

**Mad Men:**  
**Borderlines of Insanity,**  
**Masculinity and Emotion**  
**in Victorian Literature and Culture**

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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I, Helen Goodman, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

This project seeks to illuminate the relatively neglected subject of male madness in Victorian literature and culture, noting that at least half of the national asylum population in this period were men. Interdisciplinary sources include fiction, popular periodicals, psychiatric journals and casebooks from lunatic asylums in the London area. The thesis explores representations of various crises, examining the blurred line between healthy emotion and insanity through the lens of shifting models of masculinity and gentlemanliness.

Chapter One investigates the impact of financial crises, speculation and ‘railway mania’, focusing primarily on nervous breakdown and suicide in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*, Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*, and Hanwell Asylum records. It argues that the stock market became irretrievably tied to mental health in this period, constituting a major factor in what has been termed a ‘crisis of masculinity.’

Chapter Two traces the evolution of ‘monomania’, developments in psychiatric diagnostics, and cases of jealous obsession or ‘erotomania’ in young married men. It argues that Trollope’s *He Knew He Was Right* foregrounds the more explicit portrayal of domestic abuse and sexual violence found in Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga* some years later.

Chapter Three explores representations of men following the deaths of their wives or children, for whom grief becomes pathologised as a mental disorder. It argues that Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* and Trollope’s *The Duke’s Children* contribute to the

psychiatric discourse on melancholia, advocating a healthier approach to processing grief based on communication, community and action, rather than isolation and stasis.

Finally, Chapter Four considers the dialectic between individual and collective mental pathology, investigating mid-nineteenth-century perspectives on earlier political mobs. Contextualised by cultural anxieties about regicide, criminal responsibility, and Bethlem and Broadmoor cases, it explores the complexities of representations of idiocy, trauma and psychopathic political violence in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	6
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	8
<p>‘The light of medical science and discovery’: the evolution of approaches to insanity and masculinity in the nineteenth century</p>	
CHAPTER ONE.....	57
<p>Economic madness: money, mania, speculation and suicide in <i>Little Dorrit</i> (1855-7) and <i>The Way We Live Now</i> (1874-5)</p>	
CHAPTER TWO .....	114
<p>Marital monomania: sexual jealousy, erotomania and marital rape in <i>He Knew He</i> <i>Was Right</i> (1869) and <i>A Man of Property</i> (1906)</p>	
CHAPTER THREE .....	201
<p>Male mourning and melancholia: the pathologisation of grief in <i>Dombey and Son</i> (1846-8) and <i>The Duke's Children</i> (1880)</p>	
CHAPTER FOUR .....	267
<p>Political insanity: idiocy, trauma and psychopathic violence in <i>Barnaby Rudge</i> (1841) and <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> (1859)</p>	
CONCLUSION .....	344
<p>The ‘borderlands of insanity’ and the pursuit of gentlemanliness</p>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	352

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Hanwell Asylum on an Ordnance Survey map (1868) .....	14
Figure 2: ‘A Rake’s Progress’ by William Hogarth (1735).....	18
Figure 3: ‘Dr Philippe Pinel at the Salpêtrière’ by Robert Fleury (1795).....	22
Figure 4: ‘Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière’ by André Brouillet (1887) .....	24
Figure 5: Engraving of a Craniometer (1828) .....	27
Figure 6: Print showing a phrenological consulting room for servants .....	28
Figure 7: ‘Melancholy and Raving Madness’ by Caius Gabriel Cibber (1680).....	32
Figure 8: ‘The Railway Juggernaut of 1845’, <i>Punch</i> (26 July 1845) .....	69
Figure 9: ‘Off the Rail’, <i>Punch</i> (12 May 1849).....	102
Figure 10: Divorces by Act of Parliament in England, 1800-1857 .....	150
Figure 11: Divorces in England and Wales, 1865-1905 .....	155
Figure 12: ‘Louis Trevelyan at Casalunga’ by Marcus Stone (1869).....	162
Figure 13: ‘Misfortunes, Troubles, Disappointments’ by William Black (1811) .....	202
Figure 14: ‘True Courage’, <i>Punch</i> (10 Dec. 1859).....	214
Figure 15: ‘Major Bagstock is delighted to have that opportunity’ by ‘Phiz’ (1847) .....	250
Figure 16: ‘The Devastations occasioned by the Rioters of London [...]’ .....	296

## INTRODUCTION

### **‘The light of medical science and discovery’: the evolution of approaches to insanity and masculinity in the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>**

In 1800 approximately 5000 people were confined in asylums in Britain; by 1900 this figure had soared to 100,000.<sup>2</sup> The rapid increase in concern with insanity indicated by these figures is mirrored in an explosion in popularity of the subject in print media, ranging from newspapers and periodicals to fiction and art. Alongside discussions of madness in the literature of Dickens, Trollope and Galsworthy in particular, this thesis will analyse representations of madness in case notes from lunatic asylums in the London area, including Holloway Sanatorium, the Middlesex asylums at Hanwell and Colney Hatch, Camberwell Asylum, St. Luke’s Hospital and the infamous Bethlem and Broadmoor hospitals.

This thesis notes that despite the popular emphasis on female insanity approximately half of nineteenth-century asylum patients were, in fact, men. It revises previous conceptions of Victorian masculinity, observing a greater heterogeneity of models of ideal manhood than has been explored to date. Examining a range of social pressures on ordinary men during this period in fields including economic provision, marriage and sexual relationships, grief and political engagement, I argue that neither

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<sup>1</sup> J. G. Davey, ‘Lectures on Insanity Delivered at the Bristol Medical School During the Summer Session of 1855: Lecture I’, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 3, no. 129 (22 June 1855), p. 581.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Porter, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 20.



existing asylum provision and diagnoses nor existing gender models proved adequate to contain the swelling and increasingly complex London male population in a rapidly moving and changing industrial metropolitan society.

One of the most exciting aspects of interdisciplinary scholarship on nineteenth-century medical and fiction writings is the sheer quantity of evidence demonstrating that these fields were intricately connected in the period. The century began in a largely pre-disciplinary era in which scholars did not usually assign themselves to the arts or sciences as alternatives. Increasingly specialist advances in varied academic fields, together with the rise of new universities gradually necessitated the division of disciplines for research and teaching. This is particularly notable in the new profession of psychiatry, which became a discreet branches of medicine, set apart from general surgery, and other areas. I suggest that it is most appropriate to study nineteenth-century madness from an interdisciplinary perspective, since in this relatively pre-disciplinary period, writers such as Dickens and Trollope both informed and were informed by alienists.

The authors investigated in this thesis, such as Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope and Wilkie Collins, may be seen as significant participants in an authentic pre- and inter-disciplinary discourse on subjects including history, psychology, sociology, travel, politics, sciences and law. Their respective varied and interdisciplinary roles as novelists, news journalists, essayists, writers of short stories, Parliamentary reporters, social investigators and civil servants equipped them with experience and a plethora of different perspectives on their material with which to reflect and shape the world around them. Consequently, the parallel study of medical and fictional texts, as in this thesis, is quite natural, and would be unlikely to strike the original authors as curious. The recent increased critical focus on Dickens's journalism

and letters has encouraged us to engage in Dickens studies in a more holistic way, and analyses of his treatment of masculinity, imprisonment and insanity in his novels, for example, is greatly enriched by being placed within the context of his other writings on those subjects.

The theoretical approach adopted in this thesis is grounded in an historicist methodology which parallels literary and non-literary texts of the mid-nineteenth century. Most of these documents are British, but various aspects of psychological theory and asylum practice are placed within a wider network of European and North American ideas. Following critics including D. A. Miller and Catherine Gallagher, this work understands specialist and popular fiction and non-fiction writings both as products of and implicated in the political, scientific, socio-economic and ideological conditions in which they were produced. Simultaneously, this research is involved with the integration of literary studies and the social history of medicine, following Roy Porter's foundational work in the medical humanities.<sup>3</sup> In a major departure from the feminist critical focus which contends that the social and scientific construction of madness in the Victorian period was inherently feminine (as understood in seminal works by Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar), this work explores some of the complexities of understandings of male mental health within the context of a far-reaching re-evaluation of ideal and defective manliness and masculinity.<sup>4</sup> As such, it engages with scholarship of gender in the Victorian period

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<sup>3</sup> Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity From Antiquity to the Present* (London: HarperCollins, 1997); *Medicine, Madness and Social History: Essays in Honour of Roy Porter*, ed. Roberta Bivins and John V. Pickstone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2000); Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago Press, 2008) and *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Picador, Macmillan, 1997); Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1972).

which identifies a ‘crisis of masculinity,’ occasioned by the development of urban capitalism, shifting gender and class delineations and a host of other socio-economic pressures.<sup>5</sup>

## **I: Asylum expansion and reform**

The most rapid expansion of the asylum system took place between the Lunacy and County Asylums Acts of 1845 (which made it a legal requirement that all counties build a public asylum) and 1880. Alongside this growth, there was an enormous increase in public interest in mental health, which became a popular subject in periodicals and fiction. This thesis will focus primarily on the period from 1840 to 1880, arguing that it marks a collision between cultural ideals of particular models of masculinity and the increasing evidence of widespread male madness, precipitated by vulnerability to a particular set of social, economic, political and legislative shifting conditions.

The vast reach of the asylum system created additional anxiety for many of those suffering mental distress, who were often desperate not to be confined. Being judged insane by doctors, both within and outside the courts became a considerable and justified fear, which could itself worsen the symptoms of mental illness. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, the threat of the asylum terrifies the protagonist in

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<sup>5</sup> Studies of this ‘crisis of masculinity’ include: Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996) and ‘The Contemporary Crisis of Masculinity in Historical Perspective’, *The Making of New Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies*, ed. Harry Brod (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1987); Melissa Dabakis, ‘Douglas Tilden’s Mechanics Fountain: Labour and the “Crisis of Masculinity” in the 1890s’, *American Quarterly*, no. 47 (June 1995), pp. 204-35; Michael Hatt, ‘Muscles, Morals, Mind: The Male Body in Thomas Eakins’ *Salutat*’, *Body Imagined – The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 57-69.

Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* (1868-9). Centring on *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* and above all, *Little Dorrit*, Dickensians have long been engaged in discussions about the author's concern with psychological and physical imprisonment.<sup>6</sup> Just as Dickens publicised the disastrous effects of unjust imprisonment (in debtors' prisons, for example), so he was quick to observe that wrongful confinement or poor treatment in lunatic asylums could squeeze any remaining sanity from individuals who might otherwise recuperate. In a period of extensive prison and asylum reform, the variation between institutions short distances apart in London could be considerable.<sup>7</sup>

Nineteenth-century statistics reveal that most lunatic asylums had low cure rates. Such figures were often manipulated, principally by discharging patients and then readmitting them immediately, recording them as new patients. For the most part, the primary function of asylums shifted from confinement towards cure over the course of the century. For such an enormous number of patients to be locked away with a relatively low chance of recovering and being released was a concern both to the doctors who treated them, and to the public who feared going mad themselves.

The nineteenth century was a time of rapid change in medical approaches to insanity, with asylum populations swelling at an unprecedented rate, neurological research giving rise to new theories, and the public taking an increasing interest in public health issues. This thesis explores literary representations of male insanity within the context of some of the momentous changes in the field of mental disability during the nineteenth century: developments in attitude and treatment including the

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<sup>6</sup> Natalie McKnight, *Idiots, Madmen and Other Prisoners in Dickens* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993); Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> W. H. Willis, 'The Great Penal Experiment', *Household Words*, vol. 1, no. 11 (8 June 1850), p. 251.

introduction of non-restraint methods, new theories of the ideal asylum, and community-based alternatives. These medical revolutions are examined here through writings by pioneering psychiatrists from the period, archival material from lunatic asylums, and fiction written by novelists who showed a particular interest in, and knowledge of, psychiatry. This introduction also considers some of the claims made by anti-psychiatrists such as Michel Foucault, who argued that the treatment of the insane in fact regressed in the nineteenth century.

The influence of Enlightenment philosophy remained strong in nineteenth-century science, asserting that the capability for rational thought was quintessential to humanity. These ideas had been used to justify the animalisation of the asylum population during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Since those who had lost their reason were considered to have lost their humanity, it appeared logical and acceptable for them to be caged like animals. The nineteenth-century transition in psychology, in which the insane were reconstructed as patients rather than prisoners, required nothing short of a radical reconsideration of what it meant to be human. More humanitarian medical treatment of lunatics resulted from the tacit acknowledgement that the human mind was less resilient than had previously been imagined, that rationality was an unstable condition rather than an absolute concept, and that cure rather than confinement ought to be the ultimate goal of psychiatric treatment.

John Conolly was a leader of the ‘moral management’ non-restraint movement, and a keen advocate for the therapeutic benefits of fresh air, outdoor space and increased freedom of movement. This is reflected in his design for Hanwell Asylum – the first public asylum for the county of Middlesex, of which he was the medical superintendent from 1839-52. This map shows the layout of the asylum, with gardens

to the north, and the main building with its chapel at the centre. On the south side, airing courts adjoin the building, facing farm yards, farm buildings and a canal.

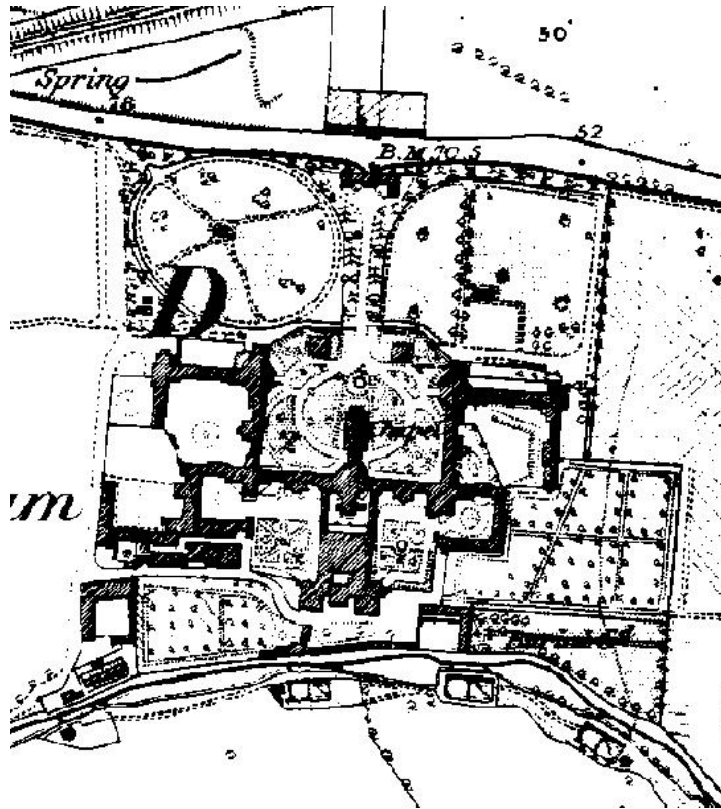


Figure 1: Hanwell Asylum on an Ordnance Survey map (1868)

Outside the medical profession, Hanwell was also considered an innovative and humane institution. A journalist writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes the pleasant setting amidst the 'green sunny meadows' and 'luxuriant vegetation', and the noble architecture of the asylum, which he sees as indicative of the enlightened practices carried out within its walls:

As a traveller by the Great Western Railway dashes through it, his attention is arrested for a moment by a large building on the southern side of the railway, a plain but handsome structure, which stands cheerfully in an open country, and discloses even to the hasty glimpse of the traveller, as he hurries past, evident indications of careful and attentive management. It is the *lunatic asylum* for the county of Middlesex, one of the most interesting buildings in the kingdom; a temple sacred to benevolence, a monument and memorial to the philanthropy of our times.<sup>8</sup>

Just 11 years earlier, in June 1839, 40 of the 800 patients were kept indefinitely restrained in leg-locks, strait-waistcoats and confinement chairs by day and night.<sup>9</sup>

J. G. Davey highlighted the need to separate patients thought to be incurable from the majority of patients whom he aimed to rehabilitate into society. His public lectures and letters in *The Lancet* urged the Commissioners in Lunacy and magistrates in Middlesex to rethink public health policy, focusing on the creation of a separate establishment for the patients most likely to recover. In *The Times* in 1856 magistrates announced plans to expand Hanwell to meet the increasing demand and minimise costs by economy of scale. They argued that the one existing medical officer would be sufficient. The newer county asylum at Colney Hatch was already full to bursting point, housing 1300 patients. Davey expressed his opposition in *The Lancet*, recommending that a smaller, more peaceful hospital for curable poor patients be

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<sup>8</sup> Sylvanus Urban, 'Hanwell Lunatic Asylum and Testament to Dr Conolly', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 34 (Sept. 1850), p. 294.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

established in the suburbs of North London. He argued that neither Hanwell nor Colney Hatch was suitable for them:

neither of these institutions are really adapted to the *cure* of mental derangement. They are both much too large [...] to embrace the details necessary to the cure of the disordered mind. Neither the form of government, the internal arrangements, nor the social and domestic economy [...] are adapted for any more than the mere common care and safe-custody of their inmates.<sup>10</sup>

The two large asylums had extremely low cure rates – about 5% per annum. Davey notes that at smaller hospitals on the model he proposed, which would embrace ‘all the best and most-approved resources of science’, with up to 250 beds, the cure rate was more like 40-60%. Over the next quarter of a century, Davey argues, the county could save money by providing more medical attention for a small number of short-term patients, rather than finding itself burdened with providing asylum space for a projected additional 5000 patients, most of whom would stay for the rest of their lives.<sup>11</sup> This article is particularly interesting because it exposes the inadequate treatment and low cure rates provided by two of the public asylums most often praised as model institutions. Given the infrequency of visits to each patient by a medical officer (who had more than 1000 patients in his care), revealed by the case books for

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<sup>10</sup> J. G. Davey, ‘Letter to the Editor: Hospital for the Cure of the Insane Poor’, *Lancet*, vol. 67, no. 1705 (3 May 1856), p. 495.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.



these asylums, it is evident that confinement was rarely therapeutic, even for individuals whose mental instability was caused by a specific, short-term, relatively untraumatic experience, like some of the men whose cases are discussed in this thesis.<sup>12</sup>

Exploring the energetic careers of key early- and mid-nineteenth-century figures such as Conolly, Davey and the Tukes, who undoubtedly effected enormous reforms within a few decades, it is tempting to frame the history of the treatment of madness as a history of progress, enlightenment and improvement. Medical writers were prolific on the subject of the achievements of ‘moral management’ in developing lunatic asylums and medical treatments. The physician Andrew Wynter wrote in the *Quarterly Review* in 1857 that the stranger visiting an asylum would be ‘surprised and delighted’ to see that ‘instead of the howling madhouse his imagination may have painted it, he sees prim galleries filled with orderly persons’ and ‘scenes of cheerfulness.’<sup>13</sup> Using the example of Bedlam, he exclaims:

what a gulf has been leaped in half a century – a gulf on one side of which we see man like a demon torturing his unfortunate fellows, on the other like a ministering angel carrying out the all-powerful law of love.<sup>14</sup>

W. A. F. Browne had summarised this humane progression twenty years earlier:

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<sup>12</sup> Most of the casebooks studied for this thesis from Hanwell, Colney Hatch, Brookwood, Bethlem, and even private institutions such as Holloway Sanatorium, record that the only contact patients had with a medical professional was a brief visit from the superintendent physician about once per month.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Wynter, ‘Lunatic asylums’, *Quarterly Review*, 101 (Apr. 1857), pp. 358-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

from a blind and hard-hearted policy, which embraced only the affliction of one evil by the affliction of another [...] a sudden transformation was made to a system, professing to be based on knowledge of the human mind, and on the common sympathies of our nature, and to have as its object the eradication, or if that appeared Utopian, the amelioration of the evil.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly by the mid nineteenth-century great strides had been made to improve the physical conditions of the eighteenth-century madhouses, with which the public had become fascinated through illustrations by Hogarth and others.



Figure 2: 'A Rake's Progress' by William Hogarth (1735)

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<sup>15</sup> W. A. F. Browne, *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1837), p. 135.

Dr Joshua Burgess proclaimed that ‘honour is due to those who have triumphed over obstacles and prejudices to emancipate the lunatic.’<sup>16</sup> Davey agreed, preaching a narrative of progress to medical students:

however much may remain to be done, it is to members of our own profession that must be attributed the high honour of having rescued the lunatic from the neglect and wretchedness which once surrounded and oppressed him. No sooner did the light of medical science and discovery penetrate the mist which enveloped mental disorders [...] than the insane were looked on with a marked sympathy, and the best and most praiseworthy efforts were made to ameliorate their condition.<sup>17</sup>

Writers in popular periodicals brought such views to a broader audience. Dickens applauded those who ‘find their sustainment and reward in the substitution of humanity for brutality, kindness for maltreatment, peace for raging fury; in the acquisition of love instead of hatred’. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that much remained to be done, urging: ‘reader, if you can do a little in any good direction – do it. It will be much, some day.’<sup>18</sup> In 1851 Dickens attended the Christmas dance at St Luke’s Hospital for the Insane in London, and reported his impressions in *Household Words*:

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<sup>16</sup> Burgess, ‘The Policy and Pathology of Insanity’, *Lancet*, vol. 58, no. 1460 (23 Aug. 1851), p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> Davey, ‘Lecture I’, p. 581.

<sup>18</sup> Dickens, ‘A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree’, *Household Words*, vol. 4 (17 Jan. 1852), p. 389.

As I was looking at the marks in the walls of the galleries, of the posts to which the patients were formerly chained, sounds of music were heard from a distance. The ball had begun, and we hurried off in the direction of the music.<sup>19</sup>

Dickens describes a ‘man of happy silliness, pleased with everything’, and patients’ ‘happy, hopefully-flushed faces’ around the Christmas tree.<sup>20</sup> Their environment is one of care, cure and amusement.

Michel Foucault, however, saw changes such as those observed by Dickens as a new threat rather than a sign of improved humanity. In the seminal text of the French anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s, *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault criticised nineteenth-century psychologists for their sinister manipulation of the twin controls of ‘Surveillance and Judgement’, and for closing off dialogue by insisting on detailed classification.<sup>21</sup> In keeping with the minutiae of cataloguing, classification and sub-categorisation evident across numerous sciences in the Victorian period, from anatomy to geology and palaeontology, the professionalisation of psychology took place amidst, and as both a consequence and a cause of, a thorough reassessment of existing diagnostic terminology.

At the close of the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis, with its increased focus on individual personalities, psyches and relationships, and its partial rejection of the relevance of socio-economic contexts of shared experience, placed a lighter emphasis on classification. For Foucault this later rejection of classification and subsequent

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<sup>19</sup> Dickens, ‘A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree’, p. 387.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 388.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 238.

partial deinstitutionalisation was attractive, provided that drugs were not substituted in place of confinement:

mental illness was not an objective behavioural or biochemical phenomenon but a label; madness had a truth of its own; and, under the right circumstances, psychotic madness could be a healing process and should not be pharmacologically suppressed.<sup>22</sup>

Foucault claims that physical manacles were replaced with more sophisticated and sinister psychological ones, initially forged by misguided or misanthropic psychiatrists. These mental restraints would eventually be internalised by each patient, who would then judge and punish themselves, at which point the patient was pronounced cured. At this rate, ‘the absence of constraint in the nineteenth-century asylum is not unreason liberated, but madness long since mastered.’<sup>23</sup> Guilt was created since a madman ‘must feel morally responsible for everything within him that may disturb morality and society.’<sup>24</sup> However, as the cases of violent psychopathy discussed in Chapter Four will demonstrate, feelings of guilt were not experienced by all nineteenth-century madmen by any means. Guilt, produced by an awareness of one’s wrongdoing, required a degree of reason which was lacking in many cases, including those found ‘not guilty by reason of insanity.’

The legend of Phillipe Pinel opening the gates of the Bicêtre Hospital in Paris in 1794, striking the chains from its caged inmates, proclaiming, ‘Citizen I am convinced that these madmen are intractable only because they have been deprived of

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<sup>22</sup> Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 522.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 239.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 234.

air and liberty', is often cited as a revolutionary moment in the improvement of care for the insane, and is the subject of a well-known painting.<sup>25</sup> Although this unchaining was a gradual process, based on several years' experimentation with a small number of patients, Pinel's intervention was certainly an important one.



Figure 3: 'Dr Philippe Pinel at the Salpêtrière' by Robert Fleury (1795)

Pinel believed that the mad behaved like animals because that is how they were treated, not because they were inherently bestial. Dickens agreed, enquiring:

What sane person indeed, seeing, on his entrance to any place, gyves and manacles (however highly polished) yawning for his ankles and wrists; swings dangling in the air, to spin him round like an impaled cockchafer; gags and

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<sup>25</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 230.

strait-waistcoats ready at a moment's notice to muzzle and bind him; would be likely to retain the perfect command of his senses?<sup>26</sup>

Following the suicide of a melancholic friend, Pinel developed a strong interest in male asylum patients, and after the French Revolution he became physician to the 200 patients on the male insane ward at the Bicêtre. Later, Pinel brought the same non-restraint approach of 'moral management' to Salpêtrière, a vast women's asylum which at that time housed 7000 women.

Criticising Pinel's work at the Bicêtre, Foucault argues for a return to 'that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself', before the separation of reason from unreason.<sup>27</sup> This caesura, he argues, 'accounts for the transition from humanist experience of madness to our own experience, which confines insanity within mental illness.'<sup>28</sup> The nineteenth century, then, taking Pinel's reform as a starting point, was a period in which this process of either enlightenment or repression spread across Europe, and from France into England, where the Tuke family and others were to effect enormous changes in the treatment of the insane.

Other notable changes in methods also reflect this contentious dichotomy between enlightenment and repression. In the late nineteenth century at la Salpêtrière, Jean-Martin Charcot used hypnotism to induce hysterical fits in his (almost all female) patients and convince the public of the extremity of conditions such as hysteria. Although primarily for his medical students (one of whom was the young Sigmund

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<sup>26</sup> Dickens, 'A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree', p. 385.

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. xi.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. xiii.

Freud), these displays were later open to the public – a move which lends credence to the idea that madness was a social construction, popularised by unethical doctors.



Figure 4: 'Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière' by André Brouillet (1887)

The ethics of so called 'moral management' seem questionable. 'Moral' has recently been reassessed as a problematically 'prescriptive term, concerned with reinforcing a benchmark of values, codes of conduct, and proper living which had roots both in evangelicalism and utilitarianism', culminating in the nineteenth century in a 'dominant model of self-control.'<sup>29</sup>

In particular, Conolly's medical ethics are questionable, since he appears to have drawn habits of which he disapproved into the sphere of insane symptomatology. In 1859 he was convicted of illegally detaining Mr Ruck, a patient at Moorcroft House

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<sup>29</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In The Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 31.



at Uxbridge, Middlesex, purely on the grounds of alcoholism. An examination by another leading psychiatrist, Forbes Winslow, had already ruled out the likelihood of hereditary insanity, despite suggestions made by Ruck's wife and servants.<sup>30</sup> Conolly was a visiting physician at Moorcroft at this time, and derived part of his salary from patient fees, providing a clear financial incentive for him to maximise diagnoses of insanity.<sup>31</sup> This case demonstrates that controversies over the nature or ethical responsibility were not confined to discussions about the patients themselves (and whether they were morally culpable for criminal acts, for example), but applied to medical staff, whose duty of care was shifting as part of broader mental health reforms.

In 1792 William Tuke founded the York Retreat, based on Quaker principles and more enlightened treatment, following a recent scandal at the York Asylum, in which a Quaker patient had died in mysterious circumstances. Tuke applied a policy of non-restraint to almost all patients, making the Retreat an innovative model for new asylums in the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> He followed the success of Vincenzo Chiarugi's similar enterprise at the Santa Dorotea asylum in Florence, where the use of chains to restrain patients had been banned in 1785.<sup>33</sup> William Tuke's grandson, Samuel, exposed cases of horrific maltreatment at York Asylum and Bethlem Hospital, leading

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<sup>30</sup> Anon, 'Law Intelligence – Yesterday', *Morning Chronicle*, 23 June 1859, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> A document presented in court revealed that for each quarter that Ruck was detained, Conolly was paid £15, making him 'not a proper person to have signed the certificate. Anon, 'Law Intelligence', p. 7. Valerie Pedlar suggests that this conviction marked 'the nadir of [Conolly's] career.' Although the case certainly made him a controversial figure, descriptions of Ruck hearing voices and threatening his wife meant that the case was far from clear-cut. 'John Conolly and debates about the treatment of madness in Victorian Britain', *Medical Historian*, no. 7 (1994), p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> The first asylum to abandon the use of physical restraints entirely was Northampton General Lunatic Asylum (later called St Andrew's Hospital), where the poet John Clare lived for the last 22 years of his life. See Arthur Foss and Kerith Trick, *St Andrew's Hospital Northampton* (Cambridge: Granta, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> Vincenzo Chiarugi, *On Insanity and its Categorization*, trans. George Mora (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1987).

to the establishment of a parliamentary committee to consider asylum regulation in 1815.<sup>34</sup>

In 1861 the cure rate of lunatic asylum patients in England was forty per cent. There is little evidence to suggest that this figure had risen by the end of the century, and some statistics even illustrate a drop. *The Westminster Review* reported that in 1905 the recovery rate for the London asylums was ‘30.3 per cent, calculated upon all the admissions, and the death rate was an alarming 7.05 per cent upon the total number under treatment.’<sup>35</sup> A brief consideration of Foucault’s critiques of nineteenth-century psychiatry has suggested that the period was not wholly one of humane improvement. Nonetheless, following Pinel and Tuke, the removal of manacles and chains from asylums in the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries must surely be recognised as a vital reform. This improvement was not, however, reflected in other aspects of psychiatric theory, which, as we shall see, took rather longer to modernise.

## **II: Causes of insanity**

In addition to, or instead of, the sociological triggers of male madness examined in each chapter of this thesis (financial crisis, sexual jealousy, grief and political violence), mid-Victorian doctors blamed factors including an imbalance of the humours, alcohol consumption, the size and shape of the skull, and masturbation for bringing those with or without an inherited predisposition to the ‘borderland of insanity.’ A range of superstitions and stereotypes from previous centuries persisted alongside new ideas in the period. In 1828, George Combe argued that ‘Mental

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<sup>34</sup> Samuel Tuke, *A Description of the Retreat* (York: Printed for W. Alexander, 1813), p. 158; p. 157.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Jones, ‘The London County Council and the Care of the Mentally Afflicted’, *Westminster Review*, vol. 163, no. 4 (Apr. 1905), p. 411.

qualities are determined by the size, form and constitution of the brain; and these are transmitted by hereditary descent.<sup>36</sup> New medical tools such as the ‘craniometer’ were developed for measuring the dimensions of the skull and parts of the face to identify various mental predispositions.

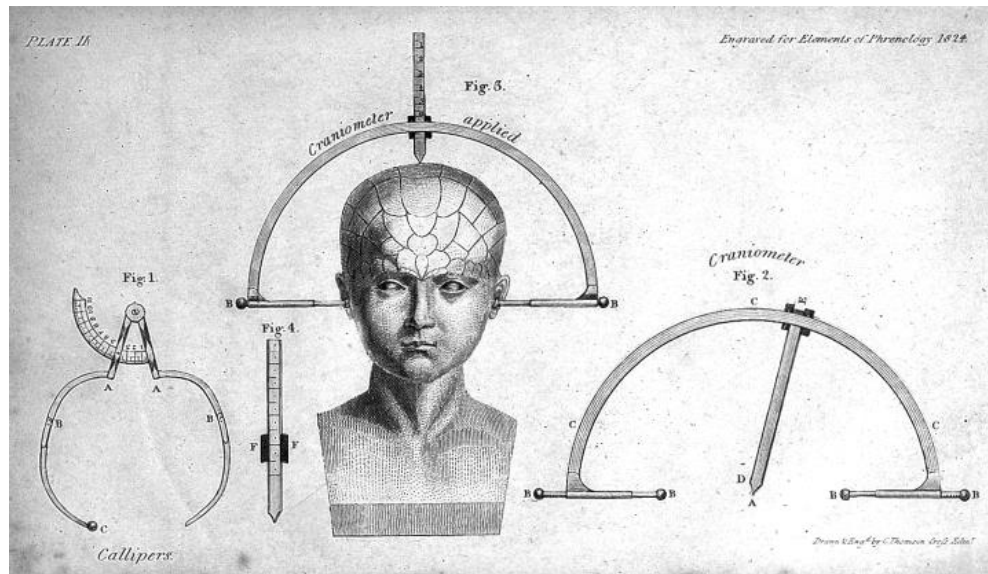


Figure 5: Engraving of a Craniometer (1828)<sup>37</sup>

Phrenological models and diagrams which labelled mental characteristics were mass-produced. A large forehead, according to Combe, ‘betoken[ed] a vast and comprehensive understanding,’ while small eyes or a narrow brow could indicate mental illness, bestial characteristics, or dishonesty.<sup>38</sup> Numerous studies analysed the

<sup>36</sup> George Combe, *The Constitution of Men Considered in Relation to External Objects* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1879).

<sup>37</sup> Engraved for George Combe, *A System of Phrenology* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1824).

<sup>38</sup> Combe, *A System of Phrenology in Embodied Selves*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 37. The theory gave rise to the expressions ‘high-brow’ and ‘low-brow’ in relation to literature and entertainments.

heads of criminals, particularly murderers.<sup>39</sup> Broad, bulbous crania were particularly admired, indicating the great intellect of the brain within. An anonymous phrenologist in 1836 recommended that such factors be considered in choosing new servants. This suggestion was the subject of many satirical prints.

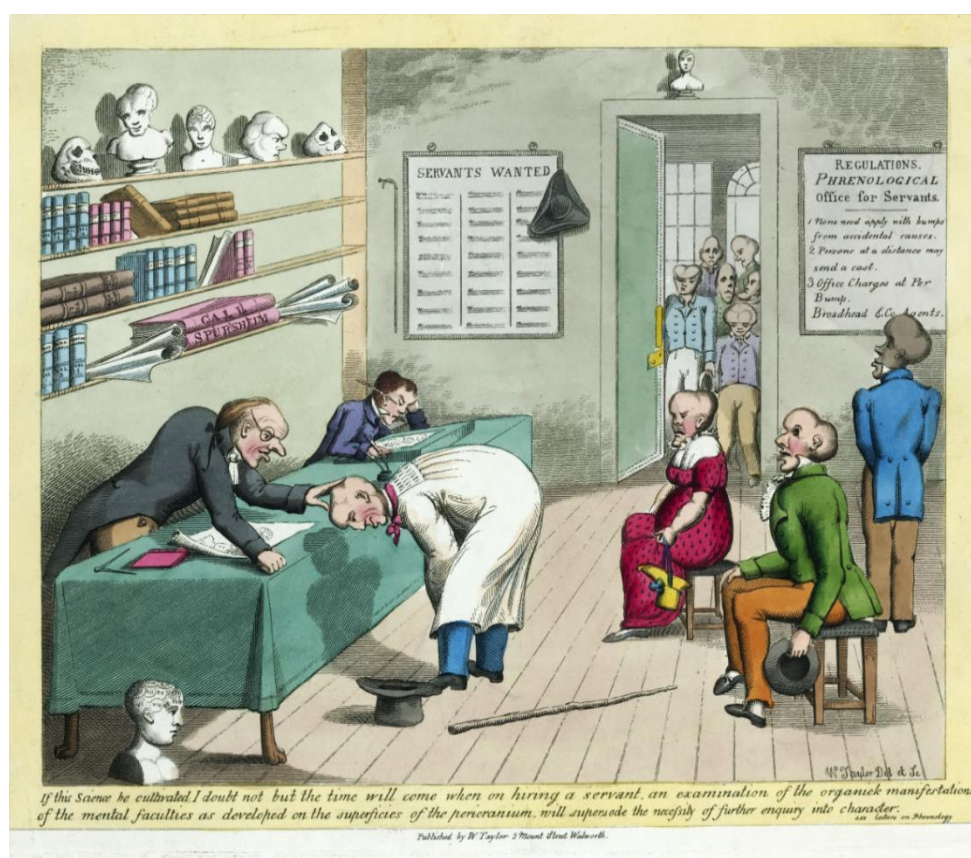


Figure 6: Print showing a phrenological consulting room for servants<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Stone, *Observations on the Phrenological Developments of Burke, Hare, and Other Atrocious Murderers* (Edinburgh: Robert Buchanan, 1829). Combe made a phrenological cast of William Burke's head, based on death masks he had taken after the hanging, and frequently visited prisons to contrast the heads of men of 'virtuous dispositions' and 'decidedly vicious characters.' Anon, 'Account of Mr Combe's Phrenological Examinations', *Phrenological Journal*, vol. 9, p. 524.

<sup>40</sup> England, c. 1805-1830 (London: W Taylor). Science Museum, London, object no. 1990-564. The inscription reads, 'If this same be cultivated, I doubt not but the time will come when on hiring a servant, an examination of the organick manifestations of the mental faculties as developed on the superficies of the pericranium will supersede the necessity of further enquiry into character.' Works by Franz Gall and Johann Spurzheim are displayed on the bookshelves.

Dickens draws on phrenological theory in his portrayal of various comic characters, forging animalistic connections in those he ridicules. Chapter Four will discuss representations of hereditary phrenological characteristics in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), including the Cruncher family, whose eyes are so close together that they look like monkeys.<sup>41</sup> It appears that by the time he published *Great Expectations* (1861) Dickens, like George Eliot, had become sceptical of phrenology, which was increasingly seen as a pseudo-science. Describing how evidence of his criminal character had been procured, Magwitch jokes, ‘they measured my head some on ‘em – they had better a-measured my stomach.’<sup>42</sup> It is, after all, Magwitch’s stomach that motivates his first actions on escaping the prison-ship, as he accosts Pip in search of ‘wittles’ and ravenously demolishes Mrs Joe’s pie.

Persisting with a theory dating from antiquity, some mid-nineteenth-century medical professionals expressed concerns about masturbation as a cause or symptom of mental disturbance. In 1861 the resident physician at Bethnal House Asylum, Robert Ritchie, called for a more open discussion of the ‘solitary vice’ of ‘indulging in libidinous pleasures’, expanding existing ideas about sexual pathology as insanity in conditions such as erotomania.<sup>43</sup> Given that 113 of the 119 cases he recorded were single men, marriage is advocated as the most effective preventative measure.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 60-1. Humans were often pictured with monkey heads in serious and satirical publications from the 1820s onwards, and so many of Dickens’s readers would be familiar with the imagery. George Combe was depicted as a monkey giving lectures at his home in Edinburgh in a wonderful collection of lithographs by L. Bump, J. Lump and others. For example, see Wellcome Images ICV No. 11370 and ICV No. 11371.

<sup>42</sup> Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 316.

<sup>43</sup> Ritchie complained that the Tukes, Bucknill, Esquirol and Forbes Winslow had either briefly passed over or entirely neglected to mention this common cause of melancholia in young men, often mistakenly ‘attributed to religion or over-study.’ Robert P. Ritchie, ‘An Inquiry into a Frequent Cause of Insanity in Young Men’, *Lancet*, vol. 77, no. 1955 (16 Feb. 1861), p. 159.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

However, as Chapter Two will discuss, representations of nineteenth-century jealousy indicate that marriage could actually *increase* male maniacal anxiety.<sup>45</sup>

Departing from critical studies of the numerous representations of hereditary illness in Victorian texts, this thesis focuses primarily on insanity or borderline insanity instigated by a variety of other causes, based largely on subjective experience rather than real or perceived biological determinism. A common feature of the cases in this thesis is a high level of mental pressure caused by unexceptional, routine aspects of the lives of typical middle-class men. These real and fictional examples are not tales of acute mania brought about by rare calamities, but of the wearing down of ordinary men. This gradual erosion of self-respect and reasonable judgement brings about despair, bordering on madness, characterised by melancholia or violence. One exception to this is Dickens's discussion of a hereditary taint in the blood of the eponymous 'idiot' in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). Chapter Four will analyse the network of circumstances and influences which cause representations of Barnaby's condition to oscillate between harmless benevolence and dangerous maniacal violence.

### **III: Diagnoses and theories**

Following the gradual abandonment of theories that madness was caused by supernatural or divine intervention, and the shift in focus from confinement to cure, the

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<sup>45</sup> An additional major strand in nineteenth-century theory about mental instability resulting from sexual pathology centred on representations of homosexuality as unhealthy 'perversion' or 'sexual inversion.' These discourses, which intensified at the fin de siècle, have been discussed elsewhere, and fall beyond the scope of this thesis, which focuses on representations of heterosexual male madness. The term 'homosexuality' was coined in a pamphlet by Karoly Maria Benkert to replace the perjorative label, 'sodomy.' 'Paragraph 143' (1869). He first used the term 'heterosexual' the following year. On homosexuality and mental pathology, see Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (London: Velvet, 1997).

subject of madness became more medical during the nineteenth century. New developments in surgical techniques in the early and mid-nineteenth century enabled the testing of existing (and often ancient) ideas about the relationship between the mind and the ‘humours,’ organs, and the respiratory and circulatory systems. Furthermore, there was an increase in examinations of the nervous system, which became the focus of biopsychology towards the end of the century.<sup>46</sup>

Another important aspect of this specialisation was the introduction of new terminology more fitting for a more scientific, specific branch of medicine. This language reflected new ways of drawing distinctions between forms of mental pathology. However, as early as the 1850s, some of the more enlightened psychiatrists warned against erecting solid boundaries between different categories of mental pathology. For example, J. G. Davey observed that in his extensive experience of moral insanity, many patients transitioned from one diagnosis to another, even to the point at which all original symptoms had been replaced with new ones:

there are mixed temperaments; in fact, there are few of us who else present as such; and hence it does follow that mania, melancholia, fatuity, and so on, but rarely preserve their identity for any length of time [...] and alternate with, and pass, by insensible gradations into each other.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Initially the field of biopsychology focused on criminality. See Enrico Ferri, *Criminal Sociology* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895).

<sup>47</sup> J. G. Davey, ‘Lectures on Insanity, Delivered at the Bristol Medical School During the Summer Session of 1855: Lecture II’, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 3, no. 113 (20 July 1855), p. 675.

In the early modern period insanity had been divided into two broad categories: melancholy and raving madness. Whilst this essential dichotomy remained in place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many of the cases explored in this thesis, both from within the pages of asylum case books and the Victorian novel, implicitly revise this idea by representing individuals whose symptoms are characterised by a combination of melancholia and mania (or ‘raving’ madness).

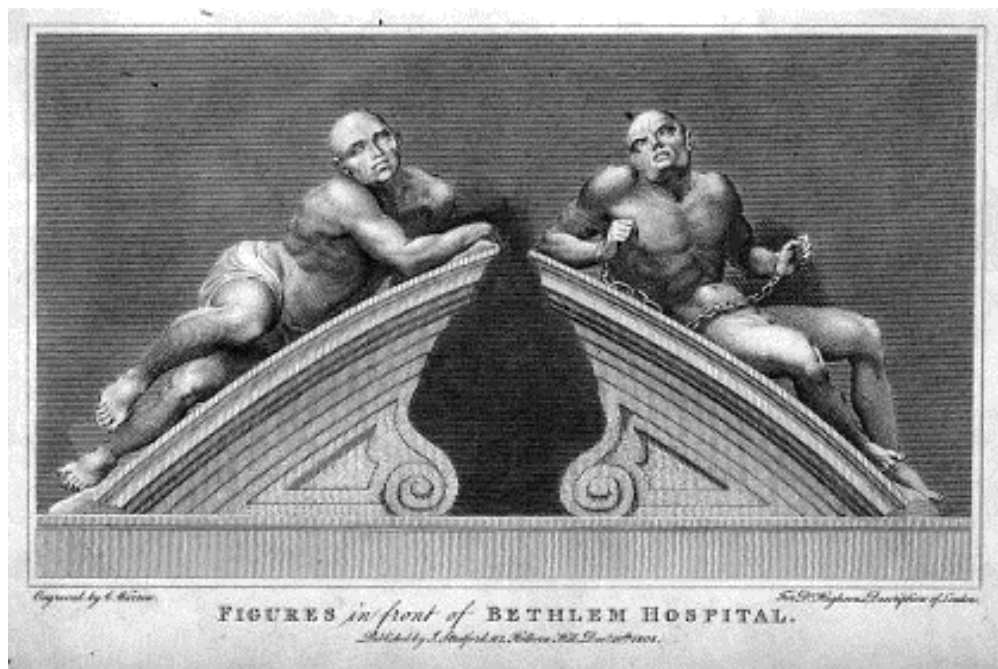


Figure 7: 'Melancholy and Raving Madness' by Caius Gabriel Cibber (1680)<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the period following the 1815 relocation of Bethlem Hospital, and thus the retirement of Cibber's sculptures, was characterised by increasingly complex subdivisions as well as the blurring of the 'melancholy' and 'raving' categories.

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<sup>48</sup> These figures adorned the entrance to Bethlem from 1680 to 1815, and were dubbed 'the brainless brothers.' Engraving by Charles Warren (London: J. Stratford, 1808). Wellcome Library no. 25634i.



Chapter Three begins by exploring the subdivisions of causes of mental pathology at the beginning of the nineteenth century made by William Black, physician to Bethlem.

Melancholia was generally considered the most refined type of mental illness, owing to its historical association with intelligence, wealth and privilege. In the eighteenth century, George Cheyne, whose patients included Samuel Richardson and Alexander Pope, consolidated this idea, based on his experience of treating nervous illness:

Those of the liveliest and quickest natural parts [...] whose Genius is most keen and penetrating were most prone to such disorders. Fools, weak or stupid Persons, heavy and dull Souls, are seldom troubled with Vapours of Lowness of Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

Its opposite, ‘raving madness’, was more commonly associated with extremes of unreason, and with two categories of patients: those possessed by demons, on whom religious tracts often focused, and lower-class violent and brutish men, whose nature and quickness of temper rendered them pre-disposed to madness. Interestingly, both melancholy and raving madness were most often represented in this period as male illnesses. Melancholia was not usually conceived as a disgrace in the way that other forms of male madness were, since it was seen to indicate an active rather than a deficient static mind, troubled by lofty philosophical thought. While madness in general was frequently represented as an excess, in which body and mind strayed outside normative boundaries of thought and behaviour, melancholy madness in particular could represent an excess of intelligence. Understood in these terms, it was

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<sup>49</sup> George Cheyne, *The English Malady: or, a treatise of nervous disorders* (Cornhill, London: for G. Strahan and Bath: for J. Leake, 1735).

clearly superior or preferable to a physicalized excess, such as anger, and to forms of mental conditions associated with deficiency, such as idiocy, imbecility, and other degrees of unreason.

The term ‘monomania’ developed in the early nineteenth century as a medical term to diagnose patients whose mania affected one particular subject, or one aspect of their lives. Jean-Étienne Esquirol coined the term in 1810-1811 when studying asylum patients in Paris, where he had been supervised by Pinel. Following a treatise in 1815 by the German phrenologist Johann Caspar Spurzheim which popularised the idea, monomania had become a major diagnostic category in Britain by the early 1830s.<sup>50</sup> J. C. Prichard became a particular proponent of the theory at this time, as Chapter Two notes.<sup>51</sup> Writers such as Dickens and Trollope presented cases of monomania in their journalism and fiction. In the popular imagination it was partially conceived as a socially unacceptable form of extreme eccentricity. Dickens’s fiction in particular is filled with eccentric minor characters, whose particular obsession is a fundamental component of their identity. Although often represented in comic terms, and given a catchphrase or easily identifiable mannerism, these characters often suffer from a form of mental pathology which can deeply affect their lives. Characters discussed in this thesis, including Mr Dick in *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and Miss Flite in *Bleak House* (1852-3), have pastimes which set them apart from others.<sup>52</sup> Keeping caged birds to represent the characteristics of and figures involved in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce Chancery case, Miss Flite is arguably a monomaniac. She has also been

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<sup>50</sup> Spurzheim, *The Phrenological System of Drs Gall and Spurzheim* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1815). By the end of the nineteenth century the term ‘monomania’ had become outdated (1897 according to the *OED*).

<sup>51</sup> For example, see J. C. Prichard’s 1837 work, *A Treatise on Insanity* (New York: Arno Press, 1973).

<sup>52</sup> The dates noted in parentheses throughout this thesis indicate the serialised publication of each work, rather than the date at which it appeared as a complete novel.

identified as a sufferer of ‘moral insanity’, in the form of a condition which would now be diagnosed as senile dementia.<sup>53</sup>

Various subcategories of monomania refer to obsessions with subjects including politics, religion and personal relationships. Chapter Two will discuss the concept of erotomania – a term which dates from Jean-Étienne Esquirol’s work in France during the 1830s, denoting an erotic, monomaniacal obsession for a person, which could cause pathological violence against women.<sup>54</sup> Influenced by but distinct from earlier ideas about love melancholy, as identified by Robert Burton and others, erotomania was characterised by intense rivalry with other suitors. Although initially Esquirol had serious reservations about the idea of moral insanity, his gradual acceptance of the category lent legitimacy to the claim that that particular kind of monomania had a moral dimension. This early-Victorian interpretation of pathological sexual jealousy and its potentially violent results as moral perversion is an example of increasing concerns about mental disease and perceived abnormality in sexual preferences and desires towards the end of the century.<sup>55</sup>

Moral insanity was not an easy category to accommodate within the English legal system. The *Law Magazine* noted the opposition of the French doctors Regnault and Collard de Martigny to ‘the doctrine of moral insanity’: if it were to be applied in

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<sup>53</sup> Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Esquirol, *Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity*, trans. E. J. Hunt (Philadelphia, PA: Lea and Blanchard, 1845). As a mania which targets one person, it differs from the wider urges typically produced by ‘nymphomania’ (dating from the early eighteenth century) and ‘hypersexuality’ (from the beginning of the twentieth). The form of erotomania discussed in this thesis is the one as outlined by Esquirol in *Des Maladies Mentales*. This differs from the later formulation of the term by another French psychologist to denote a form of unrequited love – a delusion in which the patient mistakenly believes that a famous person is passionately in love with them (De Clérambault’s Syndrome). See Gatan de Clérambault’s ‘Les psychoses passionelles’, *Oeuvre Psychiatrique* (Paris: n. pub., 1921), pp. 323-7, which was a major influence on Lacan’s ideas about desire.

<sup>55</sup> Fin-de-siècle anxieties about ‘sexual deviance’ and ‘indecenty’ were particularly fraught, fuelled by studies such as Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion* and Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

court, 'the criminal act itself would be deemed the material proof of the insanity.'<sup>56</sup> Early signs of moral insanity included 'the effects of debauchery, bad education, and early habits of cruelty to animals, or of tyranny to playmates.'<sup>57</sup> Other non-criminal acts of moral insanity amounted to anti-social behaviour or eccentricity, relating to temperament or behavioural preferences which were not in themselves pathological. In 1857 Bucknill and Tuke proposed 'emotional monomania' as an alternative term.<sup>58</sup> This had the advantage of implying a more specific, less judgemental attitude to diagnosing behaviour which fell beyond the boundaries of what was commonly acceptable.

Another major diagnostic shift concerned the word 'trauma', which evolved from denoting entirely physical symptoms to being applied to psychological ones. The concept of trauma is often assumed to be an anachronistic one in the context of the Victorian mental sciences. In part, this is due to its association with the identification of shell shock towards the end of the First World War. Indeed its counterpart, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, was not fully acknowledged by the medical establishment until the publication of the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic Statistics Manual (DSM)* in 1980, following debates about the symptoms suffered by soldiers returning from the Vietnam War. However, the twentieth-century identification of trauma resulting from military experience was preceded by earlier representations of other legacies of violence which defy comprehension within the normal parameters of healthy processing and memory. The term 'trauma' was first

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in 'News', *The Penny Satirist*, 4 May 1839, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> See John Charles Bucknill and Daniel Hack Tuke, *A manual of psychological medicine* (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1857), p. 523.

used in a specifically psychological context by William James in 1894.<sup>59</sup> Chapters Three and Four will argue that James's theory of the physical embodiment of psychological symptoms offers valuable insights into literary characters created by Dickens, Trollope and Galsworthy. Although in the case of Dickens's and Trollope's fiction this interpretation involves applying a later theory to an earlier work, I suggest that those novelists describe mental trauma without referring to it as such, and that the earlier physical meaning of 'trauma' as a wound (dating from the seventeenth century) was influential in embodying the idea of the past making an imprint or mark on the brain.

This thesis contends that 'repression' is an appropriate term and concept for interpreting nineteenth-century representations of psychological experience, following John Kucich.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, I suggest that 'trauma' has a place in pre-Freudian representations, without the danger of imposing a retrospective diagnosis. Such diagnoses are largely eschewed by the methodology of this thesis. Although it is tempting for twenty-first century readers to seek to identify nineteenth-century individuals (in fact and in fiction) within their own framework, heavily influenced by the controversial *DSM V* (2013), this has quite limited critical value. For instance, considering whether Louis Trevelyan and Soames Forsyte (discussed in Chapter Two), might suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), sex addiction or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) may be of interest. However, parallels between

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<sup>59</sup> 'Certain reminiscences of the shock fall into the subliminal consciousness [...]. If left there, they act as permanent "psychic traumata," thorns in the spirit, so to speak. The cure is to draw them out in hypnotism, let them produce all their emotional effects, however violent, and work themselves off.' James, 'Psychological Literature: *Ueber den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene* by J. Breuer und S. Freud (1893)', *Psychological Review*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Mar. 1894), p. 199. James's review is also noteworthy as the first mention of Freud in an American publication.

<sup>60</sup> See John Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Charles Dickens* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1987).

nineteenth- and twenty-first century pathology are never straightforward, and medical humanities scholars reliant on such methods risk smoothing over complex nuances in the history of psychiatry across the intervening century or two.

As part of his theory of the humours, Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BC) and his followers divided human temperament into four categories: choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. The first two of these were recognisable by their excitability and quick changes in interest – the choleric in keen interest, and the sanguine feeble. Conversely, the latter two became interested slowly, though with persistence – the melancholic intensely, and the phlegmatic feebly. As Erich Fromm has pointed out, ‘in popular usage only the negative aspects of these temperaments are remembered’ now. Following Jung’s ideas about types of temperament, ‘Choleric today means easily angered; melancholic, depressed; sanguine, overoptimistic; and phlegmatic, too slow.’<sup>61</sup> During the early Victorian period melancholia acquired connotations with weakness, and writers such as Trollope drew on the imagery which characterised the condition by an excess of black bile, as Chapter Two will discuss.

From Dickens’s depiction of the inherited idiocy in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and Braddon’s and Collins’s motif of madness as a hereditary ‘taint’ in the blood to Galsworthy’s later imagery of the hot blood of rage, the novelists studied in this thesis were all involved to some extent in an interdisciplinary nineteenth-century dialogue about madness and blood. In doing so, these writers helped to frame the theories and research questions which remain at the centre of biological psychology today. In 1854

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<sup>61</sup> Erich Fromm, ‘Human Nature and Character’, *Man for Himself* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 37. Fromm succinctly summarises the connection between these four temperaments and the four elements: ‘Choleric = fire = warm and dry, quick and strong; sanguine = air = warm and moist, quick and weak; phlegmatic = water = cold and moist, slow and weak; melancholic = earth = cold and dry, slow and strong.’ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

a Scottish physician conducted a study which involved counting the blood cells of his asylum patients under a weak microscope. In 1912, just six years after the publication of the first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*, a research group claimed to have created the first blood test for madness.<sup>62</sup>

As a plethora of historical studies have noted, a major strand of nineteenth-century psychology concerned the sensitivity of the nerves, resulting in conditions such as hysteria and neurasthenia, which now fall under the umbrella of anxiety disorder. In particular this thesis focuses on monomania, in which the patient's maniacal symptoms are confined to a single subject or theme, while they are perfectly sane and healthy when thinking, speaking, or being otherwise engaged in any other matter. The range of subjects for monomania in the nineteenth century appears to have been vast, but this study restricts itself to four primary areas: economics, sexual relations, grief and political violence.

Monomania was essentially a pathology of control which rapidly became visible on one particular subject, in which a feeling that one was losing control caused the snowballing of increasingly irrational, obsessive, and often violent, frantic attempts to re-establish and consolidate lost power. Naturally, this single subject of mania was likely to be something which held particular importance for the patient – a major area of their life, without which male patients might feel less manly. This could be a person, a pastime, or even a profession, over which entire control was desired. Turning the tables on the corrupt employees of what he largely saw by the 1850s as a bygone age

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<sup>62</sup> Major medical studies of the blood of the insane were made in 1854, 1895, and 1906. More recently, medical genomics have been used for a major international study in 2005 which 'claims to have developed a test to distinguish the blood of schizophrenic and bipolar patients from normal controls.' According to Richard Noll, this 'promises the attainment of the holy grail of biological psychiatry: a blood test for madness.' 'The blood of the insane,' *History of Psychiatry*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2006), pp. 395-418.

of asylum abuse, Dickens argued that mad doctors could themselves become monomaniacal on the subject of their patients:

Coercion for the outward man, and rabid physicking for the inward man [...]. Chains, straw, filthy solitude, darkness, and starvation; jalap, syrup of buckthorn, tartarised antimony, and ipecacuanha administered every spring and fall in fabulous doses to every patient, whether well or ill; spinning in whirligigs, corporal punishment, gagging, ‘continued intoxication;’ nothing was too wildly extravagant, nothing too monstrously cruel to be prescribed by mad-doctors. It was their *monomania* [...]. In other respects these physicians were grave men, of mild dispositions, and—in their ample-flapped, ample-cuffed coats, with a certain gravity and air of state in the skirts; with their large buttons and gold-headed canes, their hair-powder and ruffles—were men of benevolent aspects.<sup>63</sup>

At the height of anxiety about the causes of insanity, made more acute by the implications of Darwinism for theories about the hereditary or environmental nature of such illness, monomania was a particularly interesting and noteworthy concern. The press reveals that the public was particularly, perhaps even obsessively, concerned about how to identify the mad at large in society, and whether they would be locked away at an appropriate distance from themselves. The language of organic contagion more appropriate to discussions of cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis, and the other epidemiological giants of the nineteenth century, permeates both stoical and more

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<sup>63</sup> Dickens, ‘A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree’, p. 385.



sensational accounts of the spread of insanity. Thus, the detection of madmen was socially constructed as a social duty, or even a moral imperative.

#### **IV: Masculinity in nineteenth-century culture**

The ancient figure of the hero has always been a major part of cultural representations of masculinity. Following Georgian and Romantic masculinities, but prior to the late-Victorian focus on military heroism, literature reveals a restless anxiety about a dearth of positive male role models. Carlyle's 'Characteristics' (1831) sums up the broad, cultural sense that old models of ideal masculinity had become irrelevant, leaving a gaping hole in the gender identity of half the population:

The old ideal of Manhood has grown obsolete, and the new is still invisible to us, and we grope after it in darkness, one clutching at this phantom, another that; Werterism, Byronism, even Brummelism, each has had its day.<sup>64</sup>

The mid-century rise of 'muscular Christianity', characterised by physical strength and moral fortitude, was highly influential, and fed into later representations of British masculinity, the military, and imperial power towards the fin de siècle. According to E. M. Forster, the nineteenth-century public school system churned out young men with 'well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts':

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'Characteristics', *Carlyle's Complete Works*, 20 vols. (Boston, MA: Estes and Lauriat, n.d.), vol. 14, pp. 344-83.

It is not that the Englishman can't feel – it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow [...]. He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasion.<sup>65</sup>

A great deal of the male anxiety discussed in this thesis is exacerbated by concerns about emotional expression, and whether it ought to be open, in the interests of manly honesty, or concealed, in order to maintain the dignity and pride expected of any self-respecting gentleman.

However, this thesis suggests that such a model was only one of various styles of manliness in the Victorian period, and that the extent to which the expansion of empire caused a gradual process of de-domestication throughout society has been exaggerated. The perpetuation of the myth of homogenised 'stiff upper-lip' masculinity has obscured numerous other strands of cultural influence which shaped a range of alternative male behaviours and lifestyles. For instance, writing by women, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, 'A Man's Requirements', often prioritised the capacity for passionate love and emotional expression over qualifications as to class, family background, ownership of land and earnings.<sup>66</sup> This thesis proposes a regendering of the study of madness, situated within the critical context of the emergence of masculinity studies. It follows nineteenth-century social histories on the manliness and masculinity by John Tosh and others, via the interdisciplinary spread of

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<sup>65</sup> E. M. Forster, 'Notes on the English Character' (London: Edwin Arnold, 1965), pp. 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> 'A Man's Requirements', *Poetical Works of Mrs Browning*, 2 vols. (London and Glasgow: Collins, n.d.), pp. 272-3.

this new gendered focus to literary studies by scholars such as James Eli Adams and John Kucich.<sup>67</sup>

Whilst acknowledging the richness that queer studies of Victorian literature, including specifically on Dickens and Trollope, has brought to the masculinity studies, this thesis is not grounded in a queer theoretical approach.<sup>68</sup> Such work has important implications for a re-examination of Victorian culture, including later in the period. For example, controversial figures such as the dandy appear neither so subversive nor so effeminate, if we recognise the prevalence of the acceptable, even ideal, models of bachelorhood which preceded him. In relation to the present study, discussions of queer masculinities share the theory of plural models, in which a range of heterogeneous styles of masculinity are represented positively. Not only were ideals of masculinity not predicated on explicit indications of heterosexuality, but despite the alleged nurturing benefits of married domesticity (propagated in the media in the twenty-first century, as in the nineteenth), married men were not necessarily represented as any healthier than their bachelor counterparts. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, marriage was even cited as the primary cause of male madness in many cases.

Focussing on middle- and upper-class *gentlemanliness* and its psychological contexts, as opposed to the representations of working-class masculinities which have

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<sup>67</sup>John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005) and *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007); George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); John Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction* (and several of his other studies – see bibliography).

<sup>68</sup>Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kate Flint, 'Queer Trollope', *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, ed. Carolyn Dever and Lisa Niles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 99-112.

been explored elsewhere, this thesis favours the term ‘masculinity’ rather than ‘manliness.’ The latter carries associations relating to the physical body, which has been discussed in studies of nineteenth-century male education, sporting rivalry and its transference to military and civil service throughout the empire.<sup>69</sup> However, in exploring ideas about identities in relation to mental health and moral character (and physicality only insofar as it is used to illustrate these conditions), this thesis concentrates on masculinity. Similarly, this thesis does not analyse quasi-militaristic nineteenth-century reconfigurations of the medieval chivalric code, which has been considered elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> In studying the psychological attributes ascribed to (or threatening) gentlemanly masculinity, rather than solely religion and behaviour, I aim to reach beyond Leonore Davidoff’s and Catherine Hall’s somewhat limited binary opposition of two models: ‘Christian manhood’ and ‘masculine nature in gentry terms [...] based on sport and codes of honour derived from military prowess, finding expression in hunting, riding, drinking and “wenching.”’<sup>71</sup>

In Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), John Thornton and Margaret Hale debate the differences between what constitutes a man, a gentleman and what he calls ‘a true man.’<sup>72</sup> Following Thornton’s claim that he is ‘not quite the person to decide on

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<sup>69</sup> Shannon Rose Smith, ‘Marked Men: Sport and Masculinity in Victorian Popular Culture, 1866-1904’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada, 2012); Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981); Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830’, *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Apr. 2005), pp. 312-29.

<sup>71</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 110. Such pursuits were sometimes recommended by doctors in the nineteenth century as remedies for nervous exhaustion or melancholia.

<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 217

another's gentlemanliness', he clarifies his position:

I take it that 'gentleman' is a term that only describes a person in his relation to others; but when we speak of him as 'a man,' we consider him not merely with regard to his fellow-men, but in relation to himself, – to life – to time – to eternity. A cast-away lonely as Robinson Crusoe – a prisoner immured in a dungeon for life – nay, even a saint in Patmos, has his endurance, his strength, his faith, best described by being spoken of as 'a man.'<sup>73</sup>

In addition to referring to polite manners and moral behaviour, 'gentleman' was a word loaded with class significance. As such, it was perhaps no longer appropriate by the mid nineteenth-century, following the rise of 'self-made' men like Thornton. The factory owner questions the utility of the term 'gentleman':

I am rather weary of this word 'gentlemanly,' which seems to me to be often inappropriately used, and often, too, with such exaggerated distortion of the meaning, while the full simplicity of the noun 'man,' and the adjective 'manly' are unacknowledged – that I am induced to class it with the cant of the day.<sup>74</sup>

The majority of the male characters examined in this thesis see themselves are referred to as gentlemen (or, like Trollope's Mr Melmotte, aspire to be *seen* as a gentleman for

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<sup>73</sup> Gaskell, *North and South*, p. 217.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

socio-economic leverage), but the category is unstable, and the struggle to maintain the status of gentlemanliness often exacerbates mental pathology, as we shall see.

The writers examined here draw attention to the relationship between cognition and action. The active impulse, however, must be mediated by rational judgement in order to avoid frenzy and maintain health. Gentlemanliness is presented as a refined version of generic manliness, which requires that time is taken to think before acting. A gentleman's actions must be well-mannered and considerate of others; spontaneous psychological reflexes are both inadequate and injurious. As a result, this upper- and middle-class masculinity accommodates slightly slower response times as a sign of health, whereas in other class contexts such delays need not necessarily be extreme to be interpreted as symptoms of mental impairment, exemplified by the treatment of Dickens's 'idiot', Barnaby Rudge.

In recent years, the critical process of deconstructing the theory of clearly demarcated separate spheres in Victorian culture has led to a significant shift in the evolution of ideas about masculinity. Homosocial bonds and alternative domestic spaces, such as the club, provided scope for emotional openness outside the home, and studies have demonstrated the fallacy of the assumption that fathers were socially and emotionally detached from their children's lives. John Tosh and others have highlighted the permeability of the boundaries between the allegedly 'separate spheres' of work and the home, indicating that female forays into public life and male involvement in domestic family life were far more common than previously thought. This thesis suggests that far from subsiding completely with the decline of Romantic influences (in which the expression of sentiment tended to be represented as an important attribute of masculinity), representations of emotional instability persisted for many years. Together with their potential for pathologisation in the form of

hysterical illnesses, particularly in relation to the family, volatile male emotions and mental states continued to be depicted in literature and culture through the mid- to late-Victorian period.

Empire-building inevitably shaped the development of British ideas about healthy masculinity, prioritising physical strength, unimpeachable moral standing and the spirit of adventure. A range of recent studies has addressed this particular strand of nineteenth-century British masculinity, but it does not feature prominently in the texts studied in this thesis.<sup>75</sup> In many ways the expansion of the empire prompted a reaffirmation of British culture at home, of which the domestic home life of the whole family was a major keystone, and this was replicated in many colonial settlements. The primacy of familial masculinities is particularly evident in new studies of styles of Victorian fatherhood by Valerie Sanders and others. Crucially, important figures in public life, such as Prince Albert, had active family lives of which they made no secret. Some interesting research has been done in recent years by Trev Broughton, Claudia Nelson and others, to challenge the perception of Victorian fatherhood as detached, emotionally unavailable and stoical. Instead, according to Valerie Sanders and others, Victorian fathers were much more involved in a hands-on approach to child-rearing

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<sup>75</sup> Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction, 1880-1915* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); David Alderson, *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Stephen Garton, 'The scales of suffering: love, death and Victorian masculinity', *Social History*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Jan. 2002), pp. 40-58.

than has previously been thought.<sup>76</sup> Such a shift had considerable implications for representations of men grieving for their children, as Chapter Three will discuss.

This thesis is aligned with the recent trend in Victorian Studies which revises the theory that nineteenth-century culture is characterised by repression and concealment, by which undertones of psychological and emotional (especially sexual) discourse may only be read from ‘between the lines’ of texts.<sup>77</sup> These concepts are central to the discussion of Chapters Two (in relation to sexual repression and violence) and Three (in its consideration of the efficacy of male responses to grief). In this approach, however, this thesis stops short of fully accepting the ‘surface reading’ approach to nineteenth-century fiction dealing with psychological and sexual themes. For example, in Chapter Two I contend that the threat of domestic and sexual violence is an implicit one, running as an undercurrent in the narrative of Trollope’s *He Knew He Was Right* (1868-9). I suggest that the protagonist’s desperation to control the thoughts and actions of his wife may be understood as a largely covert expression of anxieties about marital rape – a subject which could only be made explicit in later texts, such as the first novel in *The Forsyte Saga* by John Galsworthy (1907).

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<sup>76</sup> Valerie Sanders has examined the letters and diaries of Dickens, Darwin, Prince Albert, Huxley and Gladstone, exploring the ways in which these major public figures negotiated new roles for themselves as fathers. *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>77</sup> For a summary of this ‘trajectory away from the “repressive hypothesis” of Victorian prudery’, via Foucault, Kucich, Adams and Sharon Marcus, see Holly Furneaux, ‘Dickens, sexuality and the body; or, clock loving: Master Humphrey’s queer objects of desire’, *Dickens and Modernity*, ed. Juliet John (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), p. 42. In relation to neo-Victorian responses to the stereotype of prudishness, see Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana: Histories, Criticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) and Kim Edwards Keates, ‘Wow! She’s a Lesbian. Got to be! Re-Reading/ Re-Viewing Dickens and Neo-Victorianism on the BBC’, *Dickens and Modernity*, pp. 171-92.



## **V: Mental stability and male identity in Trollope's fiction**

In relation to the evolution of the meaning of the word 'queer', Kate Flint contends that 'In Trollope's fiction, for a man to be effeminate, unmasculine, indicates that he lacks the kind of straightforward, honest, if impetuous personality that the author bestowed on many of his most favoured male characters.'<sup>78</sup> Amongst the Trollope novels studied in this thesis, several examples of 'honest, if impetuous' masculinity may be observed. Paul Montague, the adventurous young engineer in *The Way We Live Now*, stands apart from his contemporaries in business as an energetic and enthusiastic pursuer of honest hard work, requiring that the board of directors of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway and its shareholders be kept informed of the accounts and details of progress in the ambitious building project. Although his fidelity to Hetta Carbury is called into question, through his weakness for the persuasive and alluring American widow, Mrs Hurtle, this focus on Montague's desire serves to intensify rather than dilute his masculinity.

In contrast, Hetta's brother, the immature and somewhat foppish delinquent Felix Carbury, takes advantage of his indulgent and doting mother to fund his gambling habit at the Beargarden club, far beyond the family's means. The baronet is dishonest in his fortune-hunting dealings with Marie Melmotte, and by lying to his mother and sister too, he relies entirely on women for care and financial support. His moral character, laziness and drunkenness disqualify him from Trollope's respect as a man. Whilst various studies of Trollope's independent female characters and his 'new men' have offered important new interpretations of the author's forward-thinking attitudes towards gender, his indictment of Felix Carbury and numerous other men

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<sup>78</sup> Flint, 'Queer Trollope', p. 99.

who fail to support their womenfolk suggests that Trollope remained sufficiently socially conservative to demand a gendered sense of duty from ideal males.<sup>79</sup>

The tension between the liberal and conservative aspects of Trollope's writing on gender, like the tension between radicalism and bourgeois liberalism in Dickens's work, as examined in Chapter Four, is represented in this thesis as a point of particular interest. I argue that rather than conveying conflicting or hypocritical opinions, the careful balancing of such seemingly polarised representations allows Trollope and Dickens to sustain a tension of both the signifier and the signified in their narratives. Besides encouraging, perplexing and engaging readers for a fuller investment in the plots of their fiction, this tension has more sophisticated and specific functions. In relation to mental instability this is particularly apt, mirroring the strain and struggle of men grappling with reason and unreason at the boundary of sanity and insanity. For example, Louis Trevelyan falls into a state of monomania in *He Knew He Was Right* because he has been unable to maintain (or, as unsympathetic critics suggest, wilfully abandoned) his healthy balance in the mental space which one Victorian doctor termed 'the borderlands of insanity.'<sup>80</sup> Trevelyan has ceased to maintain the mental tension between competing ideas and arguments in a balance of probabilities, which is required as much by the writing styles of Dickens and Trollope as by the healthy, enquiring minds of the characters they create.

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<sup>79</sup> The representation of women in Trollope's novels have been explored in Jane Nardin's *He Knew She Was Right: The Independent Woman in the Novels of Anthony Trollope* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989) and Margaret Markwick's *Trollope and Women* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997). On the subject of 'new men' see Markwick, *New Men in Trollope's Novels: Rewriting the Victorian Male* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015) which explores early representations of the new man in Dickens, Anne Brontë, Eliot and Gissing.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Wynter, *The Borderlands of Insanity and Other Allied Papers* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1875).

## VI: Dickens, Trollope and the asylum system

Both Dickens and, to a lesser extent, Trollope, showed considerable interest in asylum conditions at home and abroad. In addition to Dickens's 1851 Boxing Day visit to St Luke's Hospital on Old Street in London, famously described in *Household Words* (which has already been mentioned), he made numerous visits to other asylums. In 1842, shortly after his arrival in America for the first time, Dickens visited a state-run asylum in South Boston.<sup>81</sup> His account in *American Notes*, published later that year, praises its advanced, modern approach:

[The hospital is] admirably conducted on those enlightened principles of conciliation and kindness, which twenty years ago would have been worse than heretical, and which have been acted upon with so much success in our own pauper Asylum at Hanwell. 'Evince a desire to show some confidence, and repose some trust, even in mad people,' said the resident physician, as we walked along the galleries, his patients flocking round us unrestrained.<sup>82</sup>

This optimism may be seen throughout Dickens's account of the early days of his American tour, including his generalisation that, based on his experiences in Boston:

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<sup>81</sup> By 1840 'barely 2,000 insane were under care, in twenty regularly organised institutions in the United States [...]. In view of what even yet prevails in these places, after all the efforts for reform that have been made, the imagination may be left to paint their condition at that time. At the opening of the year 1860, there were about 8,500 provided for in fifty institutions, most of which are of the first class [...] and a steady though tardy progress is making provision for the chronic insane of new and thinly settled districts.' Anon, 'Statistics of Insanity', *American Journal of Insanity*, vol. 18, no. 1 (July 1861), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Dickens, *American Notes* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd., n.d.), p. 42.

‘In all the public establishments of America, the utmost courtesy prevails.’<sup>83</sup> The asylum in Hartford, Connecticut was also ‘admirably conducted’ and ‘almost as good’ as the one in Boston.<sup>84</sup>

Elizabeth Dix, the granddaughter of a Boston physician, began a life-long campaign for the reform of lunatic asylums in 1841, the year before Dickens’s visit. Her impression of the institutions in and around Massachusetts was considerably less favourable than his, observing that patients suffered greatly from being treated like criminals. In Dix’s opinion, mental illness was ‘the result neither of Divine will nor inborn defect but rather of society’s failings.’ Dismissing two of the principal excuses for non-intervention, Dix repeatedly asked one question throughout her life: ‘Should not society, then, make compensation which alone can be made for these disastrous fruits of its social organizations?’<sup>85</sup> Given Dickens’s insistence that the British state take responsibility for the social evils it produced (in *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*, for example), we might have expected him to concur with Dix on this matter, unless the South Boston and Hartford asylums were exceptional. Dickens developed a very different impression of American provision for the insane based on his next visit to an asylum. The institution on Long Island or Rhode Island (‘I forget which’) was unclean and disordered, with ‘a lounging, listless madhouse air, which was very painful.’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>85</sup> Dorothea L. Dix, quoted in David J. Rothman, Steven Marcus and Stephanie A. Kiceluk, eds. *Medicine and Western Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 352. Also see ‘Memorial: To the Legislature of Massachusetts, January 1843’, *On Behalf of the Insane Poor: Selected Papers* (New York: Adorno Press and The New York Times, 1971).

<sup>86</sup> *American Notes*, p. 78.

Various men among Dickens's acquaintance were influential and powerful in the world of asylums. He became friends with John Conolly during the 1840s, and became a supporter of the non-restraint, moral management system. The psychiatrist gave Dickens a copy of his lecture series, *On Some of the Forms of Insanity* (1849), as a gift around 1850 (although it has been suggested that he never actually read the collection).<sup>87</sup> The friendship rather soured after Dickens published Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* in *All the Year Round* in 1863, which depicted a monomaniacal asylum doctor, Dr Wycherley, who resembles Conolly somewhat. Dickens's close friend John Forster became secretary to the Commission in Lunacy in 1855, before becoming a Commissioner in Lunacy himself from 1861-1872.

Trollope, however, is rarely noted for his interest in the reform of public institutions. Evidence of the two-way traffic of ideas between literature and science in the early decades of the division of academic disciplines is provided by communication between novelists and psychologists. In a letter to one doctor, Trollope connotes predisciplinary attitudes, indicating that he considers *He Knew He Was Right* to be a contribution to clinical psychology, as Chapter Two will discuss. Little glimpses like this are valuable in challenging the popular assumption that literature only reflected developments in science, and never the other way around. From 1871-2, shortly after Trollope's publication of *He Knew He Was Right* (in which the protagonist's fear of committal to an Italian lunatic asylum looms large), he visited his

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<sup>87</sup> Leonard Manheim, 'Dickens's Fools and Madmen', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 2 (1972), p. 71.

son, a sheep farmer in New South Wales. Trollope spent much of his time ‘descending mines, mixing with shearers’ and ‘touring lunatic asylums.’<sup>88</sup>

These kinds of records of Dickens’s and Trollope’s interest in lunatic asylums and their inhabitants beyond the pages of novels indicates the suitability of an interdisciplinary approach which discusses factual asylum cases alongside fiction. Following extensive previous research on female madness, and on representations of mental instability in sensation fiction by Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and others, this thesis focuses its attention primarily on the realist genre. It considers some of the factors contributing to the pathologisation of responses to socio-economic crises faced by Victorian men, as represented in cultural and medical constructions of the relationship between madness and masculinity.

Chapter One highlights connections between a series of nineteenth-century financial crises and developing ideas about the causes of male insanity. Focusing in particular on instances of mental breakdown following the failure of vast speculation projects, it identifies victims of swindling and the psychological effects of hunger on crowds, before embarking on two literary cases, read alongside asylum notes. In the figures of Mr Merdle and Mr Melmotte, Dickens and Trollope blurred binary distinctions between villains and victims, the sane and the insane, creating sympathy for enormously wealthy swindlers, who have the furthest to fall when immense pressure drives them to suicide.

Chapter Two investigates the development of the diagnosis of erotomania in married men, uncovering the shocking abuse which could result from compulsive

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<sup>88</sup> Nigel Starck, ‘Anthony Trollope’s Travels and Travails in 1871 Australia’, *National Library of Australia News*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Oct. 2008), p. 19.

jealousy. Acts including domestic violence, psychological abuse, marital rape, the kidnapping of children, and the imprisonment of women within pathologised domestic spaces were not only legal, but actively encouraged by some authorities. Within the Divorce Courts, such measures were often perceived as entirely rational, even praiseworthy, attempts to safeguard the sanctity of marriage and thus the moral wellbeing of the entire nation. Trollope and Galsworthy expose the disjunction between such ideas and the lived experience of women at the mercy of monomaniacal men, pushing the boundaries of acceptable references to rape in their respective historical contexts.

Chapter Three considers representations of male grief at the borderline of insanity, exploring the extent to which public and private demonstrations of deep melancholia by crying were compatible with evolving codes of healthy masculinity. Exploring the symptomatology of Dickens's and Trollope's observation of pathological bereavement, this work highlights the ways in which these novelists integrated themselves within, and even foregrounded, nineteenth-century theories of the emotions and the relationship between psychological and physiological representations of embodied distress. I suggest that in making recommendations for the healthy recovery of grieving widowers and fathers, thinkers as disparate as Charles Dickens and William James reach similar conclusions, advocating communication and action as the primary strands of grief therapy.

In contrast, Chapter Four concerns the dangers of the communal sharing of grievances, discussing the role of individuals and wider groups in major political upheavals in Dickens's historical fiction. In this final chapter, I trace the development of acts of extreme radical violence, from regicide attempts by lone madmen (some of whom may in fact be of sound mind), to vast, apocalyptic riots on the streets of

London and Paris. Informed by cases from Bethlem and Broadmoor, this dissection of the psychological causes and consequences of extended political violence interrogates medical categories including trauma, idiocy and psychopathy, considering their implications for evolving masculine identities.



## CHAPTER ONE

### **Economic madness: money, mania, speculation and suicide in *Little Dorrit* (1855-7) and *The Way We Live Now* (1874-5)**

‘Verily mammon-worship is a melancholy creed.’

– Carlyle (1843)<sup>1</sup>

‘My mood also depends very strongly on my earnings. Money is laughing gas for me. I know from my youth that once the wild horses of the pampas have been lassoed, they retain a certain anxiousness for life. Thus I came to know the helplessness of poverty and continually fear it.’

– Freud (1899)<sup>2</sup>

#### **I: Financial crises and psychiatric philology**

This chapter engages with representations of masculine roles and identities to inform a study of Victorian financial instability, and the psychological instability which it all too often produced. Financial crises, stock market crashes, and bankers’ nervous breakdowns are not new to the latest recession; nor were they new in the Great

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Carlyle, ‘The Gospel of Mammonism’, *Past and Present* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1910), p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘Letter to Fliess’ (1899), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1901* (London: Belknap Press for Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 374.

Depression of the 1920s. Stockbrokers' suicides and money madness were at least as familiar in headlines during the mid-nineteenth century as the first decade or so of the twenty-first.<sup>3</sup> The subject was not confined to the press, but flooded into periodicals, medical treatises, asylum case books and novels, some of which will be considered in this chapter. A wide range of Victorian novelists from the most canonical, such as Dickens and Trollope, and sensation writers whose critical stock has risen rapidly in recent years, such as Braddon and Reade, to largely-forgotten writers, all addressed the subject of economic risk and speculation in relation to mental health.

The rise of financial anxiety in the period quite naturally prompted a rapid increase in its discussion in the press, including newly-established specialist financial publications: newspapers, journals, pamphlets and advice manuals. These materials themselves forged a connection between the economy and pathology, taking on the language of epidemiology. The interdisciplinary approach advocated throughout this thesis is employed in this chapter by drawing not only on literary texts, but also the fields of economic history and psychiatry. This historicised approach will be used to examine the Victorian study of what I shall term 'economic madness'; that is, the ways in which various forms of economic uncertainty during the period from approximately 1840 to 1880, together with evolving Victorian conceptions of normative and alternative masculine behaviours, may be seen as causal factors in precipitating a range of forms of mental breakdown in the men involved.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2009 national newspapers reported the death of Anjool Malde, a twenty-four year old Oxford graduate who worked as a stockbroker for Deutsche Bank. Following a prank at work in which he or a colleague had allegedly impersonated a client online, and fearing that he would lose his job in the subsequent inquiry, Malde jumped 80 feet to his death from the top of a fashionable London restaurant, wearing his best designer suit and clutching a glass of champagne. 'Stockbroker who fell to his death involved in Deutsche Bank inquiry', *The Guardian*, 8 July 2009.

Rapid industrialisation, speculation from the late 1830s onwards, and the emergence of a new model of normative masculinity combined to increase pressures on men at all levels of society, frequently culminating in nervous exhaustion or even complete breakdown and descent into ‘madness.’ Particular fiscal circumstances of the period may be connected to case studies in medical literature and fiction in which otherwise sane individuals crossed the boundary into madness. Several enormously widespread phenomena were of particular significance: the ‘railway mania’ of 1847-48, the Gold Rush (in Australia in 1851 and California from 1848-52), the Irish famine (1845-52), and the increasing use of steam power over the course of the century. In 1876, the Tory *Fraser’s Magazine* traced the fever of railway speculation back to the discovery of steam power:

With the application of steam to locomotion on land the world entered on a new era – the stockjobber on a field of enterprise which must have exceeded the most fabulous of his dreams. As soon as the mania for developing the resources of nations by means of railways fairly took hold on the world, the rapidity with which money was borrowed for the purpose exceeded anything of the kind that had ever occurred before, and was productive of a series of commercial crises.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Anon, ‘Stockbroking and the Stock-Exchange’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, vol. 14, no. 79 (July 1876), pp. 84-103.

With railways, new forms of manufacturing and mechanisation, economic madness is not only concerned with financial, psychiatric and medical changes, but also the history of technology.

The thorough consideration of all these factors is beyond the scope of this chapter, which will focus on railway speculation, overwork, and actual or feared unemployment. Although it is widely acknowledged that the period from the 1840s to the 1880s was one of economic boom, it was also plagued by frequent and severe crises, in which thousands of men lost their fortunes and their wits. The intersection of financial crises with the rise of increasingly demanding codes of masculinity in relation to the management and investment of money may be demonstrated as a cause of particularly poor mental health in British men. This study identifies the developments of nineteenth-century capitalism as the cause of particular kinds of pecuniary pressure which precipitated nervous breakdown or suicide in a variety of medical case histories, newspaper reports and novels. From the 1840s onwards, speculation, particularly in railway shares, produced extremes of elation and depression in investors, many of whom were inexpert and ill-equipped, financially and mentally, for the shock of financial ruin. This chapter will consider well-known novels such as Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855-7) and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875) alongside a range of lesser-known sensation fiction, as well as periodical articles and medical reports in *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal*. I argue that Victorian notions of manhood, with their expectations of financial support by 'bread-winning,' produced particular socio-economic conditions in which male madness was to flourish, while simultaneously discouraging, or even forbidding, its open discussion, diagnosis and treatment.

Archival material is an important source throughout this thesis, and this chapter will draw on medical case notes in particular, in which doctors have indicated financial pressures as a cause of mental breakdown. John Conolly's pioneering non-restraint work at Hanwell was carefully recorded in case books, giving detailed insights into the interconnectedness of the individual's mental health and the economic environment, particularly in male cases. The extent of archival material on Hanwell at the London Metropolitan Archives runs to 278 linear yards, giving vast scope for analysis. A tiny proportion of these important materials will be discussed here. Conolly's notes abound in cases of male mental breakdown following redundancy, failed speculation and disastrous investments. As a public asylum it might have been expected primarily to treat the working and pauper classes. However, given the nature of 'economic madness', with men down when hit by financial ruin, some cases detail previously wealthy men whose suddenly altered circumstances precluded the possibility of treatment in costly private asylums.

Records from Holloway Sanatorium and other private institutions reveal that economic madness was not restricted to the lower classes. It was widely thought by medical professionals and the public that more complex forms of mental illness stemming from environmental factors or a ruminating mind, such as melancholia and neurasthenia (or male hysteria, for those who acknowledged the possibility of such a malady), were restricted to the upper classes. Idiocy, imbecility and hereditary madness were thought to prevail in the lower classes: a cultural narrative which bolstered the later theory of degeneration and the advocacy of eugenic intervention. The French psychologist and tutor to Freud, Jean-Martin Charcot, disputed this class-based perception, making the following statement in a lecture at the Salpêtrière in Paris:

When we speak today of neurasthenia or male hysteria, it still seems that we almost exclusively have in mind the man of the privileged classes, sated by culture, exhausted by pleasures' abuses, by business preoccupations, or an excess of intellectual exertion [...]. However, it had been perfectly well-established that these same disorders, at least in the cities, may be observed on a grand scale among the workers and artisans, by those the least favoured by fate and who scarcely know anything other than hard manual labour.<sup>5</sup>

Although little research by literary critics or social historians has examined the intersection of economics and psychiatry, the two disciplines are, I suggest, inherently intertwined, particularly amidst the tumults of the Victorian era. The language of economics itself bears testimony to its close relationship with madness. The words 'panic', 'depression', and 'mania', for example, have contexts in both the economic and the psychological. In 1864 Walter Bagehot declared that 'panic' had become virtually an economic term.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, 'depression' was first used in this way in 1793, to describe a decrease in public funds. It was widely used in Britain to refer to economic recession from the 1870s onwards, before falling out of fashion and being taken up again by Herbert Hoover in the 1930s. 'Mania' also became a popular term to describe the public's obsessive investment in and fascination with railway shares during the 1840s. The linguistic connection made in the journalistic press between

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<sup>5</sup> Jean-Martin Charcot, *Leçons du mardi à la Salpêtrière*, vol. 2, lesson 12: 29 Jan. 1889, (Paris: Bureaux du Progrès Médical, E. Lecrosnier and Babé, 1889), p. 256.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Bagehot, quoted in Gail Turley Houston, *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1. The first recorded such use of 'panic' in a financial context was in 1757. Joseph Harris, *Essay Upon Money and Coins. Part I. The Theories of Commerce, Money, and Exchanges* (London: G. Hawkins, 1757).

economics and psychiatry paved the way for novelists to entwine the two subjects in fiction.

## **II: Self-help and self-reliance**

A strong narrative which idealised increasing self-sufficiency and post-Enlightenment rationality is revealed by literature from the early to mid-Victorian period. I argue that this trend was a major contributing factor in the rise of a more demanding code of masculine economic behaviour than had previously been in place. Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859), which sold 20,000 copies within a year of publication, instructed its (largely male) readership to 'rely upon their own efforts in life, rather than depend upon the help or patronage of others' in order to avoid 'Failure' (which is ominously capitalised). 'Above all, he must seek elevation of character.'<sup>7</sup> More copies of *Self-Help* were sold than of any other book in the nineteenth century except for the Bible, and it was translated not only into every major European language, but also Japanese, Arabic and Turkish.<sup>8</sup>

Smiles insisted that any ordinary man could raise himself to greatness through hard work. This meritocratic classical liberal ideology made new demands of the upwardly mobile working-class man, for whom financial responsibilities were becoming more complex. Not only did working men in the early and mid-Victorian period have to cope with long hours, poor conditions, disorganised trade unions, and

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<sup>7</sup> Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray, 1897), pp. vi-vii. This kind of psychological pressure from early self-help manuals was not confined to work by male authors. Sarah Stickney Ellis' *The Women of England* (1838) discussed character formation in similar terms.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Tames describes the vast influence of *Self-Help*, noting that 'The khedive of Egypt even decorated his palace with inscriptions from what was, in effect, the Holy Writ of industrial capitalism.' Tames, *Economy and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 107.

low wages with which to support their growing families, but an onslaught of self-help ideology from the higher classes brought new expectations, concomitantly with assessment of manhood. Hard work was allegedly the solution to a broken and degenerate society, and unemployment was due to individual characters and their slothfulness, rather than economic mismanagement by the government. This ideology of labour would not find such strong articulation again in Britain until the Thatcherite years of the late twentieth century.

For Carlyle and others, idleness rather than overwork was seen as damaging to mental health. In *Past and Present* (1843) he describes ‘a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works; in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair.’<sup>9</sup> Carlyle’s ‘Work’, ‘Idleness’ and other references to psychological modes, like Smiles’s ‘Failure’ is emphasised by capitalisation. He makes an additional connection with masculinity, the ideal of which can only be reached by labour.

Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1910), p. 269.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.



On achieving manhood, he has ‘the blessed glow of Labour’ burning within him, according to Carlyle.<sup>11</sup> It is clear then, that Victorian social commentators did not ignore the mental trials of labouring men, but that they assumed, perhaps by political motivation, that the intensification rather than the easing of labouring life was the solution to feelings of mental detachment. This conservative conclusion is diametrically opposed to the most sustained nineteenth-century argument against this notion, which is found in Marx’s theory of alienation from labour.<sup>12</sup> In 1866 John Ruskin criticised the lottery involved in worshipping mammon, warning that ‘while to one family this deity is indeed the Goddess of Getting-on, to a thousand families she is the Goddess of *not* Getting-on’, and that in living by such a faith soon ‘no more art, no more science, no more pleasure will be possible.’<sup>13</sup>

Supporters of the ‘self-help’ culture claimed that in addition to increased wealth, it would improve moral character. The culture of self-help not only contributed to the weight of financial responsibility on individuals, but it also permeated every aspect of society, including medical practice. Athena Vrettos notes that parenting manuals recommended the careful moral management of children and self-help texts encouraged character reform by self-discipline, whilst at the same time, ‘Victorian alienists were increasingly using the same techniques to treat their lunatic patients.’<sup>14</sup> Whilst the abandonment of physical restraints was undoubtedly beneficial, to some extent the rise in pressure to achieve self-sufficient masculine ideal behaviours was enhanced by the development of Foucauldian internal restraints. This not only served,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, ‘Capitalism and Human Alienation’, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* [1844], in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, ed. T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 176-8.

<sup>13</sup> Ruskin, ‘Traffic’, *Unto this Last and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 246; p. 249.

<sup>14</sup> Athena Vrettos, ‘Victorian Psychology,’ *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 67-83; p. 75.

intentionally or not, to keep male patients under control within sanatoria, but also precipitated their decline from a manageable level of financial anxiety to complete breakdown.

Early twentieth-century theorists made connections between Victorian industrial development and the Protestant work ethic, as in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904). Gail Turley Houston argues that 'the capitalist version of economics focused all but monomaniacally on the individual's economic desires vis-à-vis a global network of goods, suppressing the communal nature of former definitions of economics.'<sup>15</sup> This pressure resulted in varying degrees of nervous strain. As F. M. L. Thompson puts it, the 'rise of respectable society' took its psychological toll.<sup>16</sup> Evidence of such cases are plentiful in medical journals such as *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, while periodicals including the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine* and Dickens's *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* also considered the dangers of speculation and gambling, frequently alluding to their psychological consequences. Various novelists were also vocal on the subject, drawing inspiration not only from current events and the popular press, but also from their own experiences.

### **III: Writers, finance and madness**

Many Victorian writers experienced mental instability or observed it within their families. Others were involved in various forms of business speculation, gaining

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<sup>15</sup> Houston, *From Dickens to Dracula*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian England, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 1.

awareness of the pressures involved. It is a well-documented fact that George Eliot was a shrewd businesswoman, and derived a large proportion of her income from investments, but numerous other well-known writers similarly involved themselves with economic matters, with mixed results.<sup>17</sup> Tennyson lost his modest fortune in a 'Pyroglyph' wood-carving scheme, while Thackeray lost his inheritance as a result of the collapse of the great Indian agency-houses in 1833.<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning owned railway shares, Robert Browning invested his large inheritance in Tuscan Funds and Elizabeth Gaskell's uncle was a partner in one of the largest financial houses of the period.<sup>19</sup> Earlier in the century, other writers found themselves embroiled in speculative affairs. The bank founded by Jane Austen's brother failed in 1815 while she was writing *Persuasion* (1817). Walter Scott was another important literary figure affected by financial crashes, losing most of his wealth in the early 1820s, almost reducing him to bankruptcy, and Trollope's father-in-law was a bank manager in Rotherham. In Tennyson's 'Maud' (1855), the dead man is thought to have committed suicide, 'for a vast speculation had fail'd.' 'Ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever wann'd with despair', with 'a wretched swindler's lie' being followed by 'a horror of shatter'd limbs.'<sup>20</sup>

Nor were literary families unfamiliar with the nervous breakdown in men that ensued from financial pressures and a host of other social factors, some of which will be explored in other chapters of this thesis. Thackeray's wife was confined in an

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<sup>17</sup> Gordon Haight, *George Eliot. A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 458.

<sup>18</sup> Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1905), I, p. 220 and Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 159. Both cited in Reed, 'A Friend to Mammon': Speculation in Victorian Literature', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Winter 1984), p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> William Irvine and Park Honan, *The Book, the Ring, and the Poet: A Biography of Robert Browning* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974), p. 200; p. 351. Winifred Gerin, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 286; p. 288.

asylum in Camberwell after unsuccessful treatment at home, and Dickens threatened his wife with committal to an asylum if she refused to quell gossip about his relationship with her sister. Dickens's close friend and biographer Forster was a Commissioner in Lunacy. Bulwer-Lytton arranged for his estranged wife to be institutionalised to prevent her heckling at his election meetings. Many important figures of nineteenth-century scholarship suffered nervous breakdowns as young men, including Francis Galton, John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill.<sup>21</sup> Selina Bunbury, a prolific Anglo-Irish novelist, was first prompted to write out of immediate necessity when her father became bankrupt. Margaret Oliphant's brother Frank, who suffered from chronic depression, relied on her income from literature for six years. This kind of gender role reversal, occasioned by a transfer of breadwinning responsibility, was more commonplace than historians often assume. Rather than shaking the foundations of a single monolithic model of masculinity, these kinds of alternative economic domestic arrangements provide evidence for the theory of heterogeneous and relatively flexible masculinities suggested in this thesis.

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<sup>21</sup> Van Akin Burd has discussed Ruskin's parents' interpretation of one of his earlier breakdowns (following a refused proposal of marriage) in the *John Ruskin and Rose La Touche: Her Unpublished Diaries of 1861 and 1867* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 64. Ruskin continued to suffer from periods of poor mental health throughout his life. Francis Galton had a nervous breakdown from overwork in his third year at Cambridge: 'I suffered from an intermittent pulse [...]. A mill seemed to be working inside my head; I could not banish obsessive ideas.' He 'had been much too zealous, had worked too irregularly and in too many directions' until he 'broke down entirely in health.' Galton, *Memories of My Life* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1909), p. 79. Similarly, in his biography of Mill, Alexander Bain claimed that 'work could be pushed to the point of being injurious to either body or mind'. He probed Mill's own opinion that 'spiritual or mental' causes lay behind his 1826 breakdown, insisting, 'that the chief of these causes was over-working the brain, may I think be certified beyond all reasonable doubt.' Bain, *John Stuart Mill: A Criticism, with Personal Reflections* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1882), p. 38.

#### IV: Railway mania and the press

Such was the scale of public interest in speculation and economic affairs by the middle of the nineteenth century that popular novelists could hardly fail to address the subject. The vast quantity of print material on this subject appeared not only in specialist journals, but also in the full range of popular periodicals and fiction, indicating the relevance of the subject not simply to bankers and economists, but to the entire population of all social classes. *Punch* and other publications satirised the sudden mania for railway speculation, while others sincerely encouraged it as the most prudent area of investment.

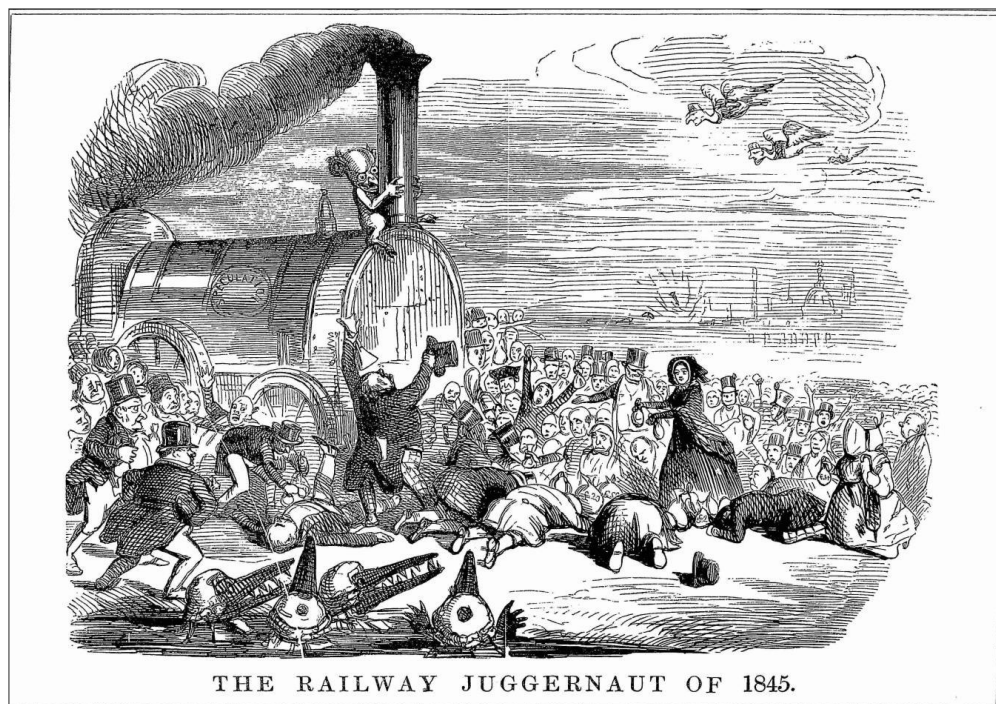


Figure 8: 'The Railway Juggernaut of 1845', *Punch* (26 July 1845)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'The Railway Juggernaut of 1845', *Punch* (26 July 1845).

*A Short and Sure Guide to Railway Speculation* (1845), written by an anonymous ‘successful operator’ and dedicated to the ‘Railway King’, George Hudson, was one of numerous pamphlets and short books published in the mid-forties claiming to be a fool-proof and safe guide to investment. This particular publication was enormously popular, and went through six editions in its first month. It does not attempt to deny the recklessness of some speculators and speculations, but claims that its own prudent readership need not be of that number. ‘Many are rushing forwards, as recklessly as the driver of a heavy train, who descends an incline without applying the break, and if, to such persons, I hold up the red signal lamp of caution to warn them of their danger, I hope that I am not uselessly employed.’<sup>23</sup> The author’s main argument in favour of railway investment is its potential to give higher rates of return than the alternatives. While 4% interest was a common average, railway shares would, he claims, give at least 6%; ‘the calculation, then, is within the capacity of a school-boy.’<sup>24</sup> D. Morier Evans published a volume on *The Commercial Crisis, 1847-1848* in 1848, attempting to analyse ‘the railway mania and its effects.’<sup>25</sup> He notes that at the height of railway investment, ‘the attractions of scrip lavishly distributed, far outvied the steady dividend paying 3 per cents, and these, with other favourite securities, were abandoned. Nothing under 8 or 10 per cent was recognised as a fair return for investment.’<sup>26</sup> The rate, then, rather than the security of the investment, was the public’s focus.

With the right names on governing boards and the support of the right newspapers, a company could be floated which would simply sell shares to make a

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<sup>23</sup> Anon, *A Short and Sure Guide to Speculation* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1845), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> D. Morier Evans, *The Commercial Crisis, 1847-1848* (London: n.p., 1848), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Evans, pp. 6-7.

profit, without ever completing the task on which its advertisements were based. This process depended entirely on the company's appearance of respectability, trustworthiness and unassailable stability. This reputation might, or might not, be grounded in the truth about the moral scruples and honesty of the businessmen involved, let alone their expert knowledge and skill. The fatuous nature of a system with such insecure foundations is the subject of Anthony Trollope's popular novel, *The Way We Live Now* (1875). He satirises the great esteem in which the corrupt business mogul at the heart of his novel is held. 'It was generally acknowledged that few men living – perhaps no man alive – had so acute an insight into the great commercial questions of the age as Mr Augustus Melmotte.'<sup>27</sup> The reputation that came with such a respected name was worth any number of column inches. However, Trollope reveals that such an elaborate construct of economic stability could be founded on sand. Although early in the novel there is 'a feeling of doubt, and a consciousness that Melmotte, though a tower of strength, was thought by many to have been built upon the sands,' the wild promises of vast returns on shares prove too tempting for most.<sup>28</sup>

The 'South Central American and Pacific Railway', though a caricature, was true to life. Trollope clarifies the company's aims early on, explaining, 'The object of Fisker, Montague, and Montague was not to make a railway to Vera Cruz, but to float a company. Paul thought that Mr Fisker seemed to be indifferent whether the railway should ever be constructed or not. It was clearly his idea that fortunes were to be made out of the concern before a spadeful of earth had been moved.'<sup>29</sup> However, this is not to say that the railways outlined in other similar schemes were never built. The 1840s

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<sup>27</sup> Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, p. 415.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

was a period of incredibly rapid railway building. George Hudson, on whom Trollope's Melmotte is believed to be based, oversaw the building of hundreds of miles of railway line in Britain. Harold Pollins notes that 'by the end of the mania just over one-third of the total route-mileage ever built had been constructed,' and by 1870, it was about three-quarters.<sup>30</sup>

Many periodicals were of the opinion that while the mercantile elite might take what risks they liked in the market, and would arouse little sympathy in bringing themselves to ruin, the real tragedy of the case lay in the involvement of working men, thwarted in their efforts of embourgeoisement. The rising upper working- and lower middle-classes were perhaps the greatest victims of market crashes and speculation scams; the fact that financial risk-taking was a new pastime to them meant that they were neither knowledgeable on the subject, nor psychologically prepared for the shock of failure. The greatest losses in nineteenth-century speculation were in the field which had been billed as safest: railways. The popular obsession began in earnest with the successful application to Parliament to build a direct railway from London to York in 1845. The event occasioned much excitement not only in the City but amongst the public at large, prompting investment on a vast and unprecedented scale. A financial crisis followed in 1847-8, in which enormous sums were invested, and enormous sums lost.

Reflecting on the disaster of forty years previously, an 1886 edition of the *Cornhill Magazine* described 'a madness for gambling and speculation which has never been surpassed by anything of the same kind within the memory of men now

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<sup>30</sup> Harold Pollins, 'Railway Contractors and the Finance of Railway Development in Britain' in *Railways and the Victorian Economy: Studies in Finance and Economic Growth* ed. M. C. Reed (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969), p. 214.



living, and probably was never equalled during any period of our history, except in the days of the South Sea Bubble in 1720.<sup>31</sup> How rapidly the mania spread, and how it embroiled such a range of people, right up to experienced, hitherto level-headed bankers and stockbrokers, long continued to perplex the Victorian public. A. Macfarlane reminisced with similarly mystified awe in his novel, *Railway Scrip; or, The Evils of Speculation* (1856):

That men of sober, calculating business habits, should be so deluded as to lend their fortunes to be ruined, in order that out of those ruins a great Railway interest should be established, will long be a ground of astonishment to reflecting minds. It was strange how men caught up that fearful mania, – and how it spread through every corner of the land, till England fairly outvied with its railway madness the Dutch in all their tulip folly. Men were suddenly seized on every hand by a burning desire for wealth.<sup>32</sup>

Both journalists and novelists forged connections between economics and mental unease by describing fevered and irrational risk-taking in speculation as madness or mania. In 1850 *The Examiner* lamented the ‘mad intoxication of the railway era, and the extent to which for a time it levelled all distinctions, mixing together the dregs of humble life, the scum of high life, and the honest of all kinds of life, in one odious mess’, going on to describe the phenomenon as ‘railway madness’, ‘speculative

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<sup>31</sup> Anon, ‘The Railway Bubble’, *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 42 (Dec. 1886), p. 585.

<sup>32</sup> A. Macfarlane, *Railway Scrip; or, The Evils of Speculation* (London: Ward and Lock, 1856), p. 1. The frontispiece instructs that the novel is specifically ‘for sale at railway stations.’

insanity' and a 'plague.'<sup>33</sup> A letter to the editor of *The Satirist* appeared in 1845, at the height of railway speculative investment, noting that 'each day brings forth sillier projects' to prompt 'insane mania for speculation', predicting that 'one-half of the nation were already lunatics, and the other half likely to become so.'<sup>34</sup> The previous week another article had expressed concern that the 'insane mania' appeared to be 'at present pervading all classes of society', and insisted that 'the evil has become so great, the hydra-headed monster so powerful that unless a vigorous resistance be offered the miseries it will recur with all their frightful results.' It warns that grand plans for building railways abroad represent equally unsound investments, joking that 'the railway dog is abroad and bites as rabidly there as he does at home.'<sup>35</sup> Speculation in canal-building schemes also reached considerable heights of scandal, gain, and loss, continuing up to the end of the century. Oscar Wilde satirised the subject in *An Ideal Husband*, in which the eponymous character falls prey to blackmail, not for money, but to promote a canal-building scheme in Argentina which he knows to be a swindle.

## **V: Swindling and sanity**

Dickens and Trollope provide us with examples of fictitious swindlers who, instead of undergoing a sustained period of mental breakdown, facing public disgrace and imprisonment, follow their discovery with suicide. Mr Merdle in *Little Dorrit* (1855-7) and Mr Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now* (1874-5) both achieve enormous levels of wealth, or at least its impression, using their standing in society to gain trust and high levels of investment. Both men may be seen to be patterned on real swindlers, such as

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<sup>33</sup> Anon, 'The Ladder of Gold. An English Story', *The Examiner*, no. 2231 (2 Nov. 1850), p. 702.

<sup>34</sup> Anon, 'The Madness of Speculation', *The Satirist*, no. 701 (21 Sept. 1845), p. 299.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 702 (28 Sept. 1845), p. 308.

the infamous George Hudson, the ‘Railway King’. Resemblances may also be seen in John Sadleir, a former MP, who poisoned himself on Hampstead Heath in 1856 when an Irish bank he was running collapsed, and his fraudulent financial practices were about to be revealed. In addition, Hamilton Fisker in *The Way We Live Now* may have been based on James Fisk, an American swindler who was murdered in 1872.

Speculation and swindling were still highly topical subjects by the 1870s when Trollope was writing, despite being some time since the railway crises of the forties. Another crisis of speculation in 1857, a major market crash in 1866 and another in 1873 sustained the public’s fear of financial ruin. Even as *The Way We Live Now* neared its serialised conclusion a major financial scandal emerged in the press. It was discovered that the firm of Alexander Collie had a mere quarter of a million pounds in assets, while its liabilities reached approximately £1.9 million – an absolutely astonishing sum for the period.<sup>36</sup> Collie fled abroad, prompting a major international search which failed to bring him to justice. Major pieces of controversial legislation were also passed during the period from 1840 to 1880. The Companies Act of 1844 legalised joint-stock companies, which were mercilessly ridiculed by Dickens with the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839). Later the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1856 changed the law so that investors were only held responsible for the unpaid portion of their own shares. Previously investors had been responsible for the full debt of their property, no matter how small their individual shares.

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<sup>36</sup> John R. Reed notes that ‘Messrs. A. Collie and Company had made profits from running to the Confederacy during the American Civil War’, and argues that ‘this public exposure of financial misconduct may be seen as a shrewd attempt by Trollope to capitalize on the crisis of 1873.’ ‘A Friend to Mammon’, p. 190.

Having a famous name to back an investment scheme was crucial to its success. When Melmotte asks Fisker exactly how he wants him to help with his railway scheme, he simply says, 'I want to have your name there,' and 'placed his finger down on a spot on which it was indicated that there was, or was to be, a chairman of an English Board of Directors, but with a space for the name, hitherto blank.' He confidently tells Melmotte, 'If you gave yourself to it, heart and soul [...] it would be the finest thing that there has been out for a long time. There would be such a mass of stock!'<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Mrs Cheveley in *An Ideal Husband* requires Sir Robert Chiltern's public support for the canal scheme, if she is to make a fortune from her stocks. In *Little Dorrit*, 'the name of Merdle is the name of the age,' and his investment advice is treated as gold dust.<sup>38</sup> Mr Dorrit is keen to benefit from this inside (and unbeknownst to him, corrupt) knowledge when the two families are united by marriage.

Much publicising was done by word of mouth. What appeared to be a tip from a well-meaning friend could well turn out to be motivated by selfish gain, or even blackmail, as in *An Ideal Husband*. *A Short and Sure Guide* advises making the most of such advice, however biased: 'If the party who desires to invest his money has no means of judging for himself, he may have some intelligent friend by whose information he will be guided, or whose connection with a particular line enables him to recommend it with confidence.'<sup>39</sup> Considering the complex web of deception surrounding railway speculation, together with the excitement of the vast sums

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<sup>37</sup> Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, p. 404.

<sup>39</sup> Anon, *A Short and Sure Guide to Railway Speculation*, p. 7.

involved, it is hardly surprising that all too often those involved experienced nervous breakdown.

## **VI: Hungry madness**

Similarly, economic stress may be seen as the inevitable result of cultural changes in working-class masculinities. Akihito Suzuki observes that fears and anxieties about poverty and the economic future were ‘the psychological price of the new working-class respectability and the concomitant notion of manhood.’<sup>40</sup> He argues that of the various economic backgrounds to mental unease, ‘the most established was that of madness caused by excitement at huge gains and shock at huge losses.’<sup>41</sup> This thesis contends that rapid economic growth following the industrial revolution brought new opportunities for large-scale capital investment in the form of high-risk speculation, available to a far greater number of people than ever before. Additionally, the concept of a ‘breadwinner’s wage’ together with the increasingly popular notion that the male head of the family took sole responsibility for the economic future of his dependents, are particularly notable developments in mid-Victorian culture which seem to indicate the rise of a new normative masculinity. Any decision to eschew engagement in these increasingly fraught financial spheres was likely to be posited as an abdication of responsibility for the wellbeing of one’s family: a grievous offence, and an absolute failure to complete the paramount task of men from all walks of life and a key tenet of all Victorian variants of masculinity – to do one’s duty.

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<sup>40</sup> Akihito Suzuki, ‘Lunacy and Labouring Men: Narratives of Male Vulnerability in Mid-Victorian London’ in *Medicine, Madness and Social History: Essays in Honour of Roy Porter* ed. Roberta Bivins and John V. Pickstone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

During his time as superintendent at Hanwell Asylum, Conolly kept meticulous records of the cases of working men, including interviews with their wives, many of whom appear to attribute their husband's mental distress to pecuniary concerns. Benjamin Skipper's wife revealed that her husband had become insane 'because he had lost all his savings in speculative investment in Spanish bonds and railways, as well as by heavy gambling.'<sup>42</sup> Suzuki considers his case, and notes that Skipper and many others were 'perceived by their families as psychiatric casualties of the boom-and-bust cycles of the early phase of the Industrial Revolution.'<sup>43</sup> While it seems erroneous to claim that the late 1840s could be considered an early phase of that revolution, there is much evidence to suggest that the erratic nature of the market in the period had direct consequences on the minds of individual males. It is perhaps surprising to note that Skipper, a lower middle or upper working-class man, was affected so similarly by investment catastrophes as someone like Dickens's Mr Merdle of the social elite. Furthermore, the former group had not only to contend with the shock and excitement of sudden gains and losses, but also with the ongoing struggle to provide sufficient economic support for their families. This entailed the additional psychological risk of the effects of physical and mental exhaustion from overwork.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Males*, pp. 354-5.

<sup>43</sup> Suzuki, p. 121.

<sup>44</sup> The recognition of overwork as a major contributing factor to mental illness was later to be rejected by early twentieth-century psychologists, who tended to see it as a cause of minor depression rather than complete nervous or mental breakdown. F. M. R. Walshe described economic pressure as an excuse or misdiagnosis on the part of the patient: 'Many subjects of the anxiety neurosis attribute their illness to overwork, but usually the plea is without substance.' Instead, he considered that depressive psychosis, as opposed to neurosis, arises 'acutely with no discoverable precipitating factors.' He exemplifies the less confident approach of post-Victorian psychologists, fearing that the typical depressive patient is 'not influenced by changes in his environment', and any recovery is 'quite independent of therapy.' F. M. R. Walshe, *The Diseases of the Nervous System: Described for Practitioners and Students* (Edinburgh: E. and S. Livingstone, 1943), p. 315; p. 15; p. 316.

Several well-known Victorian writers represented madness caused by hunger in their novels, describing the way in which extreme poverty and want could cause men to lose their senses. This is a frequent concern in ‘Condition of England’ novels, and Elizabeth Gaskell describes the problem at considerable length in *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855). Neither the factory workers of the north nor the farm labourers of the south are safe from the mental effects of physical drudgery. The compassionate middle-class protagonist of the latter novel, Margaret Hale, describes the plight of outdoor farm labourers to Nicholas Higgins in an attempt to dissuade him from idealising the South of England: ‘The hard spade-work robs their brain of life; the sameness of their toil deadens their imagination; they don’t care to meet to talk over thoughts and speculations, even of the weakest, wildest kind, after their work is done; they go home brutishly tired, poor creatures! caring for nothing but food and rest.’<sup>45</sup>

The plight of Northern families is no less severe. Boucher eventually drowns himself in the dyed millstream, unable to cope with the struggle to provide for his growing family. Higgins expresses the harshness of the government’s reaction to the desperate behaviour of the working class, saying ‘Government takes care ‘o fools and madmen; and if any man is inclined to do himsel’ or his neighbour a hurt, it puts a bit of a check on him, whether he likes it or no.’<sup>46</sup> Gaskell presents the madness of hunger *en masse* with a riot scene outside Thornton’s factory, in which the workers are described in animalistic terms. To Margaret they were ‘cruel because they were thoughtless; some were men, gaunt as wolves, and mad for prey. She knew how it was; they were like Boucher, – with starving children at home.’<sup>47</sup> The maddening conditions

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<sup>45</sup> Gaskell, *North and South*, p. 401.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

described in Gaskell's more radical text, *Mary Barton*, written during the 'hungry forties', are even worse. John Barton is so angered by class inequality and unemployment that he loses his mind, and murders his master's son, Harry Carson. Job Legh explains to John Carson how Barton 'grew bitter and angry, and mad; and in his madness he did a great sin, and wrought a great woe; and repented him with tears of blood.'<sup>48</sup>

Other popular novels of the period also dealt with this hungry kind of economic madness. Dinah Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1857) depicts the collective madness of an 'angry throng' in Norton Bury, based on Tewkesbury.<sup>49</sup> Although 'wild', the workers have rational reasons for their seemingly irrational behaviour, since 'the people rose in desperation, not from some delusion of crazy, bloodthirsty "patriotism", but to get food for themselves, their wives, and children.'<sup>50</sup> Their rioting is described as a form of temporary insanity resulting directly from their hunger and poverty. Although they appear mad, Craik suggests that they had no real alternative but to riot in the face of an employer who deliberately stockpiles grain although his workers are starving to death. 'God only knows what madness was in each individual heart of that concourse of poor wretches, styled "the mob," when every man took up arms, certain that there were before him but two alternatives, starving or – hanging.'<sup>51</sup> Unlike the madness described in the asylum casebooks, or in the novels of Dickens and Trollope, Gaskell and Craik show us not the psychological minutiae of an individual's breakdown, but the impression of a collective madness, driven not by greed, but by starvation.

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<sup>48</sup> Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 386.

<sup>49</sup> Craik, *John Halifax, Gentleman* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., c. 1899), p. 86.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.



## VII: Madness and work

However, there is also evidence of overwork in male patients who were well above the bread line. Historians have rightly given much attention to long working hours in factories and elsewhere, induced by poverty, but little has been said of middle-class workaholics. Middle-class masculinity in the Victorian period included pride in independence and freedom from patronage in work, while working-class masculinity was premised on masculine ideals of physical strength. The latter found particularly strong articulation in popular literature of the period, including *Adam Bede* (1859), while the former was an ideal of upwardly-mobile young men. Less easily categorised occupations which met neither criterion may be seen as precipitating particular kinds of masculinity crises and mental unease. John Tosh writes that ‘the hapless office clerk fell between two stools: in middle-class terms his occupation was servile, while the labourer despised his soft hands and poor physique.’<sup>52</sup>

Asylum casebooks show a disproportionately large number of cases of mental breakdown in clerks. William Keyse, a middle-aged parish clerk working on the settlement of paupers, was admitted to Hanwell in May 1848. The physician notes that ‘overwork is supposed to have been the cause of his malady,’ and goes on to record the patient’s wife’s observations.<sup>53</sup> Keyse rose at 4am most mornings to do paperwork, before working for a minimum of ten hours day in his office, and frequently had to visit the paupers’ placements in the evenings. It appears that Keyse and his wife (who had no children) were comfortably well-off. He was ‘sober and steady, had a good salary and always enjoyed good health’ until he had a paralytic seizure at his desk one

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<sup>52</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> John Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Male Casebooks* H11/HLL/B/20/001, p. 350.

day.<sup>54</sup> This was followed some months later by a collapse in a railway carriage while away on business. The doctor specifically dismisses hereditary factors, noting that ‘all relations are sane and healthy’, and instead focuses his examination on the circumstantial pressures of stress and overwork. The patient complained angrily of his wife for allowing his detention in the asylum, ‘when she knew how much business he had to attend to.’<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately the patient became weak (perhaps partly due to treatments of cupping, leaching and blistering he had previously received elsewhere), becoming paralysed, tearful, and seriously epileptic, until his death four months after admission.

Edward Fuller was admitted to Hanwell the same year, suffering from economic madness and chronic jealousy. He feared he would lose his job as a clerk for one of the Masters in Chancery when his employer’s son was appointed to a junior position. The doctor’s notes state that ‘this abstracted something from the patient’s income’, that it ‘preyed upon his mind and irritated him greatly.’<sup>56</sup> Eventually he became sure that he would lose his position, and that spies had employed his wife to watch him. He threatened his wife and sister-in-law with murder, holding a knife to them, causing his removal first to the local workhouse, and then to Hanwell.<sup>57</sup> In this case, economic worry combined with hereditary predisposition are believed to be the cause of madness, since his mother ‘died of puerperal insanity immediately after the birth of the patient’, and his sister was in an asylum. We do not know what became of

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<sup>54</sup> Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Males*, p. 350.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

<sup>57</sup> Elaine Murphy describes the prevalence of this kind of practice, with the workhouse seen as the first port of call for lower-class insane patients. ‘Imbeciles’ remained in workhouses until 1867, when the Metropolitan Asylums Board made provision at Caterham and Leavesden. ‘Workhouse Care of the Insane, 1845-90,’ *Mental Illness and Learning Disability Since 1850*, ed. Pamela Dale and Joseph Melling (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 24-36.

Fuller, since he was discharged after twelve years, with a note made simply that he was 'not improved.'<sup>58</sup> This case clearly demonstrates that fear of redundancy could have just as great an effect on mental health as unemployment itself, and the poverty caused by it.

George Ellis Cooke, however, declined into economic madness following his actual, rather than imagined, dismissal. Following his wife's death he was so distracted in his work as a jewellery salesman that he was 'incapable of transacting any business', and so was sacked. His doctor at Hanwell notes that 'he shut himself up in his room for several days without food' until his landlord climbed in through the window to find him 'in a haggard state half naked and talking of suicide.'<sup>59</sup> He too arrived at the asylum via the workhouse. Such had been his desperation to obtain food and shelter in his unemployment that he attempted to have himself put in prison. Presenting himself at a police station, he claimed to have committed a robbery, though this was proved groundless.

Cases of economic madness can be seen in other groups which are equally difficult to categorise in class terms. Middle-class men in poorly paid employment, or who were unemployed, were common victims of nervous breakdown and madness. Trollope's Reverend Josiah Crawley borders on madness precipitated by poverty in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867) as a misunderstanding about a cheque causes him to lose his position. Clergymen were often on much lower wage than was typical for well-educated gentlemen, and some, like Crawley, worked extremely long hours, exhausting themselves physically and mentally, endangering their mental health. As in

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<sup>58</sup> John Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Males*, p. 346.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

*He Knew He Was Right*, Trollope achieves a depth of analysis of madness that was unusual in the era of sensation fiction. Crawley is not an overt lunatic, used to drive a melodramatic plot, but rather a complex individual whose suffering is described in terms of his inner turmoil as well as the physical trials of poverty. In the first chapter of the novel it is acknowledged that ‘he was morose, almost to insanity’, ‘that there had been days in which even his wife had found it impossible to deal with him otherwise than as with an acknowledged lunatic. And this was known among the farmers, who talked about their clergyman among themselves as though he were a madman.’<sup>60</sup>

Crawley receives his wife’s advice that he rest in a similar way to William Keyse, apparently unable to protect himself from the mental damage of overwork. Crawley repeatedly walks unnecessary distances, tiring himself to the extent that he must retire to bed for several days afterwards. The pride and obstinacy of his character are presented as factors which precipitate his mental decline. Bordering on paranoia, he muses:

Even they whom he had most loved treated him almost with derision, because he was now different from them. Dean Arabin had laughed at him because he had persisted in walking ten miles through the mud instead of being conveyed in the dean's carriage [...] No one respected him. No one! His very wife thought that he was a lunatic. And now he had been publicly branded as a thief; and in

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<sup>60</sup> Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 11.

all likelihood would end his days in a gaol! Such were always his thoughts as he sat idle, silent, moody, over the fire.<sup>61</sup>

Even earlier in Trollope's Barsetshire series, Crawley has experienced the depths of depression and been unable to work. In *Framley Parsonage* (1860) he sits at home for days, 'crying out that the world was too hard for him [...] that his God had deserted him.'<sup>62</sup> Despite much discussion of prison or the asylum for Crawley, he escapes this fate and, being found innocent of stealing the cheque, his mental health is gradually restored.

Having been admitted to asylums, Victorian men were not necessarily freed from financial worries. Not only did the traumas which had brought them there in the first place continue in their minds, but the capitalist drive of society at large was not excluded by the walls of the asylum. If patients or their family members were unable to pay private asylum fees, there was a risk of being removed to the workhouse, irrespective of the extent of their recovery. In many public asylums, as in the prisons to which they often bore a horrifying resemblance, inmates were expected to work hard for their board and lodging. Elaine Showalter notes that 'Inmate labour played an important role in the economy as well as in the therapeutic ideology of the public asylum, but sex roles determined the division of labour even more rigidly than outside the walls.'<sup>63</sup> Showalter protests that 'male patients worked at a variety of jobs in workshops, in the gardens, and on the asylum farms', while 'women's employment

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<sup>61</sup> *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>62</sup> Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity,' *Victorian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Winter 1980), p. 167.

offered much less choice, took place in doors, and in many cases was meaningless', often centring on needlework.<sup>64</sup>

However, given the mental effect of overwork, by either intellectual or manual labour, on Victorian men, it is crucial that men's asylum labour is not idealised. It was not necessarily effective occupational therapy. Gardening and farm work had the potential to exacerbate rather than alleviate symptoms, and perhaps ought not to be heralded, as by Showalter, as 'opportunities' for 'outdoor activity' and 'outdoor recreation.'<sup>65</sup> Some public asylums had notable and admirable exceptions. Middlesex was better resourced than many counties, and benefited from the reforming ambitions of Conolly. Its second largest asylum after Hanwell was at Colney Hatch. Here the flourishing male department, under the guidance of D. F. Tyerman, encouraged outdoor recreation rather than labour. A cricket ground was constructed for this purpose during the 1850s.

### **VIII: Aristocratic anxiety**

More rare, but nonetheless present, are examples of overwork bordering on or extending into monomania, amongst men of higher classes. George Eliot's Mr Casaubon in *Middlemarch* certainly has no financial worries, and yet feels enormous pressure to complete his quest for 'the Key to all Mythologies' – an insurmountable and futile task.<sup>66</sup> Again here, as with the rising working class, we can see Carlyle's influence on masculinity. Casaubon may be seen as a part of the tradition of the 'Hero

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>65</sup> Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', p. 167-8.

<sup>66</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 63.

as a Man of Letters' (from Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, 1841). In striving to achieve this status, however, he is reduced to merely displaying the 'outward requirement' of authorship.<sup>67</sup> Being 'without a strong bodily frame' or 'an enthusiastic soul', Casaubon appears to be naturally predisposed to melancholia, seclusion and ennui. This character, together with the desperate need to make his life's work 'unimpeachable', 'weighed like lead upon his mind,' becoming a monomaniacal obsession.<sup>68</sup> Rather than the work itself, it is avoiding letting others know 'how backward he was in organising' his research material, 'trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy', and 'mentally preparing other measures of frustration' that become his principal endeavours.<sup>69</sup>

In *The Way We Live Now* Trollope presents numerous aristocrats with dubious mental health. The declining aristocracy he describes are short of cash and their titles become bargaining tools. The decline in stability of aristocratic wealth after an extensive period of relative certainty prompts questionings about identity and values. Many of Trollope's minor characters are left bewildered by the pace of economic, social and moral change. Lady Monogram's husband refuses to allow her to socialise with Jews or the *nouveaux riches*, and she has 'but a confused idea of any difference between commerce and fraud.'<sup>70</sup> Lady Carbury observes that 'To puff and get one's self puffed have become different branches of a new profession,' and lives 'a life of manoeuvres' to achieve this.<sup>71</sup> Melmotte espouses a similar philosophy, with

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<sup>67</sup> *Middlemarch*, p. 270.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>70</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 467. The term 'nouveau riche' was first adopted by the English in the early nineteenth-century, indicating vulgar and ostentatious displays of newly-acquired wealth. Before Trollope's novel, it had been popularised in the fiction of Maria Edgeworth, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Charlotte Yonge.

<sup>71</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 14; p. 16.

characteristic bodily vulgarity, declaring that ‘Give and take is a very good motto. If I scratch their back, I mean them to scratch mine.’<sup>72</sup> Just as Melmotte aspires to a title, both for himself and for potential sons-in-law, so the Longestaffes and Carburys aspire to increased wealth. The upper-classes come into conflict on the subject of the bargain not only with Melmotte, but also with Brehgart, a Jewish trader to whom Georgiana Longestaffe engages herself. She has already expressed her desperation to get the bargaining process of marriage over with, irrespective of character or even sanity, previously declaring, ‘the first man that comes to me with four or five thousand a year, I’ll take him, though he’d come out of Newgate or Bedlam.’<sup>73</sup> By remaining at the family estate at Caversham, Georgiana is certain that she ‘shall go mad – or die.’<sup>74</sup> She finds it ‘necessary that something should be settled, something known. Life such as that she was leading now would drive her mad,’ summing up the feelings of most characters in the novel, all of whom seem to find themselves at sea in a rapidly changing and unfamiliar society, not knowing how to speak, how to act, or what the future may hold.<sup>75</sup>

Trollope’s novel is saturated by references to madness, which appears to affect virtually every character. It has been suggested that in *Little Dorrit* (1855-7) Dickens displayed an entire ‘gallery of neurotics.’<sup>76</sup> Nearly twenty years later, Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* exhibited an even more anxious collection. Dolly Longestaffe remains in a state of perpetual nervous anxiety, feeling ‘all of a twitter’, while Madame Melmotte is often ‘hysterical’ and Marie Melmotte claims, ‘I feel as though I was

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<sup>72</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 422.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 728.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 602.

<sup>76</sup> Angus Wilson, *The World of Charles Dickens* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 241.



mad.<sup>77</sup> Mrs Hurtle expressed confusion about ‘the condition of [her] mind’ and killed her former husband when *he* was ‘mad with liquor.’ Felix Carbury ‘was so mad, [he] can’t tell what [he] was after’ and Ruby Ruggles is simply ‘that mad after dancing as never was.’<sup>78</sup> Even the Prime Minister is ‘much disturbed in his mind.’<sup>79</sup> The sanest individual, who embodies gentlemanly masculinity more than any other character in the novel, is the stoical Tory, Roger Carbury. He usually prides himself on his logical, moral behaviour. To Carbury, ‘the existence of a Melmotte is not compatible with a wholesome state of things in general.’<sup>80</sup> However, in the course of his rivalry with Hugh Stanbury for the hand of his young cousin Hetta (whom he had always imagined he would marry), ‘[Carbury’s] thoughts were not logical, nor was his mind exact.’<sup>81</sup> He appears to suffer at the borderline of what Helen Small has called ‘love’s madness’, finding that he is ‘not sufficiently his own master to get over a feeling like this’:

life had become indifferent to him without her. No man in England could be less likely to throw himself off the Monument or to blow out his brains. But he felt so numbed in all the joints of his mind by this sorrow.<sup>82</sup>

Together with his clear mind, love almost costs Carbury his masculinity. Towards the end of the novel he consistently repeats that the experience has ‘so near unmanned him,’ and wishes that he had been ‘more manly and stronger.’<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 221; p. 656; p. 655.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392; p. 401; p. 541.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156; p. 65.

## **X: Speculation and society**

Attempts to understand male motivations for engagement in such a stressful pursuit as speculation, aside from pure greed, may be rooted in a discussion of the psychology of risk. The speculators discussed in this chapter are so removed from the reasonable behaviour of the conventional stoic patriarch of the Victorian period that their aspirations can only be understood as a new form of bravery. In the absence of opportunities to demonstrate their valour and courage in arenas of physical danger such as warfare, hunting or manual labour, the mid-Victorian urban male was naturally drawn to financial speculation as a means to place himself in a precarious risk-taking position. An additional layer of prestige was lent to the enterprise by the rise of the financial specialist press, which placed men in positions of authority, being able to create an illusion of authority on economic matters, separate from the female role in domestic economy through household management.

In Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* Augustus Melmotte's swindling methods are a careful mixture of candour and deceit, as he sums up who is to be trusted in his inner circle, and who, being too honest or too inquisitive, had better be kept in the dark. Nonetheless, Trollope makes the moral responsibility of the men on the board clear: they all know that they are to make their fortunes fraudulently, based on empty rhetoric.

[...] not by the construction of the railway, but by the floating of the railway shares [...]. People out of doors were to be advertised into buying shares, and

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<sup>83</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 767; p. 765.

they who were so to say indoors were to have the privilege of manufacturing the shares thus sold [...]. But now, as there were eight of them collected together, they talked of humanity at large and of the coming harmony of nations.<sup>84</sup>

Fisker's speech to the board further paints a 'pleasing picture of world-wide commercial love and harmony which was to be produced by a railway from Salt Lake City to Vera Cruz.'<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Fisker frames the enterprise as being benevolent to needy members of society: 'When millions of dollars are at stake – belonging perhaps to widows and orphans, as Fisker remarked – a man was forced to set his own convenience on one side.'<sup>86</sup>

This appealing combination of fortune-hunting and alleged altruism muddled the waters for prospective speculators considerably. The language of logic employed in such speeches concealed a distinctly illogical trajectory of thought. Speculation made no more sense for the impoverished than for the wealthy, and at least the latter had the option, at least whilst they had their wits about them, to keep a certain fixed amount quite separate from risky and addictive enterprises. Georg Simmel, writing both with reference to the German financial crises of the 1870s and to make a more universal point, draws on his expertise in economic and psychological theory to contest that financial speculation is not only intrinsically risky, but also quintessentially irrational:

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<sup>84</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 78.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

In every economic situation, a certain fraction of one's possessions should not be risked at all, regardless of how large and how probable the chances of profit might be. The desperate risk of the final gamble, which is usually justified by the statement that one 'has nothing to lose,' indicates by this very argument that any vestige of rationality has been deliberately abandoned here. If, however, one presupposes rationality, then the question of the objective probability of the success of a speculation should be raised only for that part of the assets that lies above a certain fraction. The amount below this limit should, rationally, not be risked, even where a large sum might be gained with a very low probability of loss.<sup>87</sup>

Simmel gives the example of speculation in Western Australian gold mining companies. The fact of being low risk with high gains itself caused problems, since vast numbers of individuals bought shares without any prior knowledge or experience of the stock exchange. He makes the same complaint against the Italian lottery, and other popular schemes which attracted the participation of those who, with low incomes and little likelihood of having taken out an insurance policy against sickness and other adversity, could least afford to lose. 'The tragedy in all this is that people whose income provides only the minimum level of subsistence, and who therefore should not be risking anything at all, are most strongly subjected to such temptations.'<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011), pp. 280-1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Trollope's Melmotte, like Dickens's Merdle, has no rational reason for failing to keep an allotted, segregated portion of their wealth safe, by way of insurance against the failure of their corrupt financial ventures. Despite the elevated social and economic status of their characters, in sharp contrast to the victims on whom Simmel focuses, Trollope and Dickens's skilful depiction of psychological nuance alongside deeply unsympathetic behaviour creates a sense of profound tragedy surrounding the suicides of their financiers. Melmotte's brutish attempts to force his daughter to sign the fortune he has placed in her name back over to him, though not excused by Trollope, figure as desperate acts by a man whose back has been 'utterly broken' by the callous metropolitan capitalism of which he was hitherto the figurehead.<sup>89</sup>

The novel's title was criticised by its contemporary readership for using 'we', seemingly excluding vast sections of the population who, for reasons of class, geography and values, for instance, did not live in the fashion described. In the face of the increasing pace of life in the capital, many writers in this period reflected on the changing nature of society's values and the amoral effects of ruthless capitalism. The artist Benjamin Haydon committed suicide in 1846 after years of financial strain. Unable to repay a debt of £3000, he slit his throat, having failed to die by shooting himself. In his journal that June, Sir William Gregory made a direct connection between Haydon's plight and the valorisation of men like George Hudson:

What a miserable gang of tradesmen we are! We give testimonials amounting to thousands of pounds to a successful and bloated speculator, and the first

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<sup>89</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 673.

ladies of the land jostle for the arm of Hudson, the haberdasher of York, a vulgar brute; but he who adorns his country by the creation of his genius is left to die by his own hand, crushed to the earth by shame and penury.<sup>90</sup>

The improving economic status of some members of the lower middle class brought other new anxieties together with independence. An extravagant wife who overestimated her husband's increased income appears to have been a common fear. Conolly's records describe the case of William Garnham, driven mad by 'his wife's extravagance and fondness for dress.'<sup>91</sup> Similarly, John Langford became mad as a result of 'grief at difficulties arising from the extravagance and intemperance of his wife.'<sup>92</sup>

Escaping poverty was no guarantee of freedom from financial worry and mental illness. With varying status, economic madness took different guises. Melmotte deliberately cultivates an extravagant lifestyle, as does Dickens' Merdle. For Merdle marriage is a business speculation, and he displays his successful investment like a trophy:

It was not a bosom to repose upon, but it was a capital bosom to hang jewels upon. Mr Merdle wanted something to hang jewels upon, and he bought it for the purpose. Storr and Mortimer might have married on the same speculation. Like all his other speculations, it was sound and successful. The jewels showed

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<sup>90</sup> Sir William Henry Gregory, *An Autobiography* (London: J. Murray, 1894), p. 132.

<sup>91</sup> John Conolly, *Hanwell casebook* B/20/001, pp. 478-9.

<sup>92</sup> Suzuki, 'Lunacy and Labouring Men', p. 125.

to the richest advantage. The bosom, moving in Society with the jewels displayed upon it, attracted general admiration. Society approving, Mr Merdle was satisfied. He was the most disinterested of men, - did everything for Society, and got as little for himself, out of all his gain and care, as a man might.<sup>93</sup>

Despite being described as the richest men of their respective ages, the burden of financial pressure which falls on Merdle and Melmotte is immense, and culminates in suicide.<sup>94</sup>

Suzuki argues that ‘such fear and anxiety were not given prominent place’ by authors of the Victorian period.<sup>95</sup> This may be the case when looking at major figures in Victorian fiction, but by examining a broader range of characters, including many in smaller roles, it may be demonstrated that Dickens, Trollope, Gaskell and others were well aware of the threat of economic madness. For Dickens in particular, it was a subject to which he returned many times, both in his journalism and his novels. In an article in *Household Words* entitled simply, ‘Idiots’, Dickens refers to a man mentioned by Pinel, who ‘was so violently affected by some losses in trade, that he

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<sup>93</sup> *Little Dorrit*, p. 207. Although this particular reference is ironic, the sense in which ‘new money’ was obliged to do things ‘for’ society sets them apart from established members of the landed gentry. Despite her own immense success as a social-climber and trophy wife, Mrs Merdle claims to be forced not to recognise Fanny as her new daughter-in-law, declaring that ‘Society suppresses and dominates us.’ p. 201. This is Fanny’s comeuppance for marrying Sparkler (whom she despises, and considers ‘almost an idiot’) solely for financial gain. p. 204. David Castronovo compares the Merdles, who lack the upper-class ‘complacency’ to mix with other classes, with Squire Bramble in Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker*, who is ‘nauseated by the social fluidity’ of Bath. *The English Gentleman* (New York: Ungar, 1987), p. 42.

<sup>94</sup> The earliest published application of the imagery of weight to mental states appears in Byron’s ‘Werner’ (1822): ‘‘Tis past fatigue which gives my weigh’d down spirit/ An outward show of thought.’ *The Works of Lord Byron* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 550-94.

<sup>95</sup> Suzuki, p. 118.

was deprived almost instantly of all his mental faculties.’<sup>96</sup> Dickens demonstrates the prevalence of economic madness later in his career in his representation of Nicodemus Boffin, ‘the Golden Dustman’ in *Our Mutual Friend*, whose mammon-worship and rapid accumulation of wealth brings about a major psychological re-evaluation of his priorities.<sup>97</sup> Other figures are able to maintain their sanity and masculine stoicism in the face of economic ruin. Arthur Clennam and Daniel Doyce’s innovative business venture in *Little Dorrit* is brought to bankruptcy despite their apparently well-matched skills of creativity and business sense, since eventually they too are lured by speculation. Clennam, Dickens’s primary male protagonist, upholds the traditional ideal of rational masculinity in unshakeable mental health.

In 1863, W. H. O. Sankey, then the medical superintendent of the female department at Hanwell, outlined the effects of overwork induced by financial pressures on mental health. He considers cases of melancholia in working men, arguing that depression often follows a period of ‘prolonged mental exertion’, and is usually ‘the first indication of mental disease’, preceding mania and more overt breakdown.<sup>98</sup> Mid-Victorian fiction both reflects and informs these kinds of observations, with connections drawn between work and the mental state. Dickens’s novels are full of individuals, particularly among minor characters, whose endurance of urban poverty and overwork causes their minds to partially disengage from the present. Consumption has tended to be viewed as the archetypal illness of Dickens’s downtrodden poor (as with Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*), alongside deadly combinations of illness

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<sup>96</sup> Dickens, ‘Idiots,’ *Household Words*, vol. 7, no. 167 (4 June 1853), pp. 313-7.

<sup>97</sup> Boffin is thought to be based on Henry Dodd (1800-81) of Hoxton in East London. He made a large fortune dust-collecting, with his estate being valued at £111,000 at his death.

<sup>98</sup> W. H. O. Sankey, ‘Illustrations of the Different Forms of Insanity,’ *British Medical Journal*, vol. 2 (19 Sept. 1863), p. 321.



(like the hybrid of small pox and pneumonia which kills Jo, the crossing sweeper in *Bleak House*), and yet there are other less-explored instances of mental rather than physical illness. It has been argued that many of the social writers most attuned to the plight of the working class did not attempt to consider mental health. Suzuki exemplifies Engels' *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (translated in English in 1887), arguing that 'mental diseases were notable for their absence from contemporary analyses of the plight of labouring men.'<sup>99</sup>

However, if we examine that study, we may note that in Engels's chapter on 'Results', alongside sections on consumption, typhus, digestive troubles and other ailments, there is a section on the 'Influence on the mental and moral condition of the workers'. Unlike other social commentators, Engels presents mental and moral weakness as social evils in themselves. He makes his case from the perspective of the working class, rather than seeing working men's poor mental health as problematic only in so far as they influence and affect the ruling class, as a force of broader degeneration. Together with problems of overcrowded, damp and unhygienic conditions, the working class are:

exposed to the most exciting changes of mental condition, the most violent vibrations between hope and fear; they are hunted like game, and not permitted to attain peace of mind and quiet enjoyment of life. They are deprived of all enjoyments except sexual indulgence and drunkenness, are worked every day to the point of complete exhaustion of their mental and physical energies, and

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<sup>99</sup> Suzuki, p. 122.

are thus constantly spurred on to the maddest excess in the only two enjoyments at their command.<sup>100</sup>

Many characters in novels suffer from poor mental clarity which manifests itself throughout their lives rather than in dramatic episodes of madness. Sloppy in *Our Mutual Friend* is presented as a victim of capitalism. He is described as ‘a very long boy, with a very little head, and an open mouth of disproportionate capacity that seemed to assist his eyes in staring at visitors.’<sup>101</sup> The poverty caused by the economic system is partly to blame for his difficulties. Having been brought up in a workhouse he is unfit for polished society, and he has suffered from rickets caused by malnutrition. Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby* is portrayed as downtrodden simpleton, whose past has left him bewildered, and whose present position is one of drudgery and servitude virtually amounting to slavery. Although not usually insane, such characters are seen to suffer from a nervous exhaustion which at times becomes physically debilitating.

Nervous exhaustion and melancholia in Dickens appear to be exacerbated by the dreariness of urban environments, in which the economic takes precedence over the personal. As Peter Ackroyd has observed, ‘No one can evoke that mood of sad and embittered weariness better than Dickens – Arthur Clennam’s arrival on a Sunday morning in *Little Dorrit* is a perfect picture of urban melancholy – and few people can have experienced it so intensely.’<sup>102</sup> London is ‘gloomy, close and stale’, and seems to have a mentality and mood of its own, as ‘maddening church bells of all degrees of

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<sup>100</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 129.

<sup>101</sup> Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 197.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990), p. 470.

dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick and mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency [...]. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up.’<sup>103</sup>

Dickens’s most notable and extended critique of contemporary economic practice, however, comes in *Little Dorrit*. The anxiety of economics is brought to bear on characters across the class spectrum. Even the seemingly wealthy Mr Merdle, an icon and institution in himself, is driven to suicide by his economic downfall. To Mr Dorrit, ‘Mr Merdle is the man of this time. The name of Merdle is the name of the age,’ and yet he is mortal.<sup>104</sup> His death sends shockwaves through London, as the details are gradually spread: he has cut his throat in a public bath with a tortoise-shell penknife – a wedding present belonging to his stepson and daughter-in-law, Sparkler and Fanny. Lacking the substance of internal life, as the Veneerings do, it is apt that Dickens’s narrator focuses on the aesthetics, rather than the psychology, of his suicide. As well as marking the elegant surface of the penknife handle, Merdle’s blood seeps across the pale marble of the baths.

Herrmann Geiger, a highly successful Jewish wine merchant, was admitted to Hanwell in May 1848. Over-ambitious financial risks had resulted in a succession of financial failures. Conolly notes that Geiger ‘was always steady and industrious’ and had ‘speculated largely but still succeeded in business.’<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, enormous home improvements coinciding with the purchase of a new house in Regent Street

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<sup>103</sup> *Little Dorrit*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>105</sup> John Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Male Casebook 1834-*, London Metropolitan Archives H11/HLL/B/20/ 001, p. 326.

necessitated extensive borrowing. He was later sued by his pawn broker when he was unable to repay on time. Conolly's record also explains that Geiger's wife's long-term illness weighed greatly on his mind. Frustrated by the 'slow and imperfect recovery of his wife from her confinement,' as well as his financial difficulties, he became violent and routinely 'struck his wife.'<sup>106</sup> Vainly attempting to maintain a façade of wealthy respectability, he drove around town in cabs, but jumped out without paying the fare.

Geiger would not, perhaps, appear out of place in one of Trollope's novels. Trollope describes in minute detail the elaborate construction of the appearance of vast wealth in Melmotte's establishment in Grosvenor Square. Onlookers note the powdered heads of the numerous liveried servants and assume that the income is both vast and secure:

Of the certainty of the money in daily use there could be no doubt. There was the house. There was the furniture. There were the carriages, the horses, the servants with the livery coats and powdered heads, and the servants with the black coats and unpowdered heads. There were the gems, and the presents, and all the nice things that money can buy.'<sup>107</sup>

Dickens' Merdle household is equally extravagant, and the subject of gossip in all classes. This is discussed by 'the female Bleeding Hearts, when they came for ounces

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 327. A psychoanalytic analysis of his case could argue that impatience with his wife's slow recovery from childbirth might signal his sexual frustration and subsequent jealousy towards his newborn child. Early-Victorian doctors advocating reform like Conolly, however, were somewhat more likely to accept their patients' explanations, in contrast to their predecessors who sought merely to confine them, and their Freudian successors who probed for more hidden emotions.

<sup>107</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 33.

of tea and hundredweights of talk' at Mrs Plornish's shop. It is rumoured that Mrs Merdle has enough dresses to 'fill three waggons.'<sup>108</sup> It is the fevered attempt to attain and sustain this kind of lifestyle that ultimately leads Geiger to Hanwell Asylum, Merdle to the knife, and Melmotte to the bottle of prussic acid. Trollope, however, is keen to separate Melmotte's existence from homeliness and intellectual culture. 'In Grosvenor Square there were no Lares – no toys, no books, nothing but gold and grandeur, pomatum, powder, and pride.'<sup>109</sup>

Although impressed by the Melmottes' wealth, Trollope's London Society never fully accepts the family as equals in terms of class, and the vast dinner party for the Emperor of China is a vulgar spectacle rather than a societal triumph.<sup>110</sup> Lady Monogram and others are torn between an intense fascination with the lavish parties at Grosvenor Square, and an awareness that to be seen there was somehow not quite proper. The same was true of the Hudson family. Lady Dorothy Nevill recalled that 'there were rumours of Hudson, the "Railway King," and his wife, but they were never in Society, which, however, was amused by the reports of their doings which reached it.' Society could not be entered 'until credentials had been carefully examined and discussed. Mere wealth was no passport.'<sup>111</sup> Both families are outsiders, the Melmottes from the Continent, the Hudsons from York, and both represent unknown quantities to

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<sup>108</sup> *Little Dorrit*, pp. 476-7.

<sup>109</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 245.

<sup>110</sup> In this scene Trollope clearly evokes Carlyle, who quotes the Emperor of China on the subject of the English version of Hell as not 'succeeding' by 'making money' or acquiring 'fame': 'If we do not "succeed," where is the use of us? We had better never have been born. "Tremble intensely," as our friend the Emperor of China says: *there* is the black Bottomless of Terror,' according to 'the Gospel of Mammonism.' *Past and Present*, p. 202. This utilitarian dread of a useless life echoes through other mid-Victorian realist fiction. Anxious about her origins, Esther Summerson is haunted by her godmother's assertion that her utility is too limited to outweigh the impertinent inconvenience of her existence: 'I saw in her face, looking gloomily at me, "It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday; that you had never been born!"' *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>111</sup> Lady Dorothy Nevill, *Reminiscences of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, edited by her son Ralph Nevill (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), pp. 103-4.

London society at a time of aristocratic decline and the elevation of trade families. The downfalls of Geiger, Melmotte and Merdle, are not only subjects of embarrassment for the community, since such a large number of men had been taken in by swindling, but also of some satisfaction, for the press and the public. In the two fictitious cases this is swiftly overtaken by horror at their suicides, while for Hudson discovery was followed by ridicule in print and exile on the Continent, shunned by polite society, right up until his death two decades later.

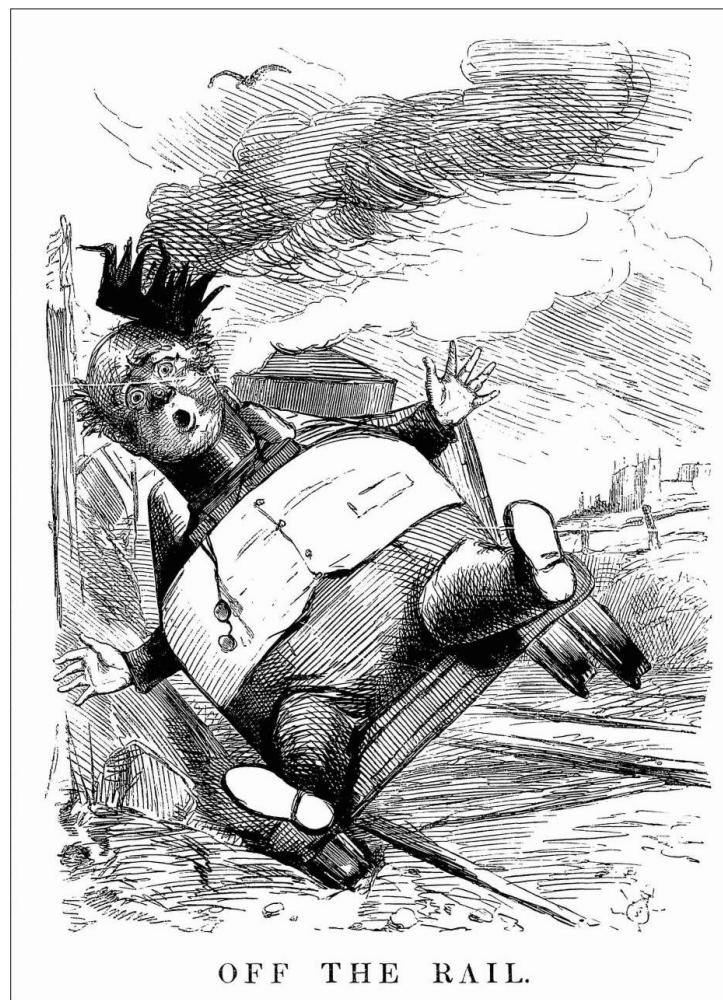


Figure 9: 'Off the Rail', *Punch* (12 May 1849)<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Illustration of George Hudson, 'The Railway King': 'Off the Rail', *Punch* (12 May 1849).

Nonetheless, not all commentators turned a blind eye to the hypocrisy of the business world which had worshipped Hudson before his ejection from it. In 1886 an anonymous writer in *Cornhill Magazine* recalled, ‘I saw his dethronement by those who truckled and pandered to him in his prosperity.’<sup>113</sup>

## **X: Insanity and suicide**

Following Melmotte’s death, Trollope discusses in some detail the possibility of his madness. He spells out that in such cases, ‘surviving friends are of course anxious for a verdict of insanity, as in that case no further punishment is exacted.’<sup>114</sup> Although during the sufferer’s lifetime, madness in the family was a disgrace, cases of insane suicide could be condoned. Clear-headed suicide, and the consequent burial in unconsecrated ground, was a far greater humiliation. Suicide resulting from madness provoked pity, and no punishment, so that ‘it can always be said afterwards that the poor man was mad.’<sup>115</sup> However, for Melmotte it could never be so. Trollope explains,

let a Melmotte be found dead, with a bottle of prussic acid by his side – a man who has become horrid to the world because of his late iniquities [...] a wretch who has made himself odious to his friends [...] a brute who had got into the House of Commons by false pretences, and had disgraced the House by being drunk there – and of course, he will not be saved by a verdict of insanity from

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<sup>113</sup> Anon, ‘The Railway Bubble,’ *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 42 (Dec. 1886), p. 593.

<sup>114</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 672.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672.

the cross roads, or whatever scornful grave may be allowed to those who have killed themselves with their wits about them.<sup>116</sup>

Despite this verdict, and despite the brutal rationality of Melmotte's character throughout the novel up to this point, following his death, it appears that on some level he may be deemed to have been of unsound mind. Having lost his power and position in society, a gaping abyss is revealed where the support of family and friends might have been, and all that he is left with is pomade, pride and prussic acid. The financial burden appears to be so immense that to have borne it sanely seems impossible. Trollope writes, 'it may be imagined, I think, that during that night he may have become as mad as any other wretch, have been driven as far beyond his powers of endurance as any other poor creature who ever at any time felt himself constrained to go [...] we none of us know what load we can bear, and what would break our backs. Melmotte's back had been so utterly crushed that I almost think that he was mad enough to have justified a verdict of temporary insanity.'<sup>117</sup> In the levelling of death, it emerges that Melmotte was not set apart from the rest of mankind, as had been imagined. The vulnerability of the mind, Trollope demonstrates, knows no boundaries of wealth or class.

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<sup>116</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 672.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 673.



## **XI: Economic delusions**

The cultural expectations for economic development by individuals appear to have been so great not only as to cause individuals to break down if they believed themselves to be economic failures, but also as to produce delusions of an economic nature. Evidence from asylum casebooks demonstrates that the height of this pressure to become wealthy was sustained throughout the Victorian period, far outliving the railway speculations of the 1840s. Herbert Harlakenden Gilchrist spent several months in Holloway Sanatorium during 1898, suffering from ‘sub. acute mania’, for which no cause could be found, although he had become disturbed in mind following public accusations that he was a ‘fortune hunter.’<sup>118</sup> Since Gilchrist drew little income as a painter it is likely that a family member paid the fees of that asylum.<sup>119</sup> His economic delusions included fancies that a duchess wishes to marry him, and that the Rothschild family plan to help him. He also believed that he was a talented and famous freemason, demonstrating that the ideal to which he aspires goes beyond mere wealth. Similarly, Gogol’s Poprishchin in *Diary of a Madman* (1834), having been desperate to marry the daughter of ‘his Excellency’, whose quills he sharpens for a living, becomes convinced that he is the rightful heir to the Spanish throne – a topical dispute in Europe that year. Such delusions of grandeur often related to the royal family, and could amount to acute paranoia of regicide and the use, or abuse, of power, as Chapter Four of this thesis will discuss.

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<sup>118</sup> Anon, *Males no. 9: Certified Male Patients admitted February 1898 – April 1899, Holloway Sanatorium* (London: Fetter and Sons, n.d.), p. 6.

<sup>119</sup> Gilchrist’s best-known work is a portrait of William Rossetti in old age, whose gaunt, wan face shows signs of emotional distress.

Whilst some patients' delusions projected false recollections on to the past, those relating to the present generally presented a greater threat, in causing a patient to believe that they were a different person, or that asylum staff or their families were conspiring against them to steal their money or poison them. In 1890 William James suggested that delusions about the past were 'melancholic or sanguine, according to the character of the disease', connecting such symptoms to the Hippocratic theory of the four humours. However, he argued that 'the worst alterations of the self come from present perversions of sensibility and impulse which leave the past undisturbed, but induce the patient to think that the present *me* is an altogether new personage.'<sup>120</sup> These new personages destabilised the patient's sense of identity, and could form the basis of what I term 'political insanity.' Nineteenth-century records reveal cases of patients who believe themselves to be anything from Prince Albert to a teapot, in a phenomenon sometimes referred to 'fanciful insanity', as Chapter Four will discuss.

While male paupers' mental health was strained by physical exhaustion and the immediate worries of how to provide food for their families, middle class men could become speculators, workaholics, or over-spenders, and go mad in the process. The aristocracy were rapidly losing money, and their wits, while Melmotte and others who rose to take new places in the hierarchy of wealth were not safe from greed, nor from the enormous anxiety of responsibility for whole companies or banks resting on their shoulders. Well before his breakdown, Melmotte describes the pressures upon him to Nidderdale, in a moment of uncharacteristic openness and honesty: 'the burden is very great. I never know whence these panics arise, or why they come, or whither they go. But when they do come, they are like a storm at sea. It is only the strong ships that can

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<sup>120</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 375.

stand the fury of the winds and waves. And then the buffeting which a man gets leaves him only half the man he was. I've had it very hard this time.'<sup>121</sup> Even those with plenty of money could become miserable or mad by sheer greed. As Carlyle notes, 'mammon-worship is a melancholy creed.'<sup>122</sup>

Trollope's conclusion on this subject echoes Dickens' at the end of *Little Dorrit*, where the impression with which we are left is one of the scale and permeation of financial pressure. It appears that no one is immune to economic madness. This is the lesson which Boffin, and perhaps Dickens, seeks to teach in *Our Mutual Friend*, by pretending to have been driven mad by love of money. Bella, for whose benefit Boffin's greed is displayed, comes to hate a financially-driven way of life. She exclaims, 'I hate this, and dread this, and don't know but that money might make a much worse change in me. And yet I have money always in my thoughts and my desires; and the whole life I place before myself is money, money, money, and what money can make of life!'<sup>123</sup> Genuine madness is presented elsewhere in the novel, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Bradley Headstone's pathological jealousy for Eugene Wrayburn's place in Lizzie Hexam's affections drives him to insanity and attempted murder.

## **XII: Women and male economic madness**

Failed speculation, bankruptcy, overwork, poverty, and the ensuing nervous debilitation, were so widespread in the mid-nineteenth century that economic madness

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<sup>121</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 565.

<sup>122</sup> Carlyle, 'Gospel of Mammonism', *Past and Present* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1910), p. 202.

<sup>123</sup> Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, p. 460.

swept across divides of gender and class, attracting the attention of the whole of society. Women were affected by this kind of masculine madness, since they saw the effects of fallen patriarchs. Mrs Crawley bears the brunt of her husband's anxieties in Trollope's 'Barsetshire' series with remarkable strength of mind and character. When Mrs Crawley loses strength in body, falling ill, her idiosyncratic husband initially refuses anyone to nurse or treat her, although she unstintingly helps him through his various ailments and eventual lunacy.<sup>124</sup> This stubborn determination to control the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing is characteristic of other ageing patriarchs experiencing mental instability in Trollope's novels. In *The Duke's Children*, the Duke of Omnium (Plantagenet Palliser) is paralysed by the trauma of seeing his wife's sudden decline and death. Reasserting his power over the female members of his family (his reckless son being beyond his control), Omnium effectively banishes his grieving daughter from the family home. In doing so he blocks the possibility of a healthier collective experience of the mourning process, as Chapter Three will discuss.

It was not only male novelists who dealt with the subjects of speculation, greed and madness. As we have seen, Eliot touched on the subject of upper-class workaholics, while Gaskell writes with compassion about collective and individual mental instability caused by the struggle for survival. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Birds of Prey* (1867) and its sequel, *Charlotte's Inheritance* (1868) are immersed in Victorian speculation and swindling, generally a subject for male writers. Braddon provides a lengthy and sustained portrait of a speculator gone mad, and driven to

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<sup>124</sup> Jane Nardin's feminist study of women in Trollope's fiction has argued that this episode, and in proudly 'forbidding his wife to accept gifts that are necessary to maintain their children's health,' Crawley 'rules his wife despotically.' As a result, Mrs Crawley is unable to 'triumph over her husband,' who is unable even to acknowledge openly that he values her. *He Knew She Was Right: The Independent Woman in the Novels of Anthony Trollope* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p. 84.

murder by greed. ‘Birds of prey’ was a popular phrase, linked to greed and financial swindling in the period. Trollope describes people’s interest in Melmotte in such terms, outlining that ‘because he had learned the art of making money, we not only put up with him, but settle upon his carcass like so many birds of prey.’<sup>125</sup> The novels were written many years after the railway mania of the late 1840s, and unlike the characters in *The Way We Live Now*, Braddon’s characters appear to have learnt something from the experience. Railway shares are neither perceived as a lucrative, nor a reliable investment. Mr Orcott observes, ‘I can’t see how a man is to develop into a Rothschild out of an occasional two-and-sixpence per cent on the transfer of some old woman’s savings from railway stock to consols; and that’s about the only kind of business I’ve seen much of lately [...] limited liability now-a-days seems only another name for unlimited crash.’<sup>126</sup>

Braddon’s Phillip Sheldon and Captain Paget, sometimes working collaboratively, and sometimes independently, are presented as a formidable pair of swindlers who will stoop to any depths of immorality to further their own financial interests. Like Melmotte, the two men increase in arrogance and brutality over the course of the novels. Of Paget, she writes that ‘with every step in the swindler’s downward road, the conscience grows tougher, the perception of shame blunter, the savage selfishness of the animal nature stronger.’<sup>127</sup> For Braddon there is something inherently unpleasant about a life lived primarily in the pursuit of money. She muses, ‘There is no such soul-absorbing pursuit as the race which men run whose goal is the glittering Temple of Plutus. The golden apples which tempted Atalanta to slacken her

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<sup>125</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 118.

<sup>126</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Charlotte’s Inheritance* (Teddington, Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006), p. 198.

<sup>127</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Birds of Prey* (Teddington, Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006), p. 63.

pace are always rolling *before* the modern runner and the greed of gain lends the wings of Hermes to his feet.<sup>128</sup>

Paget, however, is spared Braddon's absolute disgust, and is allowed to die naturally, in comfortable surroundings, and with his daughter close by. It is Sheldon who is the real villain, as he successfully carries out one murder and attempts a second in order to gain large sums. In pursuit of his oldest friend, Tom Halliday's fortunes, Sheldon murders him and marries his wife. Finding that his step-daughter, Charlotte, is to gain a far greater inheritance when she comes of age, he persuades her to postpone marriage, make him the principal beneficiary of a new will, and begins to poison her. In his madness he becomes careless and is discovered. Braddon punishes him with exile and 'complete and dire' ruin.<sup>129</sup> He eventually dies in the snow, half-starved, looking in at the window of his now happily-married step-daughter's home. True happiness is achieved for the other characters not by the fortune, but by moral living, sustained by Valentine's hard, honest work as a journalist.

### **XIII: The sickness of speculation**

As well as being described in terms of mental illness, speculation was presented as an endemic bodily disease which spread through society like a plague. In *Little Dorrit* Dickens describes the fever for speculation which spreads across London, seeping into every locality and household:

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<sup>128</sup> *Birds of Prey*, p. 79.

<sup>129</sup> Braddon, *Charlotte's Inheritance*, p. 240.

it is at least as difficult to stay a moral infection as a physical one [...]. [It] will spread with the malignity and rapidity of the Plague [...] the contagion, when it has once made head, will spare no pursuit or condition, but will lay hold on people in the soundest health [...]. A blessing beyond appreciation would be conferred upon mankind, if the tainted, in whose weakness or wickedness these virulent disorders are bred, could be instantly seized and placed in close confinement (not to say summarily smothered) before the poison is communicable. As a vast fire will fill the air to a great distance with its roar, so the sacred flame which the mighty Barnacles had fanned caused the air to resound more and more with the name of Merdle. It was deposited on every lip, and carried into every ear.<sup>130</sup>

Even the level-headed Arthur Clennam succumbs to the epidemic of investment, risking his and Daniel Doyce's business in the hope of vast returns. Dickens conveys a strong sense of the severity of the problem with the uncharacteristically violent proposal those afflicted with the speculation mania should be 'instantly seized and placed in close confinement (not to say summarily smothered).'<sup>131</sup> This unsympathetic position contrasts with his recent condemnation of the treatment of lunatics confined to asylums in *American Notes* (1842) and *Household Words*, and so perhaps ought not to be taken entirely at face value. Crucially, however, the Barnacles and Merdles pursue wealth out of sheer greed, rather than to sustain a basic standard of living.

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<sup>130</sup> *Little Dorrit*, p. 476.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

#### **XIV: Towards a new masculinity**

All this was a huge threat to the stability of rigidly defined Victorian masculinity. Male nervous breakdown from economic factors prompted a reconceptualisation of masculinity itself. Men who went mad, failed to succeed as breadwinners, or were unable to act out other crucial facets of their roles as patriarchs, were too numerous to be labelled with mere ridicule. Economic madness came to be a problem which had to be addressed, not only by psychiatrists, but by journalists and novelists. Confronted with the reality of what was perceived as male weakness, some writers reasserted traditional masculine roles, deriding mental instability as feminine, even where its causes were economic, and to that extent masculine.

However, other writers, including Trollope, confronted the terror of mental breakdown, and sought new conceptions of manliness which did not assume absolute stoicism. It is the nuanced carving out of a range of new masculinities, which allowed for the psychological pressures of the modern capitalist age, by fiction writers including Trollope, Braddon, Reade, Dickens, and psychologists such as John Conolly and J. G. Davey, that are the primary focus of this thesis.

At the end of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, Mr Toogood and Major Grantly visit Mr Crawley to explain that he did not in fact steal the controversial cheque, and so is innocent of the crime. From the perspective of Victorian masculinity, this is an extraordinary scene. The two visitors are healthy men in the prime of life, who might well be expected to conform to normative masculine behaviours to be expected of a lawyer and a major. However, overcome with emotion, the men weep. Toogood is depicted ‘wiping his eyes with a large red bandana handkerchief,’ while ‘the major had



turned his face away, and he was also weeping.<sup>132</sup> In revealing the vulnerability of masculinity, and its capacity for emotional demonstrations of friendship, Trollope creates deep sympathy for a generally unsympathetic character. Crawley's anti-social habits and poor temper with his wife, daughter, and few remaining friends, are detailed at length in the course of the series. Nonetheless, the misunderstanding with the cheque which had caused him to doubt his own sanity could have happened to anyone. Crawley has borne a double assault from economics, first struggling to provide for his family on an insufficient clerical salary, and second by the confusion of the borrowed cheque.

Throughout the novel Crawley has been hounded by men who operate on an entirely different system of values, and whose styles of masculinity clash with his own. Men like Archdeacon Grantly, who are first and foremost men of business, enabling their promotion in the workplace, cannot understand how a man could simply forget the circumstances of a financial transaction. The Victorian financial world was becoming increasingly complex at this time, with new conventions and enormous volumes of bureaucracy, as Dickens had criticised a decade earlier with the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*. Trollope demonstrates how a man can feel at sea in this rapidly changing commercial environment, and fail to maintain the absolute mental and administrative clarity demanded. As Trollope concludes the novel, the veil of previously unassailable self-control is lifted to reveal a group of men forced to confront the increasing avalanche of economic pressure, and who realise the limits of what even the most resilient mind can bear.

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<sup>132</sup> Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 769.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Marital monomania: sexual jealousy, erotomania and marital rape in *He Knew He Was Right* (1869) and *A Man of Property* (1906)**

Man for the field and woman for the hearth:  
Man for the sword and for the needle she:  
Man with the head and woman with the heart:  
Man to command, and woman to obey;  
All else confusion.

– Tennyson<sup>1</sup>

#### **I: Introduction**

In addition to personal financial solvency and stability, a reliable and healthy marriage, with (or accompanied by) the fulfilment of sexual desire was a foundation of the social and psychological lives of the majority of Victorian gentlemen. As the epigraph above indicates, love and madness have historically been intertwined. The emotion at the core of this pathology is jealousy, wavering on the tightrope between healthy demonstrations of care and protection on one hand, and pathological, obsessive control on the other. For centuries, some have interpreted a complete lack of jealousy as

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<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, 'The Princess' part v, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 203.

disinterestedness in a partner, leading many psychologists to argue that some degree of jealousy helps to maintain a healthy relationship.<sup>2</sup>

In his epigraph at the opening of *L'Argent* (1891), Émile Zola cites C. Merivale, the Dean of Ely: 'God has set the world on two pillars, Money and Matrimony; and on the right use of Money, and on the right relations of the two sexes, everything depends.'<sup>3</sup> In many nineteenth-century texts, including Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* and *The Way We Live Now*, money and matrimony are the primary motivations for people's actions, and the primary causes of mental pathology. Success in both fields characterises the ideal of male achievement according to central models of masculinity. In contrast, class, breeding and traditional education are regarded by many characters in nineteenth-century fiction as outdated and increasingly irrelevant vestiges of the gentlemanliness of a bye-gone age.

Nineteenth-century medical and fictional texts, particularly those addressing the diagnosis of monomania, reveal perspectives on the borderline of pathological sexual jealousy in a period when the law classified women as items of property, but evolving codes of gentlemanliness required their wives submit happily and willingly. Freud suggests that:

Jealousy is one of those affective statements, like grief, that may be described as normal. If anyone appears to be without it, the inference is justified that it

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<sup>2</sup> Representations of many fictional wives, such as Sylvia Tietjens in Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy *Parade's End* (1924-8), have a long history of making dramatic attempts to rouse their jealous anger, believing that only then will they have proof that they are loved. From a professional psychological perspective, Phillip Hodson has suggested that, 'Some degree of jealousy is a universal and healthy emotion [...] morbid jealousy is an insidiously unpleasant condition stemming from a deep sense of insecurity and very poor self-image.' 'Jealous Men who Love Too Much', *The Times*, 24 Apr. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Émile Zola, *Money*, trans. Ernest A. Vizetelly (Far Thrupp, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1991).

has undergone severe repression and consequently plays all the greater part in his unconscious mental life.<sup>4</sup>

He identifies the construction of jealousy in three ‘layers’: competitive or normal, projected, and delusional.<sup>5</sup> However, late nineteenth-century literature represents pathological jealousy within the category of competitive rivalry. Without necessarily being delusional, like the Trollopian jealousy explored here, Dickens and Galsworthy’s representations observe profoundly unhealthy, competitive obsession in *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Forsyte Saga*.

Unlike other cases considered in this thesis, obsessively jealous mad men occasionally back from their destructive paths to consider whether their judgement is rational. The nature of monomania meant that on other subjects they were capable of retaining a sense of reason. By the ninth chapter of *In Chancery*, even Soames begins to question his own sanity. Picturing young Jolyon, ‘with his beard and his cursed way of speaking’, going about Paris with Irene, he throws up his sash window at bedtime, ‘reckless of the cold’, and thinks, ‘By God! I’m mad, I think, to want her still!’ Even after 12 years he is desperate to bring his wife back to provide him with the heir so crucial to the survival of Forsyte name and the family legal firm. In his deluded state, he even manages to persuade himself that in offering her a home by Hyde Park once more he would be making a remarkably generous and gentlemanly offer. In reality, Irene, who has fled abroad after being raped by Soames and learning of her lover Bosinney’s death, is desperate to escape his renewed demands.

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<sup>4</sup> Freud, ‘Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality’, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: Collier Books Macmillan, 1993), p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

I suggest that novels such as *He Knew He Was Right* may be read as pioneering texts on the subject of marital discord, madness and male desire, paving the way for later writers such as Galsworthy to write more explicitly about the violent consequences of pathologised male desire. First, however, this chapter will explore some of the psychiatric and cultural contexts of the emotion behind this violent obsession: jealousy.<sup>6</sup> The simplistic gender hierarchy represented in the quotation from Tennyson was inevitably tested and strained within many Victorian relationships, as in the real and fictional cases investigated here. In order to contextualise a study of the psychology of sexual jealousy and marriage, I suggest that it is necessary to fully appreciate the marriage plot as a male plot as much as a female one. In spite of the enshrinement of the sexual double standard in law, and the advantages given to men in divorce and child custody matters, marital unhappiness and any related mental health difficulties were necessarily problematic for husbands as well as their wives. Before undertaking an analysis of representations of monomania in marriage in Victorian fiction, this chapter will make a case for the male marriage plot, and explore some of the legal and medical contexts of the subject.

Despite the proliferation of research on the position of women in Victorian culture in recent decades, an extensive re-evaluation of texts which subvert the traditional marriage plot by investigating the psychology of obsession and abuse has not yet taken place. Kelly Hager argues that recent critics have failed to reconsider their assumptions about the prevalence of the marriage plot in nineteenth-century

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<sup>6</sup> Retellings of tales of destructive jealousy as varied as Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385), Shakespeare's *Othello* (1565), Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* (1790) and Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), illustrate an enduring and fascination with the extremes of jealous male behaviour in European culture.

fiction.<sup>7</sup> The field of Victorian studies has arguably yet to move beyond Ian Watt's assertion in 1957 that 'the great majority of novels written since *Pamela* have continued its basic pattern, and concentrated their main interest upon a courtship leading to marriage.'<sup>8</sup> D. A. Miller has suggested that novels ending in happy marriages, like Jane Austen's, 'inhibit narrative productivity.' Emma and Mr Knightley's marriage, for instance, '*must* end the novel [...] otherwise, it would not be a "perfect" union.'<sup>9</sup> This chapter will argue that a trend towards failed-marriage plots gained force through the increase in psychological detail shown in fiction from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

Reflection on the married lives of parents and other acquaintances in Austen's fiction is largely overshadowed by a concern, even a socially-sanctified *idée fixe*, relating to the marriage prospects of the next generation of women – a focus which itself assumes marriage to be desirable. This chapter identifies fiction which instead, frames marriage primarily as a man's plot, and argues that writers of these novels, such as Trollope and Galsworthy, drew attention to the difficulties surrounding male agency in the context of nineteenth-century psychological theory and a crisis of masculinity at the heart of the Victorian home.

Depictions of men's borderline or absolutely monomaniacal desire to control the female body became increasingly explicit in literature towards the end of the nineteenth century. This desire culminates, in extremis, in the act of rape. Once made clear by Samuel Richardson in *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), this festered just beneath the surface of much mid-nineteenth-century fiction, before emerging in

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly Hager, *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 4.

explicit narrative through characters such as Alec D'Urberville in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and Soames Forsyte in John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1906). In *The Woman in White* (1860) Wilkie Collins describes the covert administration of Count Fosco's violence:

His management of the Countess (in public) is a sight to see. He bows to her, he habitually addresses her as "my angel," he carries her canaries to pay her little visits on his fingers and to sing to her, he kisses her hand when she gives him his cigarettes; he presents her with sugar-plums in return, which he puts into her mouth playfully from a box in his pocket. The rod of iron with which he rules her never appears in company – it is a private rod, and is always kept upstairs.<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter I argue that this sinister 'private rod' was concealed not only from family and friends, but also largely from the reader of early- and mid-Victorian fiction. I identify the gradual public emergence of this rod in literature towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, when a combination of changes in legislation, cultural attitudes and readers' sensibilities, together with the increased application of the 'monomania' diagnosis in psychiatry, contributed to a more open forum for the discussion of material which exposed non-conventional, non-idealised, even pathological marital and extra-marital sexual practices.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1993), p. 174.

The novels examined in detail in this chapter by no means stand alone as narratives depicting miserable marriages. By the middle of the nineteenth century, novels were aimed less exclusively at a female audience, and key canonical writers often chose not to end their novels with nuptial bliss.<sup>11</sup> Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) explores marital abuse, and unhappy marriages made purely for money are discussed in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1855). In the latter text, Mrs Mackenzie highlights the failure to write about married life in novels as a failure to recognise that only courtship could provide interest and adventure:

You gentlemen who write books, Mr Pendennis, and stop at the third volume, know very well that the real story often begins afterwards. My third volume ended when I was sixteen, and was married to my poor husband. Do you think all our adventures ended then, and that we lived happy ever after?<sup>12</sup>

Mary Elizabeth Braddon considers this point a few years later in *Aurora Floyd* (1863), asking:

does the business of the real life-drama always end upon the altar steps? [...]  
And is it necessary that the novelist, after devoting three volumes to the

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<sup>11</sup> Kate Flint discusses the changing readership of Victorian novels. 'The Victorian Novel and its Readers', *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 17-36.

<sup>12</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Newcomes* (London: Everyman, 1994), p. 221.



description of a courtship of six weeks' duration, should reserve for himself only half a page in which to tell us the events of two-thirds of a life-time?<sup>13</sup>

Braddon seems to think not. Her 1888 novel, *The Fatal Three*, explores the complexities of the marriages of George Ransome, who has not one but two wives, with neither courtship being described; this despite the fact that Braddon was writing in a period broadly believed to focus on the courtship plot rather than the failed marriage plot.

Another persistent falsehood on the subject of literary representations of marriage plots remains to be contested. It is often supposed that marital unhappiness arose as a new theme with New Woman fiction in the late 1880s. Emily Blair and others focus on the later expression of these concerns in modernist texts such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).<sup>14</sup> Mary Poovey identifies this shift with the emergence of the novel that 'would take as its subject marital unhappiness as well as bliss' at the end of the nineteenth century in Thomas Hardy's writing.<sup>15</sup> However, this chapter identifies this emergence earlier still, in the mid-nineteenth century. Even fiction which is not particularly known for its details of married relationships describes the consequences of the breakdown of the conventional family. Catherine Waters suggests that Dickens's fiction abounds in 'fractured families [...] made memorable by their grotesque failure to exemplify the domestic ideal.'<sup>16</sup> This does not, however,

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<sup>13</sup> Braddon, *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Emily Blair. *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-century Domestic Novel* (Albany: State of New York Press, 1997), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Poovey, 'Recovering Ellen Pickering', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 13 (2000), p. 448.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of the Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 37; p. 27.

overshadow Dicken's representations of other cohesive bonds which extend beyond blood ties to form new ideals of the domestic environment, such as the Uncle Sol and Mr Peggotty's ship houses in *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield* respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Relying heavily on plots involving infidelity, bigamy, cross-class liaisons and illegitimate children, sensation fiction provides a vast array of cases of unsuccessful marriages. Its most defining feature is arguably the expression of contemporary concerns about marital breakdown in the wake of divorce legislation, as Lyn Pykett has suggested.<sup>18</sup> I suggest that this anxiety is not genre-specific, and may be read within realist fiction of this period, too. The fact that established, canonical writers chose to move 'beyond the third volume' (which ended in marriage) clearly demonstrates the integration of the failed marriage theme into the world of the mainstream popular Victorian novel. The complexities and injustices of married life became an established subject in literature, providing a new critical space for the examination of sexual double standards, marriage law, and other controversial areas within the setting of the permanent married state, as opposed to temporary, short-term courtship.

As part of the recent scholarship identifying the prevalence of unconventional Victorian households, Ginger Frost has argued that 'though cohabitantes were a small minority of couples, their experiences highlight important issues in family history because those on the margins of society offer a unique perspective on the "norm."'<sup>19</sup> Cohabitation was still less common in upper-middle class families, like the fictional

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<sup>17</sup> Furneaux, *Queer Dickens*, pp. 50-3.

<sup>18</sup> Pykett, *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 40-3.

<sup>19</sup> Ginger S. Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 2.

Trevelyan and Forsytes (on whom the latter part of this chapter focuses). Nonetheless, Frost's point about perspectives on normative practices from the margins is an illuminating one. Following this concept, I suggest that although novels which go beyond the third volume and the marriage service (and especially those which figure male madness within the marriage relationship) began at the margins of the Victorian novel form, they offer a valuable perspective. In particular, such texts (some popular and others marginal, some fictional and others reported in the press) present a challenge to the normative hegemony of the standard courtship and marriage plot and give a more varied insight into marital relations in the Victorian period. By opening a window to this large and varied sub-genre, a heterogeneity of non-conservative approaches to sexual relationships may be revealed. This is not necessarily achieved by writers advocating alternative ideal models (though the fiction of the New Woman made inroads here), but by acknowledging that what was often the closest or most important relationship in a man's life would, inevitably, be the site of key conflicts, heightened emotion, and psychological distress.

While the love-mad woman has been explored by Helen Small, her male counterpart in literature remains neglected.<sup>20</sup> As Chapter One demonstrated, wealth could not guarantee a buffer between a professional man and adversity, since he was vulnerable to untrustworthy financiers and a capricious and volatile stock market. Similarly, men could not claim omnipotence over the sickness and death of their wives or children, or over the political turbulence of the times in which they lived, as the next two chapters will illustrate. This chapter considers the implications of desire for

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<sup>20</sup> Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

control in men's relationships, contextualising the place of domestic violence and love-sickness in European culture.

According to the theory of a singular ideal of resilient masculinity, men were feminised by allegedly weak demonstrations of deep emotion, such as jealousy. They had thicker skins, harder hearts, and more important affairs to consume their interests and energies. Although this thesis reveals the co-existence of multiple, heterogeneous models of masculinity in Victorian Britain, the inability to maintain obedience from one's wife was broadly seen as a failure in one's role as a husband. Tennyson's words, which opened this chapter, express a popular (though not universal) opinion of the time they were written: 'Man to command, and woman to obey;/ All else confusion.'<sup>21</sup> When women denied their husbands their legal conjugal rights, the language and manners of the middle-class family did not provide any polite insurance that these urges would be satisfied. The complaint itself could scarcely be vocalised. Occasionally this repressed, unfulfilled desire culminated in madness, as seen in contemporary popular fiction, the press and medical cases.<sup>22</sup>

Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* (1985) has reshaped how we view male jealousy and competition, drawing attention to what she terms the 'erotic rivalry' emerging from love triangles. Observing Dickens's incorporation of 'the paranoid Gothic' in *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Edwin Drood*, Sedgwick argues that

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<sup>21</sup> Tennyson, p. 203.

<sup>22</sup> The term 'repression', as the capacity to keep something down, has a long history of association with love and jealousy. Chaucer writes about repression as an ability or capacity: 'Some [jealousy] so ful of furey is and despit that it sourmounteth his repressioun.' Some forty years later its usage in the medical context of the humours was recorded, describing the effect of cold medicines on the heart. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, (III. 1038) and MS Hunterian 95 (c.1425). However, *The Man of Property* (the first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*) was published in 1906, so Galsworthy may have been influenced by the intellectual discourses following Freud and Breuer's first psychoanalytic usage of 'repression' (*Verdrängung*) in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), although a full English translation was not available until after his death in the 1930s.

‘each of these novels sites an important plot in triangular, heterosexual romance – in the Romance tradition – and then changes its focus as if by compulsion from the heterosexual bonds of the triangle to the male-homosocial one.’<sup>23</sup>

Dickens’s novels do not provide a detailed and sustained psychological investigation of the dangers of love mania, and hence, unlike the rest of this thesis, his fiction does not serve as a major component of this chapter. The closest Dickens’s fiction comes to a sustained case study of love mania is Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*, though this is one of several interwoven plots, whereas for Trollope and Galsworthy it concerns the central relationship. However, *Our Mutual Friend* is notable for its opposition of two types of unsuitable suitors in the figures of Headstone and Wrayburn, with whose pathological love triangle Trollope and Galsworthy would almost certainly have been familiar. At the centre of Dickens’s last completed novel, these two models of disreputable masculinity are an important consideration for studies of masculinity and marriage in the mid-Victorian novel. Sedgwick’s reading has been particularly influential in shaping the critical understanding of jealousy in the novel. She contends that, like *Great Expectations* and *Edwin Drood*, *Our Mutual Friend* incorporates ‘the concerns and thematics of the paranoid Gothic as a central preoccupation.’ The novel ‘sites an important plot in triangular, heterosexual romance – in the Romance tradition – and then changes its focus as if by compulsion from the heterosexual bonds of the triangle to the male-homosocial one, here called “erotic rivalry.”’<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 162.

<sup>24</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 162.

In a new study of marriage and masculinity, Tara MacDonald compellingly argues that Dickens's work divides seducers into two categories: those intent on 'manipulation and social control' and those who are 'diabolically obsessed with their victims.' In the first category, MacDonald places 'the conventional rake, characterized by carelessness, boredom and a desire for sexual dalliances but not marriage' (including Steerforth and Wrayburn). The second type is the 'predatory, watchful figure, whose deviant body demonstrates his perversity [...] typically social climbers who are interested in morally or socially superior women' (such as Headstone and Uriah Heep).<sup>25</sup> It has been suggested that 'jealousy scarcely seems to enter' the rivalry in *Our Mutual Friend*, based on Lizzie Hexam's assertion that if Wrayburn did not exist she would be no more likely to love Headstone.<sup>26</sup> Problematically, this interpretation assumes that Headstone is of sufficiently sound mind to reason that the elimination of Wrayburn will not strengthen his suit. Moving beyond the many discussions of sexual jealousy in *Our Mutual Friend*, this chapter explores two less well-known literary cases of this pathology.

This chapter argues that a more developed, complex and sinister type of seducer is represented by Louis Trevelyan and Soames Forsyte, although unusually, both men become destructive once they have already secured their wives by marriage. In response to real or imagined infidelity, these two men make desperate and misdirected attempts to re-seduce their wives emotionally as well as physically (after the close of what would conventionally be the third volume), in order to consolidate and justify bodily control within a middle-class framework of free will. Writing about

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<sup>25</sup> Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel*, p. 32. Kucich has discussed Heep's repression as part of his deliberate, 'cynical and transparent strategy' of humbleness. *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, p. 256.

<sup>26</sup> Frances Ferguson, 'Envy Rising', *ELH*, vol. 60, no. 4 (Winter 2002), pp. 893-4.

the same period but at a later date than Trollope, Galsworthy is able to distinguish more explicitly the contrast between a control of the female body which is yielded willingly and a control which obtained by force, exacerbated by the centuries-old insistence that this desire for control is not fully gratified until a male heir is produced. In his mania, Soames blames Irene for not giving him a son, and later believes that when she conceives a male ('Jolly' Forsyte) some years later during her second marriage to his cousin 'Young' Jolyon, she does so out of spite.

In Trevelyan and Forsyte, the two Dickensian types identified by MacDonald are conflated, merging the emotional manipulation and social control of women with a diabolical obsession which renders those women victims of male destructive jealousy, eventually radicalised to constitute overt and violent mania. Evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists have observed that male sexual jealousy stems from a strategy to minimise female infidelity. This manifests itself as anxiety about probable paternity: if the male fears that another male has fathered his partner's child, his own line may not be continued.<sup>27</sup> However, where there is no evidence of female infidelity, or contraception has eradicated the legitimacy of that fear, any remaining sexual jealousy must result from paranoia and pathology.

Despite its relative absence in his fiction, Dickens's journalism reveals a long-standing concern with psychopathology and violence in marital relationships. In 1850 the *Household Narrative of Current Events* reported that a twenty-five year-old man named Abraham Jessop, living near Halifax, '*Shot his Wife*, to whom he had only

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<sup>27</sup> See David M. Buss et al. 'Sex Differences in Jealousy: Evolution, Physiology, and Psychology', *Psychological Science*, vol. 3, no. 4 (July 1992), pp. 251-5.

recently been married, and afterwards *Blew out his own Brains*.<sup>28</sup> The pair had been living apart ‘in consequence of domestic differences arising from Jessop's habits of intoxication’, and when his attempts at a reconciliation had failed he resolved upon ‘putting a period to all future strife’:

After taking several glasses of ardent spirits at a public house to keep up his courage, he entered the house where his wife resided, and [...] took from one of his coat pockets a pistol, and discharged it with the muzzle almost close to her person [...] he drew a second pistol, and placing the muzzle under his right ear, discharged the contents through his head. The unfortunate wife ran to the door, and sank upon the causeway in a state of insensibility.<sup>29</sup>

At the date of publication, two weeks after the attack, the woman was still alive, but likely to die because of a punctured lung.<sup>30</sup>

As early as 1621 Robert Burton identified ‘love-melancholy’ and jealousy as significant forms of madness, devoting sections to each in his highly influential *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton treats jealousy as:

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<sup>28</sup> Dickens, ‘Law and Crime’, *Household Narrative of Current Events*, 1 Mar. 1850, p. 61. < <http://www.djo.org.uk/household-narrative-of-current-events/year-1850/page-61.html>> accessed 2/3/15.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> This article appears alongside one which reports on an insane patient named Pearson. He had killed his doctor and the doctor’s elderly mother following a consultation in their own home near Edinburgh. The ‘horribly mangled’ bodies were found the following morning, when the Pearson, quite naked, proudly exclaimed, ‘Here I am; quite clean, you see!’ Ibid., p. 61. Cases of this nature were not exceptional, and were published quite frequently in Dickens’s journalism.



a bastard branch or kind of love-melancholy, which, as heroical love goeth commonly before marriage, doth usually follow, torture, and crucify in like sort, deserves therefore to be rectified alike, requires as much care and industry in setting out the several causes of it, prognostics and cures.<sup>31</sup>

As we have seen earlier in this thesis, heroism, whether in military or Carlylean terms, was a central tenet of nineteenth-century masculinity, in both the context of idealised pre- and post-marital behaviours. Burton warns against allowing jealous passion to take a firm hold on the mind:

it ought not so heinously to be taken; 'tis no such real or capital matter. 'Tis a blow that hurts not, an insensible smart, grounded many times upon false suspicion alone, and so fostered by a sinister conceit.<sup>32</sup>

In the husbands in literature considered in this chapter, however, this jealousy becomes a thoroughly entrenched *idée fixe*, characteristic of the pathology which in the nineteenth century was named 'monomania.'

Burton's concerns persisted centuries later in the form of the jealousy plot in nineteenth-century writings. Although Burton's theory was that heroic males were the type most often afflicted, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings shifted the

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), p. 257.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

focus to female subjects.<sup>33</sup> I identify this as a cause of the relative neglect of subsequent representations of male jealous madness. In Victorian medical and literary depictions, jealous mania and melancholia combine the intellectual structures of recent developments in psychiatry whilst often maintaining descriptions of darkness and blackness from much earlier ideas about the effects of black bile. This combination is particularly marked in Tennyson's 'Maud' (1855), in which the speaker describes death as 'a blacker pit' and begs Maud: 'do accept my madness.'<sup>34</sup> He feels 'sick of a jealous dread' and would prefer to relinquish any chance of happiness and be emotionally numb:

Put down the passions that make earth Hell!

Down with ambition, avarice, pride,

Jealousy, down! Cut off from the mind

The bitter springs of anger and fear.<sup>35</sup>

Ancient Greek theories about black bile had been revived during the Renaissance, when medical treatises on 'hypochondriacal melancholia' described its effects on *men's* minds and bodies, more often than women's.<sup>36</sup> Much nineteenth-century literature demonstrates the jealous passions of men, rather than women, comprising a major component in the often-observed 'crisis of masculinity' in Victorian culture. The results of this dangerous emotion could cause husbands to make a reinvigorated, and often misplaced, reassertion of authority.

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<sup>33</sup> Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1892), pp. 293-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>36</sup> Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 6.

In popular fiction of the mid-Victorian period, domestic abuse appears to be more commonplace in the lower than in the higher classes. Such evidence is hardly reliable, however, since many factors in the representation of gender relations across different classes are variable. For example, the subject of abuse itself was subject to different forms of consumer-effected censorship, with violence in the home being an inappropriate topic for novels about middle-class manners. Furthermore, the variation in size between working-, middle- and upper-class dwellings, and the circumstances of the proximity between different members of the household could provide relative privacy or concealment. Wilkie Collins writes that Count Fosco's 'rod' is always kept upstairs; had he no upstairs space to retreat to, his veil of female indulgence would be rather less opaque. Significantly for the middle- and upper-class identities explored in this thesis, these men considered themselves far less likely to strike their wives than their impoverished contemporaries. Ben Griffin's study draws evidence from parliamentary debates to demonstrate that:

most politicians naturally assumed that men of their own class were unlikely to abuse their families. Seen through this lens abuses by middle- and upper-class men were viewed as exceptional cases of 'moral insanity', whereas abuses by the poor were seen as systematic – a symptom of an underlying social problem that could be dealt with through interventionist policies.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 76.

Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* (1868-9) and the first volume of Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* series, *The Man of Property* (1906), are two surprisingly similar novels which highlight mental anxieties about the exposure of marital breakdown in Victorian culture. This thesis contributes to a reconsideration of Trollope's novel in the light of its psychological workings, building on previous studies by Herbert, Gatrell and others some years ago, and tracing a trajectory of Trollope's ideas in later fiction.<sup>38</sup> *The Forsyte Saga* has received little critical attention and was published considerably later than other novels discussed in this thesis. Its explicit depictions of sexual jealousy and violence, which could not have been used by Trollope, make it a provoking point of comparison, and give a sense of the trajectory of mid-Victorian discussions of these taboos.

In the years following the height of sensation fiction's popularity, popular writers made famous by that style began to portray marital failure through a distinct genre of fiction, part way between sensation and realism. Charles Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Fatal Three* are examples of this shift, depicting somewhat more psychologically nuanced, intricate characters between whom the interconnections of masculinity, madness and marriage are played out. It is worth briefly considering Reade and Braddon's less well-known texts in particular, in order to trace the literary context of

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<sup>38</sup> Simon Gatrell, 'Jealousy, Mastery, Love and Madness: A brief reading of *He Knew He Was Right*', *Anthony Trollope*, ed. Tony Bareham (London: Vision, 1980), p. 99; Herbert Tucker, 'From Monomania to Monologue: "St Simeon Stylites" and the Rise of the Victorian Dramatic Monologue', *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 121-137; Christopher Herbert, '*He Knew He Was Right*, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and the Duplicities of Victorian Marriage', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Fall 1983), pp. 448-69. More recent writings on Trollope and psychology include George P. Landow's "'Crosbie was not altogether a villain' – Trollope and the psychology of betrayal", *Victorian Web*. <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/trollope/allington/crosbie.html>> accessed 17/02/2015.

Trollope and Galsworthy's realist writing about sexual jealousy and insanity from sensation: a form in which madness in married partners was a more common theme.

Charles Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* (1866) portrays desperate monomania resulting from sexual jealousy, and was parodied in C. H. Webb's *Liffith Lank; or, Lunacy* later the same year. These novels may be read as foundations for the re-emergence of the theme of male sexual jealousy towards the end of the nineteenth century. Before her marriage to Griffith, Catherine notices his alarming capacity for jealousy. At the mere sight of his rival, George Neville, appearing on the horizon on horseback, she 'saw her lover's face discoloured with passion, and so strangely convulsed that she feared at first he was in a fit, or stricken with death or palsy.' As Neville draws near, Gaunt's condition rapidly degenerates. The symptoms Catherine observes are specifically pathological, transcending the healthy emotional range.

She was familiar with petty jealousy; she had even detected it pinching or colouring many a pretty face that tried very hard to hide it all the time [...] but now she witnessed the livid passion of jealousy writhing in every lineament of a human face. That terrible passion had transfigured its victim in a moment: the ruddy, genial, kindly Griffith, with his soft brown eye, was gone, and in his place lowered a face older, and discoloured, and convulsed, and almost demoniacal.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Reade, *Griffith Gaunt; or, Jealousy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), p. 9.

Nonetheless, Catherine and Griffith are married, only for both to descend into forms of monomania. In an effort to escape Griffith's wrath, Catherine's puritanical religion becomes theomania. Griffith, mistaking her intimacy with the local priest for a love affair, suffers again from violent erotomania. Reade's use of the language of possession bears strong similarities to both Trollope and Galsworthy. In addition, his close observation of the symptoms of violent maniacal jealousy which so terrify Catherine, including facial discolouration, the appearance of ageing, and the replacement of a placid expression with rapid facial movements and contortions goes beyond even Trollope's later images to foreground Galsworthy. The latter writer's use of physiology, including Soames Forsyte's wife's observance of veins and ligaments throbbing in his face and neck is a later, more anatomically specific, version of Griffith's 'writhing' physique. The use of images of the alterations to the external body caused by the pathological physiological effects of mental disturbance, including alterations in the blood and the breath, are integral to techniques used by the writers studied in this thesis. Chapter Four, for example, will examine similar bodily manifestations of monomaniacal rage in relation to political rather than erotic desires.

*The Fatal Three*, unlike other novels mentioned here, assigns jealousy to the wife, but madness to the husband. Within Braddon's astonishingly prolific 1860s output, female madness in the context of marriage figures frequently.<sup>40</sup> However, her later fiction reached beyond the sensation form to represent madness in new ways. In *The Fatal Three* George Ransome is confined to a prison, then as a 'dangerous lunatic' at a public asylum near Nice, following his jealous wife's suicide.<sup>41</sup> Braddon writes that '[George's] brain must have given way under the burden of an undeserved

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<sup>40</sup> Braddon published fourteen three-volume novels between 1862 and 1868 alone.

<sup>41</sup> Braddon, *The Fatal Three* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), p. 201.

sorrow.<sup>42</sup> Stepping back from her narration of the scene itself, Braddon makes an important departure from the sensation form, in which strong emotions are more often made explicit in clear physical (or even physiognomical) descriptions of characters. In creating space for speculation about George's likely state of mind, Braddon accommodates more nuanced psychological interpretations.

Like Reade's careful distinction between the emotion of jealousy and its violent pathology, Braddon specifically separates the delicacy of nervous emotional instability from the violent behaviour it could induce in Ransome (who later goes by the name 'Greswold' to conceal his past). He has 'a temper, and a temper which occasionally showed itself in violent outbreaks', to the point at which his own son can rarely speak without 'act[ing] on [his] nerves like a nutmeg-grater.'<sup>43</sup> This rage destabilises rather than affirms his manliness. Mildred's complaint that her husband, usually 'a man of exceeding sensitiveness' and 'almost woman-like delicacy', had never mentioned his first wife centres on the assertion that it would have been 'kinder' and 'more manly' to be 'candid.'<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, in Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*, different characters make several references to honesty, particularly about one's feelings, as a gentlemanly attribute.<sup>45</sup> As elsewhere in his fiction, 'manly' characters are also described as 'straightforward', 'confiding' and 'open' in the same breath.<sup>46</sup> The ideas of secrecy and

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<sup>42</sup> *The Fatal Three*, p. 236.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89; p. 83. This secrecy is even more unmanly given that his two wives were sisters.

<sup>45</sup> For instance, Hugh Stanbury reasons that given that he loves Nora, 'would it not be better, at any rate more manly, that he should tell her so honestly.' *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 283.

<sup>46</sup> In *The American Senator*, Arabella attacks Lord Rufford's gentlemanliness, asserting that 'It would have been more honest and more manly' for him to admit his mistake and break off the alleged engagement sooner. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 431. In *The Small House at Allington* manly honesty is highlighted as especially important in relation to marriage. Even in the midst of his

the male temperament as finely-balanced, highlighted by Braddon, emerge in Galsworthy's later depiction of Soames Forsyte. Such representations both hark back to the Romantic 'Man of Feeling' and support the argument made by Mark S. Micale, that male hysteria was a genuine phenomenon, and sometimes described quite openly. This contradicts Showalter's earlier argument that hysteria was deliberately and systematically constructed by men as an intrinsically 'female malady.'<sup>47</sup> Braddon, like Trollope, may be seen as paving the way for later more overt and more violent depictions of sexual jealousy and male dominance.

I suggest that the concept of erotomania emerged from earlier structures of sensibility, and within the same intellectual sphere. The diagnosis was introduced around the time that Romantic ideals of the masculine emotional temperament declined in favour of a new, mid-century dominant model which reified quite different characteristics. A couple of generations earlier, the influence of Rousseau's constructions of male selfhood as a deeply thinking, feeling, self-reflexive form of identity, had shaped approaches to psychology and gender on both sides of the channel. Major elements of this model persisted in mid-nineteenth century ideal masculinities, including ethical conduct and the 'man of letters' model. The development of industrial capitalism, with its reshaping of economic and gender roles, rural to urban migration, rapid communications and new professions, made new demands of relatively wealthy sons and husbands.

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cold calculations about what size of settlement he might expect from a marriage, the unscrupulous Adolphus Crosbie informs Bernard of his intentions to marry Lily Dale 'in an open, manly way, as though he felt that in asking for much he also offered to give much.' (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 61.

<sup>47</sup> See Micale, *Male Hysteria*; Showalter, *The Female Malady* and *Hystories*.



As well as being thinkers, many men in the middle and upper classes needed to be doers. In conjunction with legislative debates around the breadwinner's wage, divorce and child custody, these new challenges precipitated a re-interrogation of the male character at one of the high points of the Victorian crisis of masculinity. Entering the vernacular at such a fraught time in the history of male identity, erotomania could thus be interpreted as hyper masculinity, effeminacy, or even both. The level of emotional investment in the wife and family which was required for erotic monomania to develop was open to conflicting interpretations as an indicator of protective male instincts, or a feminised concern with the domestic and a failure to maintain the self-sufficiency of emotional independence. Even the pathological excess of these emotions in mania could represent masculine determination and moral feeling, or an effeminate emotional instability caused by the biological, constitutional weakness of fragile nerves.<sup>48</sup>

As the next chapter will discuss, Dickens's *Dombey and Son* explores the uncomfortable transition period between the man of feeling and man of business models, and its implications for representations of the internalisation and externalisation of emotion. Although this thesis argues that Victorian masculinity was a heterogeneous, shifting, and often self-contradictory construct, key moments in the nineteenth century may be identified, marking the rise and fall of various primary characteristics of popular manliness. Mr Dombey's desperation for his wife to produce a son and heir, and the enormous ideological significance he places on that child once

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<sup>48</sup> Discourses about (primarily female) nerves in marital relationships were already extensive prior to Esquirol's influence, both in medical texts and fiction. We may recall Jane Austen's Mrs Bennet, who, despite evidently relishing her obsession for the subject, claims to suffer a plethora of symptoms of nervous anxiety on account of her daughters' various courtships: 'I am frightened out of my wits – and have such tremblings, such flutterings, all over me – such spasms in my side and pains in my head, and such beatings of my heart, that I can get no rest by night nor by day.' *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 220.

he is born, to the detriment of his relationships with female characters, is a theme reflected in Galsworthy's *Soames Forsyte*. In Trollope's novel, however, published in the intervening years between Dickens and Galsworthy's very different texts, erotomania develops after, and in spite of, the birth of Trevelyan's healthy son. Together with Trevelyan's anxiety about the influences of a much older family figure, Colonel Osborne, this highlights the ways in which erotomania and sexual jealousy are irretrievably tangled with the idealisation of controlling the inter-generational transfer of models of masculinity. It is imperative to Trollope and Galsworthy's erotomaniacs that young sons are not subject to the influence of other men – Colonel Osborne and young Jolyon respectively – whose preference for alternative masculinities are alleged to amount to moral corruption and contagion.

In *The Forsyte Saga* Galsworthy's shockingly frank contribution to covert debates about women's rights within marriage confronts the issue of marital rape. This intervention is a particularly complex and interesting one, since rather than simply laying bare the brutality of this legal yet covert practice, Galsworthy also exposes the tragedy of men driven mad by sexual desire: a consideration generally overshadowed by disgust, rather than serving as a mitigating factor. He writes in *In Chancery* (the second novel in the trilogy), 'Was there anything, indeed, more tragic in the world than a man enslaved by his own possessive instinct, who couldn't see the sky for it, or even enter fully into what another person felt!'<sup>49</sup> Here Galsworthy's evocation of the blindness metaphor echoes Trollope's description of Trevelyan as a man who, ignoring his remarkably blessed and fortunate situation, had 'made himself wretched in every

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<sup>49</sup> Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 514.

affair of life' by his own obstinacy.<sup>50</sup> Writing in the early twentieth century (though setting his novel in the 1880s) Galsworthy was able to address the act of marital rape: an act which, I argue, underlies concerns about marriage and a wife's independence in earlier fiction.<sup>51</sup>

Despite its earlier date, Trollope's novel makes a thorough examination of the condition of erotomania, frequently using legalistic language to address readers as though they were members of a jury. The marriage in *He Knew He Was Right* marks the beginning of Louis' jealous mania, rather than the end of it, with Trollope opening his novel at the narrative equivalent of a fourth volume. The wife's promise in the 1662 Church of England marriage service includes the promise to obey, hence its inclusion in statute law.<sup>52</sup> The words of the service also assert that marriage provides a means of preventing immoral sexual obsession by harnessing and delivering the object of desire at a sufficiently early stage. The wording defines that marriage is ordained firstly for the procreation of children, and secondly, 'for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled.'<sup>53</sup> Following Georget's rejection in 1821 of the expediency of this 'remedy', Trollope and Galsworthy depict a failed marriage plot in which case men arguably become sinful and defiled.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, they deconstruct

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<sup>50</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 325.

<sup>51</sup> Just fifteen years before the publication of this section of the saga, Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* ('*A Pure Woman*') scandalised readers with its portrayal of the raped woman as an innocent, morally pure victim. Galsworthy's Irene is similarly innocent of all blame for the violence she experiences, having been pushed into an unequal relationship with her wealthy oppressor by a mercenary (step-) mother who can see no practical alternative.

<sup>52</sup> Some Victorian relationships inverted this idea of obedience. For example, a month before his marriage Browning described his desire to 'look up to' and 'obey' his future wife. See letters from 10 and 13 Aug. 1846. Elvan Kintner, ed. *The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning: 1845-1846* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 953; p. 960.

<sup>53</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1862).

<sup>54</sup> Étienne-Jean Georget, *De la physiologie du système nerveux* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1821), I, pp. 238-302.

the ideal of procreation, with Trevelyan relegating his child to a vehicle for emotional abuse by the deplorable (albeit legal) means of kidnapping and Forsyte resorting to the extreme (albeit legal) violence of marital rape.

In part, the neglect of the field of pathological male desire in marriage may be explained by the relative neglect of studies of masculinity in association with the nineteenth-century marriage plot. To recognise the significance of this pathologisation of desire, I suggest that our analysis of the marriage plot must be reconfigured to understand it as a male plot, too. In sharp contrast to Mr Dombey's view of his wife as equivalent to a useful household object (see Chapter Three), these men's wives are not mere appendages. Instead of confirming and stabilising the status of fully-fledged manhood, marriage is conceived as a fragile, overwhelmingly *unheimlich* state which shakes the foundations of the previously controlled domestic arrangements of bachelorhood. These unhealthy marriage unions are characterised by volatile cycles of loss of power, followed by power-grabs, followed again by loss of power, forming a vortex in which chaotic pathology becomes inevitable.

Following the feminist tradition, many critics read the failed-marriage plot as a woman's plot – 'a plot that concerns itself primarily with the matter of female agency: it tends to revolve around a wife leaving her husband, an act that was both illegal and unacceptable.'<sup>55</sup> However, *He Knew He Was Right* frames the failed-marriage plot primarily as a man's plot. Although physically Emily leaves her husband, complicating the mechanics of desertion, Louis has requested her to do so. Acting within his legal rights, he banishes his wife and reduces her material and social status, condescending to provide her with mediocre financial support and allowing false rumours to grow and

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<sup>55</sup> Hager, p. 8.

circulate, echoing Dickens's treatment of his own wife. For Louis to remove himself from the family home without making arrangements for the financial maintenance of his wife and child would constitute desertion in legal terms: an act viewed highly unfavourably by the court, since it contravened the husband's primary duty to provide for his wife. Furthermore, desertion was grounds for divorce initiated by the wife (although only in conjunction with one other form of 'severe' ill-treatment such as persistent beating or drunkenness). By doing the minimum required of him by law, Louis, whose logic is considerably warped by this time, considers himself generous, insisting to Hugh Stanbury and others that, having behaved according to the codes of gentlemanliness, he is beyond reproach. This alleged certainty is not born out by his mental and physical decline, which manifests his guilty conscience.

The consideration of the failed-marriage plot as a woman's plot is predicated on the assumption that female agency is restricted and problematic. The valuable feminist project of the exposure of the difficulties surrounding *female* agency has had the less desirable effect of overshadowing the difficulties of agency suffered by men. James Eli Adams has explained the critical shying away from masculinity studies, suggesting that:

Explicit and sustained articulation of this emphasis within literary and cultural studies [...] has been resisted by those concerned that dwelling on the complexities and burdens of masculine identity would serve to obscure, and

thereby to reinforce, the brute realities of male domination against which feminist analyses were and are in the first place directed.<sup>56</sup>

This thesis continues the project of redressing this gender imbalance following the emergence of masculinity studies twenty years ago through the pioneering work of Michael Roper and John Tosh.<sup>57</sup> In doing so, however, it is necessary to take an especial care to avoid the pitfalls of falling into what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has referred to as a ‘vast national wash of masculine self-pity.’<sup>58</sup> By drawing attention to a husband’s lack of free agency, I do not wish to exclude the highly significant limits on a wife’s agency. In considering male weakness and perception of weakness in Victorian literature and culture, I do not intend to belittle the brutalities of violent assertions of patriarchy in some marriages of the period, but rather to demonstrate ways in which feelings of weakness (and thus decreased agency) in the minds of men produced a reinforcement of power by the reassertion of their will, manifested in varying forms of violence against women.

Emily Trevelyan’s own agency in Trollope’s novel is indeed restricted: she and her sister are sent like parcels, under the supervision of Louis’s oldest friend, from the family home in Mayfair to live in Devon, and then London’s East End. Later, living back in the West End, but wishing to follow her vagrant husband to Italy, Emily requires the protection of her father. However, Louis’s masculine agency, though given free reign by law, is also restricted: in this case primarily by his own declining

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<sup>56</sup> Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds. *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 145.

physical and mental health, both of which make returning to England seem impossible to him. Furthermore, the social unacceptability of a wife leaving her husband, as posited by Kelly Hager, is rivalled by the social unacceptability of Louis's condition.

This thesis contends that the polarisation of perceptions of masculinised strength and feminised weakness within Victorian culture has been overstated by many historians of gender. Nonetheless, by the 1860s earlier structures of masculine sensibility had long-since faded, and healthy strength based on the ideal of muscular Christianity was preferred. At the beginning of the novel, Trevelyan is in excellent health, adventurous in mind and body, travelling the world and writing occasional articles in scientific journals. Some months later, languishing in long robes, barely eating and keeping to his bed, Trevelyan has adopted a feminine position, isolating him further from the society which cannot fathom his grievance. In his fallen, impoverished state, Trevelyan asks Hugh Stanbury, his closest friend and a radical journalist, what he thinks of this self-imposed isolation:

What think you of a man who has not seen a newspaper for two months; and who holds no conversation with the world further than is needed for the cooking of his polenta and the cooling of his modest wine-flask?<sup>59</sup>

The residents of Casalunga, the village of Trevelyan's retreat, in the hills around Siena, gossip about his state of mind and hope to have him committed to an insane asylum. Male mental breakdown was by this period, I suggest, at least as socially transgressive

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<sup>59</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, pp. 768-9.

a phenomenon as a wife leaving her husband, and was routinely marked as scandalous, evincing as it did a distinct lack of masculine resilience.

## **II: Marriage, divorce and domestic violence: legal and social contexts**

Far-reaching reforms in marriage and family law took place in England during the nineteenth century. There has been some dispute on the subject of the religious roots of these changes. Lawrence Stone has argued that the late eighteenth century saw the revival of Puritan religion in England. This brought with it a resurgence of an old ideal of marital relationships: one based on ‘the enforcement of patriarchy and obedience’ and the idealisation of female submission.’<sup>60</sup> It was against a backdrop of these conservative and entrenched ideals that the nineteenth-century controversies over marriage, divorce and the Woman Question were set.

However, the puritanical model of marriage identified by Stone underwent a thorough interrogation and revision during the course of the nineteenth century: in the press, in fiction, and even in Parliament. Hager notes that ‘Marriage is a vexing institution, one that keeps the politics of mid-Victorians confused, constantly under revision, and divided in their aims.’<sup>61</sup> It has also kept modern social historians divided in opinion. Boyd Hilton has proposed an alternative model to Stone’s, drawing attention to evangelicalism in the ‘age of atonement’ from 1795 to 1865.<sup>62</sup> Current historical debates continually reassess the popularity and practicalities of the

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<sup>60</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1972), p. 667.

<sup>61</sup> Hager, p. 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795 – 1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).



‘companionate marriage.’ James Hammerton has observed that companionate marriage frequently led husbands to be more aggressively assertive, rather than less, as its name might imply.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, John Tosh argues persuasively and more recently that ‘Companionate marriage stood at the heart of the Victorian ideal of domesticity’ and that such marriage ‘was assumed to be voluntary, not arranged or imposed, and to be for love, whatever secondary motives might be involved.’ This ideal of domesticity founded on companionate marriage was, however, as Tosh notes, class-specific:

the pieties of domesticity were a sick joke to slum dwellers, and at the other end of the social spectrum they were scarcely relevant to the great aristocratic families for whom large-scale hospitality was an extension of political and dynastic activity by other means.<sup>64</sup>

Focusing instead on upper middle-class families, this chapter explores marriage as a fertile ground for sexual jealousy, even amounting to violent erotomania – in Trollope’s case the breakdown of, and for Galsworthy the failure to establish, a loving (or even tolerating) companionate marriage.

John Stuart Mill, himself married in an equal partnership with Harriet Taylor, evoked the progressive companionate marriage to bolster his argument for the extension of the vote to women during his famous speech at the House of Commons in

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<sup>63</sup> James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 2001), particularly Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>64</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 27.

1867, shortly before Trollope wrote his novel.<sup>65</sup> In seeking to attain this modern ideal of marriage, ‘husbands looked to a partner in life to whom they could pour out their anxieties, their doubts, and their aspirations.’ Tosh argues that ‘home was felt to be the only place where the vulnerability that lay behind the public mask of strength and imperturbability could be shared with someone else.’<sup>66</sup> This thesis identifies bachelor friendships and other forms of male companionship as alternative sites for the removal of this ‘mask’, as well as instances in which it was removed in highly visible public spaces such as the court room. Nonetheless, as the central relationship in many men’s lives, ‘the sympathetic ear and soothing tongue’ of wives were highly sought-after.<sup>67</sup> Both Trevelyan and Forsyte set themselves up in opposition against their wives from the very beginning, in part by being both attracted and alienated by their partners’ beauty, but primarily by considering themselves superior. Proudly identifying themselves as condescending and kind in deigning to rescue Emily and Irene from the Mandarin Islands and Bournemouth respectively, and placing them in the glamorous environs of London’s Mayfair and Park Lane, they are unable to see their marriages as equal partnerships. Beyond the veneer of gentlemanliness, neither man is willing to respect his wife as a person to be entrusted with shared anxiety. Instead, this dynamic configures the women as the source of new anxiety.

For the purposes of this chapter, the social history of marriage and divorce law will be examined in tandem with changing social and legal codes relating to domestic violence or ‘correction.’ Violence was a common cause for women wishing to separate from their husbands, although it was not on its own sufficient grounds for divorce,

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<sup>65</sup> John Stuart Mill, speech in House of Commons, *Hansard*, HC vol. 187, cols. 821-3.

<sup>66</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 54.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

which required violence to occur in addition to desertion or another display of the inability to provide financial support. Such violence, I suggest, can be read as a symptom of a crisis of masculinity within Victorian culture. By extension, I will argue that the sexual jealousy and desire to control the female body which cause the kind of insanity and monomania described in the fiction examined here are also causes of domestic abuse. This may be seen in separation and divorce cases from the period as well as novels. Overt examples of working-class domestic violence, such as Bill Sykes and Nancy's relationship in *Oliver Twist* (1837) and Heathcliff's violent passion in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> Instead, this chapter will focus on later fiction, and on relationships in the middle and upper classes, examining the uneasy place of violence and jealous madness in the context of gentlemanliness.

For several decades prior to the 1857 Divorce Act and the Matrimonial Causes Acts in 1859, 1870 and 1882, debates about divorce had intensified, and various high-profile cases had laid bare the inadequacies of the status quo, under which each divorce could only be obtained by an individual act of parliament. In 1820 a Bill of Pains and Penalties was introduced in an attempt to dissolve the marriage of King George IV and Queen Caroline, after a long and unhappy union. Although they had separated a year after their marriage in 1795, when George succeeded to the throne he sought to divorce his wife, against the advice of his ministers.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Marlene Tromp, *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation, and the Law in Victorian Britain* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), pp. 23-65; Judith E. Pike, 'My name was Isabella Linton: Coverture, Domestic Violence and Mrs Heathcliff's Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 61, no. 3. (Dec. 2009), pp. 347-83.

<sup>69</sup> Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 126; Sally Ledger, 'From Queen Caroline to Lady Dedlock: Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2004), pp. 575-600.

There was considerable resistance to the legalisation of non-Parliamentary divorce in general from various quarters, but perhaps most notably the Church. England was different from the rest of Europe in having the only Protestant church which had not abandoned the Catholic doctrine of marital indissolubility.<sup>70</sup> In 1836 the Marriage Act created provision for civil and other denominational marriages (besides Anglican and Jewish ceremonies, which were the only two kinds already legally binding). The legalisation of divorce can be seen as the logical extension of this process of secularisation and liberalisation of family law. In 1856 Wilkie Collins claimed licence as an 'old bachelor' to 'speak the crabbed truth' on the subject. He criticised the constraints on obtaining a divorce, arguing that irrational and 'senseless prejudice' lead some people to claim that:

they would rather see murder committed under their own eyes, than approve of any project for obtaining a law of divorce which shall be equal in its operation on husbands and wives of all ranks who cannot live together.<sup>71</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the English divorce rate increased enormously after the Divorce Act was passed in 1857. In the first half of the nineteenth century parliamentary divorces had increased too, albeit more slowly. This had caused considerable concern in the House of Commons, in which debates on the subject were characterised by reference to moral degeneration. In 1855 Sir William Heathcote, MP for Oxford University, dismissed claims that instances of bigamy and adultery

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<sup>70</sup> Phillips., pp. 124-5.

<sup>71</sup> Wilkie Collins, 'Bold Words by a Bachelor', *Household Words*, vol. 14 (13 Dec. 1856), p. 505-7.

suggested that divorce should be permissible: ‘No, men of this country are not yet prepared for this consequence, because their instincts and their moral sense are sounder.’<sup>72</sup> However, in the House of Lords the following year, the Bishop of Oxford spoke at length on the subject of the Bill, arguing that ‘the great Lawgiver of the Christian world did exclude from the sentence of condemnation pronounced against persons who put away their wives those persons who put them away on account of adultery.’<sup>73</sup>

Despite this assertion of the position of divorce in religious terms, others speaking at the same debate insisted that divorce was inherently immoral. Viscount Dungannon replied to the bishop, insisting that, ‘though defects might exist in the present system’, he could not but fear that the remedy proposed was far worse than the disease. In opposition to claims by Norton and others that divorce ought to be more freely available to avert greater ills, Dungannon argued that ‘the difficulty which had hitherto existed in obtaining a divorce was in a great degree the cause of the morality which existed in this country.’ The Bill was ‘fraught with danger to the morality, the well-being, the order of society.’<sup>74</sup> Dr Phillimore observed to the House of Commons in 1830 the shocking statistic that ‘From 1820 till 1830, in the short period of only ten years, there had occurred twenty-six cases of divorce.’<sup>75</sup> The numbers of divorces taking place were, however, extraordinarily low in modern terms, and the means to attempt the making of an Act of Parliament remained an immense and largely insurmountable hurdle.

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<sup>72</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb (9 May 1855) vol. 138, p. 242.

<sup>73</sup> *Hansard*, HL Deb (3 July 1856) vol. 143, p. 231.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 246-7.

<sup>75</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb (6 Apr. 1830), vol. 23, p. 1363.



Figure 10: Divorces by Act of Parliament in England, 1800-1857<sup>76</sup>

Legal separation was far more common than divorce, being more readily available since it was quicker and cheaper to obtain. Surprisingly, far less research has been done in this area.<sup>77</sup> Although the Divorce Bill described the requirement for centrally registered separation bills, this was controversial, causing the clause to be dropped in the 1857 Divorce Act itself. As a result, knowledge of the prevalence of separation in Victorian marriages is incomplete. Informal separation was, as Phillips notes, ‘in many respects, the most straightforward method of terminating a marriage socially,’ leaving both partners free to lead separate lives ‘free of any mutual social, economic, or sexual

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<sup>76</sup> Data from Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: a history of divorce in Western society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 235.

<sup>77</sup> Olive Anderson has begun to examine the history of separation, noting that at the end of the nineteenth century England’s divorce rate was almost the lowest in Europe, while its estimated separation rate was by far the highest. ‘State, Civil Society and Separation in Victorian Marriage’, *Past and Present*, no. 163 (May 1999), p. 161.

obligations.’<sup>78</sup> As such it presented a popular alternative to both divorce and legal separation, and one which Galsworthy’s Irene deems perfectly adequate.

The first Custody of Infants Act was passed in 1839, allowing mothers to petition the courts for the custody of their children up to the age of seven, and to seek access to any older children. The possibility of such an application for the return of Emily’s infant son is discussed by her parents in *He Knew He Was Right*. However, given the institutional bias in favour of fathers, if the Rowleys cannot be certain that Louis will be judged as categorically insane, they risk the possibility that Emily could be legally forbidden any future contact with her child.

The most influential model of happy marriage and family life during Queen Victoria’s reign was the royal family itself. Nonetheless, the Queen’s opinion of marriage in general was not idealistic, becoming seriously negative at times. Following the marriage of her daughter Vicky in January 1858, the Queen wrote to her several times on the subject. In May of that year she wrote, ‘I think people really marry far too much; it is such a lottery after all, and for a poor woman a very doubtful happiness.’<sup>79</sup> Two years later, her estimation of the institution had sunk lower still:

the poor woman is bodily and morally the husband’s slave. That always sticks in my throat. When I think of a merry, happy, free young girl – and look at the ailing, aching state a young wife is generally doomed to – which you can’t deny is the penalty of marriage.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>79</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *Queen Victoria in Her Letters and Journals* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

Even at the centre of popular ideals of model marriages, then, private correspondence reveals deep, irrevocable flaws in the institution itself, quite apart from any conflicts in taste or temperament for particular couples. The assumption that the ideal marriage existed, even for the most famous woman in the world, is false. With this in mind, plots involving marital disharmony, or even breakdown, cannot have been viewed by the contemporary readership as so rare or scandalous as many studies assume.

The most infamous case of failed marriage in the Victorian press was that of Caroline Norton, who separated from her abusive and adulterous husband in 1836, and became a feminist writer and campaigner.<sup>81</sup> Dickens reported the case for *The Morning Chronicle*, and the influence of the court proceedings between George Norton and Lord Melbourne, which hinged on one alleged illegal conversation, may be traced in *The Pickwick Papers*. Caroline Norton's petitions both addressed specific grievances about women's legal rights in relation to marriage, and drew attention to the fundamental incongruities of the sexual double standard. She wrote to Queen Victoria 'to point out the grotesque anomaly which ordains that married women shall be "non-existent" in a country governed by a female Sovereign.'<sup>82</sup> That wives had no separate legal entity distinct from their husbands was a central problem, which needed to be addressed if women were to have improved legal rights. Personal narratives of separation played a key role in public debates and reforms. Although the peak in these publications was some years earlier than Trollope's novels, the same anxieties about the issues at stake are deeply embedded in his fictional marriage breakdown in *He*

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<sup>81</sup> After 11 years of marriage, Caroline had been locked out of the house by her husband without warning. She was unable to obtain a divorce, and the courts awarded George Norton sole custody of their three children, as well as rights to her future earnings from writing.

<sup>82</sup> Norton, 'Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill', *English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century* (London: For Private Circulation, 1854).



*Knew He Was Right*, the narrative of which is regularly punctuated with the language of legal debates which place Trevelyan on trial.

The legal right for husbands to beat their wives has a long history, having been enshrined in European law since the Roman period, with violence following adultery being an exceptional circumstance treated with additional tolerance.<sup>83</sup> In the early nineteenth century adultery was the only offence which made grounds for parliamentary divorce in England. Although there was no specific law in place allowing for crimes of passion, which legitimised jealous violence in other countries, sentences in such cases tended to be more lenient, with the death penalty rarely being invoked. In the years leading up to the coining of the term ‘erotomania’ in the 1830s, various high-profile cases intensified concerns about connections between sexual violence and psychological abnormality.<sup>84</sup>

Marital rape remained a legal impossibility in England throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth: a husband’s enforcement of his conjugal rights was entirely legal, and as such, could not constitute the illegal act of rape. Sir Matthew Hale’s stated in 1736 that ‘the husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract’: in marrying her husband she had implicitly given complete consent to all future sexual

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<sup>83</sup> P. E. Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 128-9; Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979), p. 62. In France, where Esquirol’s theory of erotomania originated, a man maintained the legal right to kill his wife upon discovering her in the act of adultery as late as 1907, and until the 1970s the sentence for killing a spouse in a *crime passionnel* was two years.

<sup>84</sup> Various attempts were made to criminalise adultery itself, including the ‘Adultery Prevention Bill, for the More Effectual Prevention of the Crime of Adultery’ (1800). Had it passed, adultery would have become a crime for the first time since Cromwell’s Adultery Act of 1650. In America an equivalent of the *crime passionnel* entitled ‘temporary insanity’ was developed in 1859. Congressman Daniel Sickles shot and killed his wife’s lover having obtained a written confession from his wife, and was acquitted.

acts determined by her husband.<sup>85</sup> In 1822, John Archbold asserted that in Britain, boys under the age of fourteen must be acquitted of rape charges in all circumstances and that ‘a husband also cannot be guilty of a rape upon his wife.’<sup>86</sup> Soames Forsyte’s legal but unreasonable justification for marital rape is based on this single, non-negotiable precept. Archbold’s document enshrined many aspects of rape law which remain highly controversial, including the submission of ‘general evidence of the woman’s character for want of chastity.’<sup>87</sup> In 1869 Mill and Taylor denounced marital rape as the epitome of the sexual double standard and a key aspect of women’s legal subordination.<sup>88</sup> In 1888 the case of *R v. Clarence* contested the husband’s exemption from rape laws as an extension of coverture, although no agreement was reached by the nine judges. Marital rape was finally outlawed in England and Wales when the case of *R v. R* reached the House of Lords on appeal in 1991.

Denial persisted deep into the Victorian period that domestic violence could possibly be commonplace in middle- and upper- class families, such as the Trevelyan and the Forsytes. Such abuse was often expected according to stereotypes of brutish, working-class men, incapable of controlling their emotions. However, codes of *gentlemanliness* as opposed to generic manliness, could not possibly entertain such an idea; as we have seen in Chapter One. During the second reading of the Aggravated Assaults Act Amendment Bill in 1860, one MP insisted that if people examined the ‘revelations’ in the Divorce Court, they would see that ‘these brutal assaults upon women were by no means confined to the lower classes’ and that ‘others in better

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<sup>85</sup> Matthew Hale, *History of the Pleas to the Crown*, vol. I (E. Rider, 1800), p. 628.

<sup>86</sup> John Frederick Archbold, ‘Rape: Indictment for Ravishing a Woman’ (New York: Stephen Gould & Son, 1824), p. 259.

<sup>87</sup> Archbold., p. 69.

<sup>88</sup> J. S. Mill, *On the Subjection of Women* (London: Penguin, 2006). Also see Marina Morales, ‘Rational Freedom in John Stuart Mill’s Feminism’, *J. S. Mill’s Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment* ed. Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 55.

circumstances [...] were unfortunately guilty of similar offences.’<sup>89</sup> At this stage the divorce courts had been open just over two years. The subsequent and enormous increase in the number of divorces following their creation, and the media attention that these cases attracted, put much information about domestic disputes and violence in the public domain for the first time. These reports challenged the polarised representations of working-class thugs and mild-tempered gentlemen.

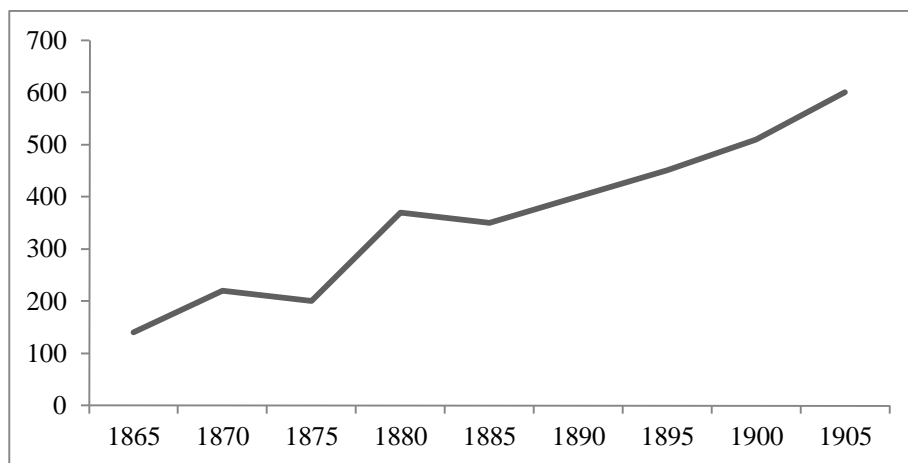


Figure 11: Divorces in England and Wales, 1865-1905<sup>90</sup>

The fact that a woman was largely seen as one with her husband made her vulnerable to domestic violence in two vital ways. Firstly, as Roderick Phillips has noted, part of the legal ‘burden of masculinity’ for husbands was ‘to answer for his wife’s actions’, causing it to be ‘considered reasonable that he should have the right to

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<sup>89</sup> John Walter in *Hansard*, HC Deb 2 May 1860, series 3, vol. 158, p. 532. This statement conflicts with Soames’s later dismissal of moral debates on the comforting grounds of the support of marital rape within the Divorce Courts.

<sup>90</sup> Data from Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, p. 464.

control her behaviour and to repress her when necessary.<sup>91</sup> Secondly, however, by the same logic, marital violence perpetrated against women did not legally constitute an assault, since women were not classified as separate from their husbands. Thus, bizarrely, a mad husband's battery of his wife could be framed in legal terms as a form of self-harm, exempting him from punishment.

Denied a separate legal existence, attempts to extend legislative protection to women seeking legal separation could only be extremely limited, as Caroline Norton observed in her plea to the Queen.<sup>92</sup> Despite the successful passage of the Divorce Bill in 1857 (which legalised non-parliamentary divorce), the first law protecting women against matrimonial cruelty was not passed until 1878. Emily Trevelyan and Irene Forsyte do not pursue the possibilities of divorce. For Emily, this legal break would reduce her chances of access to her child, and for Irene, an estranged wife and victim of marital rape, freedom from harassment by her maniacally jealous husband is infinitely preferable to the humiliation and trauma of a court battle, in spite of the likely financial gains.

### **III: *He Knew He Was Right*: the decline and fall of a monomaniac**

Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* may be the most extended and closely-observed portrait of male monomania in the Victorian canon. Suspecting that his wife has become too intimate with Colonel Osborne (her godfather, an MP), Louis Trevelyan gradually becomes mad with jealousy. The novel is of particular interest in this study because Trollope periodically makes connections between Trevelyan's mental health

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<sup>91</sup> Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, pp. 324-5.

<sup>92</sup> Norton, 'Letter to the Queen'.

and his masculinity. The two are closely intertwined from the outset of the narration, and deteriorate simultaneously. In highlighting these connections, Trollope becomes part of the discourse within Victorian culture which associates manliness with good health, both physically and mentally, and which perceives weaknesses in the mind (as ‘madness’ was understood) as weaknesses in masculinity. Furthermore, *He Knew He Was Right* is a useful example of mania and *gentlemanliness*. Frequent references are made to modes of behaviour and manners expected of gentlemen. Ian Watt’s claim, considered earlier in this chapter, that ‘the great majority of novels written since *Pamela* have continued its basic pattern, and concentrated their main interest upon a courtship leading to marriage’<sup>93</sup> is challenged by this novel. Trollope describes the courtship of the central couple in the first two pages, swiftly skipping to events two years after their marriage.

Although Trollope’s exploration of jealousy and madness is perhaps the most in-depth of the period, it was not the first. As discussed above, the topic had provided the focus for novels such as Charles Reade’s *Griffith Gaunt*. Ellen Wood’s sensation novel, *St. Martin’s Eve* (1866) also discussed the theme, although Wood focuses on its manifestation in a female character. *The Spectator* reviewed Wood’s novel, complaining that the seriousness of mental illness was belittled by its use as a dramatic plot device. The anonymous reviewer hopes that a realist novelist would take up the subject to produce a more considered psychological study. Wood, argues the reviewer, merely ‘wants to paint jealousy in its extreme forms, and she has not of course the power to create Othello, or the art to paint, as Thackeray or Trollope might have done,

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<sup>93</sup> Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, p. 154.

the morbid passion in its naturalistic nineteenth-century dress.<sup>94</sup> It has been suggested that this review, together with Eliza Lynn Linton's 1867 novel, *Sowing the Wind*, may have been Trollope's inspiration for writing *He Knew He Was Right*; and certainly, Trollope would produce a more realistic study of jealousy in marriage, together with a picture of mental disintegration which drew extensively on contemporary medical writings.<sup>95</sup>

*Sowing the Wind* reveals its writer's ideological struggle during the years when she became a radical antifeminist, expressing disgust at the 'deficient attitudes which women have lately assumed, and their indifference to the wishes and remonstrances of men.'<sup>96</sup> Some contemporary reviewers of *He Knew He Was Right*, sharing Linton's sentiments, saw Emily as responsible for the deterioration of her marriage and the breakdown of her husband. The *Spectator* blamed Emily entirely, condemning Trevelyan's sympathy for her towards the end of the novel.<sup>97</sup> Various more recent critics have blamed societal pressures for the Trevelyans' tragedy, such as R. C. Terry, who drew attention to 'the destructive powers of society' in the novel, such as 'gossip, spying, and false council.'<sup>98</sup> Certainly these destructive powers have a strong effect in exacerbating Trevelyan's jealousy and his sense of embarrassment.

Trollope's description of his darkened skin sustains Burton's earlier representations of the bodily humours – itself an ancient theory dating back to Hippocrates. At her dinner party Lady Milborough's observation of Louis' 'black' face and mood, deteriorating as speaks, does not stop her observing that Colonel Osborne is

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<sup>94</sup> Anon, 'Madness in Novels', *Spectator*, 3 Feb. 1866, p. 19.

<sup>95</sup> P. D. Edwards, *Anthony Trollope: His Art and Scope* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1966).

<sup>96</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, *Modern Women and What is Said of Them* (New York: Redfield, 1868), pp. 91-92.

<sup>97</sup> R. H. Hutton (pub. Anon), *Spectator*, 12 June 1869, pp. 706-8.

<sup>98</sup> R. C. Terry, *Anthony Trollope: The Artist in Hiding* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman, 1977), p. 138.

‘a snake in the grass’, and that ‘there is nothing he likes so much as going about and making mischief between men and their wives.’ Her suggestion that he do something about his wife’s behaviour since ‘it is the very purity of her innocence which makes the danger’ is, of course, unpleasant to Louis, and Trollope notes that ‘to be cautioned about his wife’s conduct cannot be pleasant to any man.’ His natural reaction of being ‘intolerably bitter’ on the subject, becomes less ordinary, however, as Trollope continues the process of pathologising Trevelyan’s concerns.<sup>99</sup> Like Othello, and countless men in literature, Trevelyan’s feelings of jealousy seem to make a mockery of his masculinity and status in society; his emotion is ‘the green-eyed monster which doth mock/ The meat it feeds on.’<sup>100</sup> In common with Soames Forsyte, who I suggest may be read as Trevelyan’s literary successor, he is unable to bear the idea that his marriage is the subject of drawing-room gossip.

However, Trollope observes that ‘a young husband may dislike the too-friendly bearing of a friend, and may yet abstain from that outrage of his own dignity and on his wife, which is conveyed by a word of suspicion.’<sup>101</sup> He even prescribes the correct course of action: ‘Louis Trevelyan having taken a strong dislike to Colonel Osborne, and having failed to make his wife understand that this dislike should have induced her to throw cold water upon the Colonel’s friendship.’<sup>102</sup> In addition, towards the end of the novel Trollope goes to some length to clarify that he places the blame squarely on Trevelyan, holding him responsible for the tragic outcome of the plot. In the context of nineteenth-century ideals of marriage and theories of monomania, this insistence in the

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<sup>99</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, III. 3, lines 166-7.

<sup>101</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

closing pages of the novel affirms the centrality of Trollope's concern with the psychological degeneration caused by erotomania and its consequences in marriage.

Fears about wrongful confinement and ideas about hereditary or environmental causes of madness in Victorian literature sustained an enormous public interest in the subject of mental pathology. A variety of different lay understandings of psychology grew up as a result. Akihito Suzuki has observed that the 'widespread lay aetiology' focussed on an 'iconic mental disease of Victorian working-class men', rooted in 'their new quest for respectability, independence and manhood'.<sup>103</sup> The first chapter of this thesis drew attention to a blurring of distinctions between sanity and insanity within lay understandings of psychology, as a result of shared concerns about personal finances and debt within Victorian culture. This chapter examines this blurring process within lay understandings of the transition from familiar emotions to madness.

By demonstrating the transition from sanity to insanity by means of familiar emotions, such as jealousy, Trollope increases a sense of familiarity with mental disintegration, as well as the vulnerability and potentiality of the human mind. As Braddon's narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret* enquires, 'Who has not been, or is not to be, mad in some lonely hour of life? Who is quite safe from the trembling of the balance?' The moment of equilibrium is precise: 'There is nothing so delicate, so fragile, as that invisible balance upon which the mind is always trembling.'<sup>104</sup> As Athena Vrettos has argued, *He Knew He Was Right* 'offers a striking portrait of a husband's pathological jealousy as mental fixation, constituting one of the most

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<sup>103</sup> Also see David Wright, 'Delusions of Gender?: Lay Identification and Clinical Diagnosis of Insanity in Victorian England' in *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody: Perspectives on Gender and Class in the History of British and Irish Psychiatry* ed. Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Press, 2004), pp. 149-176.

<sup>104</sup> Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Wordsworth, 1997), p. 321.



extended explorations of monomania in Victorian fiction.<sup>105</sup> Trevelyan's state of mind is at the centre of the novel, which, running to more than eight hundred pages, gives Trollope ample opportunity to make a thorough dissection.

Louis Trevelyan experiences mental deterioration dating almost from the point at which he achieves a culturally idealised position: married to the woman he loves, beautiful, obedient, of a respectable family and possessed of suitable connections in society. We are told that 'when Louis Trevelyan was twenty-four years old, he had all the world before him where to choose [...]'.<sup>106</sup> Like Emma Woodhouse, 'handsome, clever, and rich',<sup>107</sup> Louis Trevelyan makes his first impression on the reader in the novel's first sentence as an extremely fortunate young person, and 'a very pearl among men'.<sup>108</sup> He bears no resemblance to the withered hermit, hiding from his wife at Casalunga, outside Siena, who we pity hundreds of pages later.

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<sup>105</sup> Athena Vrettos, 'Victorian Psychology' in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 76.

<sup>106</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 9. Trollope quotes from *Paradise Lost*, xii.

<sup>107</sup> Austen, *Emma* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 9.



Figure 12: 'Louis Trevelyan at Casalunga' by Marcus Stone (1869)<sup>109</sup>

In Italy, and later on his death bed in the riverside cottage in Twickenham, Trevelyan shows symptoms of erotomania, as outlined by Jean-Étienne Esquirol.<sup>110</sup> He bears out the French psychologist's observation that sufferers 'neglect, abandon and fly both their relatives and friends,' as well as that in the absence of the object of their love, 'the look of this class of patients is dejected; their complexion becomes pale; their

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<sup>109</sup> Illustration by Marcus Stone for Chapter 84 for the first edition of *He Knew He Was Right*.

<sup>110</sup> See Introduction to this thesis.

features change; sleep and appetite are lost. They are thoughtful, greatly depressed in mind, agitate, irritable.’<sup>111</sup>

Trollope’s writing is deeply rooted in the psychological theory of the nineteenth century, and influenced by various seminal works. In particular he appears to have been familiar with Esquirol’s ideas, and specifically his coining of the term ‘monomania’, a newly-identified form of insanity. Trollope adhered to J. C. Prichard’s definition of monomania. His letters reveal that during the writing of *He Knew He Was Right* he was in communication with a number of psychologists, collecting material for his fictional case study. Crucially, there is evidence that this channel of influence was reciprocal in nature, with doctors as well as the general public reading the novel as a pseudo-authentic history of monomania. Thus, in turn, the novel influenced scientific writings. Trollope wrote to one physician, ‘I am gratified by the attention which your scientific analysis shews that you have given to the character of the unfortunate man which I attempted to draw in my novel.’<sup>112</sup> This traffic of ideas in both directions between literary and scientific disciplines is particularly interesting since it demonstrates that novels were being read as realities in themselves, rather than a mere reflection of them.<sup>113</sup>

Such comments are integral to the argument made in this thesis that an interdisciplinary approach to Victorian Studies is the most natural and appropriate one, since the period itself was characterised by interdisciplinarity, or rather,

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<sup>111</sup> Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, p. 336.

<sup>112</sup> N. John Hall, ed. *Letters of Anthony Trollope* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), II, p. 1011.

<sup>113</sup> Such evidence illustrates Elizabeth Langland’s point that novelists and novels ‘do not simply reflect the contemporary ideology. Rather, by depicting a material reality filled with and interpreted through ideology, they also expose ideology.’ ‘Nobody’s Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel’, *PMLA*, vol. 107, no. 2 (Mar. 1992), p. 291.

predisciplinarity, thoroughly integrating the literary with the scientific. Writing in a predisciplinary period, such a notion probably came naturally to Trollope. His correspondence with doctors, together with his clear knowledge of contemporary psychological theory, enabled him to expose a character study in a novel as a scientific case study. Even 130 years after the publication of *He Knew He Was Right*, a medical publication demonstrated the persistence of an interest in Trollope from both literary and psychiatric discourses.<sup>114</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century, despite the increased professional and academic separation of the two fields, the trend we see in Trollope's psychological dissection of marriage dynamics in relation to nervous imbalance continued in texts such as Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1890).

Not only was Trollope well-read in medical discussions about mental illness, but his life provided him with first-hand experience. While Dickens's critics frequently draw on his biographical context, Trollope, whose fiction rapidly declined in popularity from the 1890s onwards, has yet to be given the same critical treatment.<sup>115</sup> His father, Thomas, suffered from a depression which was at times very acute. In his *Autobiography* (published posthumously in 1883), Anthony Trollope considers that his boyhood was 'as unhappy as that of a young gentleman could well be', principally attributing this to his father's continued misfortunes and poor temper. Financial

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<sup>114</sup> John Price, 'The Adaptive Function of Mood Change', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, no. 71 (1998), pp. 465-477. Price argues that Trollope's text demonstrates that depressive illness is not caused by social adversity itself, but by 'the failure of the triune brain to coordinate its response to social adversity [...] higher level de-escalation is blocked by moral scruples.' Trollope 'provides a paradigm of self-destructive stubbornness in his novel *He Knew He Was Right*. In such a case the therapist is in the position of the medical attendant of a boxer who insists on fighting more powerful opponents.' p. 474. Similarly, Hodson claims that Trollope's novel 'explains more about the nature of morbid jealousy than many modern textbooks.' Medical practitioners would do well to study the novel, given that the (then) current *International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (vol. 10) 'refrains from mentioning jealousy at all, except under "Alcoholics."' Hodson also notes that 'morbid' sexual jealousy is twice as common in men as in women. 'Jealous Men.'

<sup>115</sup> See Dickens's autobiographical fragment in John Forster, 'Hard Experiences in Boyhood', *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1872), I, pp. 47-70.

difficulties, he recalls, were ‘the grave of all my father’s hopes, ambition, and prosperity, the cause of my mother’s sufferings, and of those of her children.’<sup>116</sup> His father occupied ‘dingy, almost suicidal, chambers’ at Lincoln’s Inn from which to practise as a barrister, where indeed on one occasion a pupil had killed himself. Like the fictitious Louis Trevelyan, Thomas Trollope was a good man, highly protective of his sons, and became ‘plagued with so bad a temper’ that he drove others away.<sup>117</sup> Towards the end of his life, enduring chronic melancholia, Trollope’s father ‘spent nearly the half of his time in bed, suffering agony.’<sup>118</sup> Writing seven years from the end of his own life, Trollope recorded the deep impression his father’s life made on him:

I sometimes look back, meditating for hours together, on his adverse fate. He was a man, finely educated, of great parts, with immense capacity for work, physically strong very much beyond that average of men, addicted to no vices, [...] affectionate by nature, most anxious for the welfare of his children, born fair to fortunes, – who, when he started in the world, may be said to have had everything at his feet. But everything went wrong with him [...] the worst curse to him of all was a temper so irritable that even those whom he loved the best could not endure it. We were all estranged from him, and yet I believe that he would have given his heart’s blood for any of us. His life as I knew it was one long tragedy.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1946), pp. 21-22.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25; p. 22.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-6.

This autobiographical description has echoes in his fictional representation of the tragic life of Louis Trevelyan, from his fortunate beginnings with the whole world before him to his short temper, emotional distance and death.

Trollope uses the term ‘mono-maniacal’ to describe his protagonist in *He Knew He Was Right*.<sup>120</sup> Many years earlier, in 1837, J. C. Prichard defined monomania as a form of insanity ‘in which the understanding is partially disordered or under the influence of some particular illusion, referring to one subject, and involving one train of ideas, while the intellectual powers appear, when exercised on other subjects, to be in a great measure unimpaired.’<sup>121</sup> Monomaniacs presented the primary symptom of obsessive thought patterns and behaviour on one matter, developing an *idée fixe* until it overtook his or her mind entirely. After Colonel Osborne’s first few visits, uncharacteristically, Trevelyan experiences great difficulty in deciding whether to complain or apologise to his wife:

Though he believed himself to be a man very firm of purpose, his mind had oscillated backwards and forwards within the last quarter of an hour between those two purposes of being round with his wife, and of begging her pardon for the words which he had already spoken. He believed that he would best do his duty by that plan of being round with her; but then it would be so much pleasanter – at any rate so much easier, to beg her pardon [...] he was himself affected by some feeling which pervaded him in reference to this man, that all

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<sup>120</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 796.

<sup>121</sup> Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 16.

his energy was destroyed, and his powers of mind and body were paralysed. He could not, and would not, stand it.<sup>122</sup>

The firmness of mind so often reified as a characteristic of strong masculinity is discredited here, reframed as intractable stubbornness where flexibility would be more beneficial. In this oscillation within, and paralysis of, Trevelyan's mind we see the peculiar effects of pathologised jealousy begin to emerge. Even at this very early stage, Trevelyan struggles to attain the balanced, rational mode of thought that he knows he ought to have on the subject.

There is no doubt about the diagnosis of madness by the time Louis arrives in Turin, one third of the way through the novel. Trollope entitles this chapter, 'Verdict of the Jury – "Mad, my Lord"', and explains:

Now Trevelyan was, in truth, mad on the subject of his wife's alleged infidelity. He had abandoned everything that he valued in the world, and had made himself wretched in every affair of life, because he could not submit to acknowledge to himself the possibility of error on his own part. For that, in truth, was the condition of his mind.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 324-5.

The doctor at Trevelyan's death bed towards the end of the novel observes that 'his patient's thoughts had been forced to dwell on one subject till they had become distorted, untrue, jaundiced, and perhaps mono-maniacal.'<sup>124</sup> The final chapter opens with the statement, 'At last the maniac was dead, and in his last moments he had made such reparation as was in his power for the evil that he had done.'<sup>125</sup> Trollope considered that the greatest problem with the novel was that he had failed to 'create sympathy for the unfortunate man' who was his protagonist.<sup>126</sup> Proclamations of relief following Trevelyan's death certainly appear to forego sympathy.

From the opening of the novel we have been told that Trevelyan 'was wise in many things', but not all, and that 'as Lady Rowley was the first to find out, he liked to have his own way.' Problematically, 'Emily likes her way too', as her mother notes, and although she will obey Louis's direct commands, she will not do so in silence. Her father, Sir Marmaduke Rowley, is less observant of the differences between daughters, wondering 'with eight of them coming up around him, how should he have observed their tempers?' He decides that, 'At any rate, if there were anything amiss with Emily's temper, it would be well that she should find her master in such a man as Louis Trevelyan.'<sup>127</sup> In the course of the marriage, however, Trevelyan attempts to keep his instincts for mastery in check in favour of a companionate marriage, but is unable to achieve this balance. Christopher Herbert has argued against 'a monolithic system of "male superiority and command"', suggesting instead that Victorian marriage 'amalgamates two distinct principles almost impossible fully to reconcile [...] on the one hand, the principle of male supremacy so deeply rooted in custom and

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<sup>124</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 796.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 820.

<sup>126</sup> Frank Kermode, Introduction, *He Knew He Was Right*, p. ix.

<sup>127</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, pp. 10-11.



law and, on the other, the great cult of Home,' as idealised by Ruskin and defined by Stone as 'companionate marriage.'<sup>128</sup> Trevelyan's mastery becomes monomaniacal and despotic as his actions quickly veer off in the direction of tyranny. Meanwhile, his rhetoric, repeating that Emily has free will, and need only admit to flirtation and wrongdoing in order to live at her marital home, indicates his anxiety to return to a peaceful, companionate mode.

Marriage manuals and gift-books of the period tended to recommend that husbands see enforced obedience as an option, either as a first resort, or if more companionable efforts failed. Such measures are seen as assertions of masculinity. William Landels' popular and internationally published 1883 book, *The Marriage Ring*, devotes a chapter to the subject of 'The Wife Submitting to the Husband.'<sup>129</sup> Initially, Landels appears unusually favourable to women's interests, observing that many wives 'have too much reason to complain of man's domineering tendencies, and of the little regard paid to woman's feelings by many of the stronger sex, who in all but brute force are inferior to themselves.'<sup>130</sup> However, although Landels does not suggest violence as a solution to a wife's disobedience, he questions the mental capacities of those who, having read the Bible, would choose not to submit: 'We are confident that every sensible woman would prefer to be so guided.'<sup>131</sup>

At the Trevelyan household on Curzon Street, Trollope demonstrates the failure of attempts to impose the male will, which picks apart an almost too-perfect family idyll. Mr Trevelyan observes that 'his baby was very nice', 'his wife was

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<sup>128</sup> Herbert, 'He Knew He Was Right, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and the Duplicities of Victorian Marriage', p. 451.

<sup>129</sup> William Landels, *The Marriage Ring: A Gift-Book for the Newly-Married and for Those Contemplating Marriage* (London, Paris and New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1883), p. 211.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 211

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 215.

clever, pretty, and attractive’, and begins to ‘think that he should like to have his own way completely.’<sup>132</sup> Having demanded that Emily not receive Colonel Osborne at home, Louis soon notes that ‘so far he had hardly gained much by the enforced obedience of his wife.’<sup>133</sup> Louis is acutely aware that his behaviour actually threatens his status as a gentleman and as a man, and he berates himself for it, notwithstanding his belief that were he to be cuckold, he would lose his manhood entirely:

He had meant to have acted in a high-minded, honest, manly manner; but circumstances had been so untoward with him, that on looking at his own conduct, it seemed to him to have been mean, and almost false and cowardly.<sup>134</sup>

The early warning signs of Louis’s monomania continue to take shape through this section of the novel, as he exhibits distorted ways of thinking about the subject of his wife’s alleged infidelity. Trollope evokes the humours, writing that ‘the cloud upon Trevelyan’s brow became blacker than before.’<sup>135</sup> Emily has obeyed him in promising not to see Osborne, but has done so reluctantly, repeating that her husband has insulted her in deeming such a promise necessary. Louis has extorted the pledge he has desired, but immediately and unreasonably wants more: for his wife willingly and quietly to obey his commands without question. He considers that in obeying him grudgingly, Emily has ‘had her triumph.’<sup>136</sup> Her determination to put their quarrel behind them is

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<sup>132</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

read by Louis as ‘being treated as a naughty boy, who was to be forgiven’: another threat to his manliness, this time affronting to his sense of maturity.<sup>137</sup> Michelle Rosaldo argues that:

A woman becomes a woman by following in her mother’s footsteps, whereas there must be a break in a man’s experience. For a boy to become an adult, he must prove himself – his masculinity – among his peers. And although all boys may succeed in reaching manhood, cultures treat this development as something that each individual has achieved.<sup>138</sup>

Accordingly, Louis feels, rather unreasonably, that his wife’s tolerance is an affront to his masculinity, although he would have been yet more affronted without it. We are informed that ‘Emily worked very hard at her mission of forgiveness, and hardly ceased in her efforts at conciliatory conversation.’<sup>139</sup> Trollope suggests that ‘Women can work so much harder in this way than men find it possible to do!’ In her husband’s eyes, ‘She never flagged, but continued to be fluent, conciliatory, and intolerably wearisome.’<sup>140</sup> His wife’s fulfilment of her dutiful role in smoothing over domestic quarrels riles, rather than reassures, Trevelyan.

In the early stages of his monomania, there is ample evidence that Trevelyan is of entirely sound mind in other aspects of his life. He is a learned, clever man, and

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<sup>137</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 56.

<sup>138</sup> Michelle Z. Rosaldo, ‘A theoretical overview’, *Woman, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 28.

<sup>139</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 56.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

maintains his commitment to scholarship in the midst of his marital quarrels. Downstairs in his study, he writes articles for scientific journals. Trollope sets him up in slightly Carlylean terms as a heroic man of letters, but he is ‘popular as well as wise, not a book-worm, or a dry philosopher, or a prig.’<sup>141</sup> Trollope introduces Trevelyan as a graduate of Cambridge, but later writes that he was at Oxford.<sup>142</sup> At any rate he has received a university education, met Hugh Stanbury in the process, and is something of a gentleman scholar. As well as his scientific work he has published a volume of poetry.<sup>143</sup> However, a kind of mental block seems to prevent him from thinking lucidly and rationally about his wife. Having idealised and idolised her from the time of meeting her in the Mandarin Islands to a couple of years after their marriage, he becomes suspicious with alarming rapidity as Trollope begins ‘Showing How the Wrath Began’ – the title of the first chapter.<sup>144</sup>

He told himself he withdrew because he would not allow himself to be jealous; but in truth he did so because he knew he could not have brought himself to be civil to the man he hated. So he sat down, and took up his pen, and began to cudgel his brain about the scientific article. He was intent on raising a dispute with some learned pundit about the waves of sound – but he could think of no other sound than that of the light steps of Colonel Osborne as he had gone

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<sup>141</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9; p. 35.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

upstairs. He put down his pen, and clenched his fist, and allowed a black frown to settle upon his brow.<sup>145</sup>

Trollope's depiction of blackened skin typifies the hybridity of Victorian lay understandings of melancholia, which combine the new psychological theory of the period with the Asclepian models of the bodily humours, restated in the seventeenth century by Robert Burton.

For Louis Trevelyan, this dark frown is a symptom of his mental decline. His work increasingly becomes a refuge from his marital problems, detrimentally reinforcing his distance from Emily, and excusing himself from being present on the Colonel's visits, allowing him to imagine the worst. This act of retreat is designed to maintain a state of gentlemanliness, avoiding a confrontation or the revelation of Trevelyan's hatred, and but in fact, on regular repetition, becomes the ungentlemanly habit of neglect of his young wife, and increases the jealousy which precedes his psychological abuse of her. Trollope's reference to a clenched fist forges an association between Trevelyan and physical violence: the height of ungentlemanly behaviour towards women.

Gradually Emily comes to see her husband's erratic demands and jealous disposition as unmanly, finally declaring, 'if he does not behave himself with more manliness – I will leave him.'<sup>146</sup> She perceives the state of marriage as detrimental to her own mental health as well as her husband's, and intends to separate if the situation does not improve. To continue as they are is 'out of the question': 'I should either

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<sup>145</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 19.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

destroy myself or go mad.’<sup>147</sup> Although obedience to their husband’s will was both a legal requirement and a social norm for wives, Trevelyan’s demands are particularly stringent. The language of submission Trollope uses is unquestionably oppressive: ‘Had she always been able to keep her neck in the dust under his foot, their married life might have passed without outward calamity.’<sup>148</sup> Such metaphors of violence highlight the gulf between Trevelyan’s ideal of companionate marriage, and the reality of the level of unquestioning obedience that he demands of his wife.

Kidnapping his own child is undoubtedly a step beyond socially acceptable behaviour for Louis. Mrs Bozzle remonstrates with her husband that whatever the legality of such a move, it is unnatural and unjust. Marlene Tromp has observed that the novel ‘illustrates the legal and social impossibility of rescuing a child from a father, except under extreme circumstances, and then only until the child was seven years of age.’<sup>149</sup> The circumstances of the Trevelyans are not sufficiently extreme. Louis is widely acknowledged to be both cruel and mad by this stage in the novel. As such, he may be categorised as an ‘unreasonable and dictatorial’ man, according to Sarah Stickney Ellis’s definition in *Wives of England*.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, as Lord Marmaduke repeatedly notes, the courts would undoubtedly and unjustly uphold his child custody rights.

Trevelyan’s wife, closest friend, and members of his wife’s family all attempt and fail to convince him that he is wrong on the subject of his monomania, using the language of madness to do so. Mrs. Outhouse, Emily’s aunt, observes to her husband

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<sup>147</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 78.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 818.

<sup>149</sup> Tromp, *The Private Rod*, p. 167.

<sup>150</sup> Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Wives of England* (London: Fisher, 1843), p. 593.

that Trevelyan is ‘quite insane upon this matter’, and Reverend Outhouse himself declares, ‘It’s the most monstrous thing that I ever heard in all my life. He ought to be locked up – that’s what he ought!’<sup>151</sup> Even Bozzle tries and fails to reason with him. Under the influence of his own wife, the unscrupulous retired policeman eventually concludes that it would be immoral to continue in Trevelyan’s employ as a spy on Emily, since ‘he’s disturbed in his mind – quite ‘orrid [...] he cursed and swore as made even me feel bad.’<sup>152</sup> Lady Rowley tells Trevelyan that ‘if any man was ever wrong, mad, madly mistaken, you are so now.’<sup>153</sup> Louis’ observance that ‘she tells me that I am ill’ and comes to ‘accuse’ him of madness, is not followed by the denial we see in place earlier in the novel.<sup>154</sup> However, he insists, ‘I am not so beside myself as yet, Lady Rowley, but that I know how to guard my own honour and to protect my own child.’<sup>155</sup> This implied acknowledgement that he is at least beside himself to some extent, and likely to become more so, marks a point of surprising lucidity of thought before his rationality declines sharply.

Trollope makes a specific point about the imperfections of wealthy marriages, remarking that ‘From all this it will appear that the great godsend of a rich marriage, with all manner of attendant comforts, which had come in the way of the Rowley family as they were living at the Mandarins, had not turned out to be an unmixed blessing.’<sup>156</sup> Hugh Stanbury and Nora Rowley marry on a low income at the end of the novel, and yet they are expected to be very happy because their temperaments are well suited. Crucially though, theirs, like the other marriages at the end of the novel, is

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<sup>151</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 513; p. 344.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

founded on female submission. However veiled by apparently idyllic love and companionship, male domination is still the expected dynamic. Caroline Spalding expresses her wish to end her engagement to Mr. Glascock, but he asserts his will and ‘was so strong that he treated her almost as a child; - yet she loved him infinitely the better for so treating her.’ This unsettling response is presented as a natural one, justified by her admission, ‘You must be master I suppose, whether you are right or wrong. A man always thinks himself entitled to have his own way.’<sup>157</sup> Glascock even alludes to imprisoning his fiancée, declaring that ‘when he has won the battle, he claims his captive.’<sup>158</sup> As a single woman Caroline’s assertive American manners and determination to have her own way are emphasised, but in her engagement and marriage she gladly adopts a submissive role.

As Lisa Surridge has argued, Dorothy Stanbury’s marriage to Brooke Burgess follows a similar model, ‘in which apparently egalitarian and companionate relationships are revealed to be underpinned by male power.’<sup>159</sup> Surridge grounds her work on *He Knew He Was Right* in that of Christopher Herbert, the first critic to read the novel simultaneously as a study of psychological abnormality and a process of cultural criticism. In addition, I suggest that having been hitherto largely controlled by her elder sister Priscilla, and then her aunt Jemima, Dorothy is especially vulnerable to the demands of a dominating husband. Trollope does not present Mr Burgess, Mr Glascock or Mr Stanbury as such men; but we might remember that Louis Trevelyan initially seemed reasonable. With his glowing report of Louis Trevelyan at the very

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<sup>157</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 680.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 680.

<sup>159</sup> Surridge, *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), p. 167.



opening of the novel, Trollope sets up a model gentleman who has a great deal to lose, and a pinnacle of health from which to fall into melancholia, madness and death.

The Trevelyans' case reveals the difficulties of a companionate mode of marriage, in which submission is desired, but had better not be demanded, since this is not the premise on which the marriage is based. Emily insists that she will obey direct orders from Louis, and he is desperate for her to do as he wishes. Emily has what is fondly called in Victorian novels an 'independent spirit', but from the first chapter, Emily explains to her sister, Nora, 'If he gives me any command I will obey it.'<sup>160</sup> Nonetheless, Louis prefers not to shatter his illusions of a companionate marriage, largely rejecting the option of explicitly dictating Emily's actions in favour of descent into a jealous mania. The narrator wonders:

how was the poor girl to conduct herself properly when subjected to the arts and practised villainies of this viper? And yet the poor girl was so stiff in her temper, had picked up such a trick of obstinacy in those tropical regions, that Louis Trevelyan felt that he did not know how to manage her.<sup>161</sup>

His ideal marriage dynamic is not one of overt mastery and submission, but of a subtler management of his wife, allowing for her individual freedom. Like Soames Forsyte, he wishes to believe that his wife's submission is the result of her own free will. In actuality, such an arrangement is successful only so long as Emily's use of this

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<sup>160</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 17.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

freedom matches her husband's wishes. This period of contingent happiness is brief, ending a couple of years after their return from a honeymoon tour. To compound the perceived difficulties of Emily's 'inferior' colonial manners, Trevelyan's own temperament precludes the ability either to accept blame or to forgive. While 'he knew that he had insulted his wife', 'he was one to whose nature the giving of any apology was repulsive. He could not bear to have to own himself to have been wrong.'<sup>162</sup>

The tragedy of a husband's complete inability to think outside this set of grooves is explored more openly in later fiction, such as *The Forsyte Saga* (1906-21). Referring to Mrs General, Dickens writes in *Little Dorrit* that 'to be unable to measure the change beyond our view, by any larger standard than the shrunken one of our own uniform and contracted existence; is the infirmity of many invalids, and the mental unhealthiness of almost all recluses.'<sup>163</sup> This mental infirmity is evident in Trevelyan, whose lack of empathy means that he seems genuinely surprised that his wife has suffered during their separation. In fact Emily and her parents have explained this to him on many occasions: that she was miserable in her exile and wished to be reunited with her husband on reasonable terms. In his blinkered, monomaniacal thinking, Trevelyan has not listened to this hitherto, considering it further evidence of women's characteristic powers of deception.

Emily's frustration at her husband's failure to attempt to empathise with her feelings is an idea extended in Hardy's *Tess*, who exclaims to Alec D'Urberville, 'My God! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every

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<sup>162</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 15.

<sup>163</sup> *Little Dorrit*, p. 285.

woman says some women may feel?’<sup>164</sup> Trevelyan’s inability to place himself in another’s shoes is presented as weakness, in the context of his deteriorating rational faculties. By transferring this kind of mental weakness to male characters, Trollope and Galsworthy present a specific challenge to the dominant Victorian model of masculinity, which was predicated on the rationality and independence of male thought.

Trollope’s 1869 novel contrasts sharply with other portrayals of madness from the same decade. Unlike the sensational portraits of female madness in *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Trollope’s narrative forgoes overt melodrama, while still addressing the concerns at the heart of the public panic about madness, such as wrongful confinement. By setting his novel in a typical upper-class home in Mayfair, rather than a rural estate, Trollope creates an uncomfortable sense of proximity to other families. Any door one walked by on a London street could conceal male madness within. When Trollope shifts the action to the more exotic backdrop of Italy, various characters make comments which return our attention to concrete reality. Louis’s own attempt to maintain a connection with the real world comes, ironically, by quoting *King Lear*: he asks Hugh Stanbury, ‘with an affected air of ease,’ ‘What’s the news? Who’s alive? Who dead? Who in? Who out?’<sup>165</sup> This disconcerting pairing of the ordinary with the tragic increases the unheimlich effect, and reinforces Trollope’s blurring of the line between sanity and insanity.

Simon Gatrell has juxtaposed this scene with Trollope’s critique of transport refreshments: ‘On the one hand we have made present to us the universal scale of a

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 77.

<sup>165</sup> *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 768.

heroic world – on the other a world epitomised by the observation that “the real disgrace of England is the railway sandwich.”<sup>166</sup> The effect is deeply unsettling. The narrative, like a disturbed mind, hops about between inconsequential details and sincere cogitation. This impression of confusion heightens our impression of the intensity of Trevelyan’s distress which, I suggest, amounts not only to insanity, but to what would later be termed an ‘existential crisis.’ Herbert proposes that Trevelyan’s ‘lunatic flight to a desolate Italian hilltop can only be seen as a desperate attempt to divest himself of the institutionalized English self which he has understood at last to be the source of his woes.’<sup>167</sup> This ‘institutionalized English self,’ I argue, is the particular model of perfect gentlemanliness to which Trevelyan aspires.

Ashamed of the extremes of ungentlemanliness he has reached, particularly in sending his wife and sister-in-law into exile in Devon, and in the kidnap of his young son, Trevelyan’s escape to Italy can be read not only as a hermitic symptom of deteriorating monomania, but also as a desperate, final attempt to protect his wife from further injustice by him and to shield himself from the watchful eyes of London upper-class society. Surridge argues that the scrutiny of the private self by others (through the courts, the private detective and the newspaper) is the primary theme of the novel. Although I suggest instead that a tragic case of monomania in the marriage relationship lies at the centre of the novel, the boundaries of public and private, and the crossing of those boundaries by intrusive scrutiny by others do indeed have an effect on the psychology of maintaining gentlemanliness.

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<sup>166</sup> Gatrell, ‘Jealousy, Mastery, Love and Madness’, p. 99.

<sup>167</sup> Herbert, ‘*He Knew He Was Right*, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and the Duplicities of Victorian Marriage’, p. 461.

I have suggested that the novel should not be read primarily in terms of the limitations on female agency, but those applying to male, and particularly gentlemanly male agency, and attempts to reclaim agency by the reassertion of male marriage rights. By tricking his wife and paying strangers to snatch the child under cover of darkness, Trevelyan blurs the line between psychological abuse and violent action. Later fiction would figure such violent reassertions in physically sexualised terms, as we shall see. In focussing on masculinity Trollope refigures the Victorian marriage plot as primarily male. He is additionally subversive in beginning the novel with what appears to be a happy marriage, twisting this into a failed marriage plot involving psychological abuse, only narrowly avoiding physical violence, and ending in a tragic crisis of gentlemanliness and insanity. Trollope's discussion of these themes is as explicit as it could have been within the confines of a respectable publication of the 1860s. By highlighting the legal yet deplorable paternal kidnapping of little Louis, I suggest that Trollope veils a more violent (yet also legal) attempt by a jealous monomaniac to abusively wrench a child from his wife, which Galsworthy's later generation put him at liberty to reveal: the act of marital rape.

#### **IV: *The Forsyte Saga*: possession and property**

The first novel of the saga, *The Man of Property* (1906), set from 1886-7, centres on Soames Forsyte, the wealthy solicitor to whom the title refers, and his marriage to the beautiful and enigmatic, but largely silent, Irene Heron. Galsworthy's preface to the 1922 edition of the complete saga, cites 'possessive instincts': 'the tribal instinct' and 'sense of home and property' as his primary concerns. In particular, he is interested in the inroads made by 'the wild raiders, Beauty and Passion' into these values, 'filching

security from beneath our noses.’ Male figures of possession in Galsworthy’s novel fight hard to defend their assets, manifested as houses, money, valuable jewellery and women. ‘As surely as a dog will bark at a brass band, so will the essential Soames in human nature ever rise up uneasily against the dissolution which hovers round the folds of ownership.’<sup>168</sup> Alarmingly, Galsworthy clarifies that Soames’s Forsytean nature (and later, villainy), are not set apart from humanity at large. His instincts are neither foreign nor freakish, instead being thoroughly embedded not only in late-Victorian upper-class culture, but in primal human nature itself. ‘Human Nature, under its changing pretensions and clothes, is, and ever will be very much of a Forsyte, and might, after all, be a much worse animal.’<sup>169</sup>

The disturbance that beauty, principally represented in the novel by Irene, effects in the lives of the Forsytes, makes the perceived necessity of possessing and subduing this quality all the greater. Soames is a collector of paintings; the ownership of beautiful items pleases him, as does his consciousness of their monetary value. After he has added Irene to his collection she becomes the pinnacle of his achievement as a middle-class consumer, and his most prized possession. While the narrative frequently places itself within the mind of characters such as Soames, James and Old Jolyon Forsyte, Galsworthy emphasises Irene’s status as object by depicting her only through the eyes of others. Her own perspective is never described.

The entire family is aware of the danger of Irene’s beauty. Old Jolyon is perhaps the most careful observer of the Forsytes. He is drawn to Irene but cannot pin down the nature of his attraction:

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<sup>168</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

he had seen enough of Irene to feel the spell she cast over men. She was not a flirt, not even a coquette [...] but she was dangerous. He could not say why. Tell him of a quality innate in some women – a seductive power beyond their own control!<sup>170</sup>

Irene's enigmatic appeal as a 'passive goddess' is inseparable from her sensuality:

it was her lips – asking a question, giving an answer, with that shadowy smile – that men looked; they were sensitive lips, sensuous and sweet, and through them seemed to come warmth and perfume like the warmth and perfume of a flower.<sup>171</sup>

With such descriptions Galsworthy sets the scene for Soames's desire to possess her, from the beginning highlighting her passivity which, alongside her lack of fortune, makes her prey to his predatory advances.

To the outside world, Soames appears to be an excellent husband. His maintenance of an exterior of perfect gentlemanliness is, as for other abusive partners, essential. In depicting Soames' carefully maintained façade, Galsworthy draws attention to the 'private rod' that Collins had recognised as governing the Fosco marriage.<sup>172</sup> In consequence of this process of keeping up appearances, Irene's father-

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<sup>170</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 205.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> Collins, *The Woman in White*, p. 174.

in-law tells her, 'I can't think what you're about. He's a very good husband!' Irene's answer, 'almost inaudible among the sounds of traffic', is simply, 'You are not married to him!' Unable to understand the problem, James asks

What's that got to do with it? He's given you everything you want [...] he doesn't say much, but I can see he won't stand a great deal more of this sort of thing. You'll have nobody but yourself to blame, and, what's more, you'll get no sympathy from anybody.<sup>173</sup>

Marriage to Soames has raised Irene from obscurity as the daughter of a dead, penniless professor with no connections to the wife of an upper-class professional man of property. However, miserable a loveless, stifling marriage, Irene requests that Soames keep his pre-nuptial promise: that if their marriage was not a success she should be as free as if she had never married him. Denying her this, Soames becomes increasingly possessive, following Irene's movements, and struggling to restrain his instinct for sexual possession.

Unlike Louis Trevelyan's, Soames Forsyte's suspicions about his wife's infidelity are correct. Irene's affair with Bosinney, the fiancé of her husband's cousin June, and the architect her husband has commissioned to build their new home, does not end until his death. Following Irene's admission to her lover that Soames has raped her the previous night, Bosinney sets off in a rage. He intends to attack Soames but is run over in the fog on the way. The news of his death is not known until the following

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<sup>173</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, pp. 214-5.



day when he fails to appear in court, where he is being sued by Soames. Suicide and accident are the verdicts given by most members of the Forsyte family, but a Police Inspector tells Old Jolyon, 'I don't believe in suicide, nor in pure accident, myself. It's more likely I think that he was suffering under great stress of mind, and took no notice of things about him.'<sup>174</sup>

Catherine Gallagher has made a study of Malthus and Godwin's early nineteenth-century arguments on the issue of sexual restraint, identifying 'the vindication of sexual passion as a rational pleasure' as 'an essential component of the grand design of Malthus's argument', under which he classifies sexual abstinence as 'misery' (as opposed to his other category, 'vice').<sup>175</sup> Godwin, in comparison, appears to have favoured the repression of the body's demands. Despite the fact that virility was as a key tenet of the dominant ideal of masculinity in the period, I suggest that Godwin's argument for repression represents a code of morality deeply ingrained in that same doctrine of masculinity. Soames, in the later setting of the 1880s (and depicted by Galsworthy in the years following writing on the dangers of repression by Freud, Krafft-Ebing and others), is presented as struggling with this code, failing to sustain sexual repression in the long-term context of his cooling marital relations. He finally cracks, becoming violent, and eventually raping Irene in an attempt to assert his ownership over her body.

The act of rape had been veiled increasingly thinly in the fiction of preceding decades. The possibility of a violent sexual attack haunts the narrative of sensation

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<sup>174</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 291.

<sup>175</sup> Catherine Gallagher, 'The Body Versus the Social Body in Malthus and Mayhew', *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Lacqueur (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), p. 88.

fiction from the 1860s, for instance. D. A. Miller has argued persuasively that rape can be figured as what Roland Barthes would call the 'symbolic mode' of *The Woman in White*. The vague fear of such an act is present during Anne and Walter's first encounter at the beginning of the novel, and later 'what Fosco finally accomplishes when he reads Marian's *journal intime* – is virtual rape. We might consider what is implied or at stake in the fact that the head game of suspicion is always implicitly transcoded by the novel into the body game of rape.'<sup>176</sup> Marian is:

firmly abandoned by Walter's erotic interest and forcibly seduced by Fosco's. The two tactics cohere in a single strategy, since perhaps the most important fantasy feature of rape is the reaffirmation of the rapist's unimpaired capacity to withdraw, the integrity of his body (if not his victim's) recovered intact. (Fosco, we recall, returns to Marian the journal he has indelibly signed, and she, eventually, is stuck with it.)<sup>177</sup>

In his description of Tess, Hardy deplores the indelible imprint of rape upon its victim, asking 'Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissues, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive.'<sup>178</sup> Writing in the early twentieth century Galsworthy was able to lay bare what earlier fiction had only implied. Although Irene's rape takes place outside narrative space, we are left (as with Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) in no doubt as to what the 'incident of the night before' entailed.<sup>179</sup> The sight and sound of

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<sup>176</sup> D. A. Miller, 'Cage aux folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*', in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Lacqueur (London: University of California Press, 1987), p. 116.

<sup>177</sup> D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1988), p. 181.

<sup>178</sup> *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, p. 74.

<sup>179</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 253.

Irene during the rape haunts Soames during the following day, depicted with a graphic clarity that was unthinkable for Victorian writers. Soames dismisses the rape as being ‘not of great moment’, though ‘women made a fuss about it in books,’ comforted by the recollection that it carried no weight in the ‘cool judgment of right-thinking men’ in the Divorce Court.<sup>180</sup> Nonetheless, his nerves are shaken by ‘nightmare doubts’ and the haunting ‘sound of smothered sobbing’ pulsing in his ears.<sup>181</sup>

Browning’s early monologues, such as ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ (1836) and ‘My Last Duchess’ (1842), explore this same tyrannical determination to control women’s minds by controlling their bodies. While Irene’s beauty is presented as an extension of Soames’s painting collection, Browning’s last duchess is represented by a portrait. The Duke of Ferrara’s complaint that his duchess ‘liked whate’er/ She looked on, and her looks went everywhere’ is parallel with the extreme sexual jealousy shown by both Soames Forsyte and Louis Trevelyan.<sup>182</sup> The blinkered sense of certainty that accompanies monomania rises up in Porphyria, who asserts ownership by strangling his lover with her hair – a mark of her beauty: ‘In one long yellow string I wound / Three times her little throat around.’<sup>183</sup>

Soames’s anger increases with rumination, bubbling beneath the surface, barely contained until finally it bursts forth, running at a door to break it down, or crushing a teacup in his hand.<sup>184</sup> The narrative makes repeated connections with Soames’s hot blood, which rises with the heat of the season. There is an Indian summer the year that

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<sup>180</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 250.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250-1.

<sup>182</sup> Browning, *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (London and Glasgow: Collins, n.d.).

<sup>183</sup> Browning, ‘Porphyria’s Lover,’ *Ibid.* These jealous men are contrasted against Browning’s representations of masculinity as ‘chivalrous Christianity’ in Clinton Machann’s *Masculinity in Four Victorian Epics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 107-40.

<sup>184</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 218.

his house at Robin Hill is completed, and his wife's affair with the architect begins. Soames sits at home that October, observing: 'the weather kept as gloriously fine that year as though it were still high August. It was not pleasant to be disturbed; he desired too passionately to set his foot on Bosinney's neck.'<sup>185</sup> Robin Hill, which is intended as a kind of monument to Soames's property rights and state of married perfection (by achieving Irene's isolation), fails to assuage his desire for ownership. It is only once he has achieved the assertion of his property rights by raping Irene that the weather finally cools, with 'the fog of late November wrapping the town as in some monstrous blanket till the trees of the Square were barely visible from the dining-room window,' mirroring the enshrouding of his marital relations, once the stuff of family gossip, in a thicker layer of secrecy.<sup>186</sup>

Soames attempts, and for long periods succeeds, to keep his violent sexual jealousy private. The pressure of this heats the blood in his veins, as outwardly he maintains his characteristic 'lack of sentiment peculiarly Forsytean.'<sup>187</sup> Even with his 'supercilious calm unbroken,' those who know him well, like his father, can see that he was 'violently angry' on hearing about his architect's over-expenditure of £400, for which he decides to sue.

Bosinney had put himself completely in the wrong. How on earth a fellow could make such an ass of himself Soames could not conceive; but he had done so, and all the rancour and hidden jealousy that had been burning against him for so long was now focussed in rage at this crowning piece of extravagance.

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<sup>185</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 225.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The attitude of the confident and friendly husband was gone. To preserve property – his wife – he had assumed it, to preserve property of another kind he lost it now.<sup>188</sup>

Despite his exertion in trying to maintain a cool exterior, both in his business disagreement with Bosinney and his sexual rivalry, Soames repeatedly accuses his wife of coldness.

Complaints about one's wife were widely considered to be unmanly in the period in which the novel is set. Although her opinions on other aspects of gendered behaviour were controversial, Eliza Lynn Linton expressed a common view in writing that 'A man who speaks of [his wife's] faults as they appear to him, and as he suffers by them, is illiberal and unmanly.'<sup>189</sup> Soames prides himself on what he sees as liberal reason (both in his dealings with Irene and Bosinney), but he imposes vital limits – Irene may be 'free' to decorate the house as she chooses, for instance, but must provide him with a son, and not associate with her only friend, June, in whom he fears that she confides. To be called unmanly or *ungentlemanly* would be a serious insult to Soames. Despite his insistence that his marriage must not become drawing room gossip, Soames complains to his indiscreet mother about Irene. Uncertain whether to believe Irene's claim that she is not 'carrying on a flirtation with Bosinney,' his blood boils until he can hide it no longer.<sup>190</sup> Irene's serene appearance and ability to hide her passions from him increases Soames's fury at being unable to see or control her mind,

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<sup>188</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, pp. 216-7.

<sup>189</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, 'Pinchbeck', *The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays* (London: Bentley and Son, 1883), pp. 81-2.

<sup>190</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 218.

and consequently his desperation to control her by forcing her body into submission rises.

The sight of her inscrutable face, the thought of all the hundreds of evenings he had seen her sitting there like that soft and passive, but so unreadable, unknown, enraged him beyond measure [...]. Soames gripped her arm. 'A good beating,' he said, 'is the only thing that would bring you to your senses,' but turning on his heel, he left the room.<sup>191</sup>

His wife's lover seems to haunt Soames:

he was never free from the sense of his presence – never free from the memory of his worn face with its high cheek bones and enthusiastic eyes [...] the feeling that Bosinney haunted the house. And every man's shape that he saw in the dark evenings walking past, seemed that of him whom George had so appropriately named the Buccaneer.<sup>192</sup>

In the midst of this personal crisis, Soames's proprietorial instincts do not desert him, but rather intensify. He is desperate to avoid 'making his marital relations public property.'<sup>193</sup> Its circulation amongst his family (particularly when Irene asks for a separate bedroom), quite naturally, riles him, but his response is disproportionate.

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<sup>191</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 218.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

Perhaps just as naturally for a Forsyte, especially one whom uncle Jolyon has named, ‘The Man of Property’, Irene is his prized possession.<sup>194</sup> For a time, although he still ‘made a point’ of asking where she has been, Soames prefers not to know too much, ‘deterred by a vague and secret dread of too much knowledge.’ That information must remain under cover – ‘subterranean’, in fact.<sup>195</sup>

When Soames decides to ‘take steps to make [her]’ ‘treat [him] as a husband’, he asserts his marital rights to Irene’s body by rape.<sup>196</sup> This is the ultimate act of ‘a man of property’, he is calling in what he sees as a debt which is long overdue. Galsworthy devotes many pages to Soames’s inner turmoil after the event. He is wracked with guilt, further disordering his thought processes. Galsworthy opens this chapter, entitled ‘Voyage into the Inferno’, with a striking and ironic statement which follows a distorted perspective with a clear fact: ‘The morning after a certain night on which Soames at last asserted his rights and acted like a man, he breakfasted alone.’<sup>197</sup> Although legally Soames has indeed acted like a man in forcing himself on his wife, crucially he has failed entirely to act as a *gentleman* in so doing.

Soames’s consequent isolation and damaged self-identity continues throughout the remaining narrative: he is aware of having committed a legally permissible yet socially unspeakable act. Although at first the secrecy is reassuring (‘One thought comforted him: No one would know – it was not the sort of thing that she would speak about’), his isolation with his own doubting and increasingly insane thoughts gradually

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<sup>194</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, 244.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

becomes intolerable.<sup>198</sup> Having been certain of the rightness of his actions throughout his life, he is now plagued by doubt.

He ate steadily, but at times a sensation as though he could not swallow attacked him. Had he been right to yield to his overmastering hunger of the night before, and break down the resistance which he had suffered now too long from this woman who was his lawful and solemnly constituted helpmate? He was strangely haunted by the recollection of her face, from before which, to soothe her, he had tried to pull her hands – of her terrible smothered sobbing, the like of which he had never heard, and still seemed to hear; and he was still haunted by the odd, intolerable feeling of remorse and shame he had felt, as he stood looking at her by the flame of the single candle, before silently slinking away.<sup>199</sup>

In the course of his commute to work, however, Soames's habitual stubbornness briefly protects himself from the extremities of guilt:

those nightmare-like doubts began to assume less extravagant proportions at the back of his mind [...] women made a great fuss about it in books; but in the cool judgement of right-thinking men, of men of the world, of such as he

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<sup>198</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 250.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.



recollected often received praise in the Divorce Court, he had but done his best to sustain the sanctity of marriage.<sup>200</sup>

Once secure in his first-class compartment on the Underground train from Sloane Square to the City, however, ‘the smothered sobbing still haunted him.’ He opens *The Times* to distract himself, with a ‘rich crackle that drowns all lesser sounds’, and becomes ‘barricaded behind it’, but is confronted by news of violent acts:

a more than usually long list of offences. He read of three murders, five manslaughters, seven arsons, and as many as eleven – a surprisingly high number – rapes, in addition to many less conspicuous crimes.<sup>201</sup>

‘Inseparable from his reading,’ rises up ‘the memory of Irene’s tear-stained face, and the sounds from her broken heart.’<sup>202</sup> The assertion of his rights is reconfigured by Soames’s guilt-wracked mind as a violent crime, utterly incompatible with his perception and presentation of himself as a gentleman.

This is one of many instances in which Galsworthy uses the behaviour of individual characters to denounce an entire age, which appeared to him to sanctify a veneer of gentlemanliness and respectability, but without requiring the same standard behind closed doors. In the chapter, ‘Passing of an Age’, in *In Chancery* (1920), the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>201</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 251. Galsworthy’s choice of the word ‘conspicuous’ further highlights that Soames’s main anxiety is about secrecy rather than ethics.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

second novel of the saga, Galsworthy expands upon this concern. The year is 1901 and the occasion is Soames's marriage to Annette, a poor young French waitress to whom, like Irene, he offers social status and a considerable fortune, but at the cost of an unhappy, loveless marriage. Galsworthy's narrator reflects on the preceding sixty-four years of Victoria's reign, cataloguing its social evils, inventions and manners, observing that:

God had become Mammon – Mammon so respectable as to deceive himself [...]. An epoch which had gilded individual liberty so that if a man had money, he was free in law and fact, and if he had not money he was free in law and not in fact.

It was 'an era which had canonised hypocrisy, so that to seem to be respectable was to be.'<sup>203</sup> Although guilty of marital brutality and rape, Soames is a somewhat pitiable figure. Such a reading is not, Galsworthy's preface explains, subversive:

Far from it! He, too, pities Soames, the tragedy of whose life is the very simple, uncontrollable tragedy of being unlovable, without quite a thick enough skin to be thoroughly unconscious of the fact.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 567.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Soames himself does not treat others sympathetically, considering that ‘It is high time a stand was made against this sentimental humanitarianism.’<sup>205</sup>

Perversely, it is Irene’s desertion following the rape that produces Galsworthy’s presentation of Soames as the most pitiable: ‘Soames smiled; his peculiar, supercilious smile had never before looked pitiable.’<sup>206</sup> As he informs his parents of Irene’s disappearance, Soames (who is usually clear and expansive in speech) stammers, saying simply, ‘she – she’s left me.’ Soames’s mind appears to shut down.<sup>207</sup> His raging madness has left him exhausted, and unable to process the realities of the incomprehensible position in which he finds himself, his mind slows, until he is barely conscious. ‘Soames, in the long silence that followed, felt his mother pressing his hand. And all that passed seemed to pass as though his own power of thinking or doing had gone to sleep.’<sup>208</sup> He takes to his bed and remains there for some weeks in the dark, accepting little food or company, much like Louis Trevelyan in retreat at Casalunga in Trollope’s novel.

Soames’s stubborn mania, which he misconstrues as manly fortitude, is set against a backdrop of physical maladies among the Forsyte patriarchs, who indulge in a bizarre ongoing competition to determine whose internal organs are most diseased. Masculinity in this mould, in men of property, not only permits but actively encourages the discussion of ill health. They are not ‘cold-blooded’ men: James ‘loved the family hearth, he loved gossip, and he loved grumbling’, while Swithin luxuriates in his liver complaint, being a ‘martyr to crankiness.’<sup>209</sup> In Galsworthy’s only

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<sup>205</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 149.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

indication of a hereditary element to Soames's mental pathology, James speaks openly about his problems with anxiety: 'I'm very well in myself [...] 'but my nerves are out of order.' Nonetheless, than Soames's father 'there was no saner man (if the leading symptom of sanity, as we are told, is self-preservation) [...]. He had the marvellous instinctive sanity of the middle class.<sup>210</sup> Madness is antithetical to the proud, Forsytean brand of rationalism. Attempting to advise his son on how to discipline his wife, James grumbles, I don't know what's coming to women nowadays [...]. I never used to have any trouble with them. She's had too much liberty. She's spoiled.'

[James] could see that Soames wouldn't stand very much more of her goings on! It did not occur to him to define what he meant by her 'goings on'; the expression was wide, vague, and suited to a Forsyte.<sup>211</sup>

From such comments we can trace the hereditary and environmental origins of Soames's impulse to control his wife, and his assumption that patient forbearance or compromise would be unmanly.

Suspecting (correctly) that his wife's affair has not ended, Soames experiences visual and auditory hallucinations, envisaging Irene with her lover all over London. 'The instincts of self-forgetfulness, of passion, and of love, hiding under the trees, away from the trustees of their remorseless enemy, the "sense of property," were holding a stealthy revel' as Soames approaches the park, where he becomes panicked and desperate.<sup>212</sup> Rushing around in search of the pair, and yet desperate not to find them, his paranoia becomes severe:

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<sup>210</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 77.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

who knows what he thought and what he sought? [...] impersonal knowledge of the human heart – the end of his private subterranean tragedy – for again, who knew, but that each dark couple, unnamed, unnameable, might not be he and she?<sup>213</sup>

Upon discovering that Irene has, in fact, left him, Soames's mind struggles to interpret the information. Bilson tells him 'that Mrs Forsyte had left the house about noon, taking with her a trunk and bag', and leaving 'no message,' and leaves her master standing in the hall in his fur coat, 'idly turning over the visiting cards in the porcelain bowl.'<sup>214</sup> Suddenly cut off from his ordinary life, Soames wonders, 'Who the devil were all these people? He seemed to have forgotten all familiar things. The words "no message – a trunk, and a bag," played hide-and-seek in his brain.'<sup>215</sup> Galsworthy has explained that 'James and his son were marked by a lack of sentiment peculiarly Forsytean.'<sup>216</sup> Though highly skilled in burying his emotions, such is Soames's mental state following his wife's desertion that his body undergoes an involuntary reflex in an unthinkable way: he weeps.

He locked the doors, and tried to think, but felt his brain going round; and suddenly tears forced themselves into his eyes. Hurriedly pulling off his coat, he looked at himself in the mirror. He was too pale, a greyish tinge all over his face; he poured out water, and began feverishly washing. Her silver-mounted

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<sup>213</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 236.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

brushes smelt faintly of the perfumed lotion she used for her hair; and at this scent the burning sickness of his jealousy seized him again. Struggling into his fur, he ran downstairs and out into the street [...]. His power of decision again failed.<sup>217</sup>

Galsworthy has taken the idealised male attribute of rational decisiveness and twisted it with irony. Soames's most decisive act was that in which he 'asserted his rights and acted like a man': an act of marital rape absolutely antithetical to ideals of both happy marriage and gentlemanliness. It is also, of course, the act most destructive of his chances of bringing about what, apart from his desperate desire to possess the female body at any cost, is his openly displayed wish: a marriage in which Irene willingly and gladly submits to him.

## **V: Conclusion**

Charles Kingsley describes the role of male bravery in *Westward Ho!* (1855) thus: 'To be bold against the enemy is common to the brutes; but the prerogative of a man is to be bold against himself.'<sup>218</sup> This chapter has made an examination of what happens when the Victorian man is unable to sustain the level of self-control required in order to be bold against himself both in terms of staving off his desires and postponing mental breakdown. The brute is internalised by monomaniacal jealousy and the gentleman breaks down, both as a cultural concept, and at the level of individual

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<sup>217</sup> *The Forsyte Saga*, p. 271.

<sup>218</sup> Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!* (London: Macmillan, 1855), p. 27.

psychology. Shakespeare's 'green-eyed monster' takes over the male mind so that male desire is pathologised, and the threat of violent attack comes from within rather than beyond the domestic space. This deterioration of the gentlemanly into the monstrous within the most sacred of Victorian social institutions – marriage – was to have an enormous effect on literature towards the fin de siècle. The psychology of hidden monstrous masculinities was famously explored by Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).

By identifying the failed marriage plot's emergence in the 1860s, several decades earlier than some previous studies have placed it, and by shifting from a female to a male perspective so that the plot becomes a man's one, this chapter has revealed some of the complex difficulties of male agency. Within the context of sexual desire, fuelled by a pathologised jealousy, this male agency reasserts itself in Trollope and Galsworthy's protagonists to represent a crisis of class and gender identities. Thus the two novels prompt a reconsideration of the model of the Victorian gentleman. This demonstrates the effect of psychology at a micro level on Victorian culture at a macro level: the contribution of individual psychological crises on a broader cultural crisis at the heart of Victorian society.

This chapter has explored marriage breakdown, divorce and erotomania: aspects of the failure of ideals of nineteenth-century domesticity. Such occurrences marked a deep chasm in Victorian ideologies of domestic perfection. The next chapter will explore another such chasm: death within the family, and the various forms of insanity resulting from grief. Fetishism for death and the public spectacle of funerals and the mourning process have been identified within Victorian culture. Extremes of mourning and the inability to assimilate grief healthily into the psyche presented an immense challenge to models of masculine emotional repression and rationality. The

next chapter will argue that as jealousy and subsequent monomania and erotomania were problematic within normative gentlemanly masculinity, so grief contributed to a crisis of masculinity, by descending into other forms of madness.



## CHAPTER THREE

### **Male mourning and melancholia: the pathologisation of grief in *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) and *The Duke's Children* (1880)**

He certainly had a sense within him, that if his wife should sicken and decay, he would be very sorry, and that he would find a something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth the having, and could not be lost without sincere regret. Though it would be a cool, business-like, gentlemanly, self-possessed regret, no doubt.

– Dickens, *Dombey and Son*<sup>1</sup>

It was as though a man should be suddenly called to live without hands or even arms [...] it was as though all outside appliances were taken away from him. There was no one of whom he could ask a question.

– Trollope, *The Duke's Children*<sup>2</sup>

### **I: Melancholia and mania in the asylum**

In 1810, William Black, physician to Bedlam, drew up a list of the causes of insanity. Grief was by far the most common problem, accounting for 206 of the cases included in the study, with the next most prevalent (family and heredity) lagging behind at 115.

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<sup>1</sup> Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Trollope, *The Duke's Children* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 8.

While the latter field has received a great deal of attention, both in nineteenth-century texts (particularly sensation fiction) and in recent critical studies, grief has received far less.<sup>3</sup>

Grief	206
Family and Heredity	115
Fevers	110
Religion and Methodism	90
Childbed	79
Love	74
Drink and Intoxication	58
Fright	31
Study	15
Venereal	14
Contusions and Fractures of the Skull	12
Obstruction	10
Jealousy	9
Pride	8
Small Pox	7
Ulcers and Scabs dried up	5

Figure 13: 'Misfortunes, Troubles, Disappointments' by William Black (1811)<sup>4</sup>

This chapter begins to redress this imbalance, drawing on a broad range of sources including poetry, personal diaries and letters as well as asylum case notes, medical journals and fiction. Many cases of male patients at the London asylums studied in this project were believed by doctors to be caused, either partially or wholly, by the death

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<sup>3</sup> William Black, *A Dissertation on Insanity* (London: D. Ridgway, 1811), p. 12.

of a family member, particularly a child. This chapter, like the previous one, draws on post-Foucauldian work, particularly that of John Kucich, which has made a radical revision of the repression-denial model of nineteenth-century psychology.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this project, the implications of such an overhaul for a re-examination of male bereavement are of particular importance.

The act of writing itself may be considered therapeutic, with diaries and letters constituting important source texts alongside the novels and medical records which are the focus elsewhere in this project. In addition to the diaries of prominent Victorian writers such as Ruskin, many accounts by ordinary people, both in Britain and across the Empire, reveal experiences of the altered mental states experienced by those who grieve. Although diaries detailing relationships and emotional upheavals have tended to be associated with female writers, examples of widowers' writing may be found. Steven Garton has highlighted the case of J. W. Springthorpe, an Australian whose diary gives an especially detailed account:

I scarcely know how to begin this saddest of sad matters [...] Dead – dead – my Annie – that for ten years was my constant companion, inspiration and ideal [...]. Dead – what does that mean?<sup>6</sup>

According to Garton, 'this private grief failed to interrupt a thriving public career.'<sup>7</sup> The sharp distinction forged between public and private in this text and lived

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<sup>5</sup> See Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction*.

<sup>6</sup> J. W. Springthorpe Diaries, 26 Feb. 1897, La Trobe Library, Melbourne (MS 9898), cited by Garton in 'The scales of suffering', p. 41.

experience make Springthorpe's diaries an interesting vehicle for exploring patterns of Victorian masculinity. Although his grieving period was long and severe, Springthorpe crucially avoided the two traps highlighted by Dickens and Trollope: individualism and stasis. Contrary to late nineteenth-century concerns about the dangers of repressed mourning, his maintenance of a busy public career became the consistent occupational therapy that saved him from pathological grief, and ultimately, the asylum.

Surviving asylum casebooks from the London area contain numerous studies of male patients who are thought to have become insane while grieving for their wives. George Ellis Cooke, whose redundancy was discussed in Chapter One, initially became mentally unstable following the death of his wife. Cooke was admitted to Hanwell Asylum in June 1848:

pale and feeble, and apparently in bad health, he is reported to be suicidal [...]. His wife of whom he was very fond died at Christmas last of paralysis after a long illness, he fretted much at her death and soon afterwards committed such mistakes in his accounts that he was dismissed, he shut himself up in his room for several days without food, his landlord got in through the window – found him in a haggard state half naked and talking of suicide [...] since the death of his wife he became slovenly and he went to a police office, gave himself up as having committed a robbery the accusation was investigated and found to be groundless.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Garton, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Male Casebook 1834 -*, London Metropolitan Archives H11/HLL/B/20/001, pp. 356-7.

No details of the psychological process of grieving are given, nor any further analysis of symptoms. Cooke died that December, less than a year after his wife. As with the far wealthier Mr Dombey, whose fictional case Dickens described the same year, it is implied that Cooke's emotional distress and subsequent madness could have been eased by increased communication with family members, such as his nieces.

The Hanwell Asylum casebook for 1848 also details another case of pathologised grief amounting to insanity, this time in the case of a father mourning the death of his young child. General poor health and excessive alcohol consumption had worsened his condition, and perhaps increased the intensity of his anger, which is connected to economic stress (outlined in Chapter One), domestic violence (discussed in Chapter Two) and political crowds (in Chapter Four). However, grief was considered the main trigger for an episode of insanity to which he was already hereditarily predisposed. David Dove, a young married gardener, was admitted in May, when the following assessment was made:

steady and industrious, had good employment – in June lost a child three years old of whom he was very fond died of cramp, he fretted greatly at this [...] unable from illness and from grief to go to work for some time, but recovered from his bodily ailment he returned to his employment and continued at it till about a week ago – when he returned one day from market in a very excited state, turned his children into the garden, went to the cupboard, broke crockery, threatened his wife, soon became calm, but grew violent again and attempted to strike his wife and jumped out of a window after her – he was sworn in as a

Special Constable on the occasion of the proposed meeting of the Chartists at Kennington, and drank much more than usual [...] but he never ceased to grieve for his child – his mother was insane and his sister is “odd”, he never attempted suicide.<sup>9</sup>

As with Cooke, the notes end abruptly a few months after admission. Dove was ‘discharged recovered’ at the end of September 1848, cured, one hopes, of at least the most violent symptoms of his grief.<sup>10</sup> These asylum cases illustrate some of the ways in which grieving men were represented as insane by medical professionals writing in the same period as Dickens and Trollope. Although they did not have access to these particular records, they provide a context for the wider Victorian theories of emotion and discourses on the psychology of grief, in which Dickens and Trollope saw themselves as integrated.

## **II: Nineteenth-century cultures of death, grief and mourning**

Images of Victorian mourning are familiar to us, from the young Oliver Twist as a mute at the head of children’s funeral processions at the beginning of the period, to the ageing Queen Victoria in chronic mourning. For the head of state to wear black for such a long period, throughout the forty years from Prince Albert’s death to her own, was unprecedented and highly influential. Death and its accompanying mourning

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<sup>9</sup> Conolly, *Hanwell Asylum Male Casebook* B/20/001, p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

rituals have long formed a significant part of Victorian studies.<sup>11</sup> Examinations of its emotional and psychological effects, however, have yet to receive such detailed and sustained analysis. In the late-twentieth century a number of historians suggested that high Victorian mortality rates, including high infant mortality rates, produced relatively high levels of tolerance in bereaved families. According to this theory, with deaths being quite frequent in the home, other family members were less affected in emotional terms than they would otherwise have been. In 1856 Archibald Tate, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, and his wife lost five children in as many weeks to scarlet fever.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to view such a tragedy in such utilitarian terms, suggesting that by the fifth death, Tate would have become so accustomed to bereavement that he mourned the last child any less than the first. Lawrence Stone argues that this was the case before, and in the early decades of, industrial England.<sup>13</sup> More recently, work by Angus McLaren and others has presented evidence to the contrary.<sup>14</sup> In addition, research by Valerie Sanders has challenged the assumption that Victorian fatherhood operated largely on the basis of financial support and a cool, detached and emotionless hands-off approach.<sup>15</sup>

Publications about mourning from the period, as well as studies in social history, have privileged discussions of funeral dress and arrangements at the expense of discussions about the emotional and psychological characteristics of grief, and the behaviour it produces. Those accounts of personal experience which *have* received

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<sup>11</sup> D. P. Helm, “‘A Sense of Mercies’: End of Life Care in the Victorian Home’ (unpublished master’s dissertation, University of Worcester, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals: The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> McLaren, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

critical attention have tended to be women's, slanting research towards the figure of the widow rather than the widower, and the mother than the father. Drawing together new perspectives on Victorian masculinity and fatherhood, this chapter will investigate acute male mourning as a cause of melancholia and anxiety at the borderlines of gender and insanity, particularly in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) and Trollope's *The Duke's Children* (1880). It will also investigate the extent to which Dickens's ideas about the pathologisation of grief are posited in terms of gender, enquiring whether an alternative way of grieving would feminise or masculinise Dickens's representation of Mr Dombey. This research explores the extent to which the way Mr Dombey grieves has been shaped by cultural expectations, set by his education, the media, and other characters in the novel.

First, however, these concerns ought to be contextualised by several major factors: Victorian mourning conventions, the persistent presence of death in Victorian culture, the various socioeconomic conditions which affected death rates, and the psychological theories which have attempted to make sense of the grieving process. Mourning dress and set mourning periods fixed a formal standard for Victorian women's external exhibition of grief. The burgeoning print culture of the period was filled with advertisements for undertakers, mourning tailors and other services in the death industry. Dickens's own periodicals and monthly parts frequently printed such material.<sup>16</sup> A schedule of social interaction was prescribed, together with minute instructions as to dress. *The Workwoman's Guide* (second edition 1840), written by 'A Lady' (possibly Maria Wilson) as a thorough and comprehensive guide to ladies'

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, the inside of the front cover of *Our Mutual Friend*, part 10 (Feb. 1865) recommends a 'large purchase' of black mourning silk at £3 0s 6d per yard (three pounds and sixpence) – well above the price of other colours of silk advertised.



maids and young middle-class wives, explained that ‘It shews the best taste to make mourning as plain and as little fanciful as possible.’<sup>17</sup> The cost of fitting and tailoring a family and its servants in such attire could be immense, particularly when considered alongside expensive funeral arrangements.<sup>18</sup>

The fitting of servants for mourning clothes is a high priority in Dickens’s fictional Dombey household, following Mrs Dombey’s death. Polly Toodle, that is, ‘Richards’, is measured before beginning her appointment as young Paul’s nurse. For Mrs Chick, Mr Dombey’s sister, who is in charge of such arrangements, high quality mourning is of the utmost importance, whatever her misgivings about Mrs Dombey’s ‘want of effort’ in failing to rally herself following childbirth. It is quite enough that Fanny had the ‘audacity’ to marry her brother in the first place, and no more erroneous behaviour should be tolerated. Mrs Chick reassures her brother, ‘If you have any reliance on my experience, Paul, you may rest assured that there is nothing wanting but an effort on Fanny’s part.’ Less than an hour after the birth, observing the doctors looking down ‘on the impassive form with so much compassion and so little hope’, Mrs Chick quickly wakes Fanny, asking with ‘assumed lightness’, ‘Don’t you think it’s time you roused yourself a little? Eh?’<sup>19</sup> Moments before she dies, Mrs Chick addresses Fanny again, though ‘speaking less confidently this time.’ The last words the dying woman hears are ‘I shall have to be quite cross with you, if you don’t rouse yourself. It’s necessary for you to make an effort [...] we must never yield [...] Come! Try! I really must scold you if you don’t!’<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anon, *The Workwoman’s Guide* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1840), p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Like her brother, Mrs Chick appears to favour repression of the emotions in relation to grief, but uses a brisk tone of voice and a busy schedule of organising others to do so. Richards's clothes are to be made by the same seamstress who has made Mrs Chick's own: "And it'll fit beautifully, I know," said Mrs Chick, "for the same young person has made me many dresses. The very best materials, too!" The suggestion that women were left to mourn passively at home while only men (out at work in London's banks, offices, courts and so forth), were active does not stand up to scrutiny. With so much to be attended to in the way of mourning clothes and other conventions for household flowers and linens, it seems that many middle-class women in grief were as busy, if not busier than their male counterparts.

Although historians have tended to give Victorian male mourning attire less attention, men were expected to conform to their own set of conventions: black mourning suits (different from formal morning suits), comprising a black tail coat (or for more distant relatives, a black mourning band of fabric, worn on the sleeve). Engagement in public life was still expected, and for the working middle-class man, necessary. This chapter addresses questions about what was expected of Victorian grieving men, and how mourning abided by or contradicted routine behavioural norms. In addition, it will explore the psychological implications for the outward display of emotion, such as crying, or of attempts to mask such responses. It questions whether weeping was associated so directly with feminine emotional or nervous responses as stereotypes of the manly 'stiff upper lip' might suggest. Enquiring as to the location of chronic grief within psychiatric categories such as melancholia, it also asks how less acceptable symptoms, such as those associated with mania, fitted into cultural representations of male mourning. This chapter analyses responses to grief, particularly in relation to the deaths of wives and daughters, using representations in

fiction by Dickens and Trollope, as well as asylum records for male patients, to contend that the borderline between healthy and pathological grief was drawn not primarily by gender, but by alternative previously unexplored binaries.

Research on death in Dickens's writing tends to focus almost exclusively on the demise of his villains, the passing of angelic middle-class wives, or the tragic effects of poverty and disease on the urban working class, particularly children.<sup>21</sup> Mr Jarndyce speaks of 'a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame [...] the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green.'<sup>22</sup> According to the Registrar General's report in 1841, average life expectancy varied considerably in different parts of England: 45 in Surrey, 37 in London, and 26 in Liverpool.<sup>23</sup> Of course these shockingly low averages varied enormously according to precise geographical location, class, employment, and other factors, such as proximity to particular water pumps during cholera epidemics. According to a report in 1842 the average life expectancy of 'labourers, mechanics, and servants, &c.' in 1840 was just 15.<sup>24</sup> In a story in *Household Words* a decade later, Dickens writes in the voice of an anxious father:

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<sup>21</sup> Laurence Lerner, *Angels and Absences* (Nashville, TN and London: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997);

Claire Wood, *Dickens and the Business of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 109-10.

<sup>23</sup> R. Thorne, *On the Progress of Preventative Medicine During the Victorian Era* (London: Shaw, 1888), p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Gt. Britain*, ed. M. W. Flinn, 1842 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965), p. 255.

‘I learn from the statistical tables that one child in five dies within the first year of its life; and one child in three, within the fifth [...]. That don't look as if we could never improve in these particulars, I think!’<sup>25</sup>

Although mortality rates were quickly decreasing by the end of the nineteenth century, and hospitals had expanded, a close proximity to the dead and dying remained. Corpses remained in the home between death and the funeral, making traumatic encounters with the corpse a common problem – a subject Freud would analyse some years later. For the wealthy, the corpse could lie in its own room; the cramped conditions of lower-class life made close proximity inevitable. It was not until the 1930s that ‘chapels of rest’ came into common usage.<sup>26</sup> If, as many psychiatrists have suggested, childhood is characterised by innocence of the existence of death, many children in the period must have reached adulthood at a very young age, and the trauma induced by having seen the corpse of a family member during childhood must have been commonplace. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that in nineteenth-century writing, public mourning rituals merely veiled the private work of mourning within the home, which, when characterised by extreme individualism and stasis, proved a fertile ground for the pathologisation of grief, and its transition to the borderline of insanity.

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<sup>25</sup> Dickens, ‘Births. Mrs Meek, of a Son,’ *Household Words*, no. 2 (22 Feb. 1851), p. 507.

<sup>26</sup> See Glennys Howarth, ‘Professionalizing the funeral industry in England, 1700-1960’, *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, ed. Howarth and Jupp (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 120-34.

### III: Childhood and parenthood in nineteenth-century thought

Nineteenth-century conceptions of childhood, parenthood, and the relationship between the two are perhaps nowhere more concentrated and more starkly visible than in representations of the deaths of children and mothers. Poetry such as Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* (completed in 1804), portrays the figure of the child full of life, but under threat of death.<sup>27</sup> The transition from innocent, idealised childhood to the knowledge of adulthood was marked by an awareness of one's own mortality. The speaker's assumption, 'to me alone there came a thought of grief', is expressed in later years by the characters of Mr Dombey and the Duke of Omnium, both of whom isolate themselves in mourning, rejecting empathy from family members and others as intrusive and disingenuous.<sup>28</sup>

From the mid-century onwards, periodicals and advice manuals began to turn their attention to the subject of fatherhood, recommending a more active role within the family than had been seen in previous generations.

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<sup>27</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Ode, Intimations of Immortality', *The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (London: Macmillan, 1893). See Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Ann Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works*, p. 358.



Figure 14: 'True Courage', *Punch* (10 Dec. 1859)<sup>29</sup>

An article in *All the Year Round* entitled 'Fathers' appeared in 1865, noting such a shift:

The British father has undergone a great metamorphosis of late years. He has relaxed his old severity of aspect, and become more human [...]. Love and sympathy and intelligent communion have taken the place of a cold and

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<sup>29</sup> Illustration, 'True Courage', *Punch* (10 Dec. 1859).

senseless severity, and children, who formerly were little better than mechanical dolls, to be pushed up and down a stick like monkeys, or squeezed for a bark, like toy dogs, are freed from artificial restraints, and their intelligence is allowed to expand with the natural growth of their minds and bodies.<sup>30</sup>

Margaret Markwick argues that Trollope's fiction provides numerous examples of the 'new man', who is so focused on domesticity that he may be found 'changing the nappies, making the gravy, pushing the pram, hugging his sons and his daughters.'<sup>31</sup> Although such a revolution is not identifiable in the texts considered in this thesis, a shift towards more active models of fatherhood was certainly widely supported. A broad range of different publications commended such an approach as the honourable fulfilment of male duty.

The language used in *All the Year Round* to describe the emancipation of children following a revolution in approaches to fatherhood is remarkably similar to that of psychiatrists describing the substitution of mechanical restraints to moral treatment for lunatics, and supported by Dickens in *American Notes* and *Household Words*.<sup>32</sup> Mr Dombey could not exactly be categorised as a modern father who wishes to be actively involved in his infant son's life. His main concern for young Paul's early years was that he be brought up as a strong and healthy child to be educated adequately

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<sup>30</sup> Anon, 'Fathers', *All the Year Round*, vol. 14 (5 Sept. 1865), p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Markwick, *New Men in Trollope's Novels*, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> For example, compare Davey, 'Lecture I', p. 581 with Dickens, 'A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree', p. 385; and *American Notes*, p. 42.

in readiness for entering the family firm as the eponymous ‘Son.’<sup>33</sup> As the child grows older his father takes an increased interest, and sees that he embarks on more academic path. As Paul’s health deteriorates Mr Dombey enters upon a lengthy stage of apparent denial, after which he becomes desperately anxious, and increasingly dogmatic in his instructions for Paul’s care.

Various mid-nineteenth-century publications suggested positive role models for boys and young men, including Carlyle’s *On Heroes* (1841) and Smiles’s *Self-Help* (1859). Court and asylum records detail an enormous number of men who were unable to meet these demanding expectations of resilience, driven to severe melancholia or even violent mania by their emotional responses to a particular crisis: a death in the family. In the last few years scholars have begun to examine the previously neglected field of Victorian fatherhood in relation to familial violence. Previously, studies have focussed on the influence of maternal presence or absence.<sup>34</sup> Jade Shepherd’s recent work seeks to redress this gender imbalance within the context of criminal insanity.<sup>35</sup> She suggests that paternal child-murderers were not always ‘treated unsympathetically, as savage tyrants,’ as Josephine McDonagh and Melissa Valiska Gregory have argued, and points out that Broadmoor records reveal that this was not always the case.<sup>36</sup>

The period between Romanticism and the fin de siècle saw major shifts in models of childhood (and consequently, reactions to the deaths of children) as well as

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<sup>33</sup> Dickens provides an ironic description of the business as the centre of the universe, for the preservation of which the ‘stars and planets circled in their orbits.’ *Dombey and Son*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Keefe contends that ‘the single most important event in Charlotte Brontë’s life was the death of her mother’: a trauma exacerbated by the deaths of two sisters in quick succession. *Charlotte Brontë’s World of Death* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Shepherd, ‘One of the Best Fathers until He Went Out of His Mind’: Paternal Child-Murder, 1864-1900, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2013), pp. 17-35.

<sup>36</sup> Shepherd highlights the case of George Wilson, who, under ‘insane influences’ murdered his ten-year old son in March 1873, after which he was confined at Broadmoor.’ Berkshire Record Office (BRO), Medical Report, D/J14/D2/2/1/811, cited in Shepherd, p. 17. Scholarship relating to infanticide by women is more extensive – see bibliography.



in understandings of fatherhood and masculinity. Combined, these factors made mid-nineteenth-century fiction a space in which the psychological and emotional states of men grieving the death of their children could be renegotiated and reimagined. Weeping became a vital signifier in representations of these states, used by Dickens and others to manipulate the emotional responses of characters, and was not automatically coded as feminine, contrary to popular misconceptions.<sup>37</sup>

#### **IV: Men and mourning**

A vast number of critical texts on the subject of the place of death and public displays of mourning in Victorian culture have been written and collected by John Morley, James Curl and Joachim Whaley.<sup>38</sup> John Kucich has argued that the ‘convention of social display, the physical immediacy of death, and romantic literary influences all helped lift normal taboos against death-related interest’ enabling Victorians to ‘relish death for its own sake.’<sup>39</sup> To some extent these ‘normal taboos’ do appear to have lifted when we consider the public expressions of mourning with which the period is associated, bringing the subject out into the daylight as a burden to be shared collectively. This can be seen at work within the sentimental genre, for instance. However, by examining the individual psychological work of grief, both by literary characters (in novels) and by real individuals (as revealed by diaries, letters, asylum

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<sup>37</sup> Dickens’s ability to manipulate emotional affect is close to the surface of *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1), but the emotional landscape he creates several years later in *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) is considerably more complex and varied.

<sup>38</sup> Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (London: Studio Vista, 1971); Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1972); Whaley, ed., *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981).

<sup>39</sup> Kucich, *Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 178.

records, and other historical documents), I suggest that responses to death were still largely characterised by a depression rather than a 'lift' to a point at which death could be relished.

This chapter takes a different approach from most recent critical studies, which have tended to favour discussions of public rather than private mourning. Darian Leader has defended this trend. Favouring a cultural historical approach over a psychological one, he claims that mourning in the nineteenth century, as in all others, was typified by collective rather than individual behaviour. Leader argues that:

Freud saw mourning as an individual task, yet every documented human society gives a central place to public mourning rituals. Loss would be inscribed within the community through a system of rites, customs and codes, ranging from changes in dress and eating habits to highly stylized memorial ceremonies.<sup>40</sup>

In keeping with this approach, rejecting not only Freud but also psychological theory more generally, recent scholarship in material culture has illuminated the significance of the physical accoutrements of the Victorian mourning process. During the period, 'mourning jewellery, clothes, and elaborate decorations all emerged as public signs of loss', as Jolene Zigarovich notes in her 2012 study.<sup>41</sup> A focus on outward displays of

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<sup>40</sup> Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (London: Hamish Hamilton, Penguin, 2008), pp. 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> Zigarovich, *Writing Death and Absence in the Victorian Novel: Engraved Narratives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 4.

personal loss fits neatly with the popular representation of the Victorian middle and upper classes as a merchandise-driven and psychologically repressed people. Such monolithic stereotypes of ‘the Victorians’ belie the intricacies of that period’s many contradictions and complexities. A particular problem with such an approach is that it assumes that by transferring the focus from themselves to material objects, bereaved subjects made a successful separation between themselves and their grief.

The complete rejection not only of Freudian theory, but of its antecedents – indeed any psychological analysis whatsoever – which is required by Leader’s claim that Victorian grief is genuinely characterised by collectivity, ignores the considerable amount of surviving evidence which allows us to view the grief processes of a society through the lens of individual experience. If we stay outside with the street performers on the day of young Paul Dombey’s funeral, we are ignoring Dickens’s repeated invitations to wonder what is going on behind the closed door of Mr Dombey’s library.

While articles and advertisements in etiquette manuals, newspapers and periodicals depict a nineteenth-century culture so preoccupied with mourning dress, processions, and other conventions that it appears to be disengaged from individuals, the writings considered in this chapter tell a completely different story. Instead, they indicate high levels of deeply personal psychological suffering. When the writers considered in this thesis refer to the collective, shared experience of intense emotional and psychological states, more often than not it is to suggest an idealised way of managing individual experiences. When Dickens and Trollope write in terms of communities of mourning, it is to offer a healthy alternative to the highly individualistic attempts to manage grief, in which their fictional patriarchs fail so miserably.

*Dombey and Son* represents the unhealthy, melancholic dangers of highly individualistic, private grief at one end of the spectrum, and collective, public but potentially superficial mourning practices (which facilitate the displacement of emotion on to physical objects) on the other. Again, Dickens's representation of healthy masculinity is concerned with balance between two unhealthy extremes. Mr Dombey's apparent emotional coldness arises from falling into the first trap, while his sister's stems from the second. Only Florence Dombey and the Toodles family maintain a healthy balance despite their deep grief, though their input is rejected outright by Mr Dombey. Interestingly, Dickens presents this balanced, non-pathological grief in the same terms for both male and female characters.

Those men who remain on the healthy side of the borderline of madness, avoiding becoming insane because of their grief, may be characterised by their adherence to at least one of two things. The literature examined in this chapter reveals that the primary concerns in relation to male grief within Victorian culture were not with the division of male and female, but with two alternatives dichotomies: collectivity versus individualism, and action versus stasis. In effect, by sticking to the right side of one or both of these, men in Victorian literature appear to have been coded as healthy or unhealthy, sane or insane. Their attainment of, or failure to reach, idealised masculinity was the result. Conditioned by socioeconomic factors, determined by their personal characteristics, or simply by chance, men could succeed or fail in completing the cycle of grief, in which shock turns to denial, anger, depression and detachment, dialogue and finally acceptance.<sup>42</sup> Such a cycle is often understood as a Freudian and post-Freudian model, but Dickens represents grief as a

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<sup>42</sup> The most popular model of the grief cycle is posited by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* (London: Routledge, 1969).

series of emotional phases, without their being placed in an order. Mr Dombey's inability to grieve without a pathology emerging is, I suggest, represented as a result of various factors in his decision-making.

In particular, Mr Dombey's grief is characterised both by his inaction and his extreme individualism as he is caught in the depression and detachment stage, unable to move on to form a dialogue with others. Once he sets off to travel with a companion, his state of mind improves considerably, and he is lifted out of his deepest depression. Notably, it is only following this stage that he is able to contemplate remarriage, arguably marking the resumption of his full, masculine status. As Valerie Sanders has observed, 'for Dickens, masculinity was synonymous with energy.'<sup>43</sup> However, it does not necessarily follow that low energy and a lack of movement is synonymous with femininity for Dickens, since Florence Dombey and Mrs Skewton move around at their own will. Rather than encoding energy as gendered, Dickens represents it as a universal sign of good health (provided it is not maniacal), with action and motion indicating wellbeing in both body and mind.

Crying in and about literature may be understood as a nineteenth-century phenomenon which, having begun to wane towards the end of that century, was a rarity in the twentieth. In 1936 Gertrude Stein argued that Victorians were not surprised by tears because 'they dwelt with tears.'<sup>44</sup> Tom Lutz similarly contends: 'In the sentimental nineteenth century, people dwelt with tears as a regular part of their lives, but now we are at best momentarily surprised by them, or they are simply a form

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<sup>43</sup> Sanders, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Stein, *The Geographical History of America; or, The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (New York: Random House, 1936) cited by Lutz, p. 283.

of nervousness.’<sup>45</sup> While undoubtedly characters weep more frequently and more intently in major works of nineteenth-century fiction than in their twentieth-century equivalents, this does not necessarily indicate sentimentalism. Nor can tears be produced ‘simply as a form of nervousness.’ The relationship between nerves and tears is a complex one; and Victorian writers did not only write about it in simplistic ways. Romantic ideas about the ‘man of feeling’ and the angelic representations of children remained influential in early-Victorian writings about emotional display, and the acceptability (or even encouragement) of manly weeping.

Mr Bumble in *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) evidently considers himself a manly stoic, though Dickens’s ridiculing critique of him reveals that he is not an ideal figure of anything – in his role as a parish beadle, a Christian, a husband or simply a man. Dickens does not depict the failure to weep as a virtue, then, when he writes that:

tears were not the things to find their way to Mr Bumble’s soul; his heart was waterproof. Like washable beaver hats that improve with rain, his nerves were rendered stouter and more vigorous, by showers of tears, which, being tokens of weakness, and so far tacit admissions of his own power, pleased and exalted him.<sup>46</sup>

Dickens describes Mr Dombey’s heart as frozen: making it presumably even more resilient than Bumble’s waterproof heart.

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<sup>45</sup> Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York and London: Norton, 1999), p. 283.

<sup>46</sup> Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 296-297.

Later in the century, it was demonstrated scientifically that physical coldness was an involuntary response to the emotional experience of grief, contradicting the literary convention of portraying those who do not feel emotions as cold in body and heart. At this rate Mr Dombey's coolness scientifically indicated deep mourning, in direct opposition to how it was interpreted by at least its first few decades of readers. During the 1880s William James' theory of the emotions drew closely on the connections forged by his collaborator Carl Lange between physiology and psychology. Describing muscular contractions in minute detail, and following their effects on the nerves and 'motor apparatus', Lange explains the cooling effect produced by grief:

the vascular muscles are more strongly contracted than usual, so that the tissues and organs of the body become anaemic. The immediate consequence of this bloodlessness is pallor and shrunkness, and the pale colour and collapsed features are the peculiarities which, in connection with the relaxation of the visage, give to the victim of grief his characteristic physiognomy, and often give an impression of emaciation which ensues too rapidly to be possibly due to real disturbance of nutrition, or waste uncompensated by repair. Another regular consequence of the bloodlessness of the skin is a feeling of cold, and shivering [...]. The mouth grows dry, the tongue sticky, and a bitter taste ensues which, it would appear, is only a consequence of the tongue's dryness. (The expression "bitter sorrow" may possibly arise from this.) [...] There is one of the most regular manifestations of grief, which apparently contradicts these other physiological phenomena, and that is the weeping, with its profuse

secretion of tears, its swollen reddened face, red eyes, and augmented secretion from the nasal mucous membrane.<sup>47</sup>

The complex network of nerves and emotions that Dickens constructs around Mr Dombey causes a gradual, though unsteady thawing process. Child death is represented as a profoundly unnatural event, far from being rendered so normative as to not be shocking. The tears of others do not always go unnoticed by Mr Dombey, in spite of his appearing to ignore the anguish with which Florence, who weeps often, experiences bereavement for her lost brother.

For Elizabeth Barrett Browning, tears are inappropriate in the context of grief. In 'Grief' (1844), the speaker suggests that weeping and motion – that is, movement away from grief, to 'arise and go' towards the resumption of ordinary life – is disingenuous. In contrast, silence and stasis denote sincere feelings of loss:

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless; [...]  
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express  
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death -  
Most like a monumental statue set  
In everlasting watch and moveless woe  
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. II, p. 444.



Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:

If it could weep, it could arise and go.<sup>48</sup>

The mention of the ‘blanching’ effect is like Lange’s physiological descriptions, as discussed by William James, while the contention that ‘full desertness [...] lieth silent-bare’ aligns with Dickens’s earlier implication that when Mr Dombey is most silent he is the most immersed in deep grief.<sup>49</sup>

Ralph Nickleby’s refusal to partake (or even politely feign to partake) in the family’s grief when his brother dies is marks him as distinctly ungentlemanly. Being incapable not only of empathy, but even of any indication of sympathy, Ralph dismisses his sister-in-law’s distress. Mrs Nickleby’s grief is temporarily physically disabling: ‘A lady in deep mourning rose as Mr Ralph Nickleby entered, but appeared incapable of advancing to meet him, and leaned upon the arm of a slight but very beautiful girl of about seventeen.’<sup>50</sup> Dickens highlights a stark contrast between healthy, natural, shared grief (represented by Mrs Nickleby, Nicholas and Kate) and the individualistic refusal to engage with the family collective (represented by Ralph). He reminds his sister-in-law, ‘Husbands die every day, ma’am, and wives too [...] puppies and pup-dogs likewise’, and asks for the cause of death.

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<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, ‘Grief’, *Poetical Works of Mrs Browning*, 2 vols. (London and Glasgow: Collins, n.d.), II, p. 166.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>50</sup> Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Collins, n.d.), p. 31.

‘The doctors could attribute it to no particular disease,’ said Mrs Nickleby, shedding tears. ‘We have too much reason to fear that he died of a broken heart.’

‘Pooh!’ said Ralph, ‘there’s no such thing. I can understand a man’s dying of a broken neck, or suffering from a broken arm, or a broken head, or a broken leg, or a broken nose; by a broken heart! – nonsense, it’s the cant of the day. If a man can’t pay his debts, he dies of a broken heart, and his widow’s a martyr.’<sup>51</sup>

With this response, Ralph abruptly dismisses both the idea of death from a ‘broken heart’ and the melancholic distress to which the phrase alludes. Dickens inverts the usual alignment of reason with mental health. Ralph’s utilitarian cognitive failure to sympathise is so distasteful that Dickens seems to favour unreason, which is presented here as healthy, in contrast to the more productive reason, which is unhealthy. With Mr Dombey, Dickens extends Ralph’s model of undemonstrative, ‘stiff upper-lip’ masculinity, to demonstrate the pathological effects of the isolation produced by the refusal to engage with others to share the burden of bereavement.

Recent research on the history of the emotions in the nineteenth century has revealed that male weeping, even in public, was more commonplace than has previously been assumed. Records of such incidents are not restricted to unknown men on the streets, who could easily be thought eccentric or mentally unstable. Nor were public tears only shed for personal reasons and first-hand experience. Sympathetic weeping for others has even been observed among senior public authority figures,

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<sup>51</sup> *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 31.

suggesting that the practice was far from marginal. Thomas Dixon highlights the case of a judge who became so moved by a case that he broke down in tears in court on a number of occasions. Mr Justice Willes became overwhelmed when hearing evidence about a baby poisoned by his mother, who was condemned to hang (and found NGRI of infanticide), and when sentencing a young woman (whom Dr Bucknill had declared *not* insane) for the murder of her half-brother.<sup>52</sup>

In Dickens, tears need not be hidden, and can even be therapeutic. In *Great Expectations*, Pip reaches the conclusion that ‘We need never be ashamed of our tears.’<sup>53</sup> Private male weeping can be a vital indication that a character is not entirely without human feelings. Upon learning that Toodles had spent most of his premarital life underground, Mr Dombey is unable to restrain his emotions any further:

As the last straw breaks the laden camel’s back, this piece of underground information crushed the sinking spirits of Mr Dombey. He motioned his child’s foster-father to the door, who departed by no means unwillingly: and then turning the key, paced up and down the room in solitary wretchedness. For all his starched impenetrable dignity and composure, he wiped blinding tears from his eyes as he did so; and often said, with an emotion of which he would not, for the world, have had a witness, ‘Poor little fellow!’<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Dixon, ‘The Tears of Mr Justice Willes’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-23.

<sup>53</sup> Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 20.

This moment is a rare chink in Mr Dombey's protective emotional armour, made especially notable because it coincides with a chink in the narrative structure of the novel. Not only do we have no first person account by which to know of Dombey's thoughts and feelings, but we also have few pieces of direct speech from him at this early stage in the novel. In spite of constant reminders of his concern for his son's material wants, the three words 'Poor little fellow' offer a vital glimpse of Dombey's emotional capacity: Dickens demonstrates that his 'starched impenetrable' patriarch is capable of empathy.<sup>55</sup> Not only does Mr Dombey show empathy for his now motherless son's present condition; but more remarkably, he empathises with little Paul's future self, and his future consciousness of the fact that his mother has died. Arrival at this knowledge of death, in psychological terms, may be understood as the end of childhood innocence, as with Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*, whose saintly qualities mark her out as one already close to heaven. Dickens seems to suggest that this is the case with Paul, since others frequently refer to his unnerving way of seeming far more mature than his years, 'old fashioned' in his facial, linguistic and bodily expressions.

Other influential writers, of non-fiction as well as fiction, fed into discourses about men and the exhibition of emotion, in which responses to grief such as weeping are explained in anthropological and historical terms, rather than with reference to contemporary gender roles. Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) includes chapters entitled, 'Special Expressions of Man: Suffering and Weeping' and 'Low Spirits, Anxiety, Grief, Dejection, Despair.'<sup>56</sup> He treats pain, either in body or in mind, as the most intense form of emotion, set apart from others in magnitude and significance. Similarly, Keats's 'Ode on Melancholy' (1819) urges

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<sup>55</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 20.

against attempts to escape grief which would ‘drown the wakeful anguish of the soul’, recommending surrender to the consuming, sensual qualities of emotions as a preferable remedy for psychological suffering. ‘When the melancholy fit shall fall/ Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud’, Keats advises: ‘glut thy sorrow on a morning rose [...] Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,/ Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave.’<sup>57</sup> Restricting himself to a single, dark room indoors, Mr Dombey makes no such active attempt to ‘glut’ his sorrow, and his post-Romantic mode of masculinity is evidently not one which relishes emotional intensity.

## **V: Male and melancholia**

This chapter brings together recent research on the Victorian family to explore cases of fathers who were so deeply affected by the deaths of close family members that their suffering amounted to what I term ‘pathologised grief’: an emotional and/or psychological condition which could bring these men to the borderline of insanity. This analysis draws on the theory, popularised by Freud, that morbid, unhealthy grief results from an individual’s inability to mourn sufficiently or correctly, a theory pre-empted to a considerable extent by Dickens and Trollope’s much earlier writings. Mieke Bal has observed that ‘if there were no losses to suffer, there would be no real need to mourn, and if all mourning were successful, there would be no melancholia.’<sup>58</sup> I suggest that the model masculinity which asserted that true courage was predicated on firmness and mental rigidity in the mid-Victorian period may have acted in part as a block, preventing the successful completion of the grief cycle. New readings of male

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<sup>57</sup> John Keats, ‘Ode on melancholy’, l. 10-19, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 172.

<sup>58</sup> Mieke Bal, ‘Force and Meaning: The Interdisciplinary Struggle of Psychoanalysis, Semiotics, and Aesthetics,’ *Simiotica*, no. 62 (1987), p. 326.

psychology in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) and Trollope's final novel in the Palliser series, *The Duke's Children* (1880), may be contextualised by contemporary writings on masculinity as well as asylum records of patients thought to have become insane because of their grief.

Grief represented a potential challenge to mainstream normative masculinity in the period. While to mourn was not an intrinsically effeminate act, if unrestrained, it could threaten the role of middle- and upper-class men as active participants in society. While such a model was perhaps successful if external conditions remained favourable, such extreme individualism was highly problematic in the event of public or personal crisis. The death of a family member is one such crisis (provided we reject Stone's assertion that high death rates produced higher emotional resistance). According to the evidence of asylum records and the representations of grief in Dickens and Trollope, extreme individualism fosters the pathologisation of grief. In contrast, the establishment of communities of grief, both within and beyond the family can have therapeutic benefits for mental health.

In psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic theory, grief is typically understood as the vacuum left when a need is no longer fulfilled. Reading nineteenth-century narratives of loss through this theoretical lens, this implies that a need previously met has been lost, and that a cognitive space previously occupied by another human being cannot be filled by one's own resources. This fits with Trollope's representation of loss within the Palliser plot: the Duke finds himself disconnected from social communication, and without a social calendar, since this had previously been facilitated by his wife. He feels Lady Glencora's death as the ripping off of a kind of prosthetic arm which he has come to rely upon for creating and maintaining social and emotional bonds with others.

Although middle- and upper-class men in this period often formed emotional attachments that were deeper than the one-dimensional ‘stiff upper-lip’ model of Victorian gentlemanliness would suggest – and thus were vulnerable to experiencing deep grief – their emotional training, initially from education and later reinforced by their peers and by the media, did not generally encourage them to foster close emotionally demonstrative ties.<sup>59</sup> The enormous popularity of Samuel Smiles’s *Self Help* (1859), its subsequent reprinting, discussion in the press, and its instigation of an entirely new genre of self-help writing, is testament to the appeal of this creed. The experience of deep grief revealed a gaping hole in these foundations of dominant masculine models, or alternatively indicated that grief was an intrinsically gender-transgressive state. Smiles was emphatic in his teaching that optimism in the face of adversity, hard work and hope must be maintained in order for a full and manly life to be led. Discussing the application of these principles to middle-class and intellectual occupations, Smiles writes: ‘cheerfulness is an excellent working quality, imparting great elasticity to the character [...] the life and soul of success, as well as of happiness [...] every other good quality mainly depending on it.’<sup>60</sup>

Smiles cites case studies of this mode of self-reliant and conscientious manliness. Sydney Smith ‘went cheerfully to work’, although ‘he did not feel himself to be in his proper element’: ‘I am resolved,’ he said, ‘to like it, and reconcile myself to it, which is more manly than to feign myself above it, and to send up complaints by the post of being thrown away, and being desolate, and such like trash.’<sup>61</sup> Smiles also commends Adam as an example of masculine tenacity, in his efforts at ‘that dingy old

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<sup>59</sup> Studies of homosocial bonds formed within the public school system have explored exceptions to this. Jane Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Self Help* (London: John Murray, 1897), pp. 98.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99

University of Glasgow where he so long laboured' in writing *The Wealth of Nations*.<sup>62</sup> In his emphasis on the role of attitude, Smiles lays the groundwork for his later study, *Character* (1871), while his response to symptoms of depression fits with the Christian idea that despair (particularly if it led to suicidal thoughts or actions) indicates a lack of trust in God, and is sinful: 'the sickness unto death', as Kierkegaard puts it.<sup>63</sup> Within these religious and ideological contexts, pathological grief, like other forms of melancholia, was a highly problematic condition.

Dickens and Trollope present challenges to this theory of ideal masculinity in the representations of male grief in *Dombey and Son* and *The Duke's Children*. These were best-selling works, and as such the masculinities they defend may not be dismissed as peripheral. The extreme individualism of the eponymous patriarchs in the two novels, manifested as self-isolation amounting to self-imprisonment is far from healthy. The Duke's attempts to bear the emotional burden of grief to ease the suffering of his family ultimately fail, further splintering the collective family unit, already ruptured by the sudden death of the matriarch. Nonetheless, his intentions may be read as the fulfilment of a parallel idealised masculine role of the father as protector. Dombey's pathological grief is also highly individualistic and exclusive of other family members, although his response is represented as selfishly motivated.

## **VI: Dickens and *Dombey and Son***

For William James, writing after Darwin, physical responses to tragic events were vital in indicating the healthy transition from the cognitive receipt of a piece of information

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<sup>62</sup> Smiles, p. 99.

<sup>63</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (London: Penguin, 2008).



to its emotional output. If no physical symptoms are produced, the emotion is confined to an intellectual, almost theoretical, space, with no participation through experience. It is not only Mr Dombey's spoken words and his comparison of his wife to a household object, but also this absence of initial symptoms that causes us to assume that he is unfeeling. Melancholic symptoms of grief are more subtle than the appearance of rage, hatred and other more easily identifiable emotional states.

In an influential article in *Mind* in 1884, James asks, 'What is an Emotion?' Explaining that we recognise anger and other emotions by their outward displays, he challenges us to conceive of emotional experience without their indicators:

Can one fancy the state of rage and picture no ebullition of the chest, no flushing of the face, no dilation of the nostrils, no clenching of the teeth, no impulse to vigorous action, but in their stead limp muscles, calm breathing, and a placid face? [...] the only thing that can possibly be supposed to take its place is some cold-blooded and dispassionate judicial sentence, confined entirely to the intellectual realm [...]. In like manner of grief: what would it be without its tears, its sobs, its suffocation of the heart, its pang in the breast-bone? A feelingless cognition that certain circumstances are deplorable, and nothing more.<sup>64</sup>

Mr Dombey's coldness following his wife's death is characterised in precisely the terms which James uses to identify the dispassionate cognition of the intellectual

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<sup>64</sup> William James, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind*, vol. 9 (Apr. 1884), p. 194.

conception of grief. His comparison of the loss of his wife of ten years to the loss of something ‘from among his plate and furniture’ reveals his restriction of highly emotional subjects to the strictly cognitive part of his brain.

However, it becomes apparent that Mr Dombey is not, in fact, entirely devoid of all feeling. Dickens writes a few pages later:

Mr Dombey had remained in his own apartment since the death of his wife, absorbed in visions of the growth, education, and destination of his baby son. Something lay at the bottom of his cool heart, colder and heavier than its ordinary load; but it was more a sense of the child’s loss than his own, awakening within him an almost angry sorrow.<sup>65</sup>

Dickens’s association of anger with coldness rather than heat is an unusual one, and draws attention to the ambiguities and complexities of Dombey’s mental life. James impresses a sense of the urgency of his considerations of the physical embodiments of deep emotions:

The last great argument in favour of the priority of the physical symptoms to the felt emotion, is the ease with which we formulate by its means pathological cases and normal cases under a common scheme. In every asylum we find examples of absolutely unmotivated fear, anger, melancholy or conceit; and

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<sup>65</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 17.

others of an equally unmotivated apathy which persists in spite of the best of outward reasons why it should give way.<sup>66</sup>

Mr Dombey's reaction to his son's death is characterised by symptoms of shock. The fact of the death cannot in itself be a shock, since it follows a decade of increasing physical fragility, but I suggest that he is paralysed nonetheless, stunned by the effect it has on his own emotions. His notably *unemotional* response to the death of his wife of ten years is represented at the time as repression, but as a genuine reaction to the departure of a woman whose relationship with him had been a mere 'social contract.'<sup>67</sup> His son's life was far more significant in him, being the sole object of his pride, sense of purpose in the present, and hope for the future.

Charles Darwin was overcome by grief following his daughter Annie's death from tuberculosis in 1851, unable to concentrate on his work, and haunted by hallucinations day and night, for some months. His memorial to Annie praises the strong, healthy and accomplished young girl, who 'held herself upright, and often threw her head a little backwards, as if she defied the world in her joyousness', and the closely-observed details reveal a deeply bereaved father who had shown a strong interest in his daughter's education and wellbeing. Darwin concludes, 'We have lost the joy of the household, and the solace of our old age [...]. Oh that she could now know how deeply, how tenderly we do still and shall ever love her dear joyous face.'<sup>68</sup> With Annie's death, Darwin's dearest hopes for the future were flattened. As his

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>67</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Darwin, 'Memorial of Anne Elizabeth Darwin', 30 Apr. 1851, Darwin Archive, Cambridge University Library (DAR 10.13).

favourite child, who showed a keen interest in his work in the natural sciences, playing at being his assistant, Darwin had adored Annie. Although a considerably more demonstratively affectionate father than the fictional Mr Dombey, the two men's visions of the continuation of family businesses was not dissimilar. At this time approximately 600,000 children in Britain died of tuberculosis each year.

As Howard W. Fulweiler has observed, 'The death of the innocent touched, as nothing else, the Victorian imagination.'<sup>69</sup> Little Nell's death in *The Old Curiosity Shop* prompted an unprecedented public outpouring of grief, with grown men weeping not only in the privacy of their own homes but in public spaces ranging from railway carriages to the House of Commons.<sup>70</sup> The similar response to Little Paul's death a few years later is less well-known. Men including John Forster and Francis Jeffrey (a judge, and editor of the Whig *Edinburgh Review*) commented on feeling cleansed by the experience of reading the episode. Jeffrey wrote to Dickens at considerable length, enraptured by the episode: his 'heart purified by those tears', 'ashamed of the contamination which *our* manhood has received from the contact of the earth.'<sup>71</sup> William Macready noted that Dickens's writing had the power to 'make our hearts less selfish', and felt concerned at feeling so distraught by the death that he found himself *unable* to shed tears.<sup>72</sup> This is further evidence that rather than revealing a crack in a carefully contained, cold, masculine exterior, Dickens's contemporaries understood weeping as a psychologically healthy response. Further still, Macready's statement reveals that an emotional response was a sign that literature had touched one's moral

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<sup>69</sup> Fulweiler, 'Sentimentality in Bleak House', *Here a Captive Heart Busted: Studies in the Sentimental Journey of Modern Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), p. 65.

<sup>70</sup> Lutz, p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey to Dickens, 31 Jan. 1847, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, ed. Lord Cockburn, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1852), II, pp. 406-7; Forster to Dickens, 16 Jan. 1841, *Letters*, II, p. 187.

<sup>72</sup> William Charles Macready, *Reminiscences, and Selections from his Diaries and Letters*, Sir Frederick Pollock, ed., 2 vols. (London and New York, 1875).

conscience, not merely one's aesthetic sensibilities. Emphasis on the cathartic benefits of weeping implies a determination to fix emotional experience within masculine parameters of restraint and control, and to train oneself in a discipline of emotion of which men need not be ashamed. Weeping, then, could be masculine, at least if it was productive.

Thackeray was so affected by that he threw the volume down in exasperation, exclaiming, 'There's no writing against such power as this – one has no chance! Read that chapter describing young Paul's death: it is unsurpassed – it is stupendous!'<sup>73</sup> According to Mamie Dickens's recollections, her father suffered feelings of grief at the death of Paul, a child of his brain:

When my father was arranging and rehearsing his readings from 'Dombey', the death of 'little Paul' caused him such real anguish [...] that he told us he could only master his intense emotion by keeping the picture of Plorn, well, strong and hearty, steadily before his eyes.<sup>74</sup>

The argument that public crying and public grief is rendered disingenuous in Dickens's social critiques is a familiar one. While such a reading is sound in relation to some of the simpler or more caricatured relationships in Dickens's fiction, such as the Bumbles', it cannot be directly mapped on to the more complex emotional terrain of

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<sup>73</sup> *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), vol. 2, p. 267.

<sup>74</sup> Mamie Dickens, p. 51. Plorn was the nickname for Dickens's youngest son (who otherwise laboured under the name Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens), whom he persuaded to emigrate to Australia at the age of sixteen.

other passages. On occasion, Dickens's narrator steps in to guide us through, judging which emotional responses are natural and emotionally healthy, helping his readers towards the desired response. Most commonly in *Dombey and Son*, these statements of judgement are used to bolster Florence's emotional authenticity. At an important crossroads in the cognitive landscape of the novel, Florence decides that she would rather remain in the family home, despite her father's suggestion that she should go away for a time. Mrs Chick, hitherto one of the most 'waterproof' of the characters, finds herself in need of her handkerchief as her niece explains her choice:

I should not like to feel... as if the house was avoided. I should not like to think that the – his – the rooms upstairs were quite empty and dreary, Aunt. I would rather stay here, for the present. Oh my brother! Oh my brother!'

It was a natural emotion, not to be suppressed; and it would make way even between the fingers of the hands with which she covered up her face. The overcharged and heavy-laden breast must sometimes have that vent, or the poor wounded solitary heart within it would have fluttered like a bird with broken wings, and sunk down in the dust.<sup>75</sup>

The authenticity of this emotional outpouring is not compromised by taking place in front of others. Rather, in articulating her feelings so well, we can recognise good psychological health, with needs and desires which are natural and morally sound. The implication is that were Florence unable to make public expressions of her grief, she

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<sup>75</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 259.

would eventually fall into the same unhealthy, dusty mental space of pathologised emotion that her father inhabits.

Dickens's characters live with the ever-present black cloud of death looming over them, in a world which is thoroughly infused with evidence of mourning. At the beginning of *Bleak House*, the flakes falling on the hypothetical megalosaurus walking up Holborn Hill resemble 'full-grown snowflakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun.'<sup>76</sup> Following his wife's death, Mr Dombey's covered chandeliers 'looked like a monstrous tear depending from the ceiling's eye.'<sup>77</sup> The former novel is notorious for its mortalities, with Dickens clocking up an unprecedented death toll of individuals. Characters not only mourn loved ones they have lost, but also lives they could have (or at least *think* they could have) led. Miss Havisham is the archetypal example of this, and has been discussed in detail elsewhere.<sup>78</sup> But what of Dickens's grieving husbands and fathers? Paul Dombey and Little Nell's grandfather bear the double burden of masculine behavioural expectations and their grief. Like Gaskell's John Barton, these men involuntarily perform outward emotional displays of grief exacerbated by guilt, in a way which renders them physically passive: they weep. They are unable to act because of their individualisation of emotional crises. While such responses are not, I suggest, necessarily codified as gender-transgressive according to contemporaneous models of masculinity, these men are paralysed nonetheless. They must remain confined to the home, while others act for and around them.

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<sup>76</sup> *Bleak House*, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> Helen Small, 'The Woman in White, *Great Expectations*, and the Limits of Medicine', *Love's Madness*, pp. 179-220; Linda Raphael, 'A Re-Vision of Miss Havisham: Her Expectations and Our Responses', *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Winter 1989), pp. 400-12; Curt Hartog, 'The Rape of Miss Havisham', *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Fall 1982), pp. 248-65.

Dickens makes constant and repeated reference to Mr Dombey's determined struggle to keep his emotions in check behind a cold, expressionless exterior. While a convincing argument may be made that on occasion some of the female characters in the novel fall away from realism into sentimentalism, this cannot be said of Dombey himself. When Walter and Captain Cuttle visit Brighton, requesting his financial support to help Sol out of his debt crisis, Dickens reveals that Mr Dombey is not only engaged in efforts to keep his own emotions hidden, but has a sharp eye for similar efforts by others. Following Walter's earnest appeal, Dickens writes: 'Walter's eyes filled with tears as he spoke; and so did those of Florence. Her father saw them glistening, though he appeared to look at Walter only.'<sup>79</sup>

Crying and not crying are key signposts throughout the novel. Observing whether others do or do not cry is an important way for characters to track, with varying degrees of success, the thoughts and feelings of others. Having returned from Dr Blimber's school weaker than ever, carried up the 'well-remembered stairs' of the Dombey home, little Paul hopes to have been mistaken in his father's condition. He asks of Florence, 'He didn't cry, and go into his room, Floy, did he, when he saw me coming in?' His sister shakes her head and kisses him. "'I'm very glad he didn't cry,'" said little Paul. "I thought he did. Don't tell them that I asked."<sup>80</sup> In the days after his son's death it takes some time for us to discover whether or not Mr Dombey sheds tears, since he remains almost entirely hidden from the watchful (and tearful) eyes of his servants:

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<sup>79</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 140.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.



All this time, the bereaved father has not been seen even by his attendant; for he sits in an inner corner of his own dark room when any one is there, and never seems to move at other times, except to pace it to and fro. But in the morning it is whispered among the household that he was heard to go up-stairs in the dead night, and that he stayed there – in the room – until the sun was shining.<sup>81</sup>

Servants' uncertainty about Mr Dombey's mental state inside the home changes to assumptions of indifference outside the home by employees and passers-by. Despite the mournful 'unusual gloom' which appropriately prevails in the offices, the Dombey and Son clerks 'make assignations to eat chops in the afternoon, and go up the river', as if it were a holiday.<sup>82</sup>

Strangers watching Mr Dombey on the day of his son's funeral mistake his stoical masculine outward composure for emotional indifference, in contrast to the 'weeping women' around him:

He is not 'brought down,' these observers think, by sorrow and distress of mind. His walk is as erect, his bearing is as stiff as ever it had been. He hides his face behind no handkerchief, and looks before him. But that his face is something sunk and rigid, and is pale, it bears the same expression as of old.

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<sup>81</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 253

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

The ‘rosy children’ who live in the house opposite Mr Dombey’s ‘peep from their nursery windows down into the street’, a picture of perfect health that contrasts bitterly to the corpse of little Paul. Moments later, with the black feathers adorning the carriage and horses ‘yet nodding in the distance’, the festive entertainers continue with their performances along the street as before, seeming easily to forget the small coffin they have just seen carried from the house.<sup>83</sup> The crowd’s quick return to their jubilant mood may appear to support Stone’s argument that the urban Victorian population had built up a high tolerance to child death, but Dickens highlights one important exception.

The juggler’s wife makes the only sign of being affected by the sight of the little coffin: ‘closer to her dingy breast she presses her baby, when the burden that is so easily carried is borne forth’, thereafter being ‘less alert than usual with the money-box, for a child’s burial has set her thinking.’ The continuity of her own family’s business is put into question as she thinks that ‘perhaps the boy underneath her shabby shawl may not grow up to be a man, and wear a sky-blue fillet round his head, and salmon-coloured worsted drawers, and tumble in the mud.’<sup>84</sup> Dickens’s representation of an empathic response to grief is complex here: its proximity is increased by the shared experience of parenthood and pride in a family business, but decreased by class difference and hypothetical imaginings, which can be more readily dismissed.

The sharp contrast between pauper and wealthier burials has been discussed by Julie-Marie Strange. She goes so far as to align the former with intense grief and the latter with carnival-like festivity. She writes that ‘giving the dead a “good send off”

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<sup>83</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 254.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

epitomised respectability; it provided an excellent opportunity for revelry and display; and the funeral party were the object of jealousy and social rivalry.’ While the passage from *Dombey and Son* above does employ carnivalesque motifs, it is to make the contrast between the grief of the wealthy and the gaiety of the lower classes. According to David Cannadine, ‘it is arguable that the Victorian celebration of death was not so much a golden age of effective psychological support as a bonanza of commercial exploitation.’<sup>85</sup> Images of lavish funeral processions figure often in Dickens, but the assumption that this serves simply to make a comedy of the booming business of undertaking, or that an expensive funeral functions in the novels as a replacement for the hard work of bereavement, belongs to a very limited kind of analysis. While it may be apt for the following passage from *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), I suggest that the funeral ritual performs a more nuanced and complex role in Dickens’s next novel, *Dombey and Son*.

two mutes were at the house-door, looking as mournful as could be expected of men with such a thriving job in hand [...] feathers waved, horses snorted, silk and velvets fluttered; in a word, as Mr Mould emphatically said, ‘everything that money could do was done [...]. The four hearse-horses especially, reared and pranced, and showed their highest action, as if they knew a man was dead and triumphed in it.’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> David Cannadine, ‘War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain’, *Mirrors of Mortality* ed. Joachim Whaley (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981), p. 191.

<sup>86</sup> Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Penuign, 2004), p. 309; p. 312.

According to Strange, ‘the tendency of the populace to equate extravagant funerals with respectable status did little more, [Dickens] suggested, than render such spectacles absurd. That they were “highly approved” by neighbours and friends reinforced the notion that the disposal of the dead was a theatrical display where any concept of grief was rooted in pride and snobbery rather than the personal expression of loss.’<sup>87</sup>

Mr Dombey’s bereavement may be of a carefully veiled kind, but by the time we reach the scene of little Paul’s funeral, we can be in little doubt that he feels his loss deeply. Strange’s implied equation of wealthy respectability with emotional bankruptcy is an insufficiently complex model to be applicable to this piece of Dickens’ writing, assuming, like his Veneering family, that surface is all. *Dombey and Son* is instead concerned with attempts to conceal emotion, and desires to control the people to whom emotion is revealed. To some extent Dickens is following Austen’s Elinor Dashwood who, like Mr Dombey, is assumed to be without feeling, but is actually forced to conceal her true grievances by the combination of her own nature and social convention.<sup>88</sup> Crucially, though, there are differences between the narrative sympathy and near parity with Elinor’s actual perspective (the gap being narrowed as far as possible by the use of first-person narration), and the continual obscurity of Mr Dombey’s interior cognitive and emotional framework to the narrator and thus the reader.

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<sup>87</sup> Julie-Marie Strange cites the funeral of Pip’s sister in *Great Expectations* as an example of this. *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*. Elinor is eventually at liberty to explain that an unsought confidence was thrust upon her by her rival, and that she had consequently been bound to repress her feelings.

At the church, Mr Dombey gives the man commissioned to engrave the memorial tablet his instructions. Confirming his disregard for Florence in the form of a material object, he hands over a note with Paul's name and age, alongside the words, 'beloved and only child.'<sup>89</sup> It falls to the engraver to observe that perhaps he would prefer it changed to 'only son.' Our hopes that despite not asking to see his daughter Florence following the death, appearing not to know or care whether she is even still living in the house, Mr Dombey might give her some thought are crushed once more. However, it is at this point that '[Mr Dombey's] face is hidden for the first time – shaded by his cloak' in the carriage. Back at the house 'he alights first, and passes immediately into his own room.' The mourners upstairs have no idea as to the state of Mr Dombey's mind as he sits alone in his room on the floor below. They 'make themselves dismally comfortable over bottles of wine, which are freely broached as on a festival', and are 'much inclined to moralize.'<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, 'what the face is, in the shut-up chamber underneath: or what the thoughts are: what the heart is, what the contest or the suffering: no one knows.'<sup>91</sup>

Even those characters who are able to process grief in an emotionally literate way, rather than perform it as a social role, are dismissed by Mr Dombey. He reads marks of mourning and expressions of condolence as impudent intrusions into his own very deeply personal grief. On the station platform he is approached by Mr Toodles, who clarifies to the oblivious Mr Dombey that he is the husband of 'Richards.' Despite Toodles' kind words Dombey is affronted and insulted, asserting his exclusive ownership of his son, even after Paul's death. Dombey's arrogant assumption that he is

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<sup>89</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 255.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

the only person to be suffering in this way highlights his separation from society, and the vehemence with which he refuses even to allow the existence of, let alone participate in, any kind of community of grief. Never considerate of others, grief has turned his attention further inward until his whole world consists only of the darkest depths of his own mind. Outwardly, his complete dismissal of the possibility of other mourners seems individualistic to the point of cruelty to others.

Like Soames Forsyte, whose jealous obsession with Irene forbids others to be close to her, Dombey may be interpreted as a profoundly unlikeable but tragic figure, whose real tragedy is that he excludes others from his grief. Recent research has begun to explore the psychologies of sympathy and empathy in relation to the novels of George Eliot and others.<sup>92</sup> For example, it has been noted that for Elizabeth Barrett Browning, thinking implies distance, and so may be wrong or inappropriate when in the subject's presence: 'I do not think of thee, I am too near thee.'<sup>93</sup> Such mitigating closeness does not apply to Mr Dombey's familial relationships, since although he lives beneath the same roof as his daughter, she is discouraged from going downstairs, and when out of sight it seems that for her father she is out of mind.

Captain Cuttle and Major Bagstock are two other men of Mr Dombey's generation who seem determined to conceal their emotions. Both are retired military bachelors, fixed in their own habits, but they are distinct from Dombey in ways which are vital to their mental health. Acting as counterpoints to Dombey, Cuttle and Bagstock are loquacious, often comic figures, who do not hold back their thoughts on any other subject. In spite of this, they have sharp eyes, which they use to sympathise

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<sup>92</sup> Adela Pinch, *Thinking about Other People in Nineteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, quoted by Pinch, p. 1.

and to judge the moods of others. Furthermore, they avoid pathology not only by witnessing Dombey's grief rather than experiencing a loss directly, but by remaining emphatically active in the face of adversity. When Walter informs him of a difficulty, Captain Cuttle invariably sallies forth as soon as he is satisfied by his appearance (the improvement of which allows him time to gather his thoughts as well as his signature hat and stick), energetically walking to and from his home, the Midshipman, the offices of Dombey and Son in the City, and other locations as necessary, not resting until he has seen the right people, carried the correct information, and thoroughly discharged his mission. Similarly, 'Joey B,' Major Bagstock, is not deterred by the discouragement with which his romantic advances towards Miss Tox are met, instead throwing himself entirely, both in teeming mind and terrifyingly corpulent body, fit to burst, into his new project of animating Mr Dombey.

Melancholia is treated in the novel as a disposition rather than a medical condition, and is to be avoided at all costs. Old Sol is a reminder of the dangers of stasis. In his depressive states he is bound up in the past and fearful of the future to the point of being quite unable to act in the present. This places him in a position in which, though not especially effeminate or child-like, he is unmanly and dependent on others. Despite the various punitive academic and social conditions at Dr Blimber's establishment, particularly in Paul's early months at the school, sadness there is attributed to individual dispositions, to be remedied by additional study. Paul is amiable and eager to please, following Mrs Pipchin's instruction never to ask questions, regardless of his lack of understanding. Cornelia Blimber is concerned that this lack of inquisitiveness in her pupil is a sign of melancholia. She tells Paul when he

fails to ask for clarification, 'I begin to be afraid you are a sad boy.'<sup>94</sup> In his final weeks and months, every effort is made to raise the spirits of the young invalid so that he might have the strongest chances in battling his illness. This support functions in line with the Dombeyan philosophy so frequently espoused by his aunt Mrs Chick: that a little effort is all that is required to evade death (the want of which having apparently carried Mrs Dombey to her grave an hour after childbirth).

In this novel Dickens's construction of masculinity is not necessarily aligned with emotional restraint as might at first be supposed. Instead, characters are, in many ways, at their most manly when they are at their most cheerful in their spirits and manners. Uncle Sol ceases weeping upon finding himself able to repay his first loan instalments to Mr Dombey. His spirits 'had lately recovered very much, and the old man had become so cheerful, that the little back parlour was itself again [...] he had sprung up so manfully from his troubles.'<sup>95</sup> This gives Walter greater difficulty in explaining that Dombey and Son are sending him to the West Indies, knowing that it would involve 'dashing Uncle Sol's spirits', being a 'terrible blow' which would 'cast him down afresh.'<sup>96</sup>

When we consider the fathers, father figures and husbands (both current and prospective) in Dickens's fiction, it is striking that those who the most healthy are energetic men of business or busy gentlemen of leisure, vigorously undertaking travel, engaging in intellectual pursuits, or, like Dickens himself, fond of taking walks in the fresh air. In this category we may place characters of various ages including Arthur Clennam, Joe Gargery, Alan Woodcourt, Mr Jarndyce and Mr Brownlow. Grief upsets

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<sup>94</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 195.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.



the balance of healthy manhood in Victorian fiction, not by entailing emotional performativity, such as crying (which, as we have established, did not necessarily connote femininity in this period), but by curtailing men's abilities to be active.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have argued that 'The significance of marriage for middle-class men cannot be overestimated. It profoundly affected their economic, social, spiritual and emotional life as well as everyday standard of comfort. This was demonstrated forcefully when a wife was away.' This temporary absence of femininity from the domestic space may be understood as the cause of a temporary kind of bereavement, and a temporary suspension of male action – a microcosmic prototype for the full symptoms of grief following a wife's death. Davidoff and Hall cite the diaries of a Birmingham manufacturer who experienced his wife's temporary absence as 'something like the loss of a part of myself.'<sup>97</sup> Similarly, after his wife had been sent to London for medical treatment, an Essex doctor wrote, 'I am now alone at home which is very dull and dreary [...]. I now know the value of my absent friend and the feelings connected to the married state.'<sup>98</sup> After his wife's death in middle age, a Suffolk manufacturer's wife left him with the feeling that he had lost his 'dearest earthly treasure.'<sup>99</sup>

In extremis, acute grief at the death of a wife or daughter can be seen to result in psychological damage amounting to paralysis. This kind of blank stasis posed a considerable threat to functional masculinity, far more significant than the weeping in Dickens's works. When informing Mrs Skewton, whom he has dubbed his 'Cleopatra,'

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<sup>97</sup> W. King, Arthur Albright. *Notes on his Life March 12, 1811-August 3, 1900* (Birmingham: n. pub., 1901), p. 24, quoted in Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 324.

<sup>98</sup> Henry Dixon, 'Unpublished diary' (13 May 1843), by permission of Dr Denholm, quoted in *Family Fortunes*, p. 325.

<sup>99</sup> H. Allen, 'A Beloved Mother by her Daughter: the Life of Hannah S. Allen' (1884), p. 18, quoted in *Family Fortunes*, p. 325.

that Mr Dombey is in love with her daughter Edith, Major Bagstock, as self-confessed blunt speaker, says that Dombey is as well as he could be given his condition. That condition, of being in love, is described by the Major as having been stabbed, in another framing of intense emotion as a bodily injury: “His condition is a desperate one, Ma’am. He is touched, is Dombey! Touched!” cried the Major. “He is bayonnetted through the body.””<sup>100</sup> Coming from our old friend ‘Joey B’, who we know is liberal with the truth to say the least (not least in calling Mrs Skewton ‘Cleopatra’), particularly on the subject of his allegedly vast acquaintance, it is clear that such a statement is an exaggeration.



Figure 15: ‘Major Bagstock is delighted to have that opportunity’ by ‘Phiz’ (1847)<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 389.

<sup>101</sup> Etching illustration for Chapter 19 of *Dombey and Son* by ‘Phiz’ (Hablot K. Browne), 1847.

Although we have no first-hand knowledge of Dombey's thoughts on this subject, from what we know of Dombey's emotional responses to other moments of personal crisis (most notably, of course, his son's death), we can safely disregard the claim. Given that his appreciation of his first wife extended only insofar as she was a useful possession to have in a household (the same opinion held by the Duke of Omnium *before* the Duchess's death), the prospect of Dombey falling passionately in love with his future second wife is deeply implausible. Significantly though, despite being a robustly traditional (perhaps, in all other respects, already outdated) figure of masculinity, Bagstock's judgement, quite correctly, is that Dombey will be far more attractive to the opposite sex if he is represented as an emotional, passionate, desiring, active man. Were the Major to give an accurate report of his friend's apparently static, passive and unmoved emotional state, it is highly unlikely that the plot would unfold as it does. Mrs Skewton's belief that Mr Dombey is not only a physically but emotionally active man is a vital catalyst in bringing about a marriage between him and her daughter.

Mr Dombey appears to see his dying wife in purely utilitarian terms, as a piece of property which he would rather not lose. Mr Dombey calls Fanny 'my – my dear' when Paul is born. The 'transient flush of faint surprise' which 'overspread the sick lady's face' reveals that she is evidently not used to terms of endearment, and her husband's stuttering delivery indicates that it is unnatural to him too. We note that throughout the rest of the scene he addresses his wife as 'Mrs Dombey', even when no

servants are present.<sup>102</sup> Dickens's representation fits with E. M. Forster's claim that the Englishman must 'bottle up his emotions' and 'let them out only on a very special occasion.'<sup>103</sup> The birth of a son, so that the family firm will once again be 'not only in name but in fact Dombey and Son; Dom-bey and Son!' is evidently a sufficiently special occasion.<sup>104</sup> However, the sentiment is a passing one. When informed by the eminent society doctor, Parker Peps, that 'a crisis might arise' if Mrs Dombey was not able exert sufficient 'effort' to keep herself alive, Dickens describes his reaction in the following terms:

To record of Mr Dombey that he was not in his way affected by this intelligence, would be to do him an injustice. He was not a man of whom it could properly be said that he was ever startled, or shocked; but he certainly had a sense within him, that if his wife should sicken and decay, he would be very sorry, and that he would find a something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth the having, and could not be lost without sincere regret. Though it would be a cool, business-like, gentlemanly, self-possessed regret, no doubt.<sup>105</sup>

In *The Duke's Children*, Trollope extends this idea, which likens a wife's death to that of a useful or desirable part of the household, until the loss is felt as intensely as though it were an amputation.

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<sup>102</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> E. M. Forster, *Notes on the English Character*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

## VII: Trollope and *The Duke's Children*

In the opening pages of *The Duke's Children*, Trollope uses a striking simile to convey the experience of his eponymous patriarch following his wife's sudden death:

It was as though a man should be suddenly called to live without hands or even arms. Hitherto he had never specially acknowledged to himself that his wife was necessary to him [...]. But it was as though all outside appliances were taken away from him. There was no one of whom he could ask a question.<sup>106</sup>

In this passage Trollope represents melancholia as a loss of the unacknowledged feminine self. The image of his wife acting as a female prosthesis added to his otherwise incomplete male body is a powerful one.

Glimpses into Trollope's personal life show quite a different attitude to the expression of male grief. By the late 1840s, his sister Cecilia, one year his junior, showed signs of weakness in the lungs – an illness which had already killed three of their other siblings. By the time she took to her bed, her eldest daughter Fanny was dying of consumption in the next room. Trollope's mother, Fanny senior, resumed a familiar routine, dividing her time between the sickrooms and writing comic novels. Anthony's own coping strategy (which was similarly required by his financial situation), was to visit the house briefly to say his goodbyes, then return to Ireland,

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<sup>106</sup> *The Duke's Children*, p. 8.

without going back to London for the funeral. Fanny Trollope wrote to Rose, her son's wife, 'I am very *very* glad my dear Anthony saw her on her death bed – The impression left on his mind, however painful at the moment of receiving it, will remain with him forever, more as a consolation, than sorrow.'<sup>107</sup> After Cecilia's death Trollope wrote to John Tilley, his brother-in-law and colleague at the Post Office, emphasising his conception of manly duty as emotional concealment: 'You are not the man to give way to sorrow.'<sup>108</sup> Richard Mullen has noted that Trollope 'avoided the endless pietistic platitudes that often occupied pages of such letters, but at the end his emotion broke through', exclaiming 'God bless you my dear John – I sometimes feel that I led you into more sorrow than happiness in taking you to Hadley.'<sup>109</sup>

Trollope's opinion of appropriate male grief in his early- to middle-age appears to have been in favour of emotional repression. In *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870), a clergyman is represented as giving sound advice in his condemnation of suicide as cowardice, interrogating Harry Gilmore, whose proposal has been rejected, leaving him heartbroken:

'Have you no feeling that however hard it should be there you here' – and the Vicar, as he spoke, stuck his breast, – 'you should so carry your outer self, that

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<sup>107</sup> Letter from Fanny Trollope to Rose Trollope, 20 Apr. 1849, Taylor MS, quoted in Richard Mullen, *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in His World* (London: Duckworth, 1990), p. 22. In *The Three Clerks* (1858), Trollope depicts an apparently terminally ill consumptive girl who, consciously or not, strongly resembles his sister, and finally recovers at the end of the novel.

<sup>108</sup> Letter to John Tilley, 1 Apr. 1849, Trollope MS, UCLA, quoted in Richard Mullen, *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in His World* (London: Duckworth, 1990), p. 227.

<sup>109</sup> Mullen, p. 227.

the eyes of those around you should see nothing of the sorrow within? That is my idea of manliness, and I have ever taken you to be a man.’<sup>110</sup>

A decade later, in the opening pages of *The Duke's Children*, Trollope details the failure of such attempts. Both the fictional Duke and he, the author, were in old age by this time, and perhaps the considerable leisure time of both men provided space for involuntary rumination – a pre-Freudian return of the repressed – against which the speed of a youthful lifestyle had previously shielded them. Although Dickens's Mr Dombey is a man of business, used to spending a great deal of time at his office in the City, the family firm can continue to function perfectly adequately in his absence, allowing him the financial security and time to grieve indefinitely alone at home, whether he is glad of it or not.

Like Dombey, following his son's death, the Duke of Omnium is quick to ask that his daughter be sent away immediately after his wife dies, certain that her presence will only induce mutual discomfort, and that he, the father, is the only person in deep bereavement. Grief has brought him suddenly to a condition in which he considers himself unable to fulfil the social aspects of his role as a gentleman: ‘I do not think that I am fit to have any human being here with me in my sorrow.’<sup>111</sup> Florence and Mary, respectively, are thought too young to experience such emotion, and so essentially irrelevant. Lady Mary expresses her wish to remain in the family home, where she can draw solace from happy memories of her mother. Her father swiftly invalidates these

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<sup>110</sup> Trollope, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (London: B. Tauchnitz, 1870), p. 308.

<sup>111</sup> *The Duke's Children*, p.13.

feelings of grief, simply saying, 'It is only the old who suffer in that way.'<sup>112</sup> In framing patriarchs' decision-making in this way, Dickens and Trollope reveal their characters' implicitly gender-based assumptions: firstly, that it is (or rather, that the patriarchs *think* that it is) the male, rather than the female, who is susceptible to the profound emotional distress grief entails, in opposition to the normative expectation that women were more emotionally vulnerable; secondly, that male sufferers wish to be left to mourn alone, in private, where any tears they may shed will go unseen, and where their self-reliance can be demonstrated; and finally, that their daughters will be content with such an arrangement (if indeed their daughters' wishes are considered at all).

To Lady Mary, as to her mother, the Duke had never been an ally, but rather an obstacle whose approval, being required, was to be sought with tactics:

The father had been regarded as a great outside power, which could hardly be overcome, but which might be evaded, or made inoperative by stratagem. It was not that the daughter did not love him. She loved him and venerated him highly, – the veneration perhaps being stronger than the love. The Duchess, too, had loved him dearly, – more dearly in late years than in her early life. But her husband to her had always been an outside power which had in many cases to be evaded.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *The Duke's Children*, p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.



The Duke may be read as a traditional patriarch, whose style of fatherhood belongs to the first, rather than the second, half of the nineteenth century. Elsewhere, Trollope portrayed more modern, sympathetic and engaged fathers, who make up an important section of what Margaret Markwick has called the ‘New Men’ of Trollope’s fiction.<sup>114</sup> By the final decades of the nineteenth century, family advice manuals had started to become aimed at male as well as female readers, and included guidelines for fathers. J. W. Kirton’s *Happy Homes and How to Make Them* (1870) endorsed the view that it was vital, rather than optional, that men should play with their children as Prince Albert had done in the 1850s.<sup>115</sup> Kirton claimed that it was a man’s duty to:

rock a cradle, nurse a baby, [and] play with his children [...] It is a grand thing to have a romp with the children, and [...] a man is not worthy to be a father who cannot now and then play with them, or take an interest in their sports and education.<sup>116</sup>

Although the deaths of children and wives have no place in Kirton’s *Happy Homes*, presumably such events could not pass without husbands and fathers fully engaging with the emotional grief and profound sense of loss which closely attached relationships naturally produce, without being pathological.

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<sup>114</sup> Markwick, *New Men in Trollope’s Novels*; ‘Hands on Fatherhood in Trollope’s Novels’ in *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 85-9.

<sup>115</sup> Jane Shepherd has used this publication to contextualise her examination of men who, being ‘affectionate and caring fathers,’ had murdered their children without motive while affected by insanity, before being sent to Broadmoor. ‘One of the Best Fathers until He Went Out of His Mind,’ p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> J. W. Kirton, *Happy Homes and How To Make Them, or, Counsels on Love, Courtship and Marriage* (London: John Kempster and Co., 1897), p. 97.

The Duke of Omnium's style of fatherhood is less active, and externally less emotionally involved. However, as with Dickens's representation of Mr Dombey, Trollope's narrative demonstrates that this kind of masculinity cannot be read at face value. Neither in health nor in illness can we make an accurate diagnosis based on external symptoms. It takes some time for Dickens's narrator to reveal to us that Mr Dombey is emotionally engaged, finally noting that in Brighton he notices others who are trying to conceal their tears.<sup>117</sup> In contrast, the Duke's emotional literacy is evident from the outset of Trollope's novel, though he does not show his feelings to his family. Tragically, following the Duchess's death, he finds not only that their acquaintance, friends and extended family are like strangers to him, but he does not even feel that he knows his own children, or that they know him. 'He was a man so reticent and undemonstrative in his manner that he had never known how to make confidential friends with his children.'<sup>118</sup>

The Duke's grief increases in intensity when he hears that his wife had given her support to what he considers an imprudent marriage, and died before telling him so. To add insult to injury, the person to inform him is a long-term guest in his Park Lane house who considers himself engaged to his daughter, Lady Mary – not only a penniless man without pedigree, but worse still, a Conservative. The political is especially personal here, since he is a former Liberal Prime Minister, his family have been Liberal for generations, and he has only recently persuaded the feckless Lord Silverbridge to enter Parliament at all. For his son to have been persuaded to stand as a Conservative, especially after the trouble with his having been sent down from Cambridge in disgrace, would be quite intolerable.

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<sup>117</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 140.

<sup>118</sup> *The Duke's Children*, p. 41.

Growing 'extremely red in the face', the Duke is 'almost beside himself with emotion and grief.'<sup>119</sup> Expressing his belief that marrying Tregear, himself hot and angry, would be 'a step which I should regard as disgraceful' to his daughter, the Duke finds himself rebuked: 'Disgraceful is a violent word, my Lord.' Tregear's constant use of 'your Grace' and 'my Lord' in the midst of his impudent claims (the young Conservative is asking only for his blessing, crucially not his permission) enrages the former Prime Minister, who, 'even in the midst of his wrath, which was very violent, and in the midst of his anger, which was very acute, felt that he had to deal with [the man].'<sup>120</sup> 'This terrible indiscretion on the part of his daughter and of his late wife' meant that he was obliged to address Tregear with some politeness.'<sup>121</sup> This crisis makes it yet more unbearable that he can no longer consult his wife, and his anger with her conflicts with and complicates his intense grief. The narrator explains, 'No man had ever loved his wife more dearly than he had done; and yet now, in that very excess of tenderness which her death had occasioned, he was driven to accuse her of a great sin against himself, in that she had kept from him her knowledge of this affair.'<sup>122</sup>

The Duke's children and Mrs Finn know him better than he thinks, but his blindness to this makes him unable to reap the benefits of a community of mourning. Nor is the Duke correct in his belief that no one is on his side, or understands his feelings. Tregear remarks, 'I am afraid the Duke felt his loss severely' and that 'Silverbridge has told me that he is awfully cut up', as though his prospective father-in-law ought not to feel grief so keenly. This lack of sympathy is swiftly rebuffed by

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<sup>119</sup> *The Duke's Children*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Mrs Finn: 'How should he not, such a loss as it was? Few people knew how much he trusted her, and how dearly he loved her.'<sup>123</sup>

Trollope describes the Duke's innermost thoughts and feelings, allowing us access to the character's psychology in a way which follows the narrative style of *He Knew He Was Right*. In consequence, he is not such a mystery as Mr Dombey, although the two men evidently both feel their loss acutely, inspired and yet restrained by the same code of Victorian masculinity. The Duke's temperature during his grief is high, like Soames Forsyte's, and unlike Mr Dombey's, whose heart appears to be 'frozen.' Other aspects of his physical symptomatology bear strong resemblances to other insane and mentally unstable men studied in this thesis. Representations of severe grief, as of economic and jealous madness, frequently draw on the idea of darkened skin from black bile. Tennyson cites 'blackness' as an indicator of melancholic grief in 'On a Mourner' (1833), expressing concern that the act of writing may inappropriately alleviate his pain.<sup>124</sup> The poem was followed by 'Break, Break, Break' (1834) and 'In Memoriam' (1849), in which Tennyson continues to mourn Arthur Hallam's death.<sup>125</sup>

As with his earlier representation of the monomaniacal Louis Trevelyan, Trollope characterises the Duke's appearance by accelerated ageing and an overwhelming blackness, both in attire and complexion:

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<sup>123</sup> *The Duke's Children*, p. 28.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-5.

<sup>125</sup> Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1892).

He was dressed of course in black. That indeed was usual with him, but now the tailor by his funereal art had added some deeper dye of blackness to his appearance. When he rose and turned to [Mrs Finn] she thought that he had at once become an old man. His hair was grey [...]. He was thin, of an adjust complexion, and had acquired a habit of stooping which, when he was not excited, gave him an appearance of age. All that was common to him: but now it was so much exaggerated that he who was not yet fifty might have been taken to be over sixty.<sup>126</sup>

This places him at the same age as Mr Dombey, who is ‘about eight-and-forty years of age’ at the opening of Dickens’s novel.<sup>127</sup> In drawing our attention to the Duke of Omnium’s ‘adjust complexion’ and thinness, Trollope evokes the theory of bodily humours, characterised by dryness and the colours of blackened or burnt blood on the face’ as well as more generally indicating a sallow complexion and melancholic appearance.<sup>128</sup>

## VIII: Conclusion

Beyond the academy, stereotypes of Victorian masculinity as a stern and either repressed or genuinely emotion-free state are common but show signs of shifting. A recent BBC series, Ian Hislop’s *The Stiff Upper Lip: An Emotional History of Britain*,

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<sup>126</sup> *The Duke’s Children*., p. 10. The particularly dark tailoring indicates expense, and a concern that the most formal of mourning dress conventions be adhered to, as an earlier section of this chapter discusses.

<sup>127</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> Katherine Mullin and Francis O’Gorman note that these specific medical implications remained in use in the 1870s. See Explanatory Notes in *The Duke’s Children* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 520.

has questioned the relevance of the concept in the nineteenth century. Jennifer Wallis has drawn our attention to *Les Anglais, Are They Mad?* – a study which highlights Englishmen’s relationships with animals as examples of open, unrestrained emotion. It suggests that while normative codes of masculinity did not allow for the free expression of emotion towards fellow human beings, men could dote on their dogs, horses, and other animals quite publicly.

The late queer theorist Jose Esteban Munoz sheds some light on the nuances of the process of mourning in relation to masculinity:

Communal mourning, by its very nature, is an immensely complicated text to read, for we do not mourn just one lost object or other, but we mourn as a ‘whole’ – or, put another way, as a contingent and temporary collection of fragments that is experiencing a loss of its parts.<sup>129</sup>

Trollope’s comparison of an individual (rather than a group) mourning a partner and the amputation of limbs is an even more acute version of the fragmentation Munoz describes. Lady Glencora’s death functions as a sudden movement, both in the plot of the novel and the Duke’s cognition. Her removal is as brutal as a removal of a part of the Duke’s self. He is, in Munoz’s terms, experiencing the loss of a part. This rupture interrupts the healthy relative stasis of his decades-long marriage. The subject is, in this case, not a temporary collection of fragments, but a permanently unified whole

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<sup>129</sup> Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 73.

which has been ripped in two. Lady Glencora was not a temporary appendage for the Duke, as Fanny was to Mr Dombey, but rather a fully integrated limb on which he had come to rely. She was a vital part of himself which enabled action in and interaction with the outer world.

Pat Jalland has argued that ‘the study of death and bereavement in the past helps us to understand the present, especially in the context of the modern tendency to avoid the subject of death and to minimize the public expression of grief.’<sup>130</sup> While I do not doubt the value of studying historical responses to death, I suggest that there is considerable evidence to indicate that modern western society does not minimize the subjects of death and bereavement as much as Jalland suggests – or at least, not any more. More individuals seek the support of mental health services in the UK to address their feelings of grief than for any other single issue, and more individuals are diagnosed with short to medium-term depression as a result of bereavement than any other cause.<sup>131</sup> Women are still considerably more likely, on average, to seek bereavement counselling, though following NHS publicity campaigns in the last few years this gender imbalance has become less dramatic.<sup>132</sup> These statistics show no major change from William Black’s study of Bethlem in the early nineteenth century.

Dickens represents Mr Toodles’s decision to wear a mark of mourning in his cap following the death of young Paul Dombey as a natural, kind and psychologically

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<sup>130</sup> Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> The funeral of the Princess of Wales in 1997 may be seen as a pivotal moment in the history of grief in British culture, marking a major shift from the private towards the public, reaching across political and class divides in a way which had perhaps not been seen since Queen Victoria’s death. Collective mourning for the Princess as part of a community was presented in the media as the correct moral, healthy response. Arguably the public’s sense of a shared ownership of grief was so powerful that it constituted a kind of mania. The Royal Family themselves faced criticism for what many saw as cold, insufficient private grief.

<sup>132</sup> Anon, Office for National Statistics, ‘Psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households in Great Britain, 2000’ <[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_health/psychmorb.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/psychmorb.pdf)> accessed 18/12/13.

healthy response. Mr Dombey's determination to avoid the establishment of a community of mourning is, by contrast, represented as possessive, selfish, angry and unjust – in short, characterised by the stifling and intense kind of love which we suspect damaged Paul's health while he was alive. The funeral of the Duke of Wellington in 1852 was one of the most enormous displays of mourning London had ever seen, heightened by the hiatus of two months between his death and the funeral.<sup>133</sup> According to Cornelia D. J. Pearsall, many people 'felt it to be one of the most significant public events in the history of Britain, and if Britain, of course the globe: as the *Illustrated London News* put it, "[this event] may be said to have surpassed in significant grandeur any similar tribute to greatness ever offered in the world."'<sup>134</sup> It attracted one and a half million viewers to the procession from Chelsea to St Paul's, and according to *John Bull*, 'Never before did the world witness a more imposing spectacle' than Wellington's cortège.<sup>135</sup> The Duke had been well-known for a strict, disciplined brand of masculinity, with which he maintained his feelings and personal habits, only sleeping on a camp bed, even during retirement, and only showing emotion in public very rarely.

In 1841, attitudes to men crying were quite different from later in the century, with men in the earlier period been less far removed from the masculinities illustrated

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<sup>133</sup> Peter Sinnema has explored the subject of anxiety surrounding the Duke of Wellington's funeral, and interprets Carlyle's critique of the procession as a 'bearing melancholic testimony to Wellington's incapacity to break the bonds of death in order to reassert his masculinity by voicing a [...] resentment against vulgarity' and a 'failure to appropriately reflect the manly qualities he admired in the vital Wellington of the Napoleonic Wars.' 'Anxiously Managing Mourning: Wellington's Funeral and the Press', *Victorian Review*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Winter 2000), p. 44.

<sup>134</sup> Cornelia D. J. Pearsall, "Burying the Duke: Victorian Mourning and the Funeral of the Duke of Wellington", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1999), pp. 365-93; 365.

<sup>135</sup> Anon, *John Bull*, 20 Nov. 1852, p. 746.



within Romanticism along the lines of the eighteenth-century ‘man of feeling.’<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, the shift was not a smooth transition, nor was it without exceptions. From the material studied in this chapter, however, some conclusions may be drawn. Ideal masculinity in the Victorian period was not characterised by an entire rejection of the ‘man of feeling’ model in favour of a ‘stiff upper lip’ one. Nor do we need to wait until the end of the nineteenth century for the theory that the repression of the emotions was psychologically unhealthy, often resulting in a severe, albeit delayed, state of crisis: Dickens was already at work with this concept as early as the 1830s.

Conversely, Dickens’s mature writing, in line with conduct manuals and contemporary movements in the emerging field of psychiatry, does not endorse lengthy periods of weeping as an alternative. This is not because of a suggestion that to weep is necessarily effeminate, but rather because it was likely to result in stasis, which, as we have established, may be seen as a primary reason for the pathologisation of grief in bereaved males. For the Duke of Omnium and for Mr Dombey, stasis is inextricably tied to seclusion – the other cause of pathology. For these men, who either decide not to or are unable to move, they remain shut up in their studies, where, almost by default, they are alone, set apart from the community of the family home. Their solitary confinement is reinforced by their instructions that their daughters be sent away. Their resulting implied emasculation is not caused by their inability to grieve, but rather by their inability to grieve correctly and healthily. Self-sufficiency, as advocated by Samuel Smiles and others, is represented as an ineffectual tool by Dickens. Like Darwin, William James, Trollope and others, Dickens suggests that in

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<sup>136</sup> In some ways the eighteenth-century ‘man of feeling’ is quite the opposite of nineteenth-century Smilesian ideal man. These heroes were judged successful because of their sensibility and benevolence towards others, rather than their capitalist accumulation of wealth and self-sufficiency. See Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771).

times of emotional crisis, it is natural for men to return to, or remain in, social groups, since it is here that the full work of mourning can be done, and activity can be encouraged.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Political insanity: idiocy, trauma and psychopathic violence in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)**

The noise and uproar were on the increase every moment. The air was filled with execrations, hoots, and howlings. The mob raged and roared, like a mad monster as it was, unceasingly, and each new outrage seemed to swell its fury.<sup>1</sup>

#### **I: Introduction**

Examining the psychology and behaviour of ‘mad monsters’ involved in political extremism and violence within the context of developing nineteenth-century ideas about male insanity, this chapter will bring to light cases of idiotic, traumatic and psychopathic madness, focusing on Dickens’s historical novels: *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). The discussion will also explore the dialectic relationship between the one and the many in the violent political protests and mobs represented in each novel, considering where Dickens blurs or clarifies the distinction between reason and unreason.

This new shift towards collective mental states requires consideration of how we are to define insanity within a political context. In part, such a definition is dependent on legal interpretations of criminal insanity, and the M’Naghten rule for

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<sup>1</sup> Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 393.

establishing insanity in particular.<sup>2</sup> Although ‘political insanity’ does not appear to have been used as a diagnostic phrase in the nineteenth century, it may be compared to what was called ‘religious insanity’, and particularly ‘religious monomania’ (as opposed to ‘religious melancholia’). This distinct diagnosis was used by various nineteenth-century psychiatrists, including Laycock (at York and Edinburgh), and later, Charcot (at Paris).<sup>3</sup> The illness entailed symptoms of madness relating to obsessive behaviour around religious belief and ritual, often combined with delusions and hallucinations.<sup>4</sup> The term ‘political insanity’ may be seen as its counterpart. Both categories of patients became so immersed in their belief system as to become maniacal upon that subject, experiencing what may be interpreted as delusional visions of a utopian future. The cases of attempted regicide and other political assassinations examined in this chapter demonstrate how closely Victorian politics and ideas about criminality and madness were entwined, fuelling heated debates about legal terminology and procedure in the press, the courts, Parliament and Queen Victoria’s diaries.

Historical accounts from numerous sources indicate that the public was quick to become agitated, vulnerable to the influence of charismatic political leaders such as Lord Gordon. While ‘religious monomania’ and other forms of insanity resulting from

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<sup>2</sup> In 1843 the House of Lords created the M’Naghten rules, which are applied to determine whether a defendant was sufficiently sane at the time of their crime to take moral responsibility.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Laycock, ‘Religious Insanity, illustrated by case histories of mental diseases and defects’, *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1848, pp. 229-46; Jean-Martin Charcot, *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System* (Memphis, Tennessee: General Books, 2009). Charcot argued that the suspension of rational consciousness in religious ecstasy resembled sexual orgasm, and that responses to religious iconography could constitute hysteria. Also see Ruth Harris, *Murders and Madness: Medicine, Law and Society in the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> Religious monomania features in sensation fiction, typically in women who become obsessively devout in worship, neglecting their husbands and families, as in Charles Reade’s 1866 novel, *Griffith Gaunt*.

obsession with religious belief have featured in various studies of nineteenth-century madness, its political equivalents have remained neglected by comparison. By studying connections between extremist politics and madness in Dickens's fiction as well as in the press and medical sources, this chapter seeks to begin to redress this imbalance. Criminal insanity and judgements of 'not guilty by reason of insanity' (NGRI) have often been associated with female insanity, infanticide, sexual relationships or crimes of passion within private spaces. Instead this chapter explores male criminal insanity in relation to politics and public life.<sup>5</sup>

Dickens's two works of historical fiction, *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Cities*, have been selected for research into his treatment of political violence since it is here that he addresses the subject of political radicalism and extremism most clearly. In addition, Dickens's frequent use of the language of madness (primarily popular but occasionally medical) highlights the relevance of these novels to discussions of insanity in the period, situating them within an interdisciplinary dialogue of psychology. The psychopathic behaviour of Dennis the hangman and Madame Defarge provides case studies of dangerous individuals, psychologically damaged by the past of their families, whose bloodlust for power and vengeance is influenced by wider political groups. Barnaby, who is identified explicitly as an 'idiot' (according to contemporary medical terminology), acts as a weather vane, taking on the influences of the forces and forceful individuals around him. His malleability means that like Dennis and Madame Defarge, when harnessed to a greater political cause, he has power to effect violent social change. Representations of both illegal and state-

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<sup>5</sup> The use of the NGRI verdict remains controversial. A recent documentary about psychiatric facilities in Ohio by Louis Theroux has explored some of the medical and legal challenges involved in diagnosing patients who have committed violent crimes, complicated by the possibility of malingering to avoid jail sentences and even the death penalty. *By Reason of Insanity* (BBC, March 2015).

sponsored violence, together with analysis of the mental conditions experienced by Dr Manette, Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton, make these texts valuable material through which to explore broader ideas about borderlines of insanity, and of acceptable and unacceptable male behaviour under pressure, which are interrogated throughout this thesis.

The focus found in both texts on the dialectic between the one and the many in the form of individual madness and the psychology of political crowds, is further complicated by Dickens's weaving of an intricate web of connections between psychological states and physiological symptoms. His descriptions of blood flow and other physiological manifestations altered by mental states including anger, fear, trauma, and dreaming function as indicators by which his characters and readers can interpret the thoughts and feelings of others. In effect, this is a process by which Dickens applies physiognomical practices to the active, temporary characteristics, in addition to the permanent features, of his representations. Phrenological methods of analysing the head are extended to a reading of passing impressions and facial expressions.

By detailing such phenomena, Dickens demonstrates his engagement with emerging biological as well as psychological theories of the nervous system, and describes complex psychological states with an understanding which was not reflected in medical literature until the 1890s. In doing so, Dickens moves beyond the basic physical indicators of a mental state relied upon by other novelists, such as body language based on the movement of the limbs, tones of voice, facial expressions and so on. Forensic details of the effects various thoughts or actions have on the different circulatory and respiratory systems signal Dickens's modern exploration of the connections between the mind and body which extend beyond the 1840s and 1850s,

when *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* were published. An examination of the interconnectedness of the psychology and physiology of Dickens's characters within the context of a rapidly-changing scientific movement opens up possibilities for further investigations of Victorian male madness in this final chapter.

Like Chapters Two and Three in particular, this chapter will continue to demonstrate ways in which Dickens's descriptions of extreme emotional and psychological states show not only awareness, but a widespread integration, of nineteenth-century discourses of bodily biology. In particular, I suggest that the ways in which Dickens represents the relationship between psychology and physiology in these two texts identifies the author not only as a product of the science of his age but an actor within it. As Chapter Two revealed that Trollope's fictitious case study of erotic monomania in *He Knew He Was Right* not only drew upon genuine medical cases but influenced them in turn, so this chapter suggests that in many ways *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* not only demonstrate a knowledge of psychological writings of the period (particularly Bain's), but also pre-empt psychological developments published more than thirty years later (such as the theories of James and Freud). Observations of the interaction between psychological states such as melancholia and panic and the respiratory and circulatory systems outlined in James's studies in the 1890s may be seen throughout Dickens's historical fiction. Most astonishingly, the novels even occasionally imply that physiological states such as a quickened pulse, a rise in temperature, or a shortness of breath may contribute to psychological anxiety, rather than purely being a symptom of that anxiety. James's most crucial contribution to the field of psychology at the end of the century was his

theory of the ‘sympathetic nervous system’ – an argument that physical responses caused psychological ones, rather than vice versa.<sup>6</sup>

By describing physical changes in his characters in minute, forensic detail, Dickens places the reader of *Barnaby Rudge* or *A Tale of Two Cities* in the position of a psychologist, reading these movements and changes as evidence of a particular state of mind. In contrast to Galsworthy’s application of this technique to his representations of male insanity in *The Forsyte Saga*, as discussed in Chapter Two, Dickens’s novels illustrate a vast range of states, including mild symptoms and slight changes as well as violent or extreme actions, both in individuals and enormous crowds. Unhealthy masculine psychologies are to be found at both ends of these two spectra in these novels, and Dickens shifts between them with considerable speed and dexterity, highlighting a sense of instability and constant flux throughout his narratives.

Examining the intersection of political violence and psychiatry, the 1840s may be identified as a critical turning point in responses to individual criminal insanity. Given the vast asylum growth during what Foucault terms ‘the great confinement’ from the late-seventeenth century onwards, some medical professionals sought more sustainable alternative treatments based on community care.<sup>7</sup> I suggest that considerable contention existed between these forward-thinking, more liberal aims, and pressures from the establishment to hold up individuals as examples, effectively

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<sup>6</sup> In James’s famous example, when a man sees a bear he runs, making himself afraid and causing faster breathing, a quicker pulse, more adrenaline, and so on. Our response to the stimulus of running causes fear, rather than the sight of the bear itself. ‘What is an Emotion?’, *Mind*, vol. 9 (Apr. 1884), pp. 188-205; *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. xiii.



sentenced to life in an asylum.<sup>8</sup> The first two of eight separate attempts to shoot and kill Queen Victoria in the course of her six-decade reign took place in the 1840s, reawakening and intensifying eighteenth-century concerns and debates about individual insanity and criminal responsibility. A careful construction of male madness was arguably controlled by the government and media in the wake of these events as a means of characterising or even dismissing political radicalism as insane, providing the primary means of quelling the mass hysteria of the public. The Queen's letters, Old Bailey records, and casebooks from Bethlem and Broadmoor illuminate the legal, political and medical contexts of these shootings. These details provide a backdrop of the discourses around political violence, insanity and the law against which Dickens wrote his historical novels.

The Criminal Lunatics Act (1800) created provision for the legal incarceration of those found not guilty because of insanity, but whose condition made them a danger to society. Prior to this date, those identified as criminal lunatics simply walked free following the verdict. The legislation resulted directly from the trial of James Hadfield, who attempted to assassinate 'mad' King George III earlier that year.<sup>9</sup> Concerns about this assassination attempt across Parliament and the press opened up new debates about what constituted the condition this chapter terms 'political insanity,' and what the appropriate responses from the legal, medical and wider communities might be. Attacks on the figure of the monarch, and the very number of public attacks on Queen Victoria, provides an important context for the wider public understanding of political

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<sup>8</sup> The idea of labelling an individual anti-monarchist 'mad' and making an example of him as a warning to others in a more brutal way is explored by the plot thread concerning Gaspard in *A Tale of Two Cities*, as we will see later in this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> During the singing of 'God Save the King' before a performance at the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane in May 1800, Hadfield shot at George III and missed. He was found not guilty of treason by reason of insanity, and was acquitted. The Treason Act of 1800 allowed for the subsequent indefinite detention of the insane, together with the Criminal Lunatics Act.

insanity as a category. The extreme violence of the individual attackers inevitably increased the fear of the destructive collective potential of groups of these madmen in the form of political mobs.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Edward Oxford, a young man who had just turned eighteen walked into a shop in Southwark and bought two pistols for two pounds. He had saved up the money over several months of working at a public house in Camberwell.<sup>10</sup> Edward's aim was poor, but improved somewhat with frequent practice at shooting galleries in central and west London. Three weeks later, he shot at Queen Victoria, then four months pregnant with her first child, who was taking her usual afternoon drive in St James's Park in a phaeton with Prince Albert. Despite his clear declaration on being arrested, 'It was I. It was me who did it', Oxford's manner and facial expressions during his trial were taken as additional evidence of his lack of reason, and the jury at the Old Bailey found him not guilty by reason of insanity on 10th July.<sup>11</sup> According to his case notes from Broadmoor, which also detail his behaviour at Bethlem, where he spent most of his incarceration, Oxford engaged himself busily in a range of activities. As well as painting, drawing and learning the violin, he became quite fluent in six languages, and was the hospital's champion at playing draughts.<sup>12</sup> These demonstrations of intellect applied to rational pursuits, in addition to his model behaviour, supported his Bethlem doctor's opinion that he was actually perfectly sane.

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<sup>10</sup> Crucially, of course, this implies premeditation. Paul Thomas Murphy describes Oxford's 'diminutive stature' and notes that his mother Hannah was exasperated by the extravagant purchase which had cost the better part of a quarter's wages for his job at the Hog in the Pound. *Shooting Victoria: Madness, Mayhem, and the Rebirth of the British Monarchy* (London: Head of Zeus, 2012), p. 3; p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Murphy writes that 'Oxford's expression of dejection changed to a silly-looking smile of bafflement, excitement and curiosity', and describes his apparent fascination with herbs strewn in front of him at the dock – a tradition designed to curb the spread of infection in the court room. Murphy, *Shooting Victoria*, p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> These notes suggest a considerable improvement in the conditions at Bethlem following the 1815 investigation, a world away from the scenes depicted by Hogarth much earlier.

Under considerable pressure from the Queen to do so, the Home Secretary ignored the numerous petitions to have Oxford released.<sup>13</sup> After twenty-seven years in the asylums he was escorted on board a ship to Australia, where he began a new life in Melbourne, marrying and becoming a churchwarden of St James's Cathedral (which he saved from demolition) and authoring a book about colonial life.<sup>14</sup> His correspondence with George Haydon, a friend who had been a steward at Bethlem during his confinement, reveals that he came to regret his attempt to kill the Queen, and 'wanted her to know that the foolish boy of half a century ago had done well for himself.'<sup>15</sup> Oxford's interesting choice of the noun, 'boy' and the adjective, 'foolish', connote a juvenile prank rather than murder and treason, both diminishing the severity of his violence and dismissing his 'insane' diagnosis (although without the latter he would very likely have been hung, drawn and quartered).

In 1843, Daniel M'Naghten murdered Edward Drummond, mistaking him for Prime Minister Robert Peel. Having watched Peel's house in Whitehall Gardens for some time, M'Naghten saw a man, whom he believed to be Peel, walk out of the front door, and followed him up Whitehall. When they reached Charing Cross, M'Naghten shot him. On trial in Bow Street he claimed, 'The Tories in my native city have compelled me to do this. They follow, persecute me wherever I go, and have entirely destroyed my peace of mind [...]. That is all I have to say.' For M'Naghten there were

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher Arthur Benson and Viscount Esher, eds. *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Volume 1: 1837-1843*; *A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence Between the Years 1837 and 1861* (Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2009), p. 458. More information about the investigation may be found in Peel's letter to Prince Albert of 20<sup>th</sup> January 1843. Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>14</sup> *Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life* discussed subjects including slums, racetracks and markets, and was published under his new name, John Freeman (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888).

<sup>15</sup> These letters may be accessed in the manuscript collection at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 243. Also see Jenny Sinclair, *A Walking Shadow: The Remarkable Double Life of Edward Oxford* (New York: Arcade, 2012).

two incidents of political violence in the case, and his perception was that suffering as a victim of the first directly caused his perpetration of the second. Despite a lack of evidence for his victimisation by the Tory party, and the concrete evidence (in the form of Drummond's dead body) that M'Naghten used disproportionate and extreme violence to attempt to kill their leader, his short statement, like Oxford's, is an assertion of diminished responsibility without admission of lunacy. The landmark case, now interpreted as an example of paranoid schizophrenia, established the rule for establishing criminal insanity, sustained in law today and known as the M'Naghten rules.

Roderick McLean's attempt to shoot the Queen at Windsor railway station on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1882 was thwarted when two boys from Eton began hitting him on the head with umbrellas.<sup>16</sup> The event prompted an odd response from Victoria, who claimed, 'It is worth being shot at to see how much one is loved.'<sup>17</sup> The Queen's diary gives an account of the day's events in remarkably stoical terms:

Just as we were driving off from the station there, the people or rather, the Eton Boys cheered, and at the same time there was the sound, of what I thought, was an explosion from the engine [...]. I then realised that it was a shot, which must have been meant for me [...]. Sir J. M<sup>c</sup> Neill, jumped out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> carriage in a great state [...]. Horatia S. rushed up, to ask if we were not hurt. I pacified them, [...] telegraphed to all my Children & near relations. [...] Superintendent Hayes of the Police here, seized the man, who was wretchedly dressed, and had

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Thomas Murphy, *Shooting Victoria: Madness, Mayhem and the Rebirth of the British Monarchy* (London: Pegasus, 2012), p. 453.

<sup>17</sup> Queen Victoria, quoted in Murphy, p. 1.

a very bad countenance [...]. The man will be examined tomorrow. He is well spoken, and evidently an educated man [...] the man's intentions seemed very clear. An Eton Boy had rushed up, and beaten him with an umbrella. Great excitement prevails [...]. I was not frightened.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that it was the Queen, whose life was in danger, who ‘pacified’ her staff and family at Windsor Castle is a remarkable one. This being the eighth attempt on her life over a forty-year period, she was, perhaps, not as shocked as she might have been. McLean was confined, ‘uncured’ for life at Broadmoor, the new asylum for the criminally insane.<sup>19</sup> The enduring legacy of these events may be seen in debates surrounding the language of verdict (such as Queen Victoria’s request that ‘not guilty by reason of insanity’ be substituted in favour of ‘guilty but insane’), appropriate punishment or care for (would-be) assassins, and who was considered insane by medical professions, the press and wider society.<sup>20</sup>

The development of psychological research in the nineteenth century, with its focus on a single patient’s organic morbidity, then bodily symptoms, behaviour, and finally psychoanalysis, made it typically more difficult to label groups than individuals insane. Nonetheless, Dickens’s journalism and fiction explore the relationship between

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<sup>18</sup> See *Queen Victoria’s Journals* (Princess Beatrice’s Copies), vol. 26, 2 Mar. 1882, pp. 63-65 <[www.queenvictoriasjournals.org](http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org)> accessed 28/08/14.

<sup>19</sup> Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum opened in Crowthorne, Berkshire in 1863 for women and 1864 for men.

<sup>20</sup> 123 years after Edward Oxford shot at the Queen’s open carriage, similar debates were reignited following the shooting of President J. F. Kennedy, who was seated in an open-top car in Dallas. The ensuing speculations about the possible labelling of an individual as mentally ill, isolating a single act of political violence as an anomaly to draw attention away from a potential wider group of political dissidents, echoed those of nineteenth-century Britain.

altered states of consciousness, sanity and behaviour, in individuals and collectives. The roots of these ideas in relation to political radicalism and crowd violence can be traced to the politics of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.<sup>21</sup> In addition to writings about the Gordon Riots and French Revolution, the influence of other eighteenth-century riots in Britain, such as the Porteous Riots (1736), may be traced in Dickens's two historical novels.<sup>22</sup>

It is highly significant that the first two books of *A Tale of Two Cities* open with accounts of violence – first, the threat of criminal violence from highwaymen, and second, the tradition of exposing severed heads on Temple Bar.<sup>23</sup> This collecting of individuals' heads in a group as a symbol of the power of the British rule of law is mirrored in the practices of the aristocracy in pre-revolutionary France. These heads are trophies, representing not only a threat and deterrent to would-be criminals and protestors against the status quo, but also a source of comfort to those who display them. Given that the skull contains the brain, ownership of the dead heads of dismembered bodies may even be interpreted as Foucauldian control of the minds of others. Moving away from discussions by Tambling and others of *A Tale of Two Cities* as a novel centred on imprisonment, this chapter draws on the theories of Foucault and Deleuze to explore political violence in terms of the psychological effects of state-sponsored and criminal violence in relation to nineteenth-century ideas about 'idiocy',

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<sup>21</sup> Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*.

<sup>22</sup> The gruesome Porteous Riots were sparked when six civilians were shot and killed by the City Guard during a protest at a hanging in Edinburgh, under the direction of Captain John Porteous. A mob later dragged Porteous from his cell in Tolbooth Prison and lynched him, beating and burning him, before stringing him up for the final time from a dyer's pole outside a draper's shop. Robert McNeil, *The Porteous Riot* (Edinburgh: Scotland's Cultural Heritage, n.d.), p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 56. Also see Jeremy Tambling, *Dickens, Violence and the Modern State* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 131. Tambling discusses Dickens's novels alongside Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (1868-9) and Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818).

individual and collective psychopathic mania, and what we now call ‘trauma.’<sup>24</sup> Assassination attempts in Britain, even when their perpetrators are understood as insane, remain firmly in the criminal category. Those who attempt or succeed at this crime are isolated as individuals, separate from the more dangerous radical dissent of the wider population, both in the way they are represented in being physically confined in prison or an asylum, or removed more permanently from society by execution. In effect, individual criminal violence is usurped by collective state-sponsored violence, the latter gaining strength by its appearance of a collective backing by not only the monarch, but also her government and judiciary.

In specifically examining how insanity may be defined within a politically extreme or violent context, this research seeks to move on from debates about the extent to which Dickens’s own personal politics may be understood as radical or conservative. Forster observed that Dickens was ‘very much a man of one idea, each having its turn of absolute predominance.’<sup>25</sup> In addition to welfare and warfare, complexities and apparent contradictions in Dickens’s attitudes may be seen elsewhere in his attitudes to politics and economics.<sup>26</sup> For example, Juliet John finds similar contradictory perspectives governing Dickens’s relations with the mass and the

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<sup>24</sup> Although the term ‘trauma’ is anachronistic for Dickens, I use it here given the connections this chapter draws between Dickens and William James, who was the first to apply the word to psychological as opposed to physical wounds in the early 1890s. The term became more widespread following its mention in the non-specialised press in 1895: ‘We have named this psychical trauma, a morbid nervous condition.’ Nathan Oppenheim, ‘Why Children Lie,’ *Popular Science Monthly*, July 1895, p. 386.

<sup>25</sup> John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens, vol. III (1852-1870)* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), p. 181.

<sup>26</sup> John Carey cites numerous complexities in Dickens’s writing on politics, imprisonment and violence. *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens’s Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 8.

marketplace, as a writer who sought to write for the people as well as for commercial success.<sup>27</sup>

Informed by, but departing from, this critical context of Dickens's attitudes to socio-political debates and violence, this chapter will highlight some of the complexities inherent in Dickens's discussion of masculinity, madness and political violence in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* whilst allowing a degree of flexibility which seems appropriate given the extraordinary range of his imaginative scope. Important as discussions of Dickens's radicalism (or lack thereof) have been, they have tended (especially in analysis of his historical novels) to dominate historicist interpretations of the political allegiances represented in his fiction at the expense of embedding his work more deeply in other specific aspects of political history, such as the psychological, medical and legal contexts of ideas within which the novelist situated himself. Stepping aside from debates in cultural studies, and from an absolute focus on Foucauldian interpretation, this chapter aims to provide a new focus for historicising Dickens, examining theories of physical indications or results of difficult psychological processing, including ideas about personal, individual trauma as well as broader collective trauma, and the recoveries and retributions with which they are associated.

In *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens makes a marked break with domestic subjects, instead exploring the social and psychological causes and implications of political violence at the time of two momentous popular uprisings: the

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<sup>27</sup> As John observes in her introduction, 'Contemporary criticism has not found the relationship between the popular and the commercial quite so unproblematic.' See *Dickens and Mass Culture*, especially pp. 25-33.



Gordon Riots and the French Revolution.<sup>28</sup> In the former, the relatively domestic setting of the Maypole tavern quickly becomes the site of a duel, preceding full-scale rioting and arson on the streets of London. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the ideal of peaceful femininity and domesticity, represented by Lucie Manette, provides relief from the brutality of the Terror, but is disrupted by traumatic memory and relapse. This focus, I suggest, results from the context of ideas which Dickens was negotiating. In the 1840s, demands to broaden the franchise contributed to volatile social conditions in Britain, in which the risk of rebellious and revolutionary violence loomed large in both the popular and establishment imaginations. Dickens represents the vast chasm between rich and poor living conditions in France towards the end of the eighteenth century, as well as in Britain during the ‘hungry’ 1840s, as a catalyst for social unrest, which can manifest itself in sane or insane violence, either covertly by individuals seeking personal gain, or *en masse*, motivated by larger political aims. Carlyle, acknowledged as the greatest influence on Dickens’s historical fiction, had previously enquired in relation to Chartist riots, ‘is the discontent itself mad, like the shape it took?’<sup>29</sup> The pursuit of an answer to this diagnostic question is the driving force behind Dickens’s extended exploration of male mental health in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

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<sup>28</sup> Kucich has argued that ‘the Victorian novel was predominantly a novel of domestic manners, not a novel of ideas’, citing Eliot, Meredith and Hardy as the most notable exceptions. However, I suggest that Dickens, particularly in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, is surely another exception to this idea. See Kucich, ‘Intellectual debate in the Victorian novel’, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. David, p. 212.

<sup>29</sup> *Barnaby Rudge* was serialised in weekly parts in *Master Humphrey’s Clock* from February to November 1841. The front page of *Chartism* is dated 1840, although it was published in December 1839. Mark Cumming, ed. *The Carlyle Encyclopedia* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 2004), p. 89. Carlyle’s criticism of the riots extends to the government and police: ‘coercion by itself will not even do much. If there does exist general madness of discontent, then sanity and some measure of content must be brought about again, - not by constabulary police alone. When the thoughts of a people, in the great mass of it, have grown mad, the combined issue of that people’s workings will be a madness, an incoherency and ruin! Sanity will have to be recovered for the general mass; coercion itself will otherwise cease to be able to coerce.’ Carlyle, *Chartism* (Memphis, Tennessee: General Books, 2010), p. 3.

## II: *Barnaby Rudge*

The personal is political and the political is personal in Dickens's historical fiction. His depictions of riots in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* do not simply reflect the resentment and instability of family relationships. Rather, paternal conflict in particular is implicated in the problematic relationship between the individual and the state, in which diplomacy and negotiation, where they are offered at all, are swiftly replaced by rebellion. The initial satirising of corrupt authority in the home and the state, in failed patriarchy and unstable democracy, gives way to the terror of mass violence mid-way through *Barnaby Rudge*. The mystery of Reuben Haredale's brutal murder, which has taken place twenty years before the novel opens, is only the beginning of bloody anti-Catholic violence on a vast scale, which snowballs into a wider uprising against traditional authority at every level.

Beginning to publish the weekly parts of his novel only months after Carlyle's polemic on Chartism, Dickens cites various institutions which are to blame in part for the conditions giving rise to political unrest: the 'vast throng' is 'sprinkled doubtless here and there with honest zealots, but composed for the most part of the very scum and refuse of London, whose growth was fostered by bad criminal laws, bad prison regulations, and the worst conceivable police.'<sup>30</sup> Dickens implies that the metropolitan population was almost bound to join forces with any protest group which promised to improve their conditions. They were easy prey to Gordon and Gashford, who could

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<sup>30</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 393. Similarly, Carlyle blames Parliament for not having addressed Chartist concerns sooner, before violence broke out. See *Chartism*, p. 2.

quickly infect them with violent fervour as if it were a disease. Dickens draws on the language of contagion and flowing water to describe the effect of madness:

The great mass never reasoned or thought at all, but were stimulated by their own headlong passions, by poverty, by ignorance, by the love of mischief, and the hope of plunder [...] from the moment of their first outbreak at Westminster, every symptom of order or preconcerted arrangement among them, vanished [...]. Each party swelled as it went along, like rivers as they roll towards the sea.<sup>31</sup>

In the tumultuous crowd, all economic and social order is ripped apart and ordinarily sane, 'sober workmen going home from their day's labour, were seen to cast down their baskets of tools and become rioters in an instant; mere boys on errands did the like.'<sup>32</sup>

Connecting with debates in the 1840s about the 'moral management' of lunatics, Dickens describes the consequences of a society's failure to isolate mentally unstable individuals before they attract others. This combines with the failure of civilised masculinity to withstand external threats and retain moral courage, giving way to a more primitive, savage masculinity in which strength is defined as physical power.

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<sup>31</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 421.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 421.

In a word, a moral plague ran through the city. The noise, and hurry, and excitement, had for hundreds and hundreds an attraction they had no firmness to resist. The contagion spread, like a dread fever: an infectious madness, as yet not near its height, seized on new victims every hour, and society began to tremble at their ravings.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to Lord Gordon, the only genuine historical figure to appear in Dickens's text, the three male leaders of the riots may be identified as case studies of madness: Barnaby, Hugh and Ned Dennis. Steven Marcus has argued that these men form a Freudian triumvirate in which Dennis represents the superego, Barnaby as the ego and Hugh as the id.<sup>34</sup> Departing from this mapping of Freud's theory of the mind on to these three men to form one collective brain, this chapter examines the psychology of violent political behaviour in relation the three categories of madness named in its title: idiocy, trauma, and psychopathy.

Usually identified by literary critics as a 'holy fool,' Barnaby is often seen as having a surprisingly small role for a title character.<sup>35</sup> However, I suggest that his significance can be better appreciated by examining the relationship between his position as an idiot and the political violence of which he becomes a vital part. In other words, this chapter focuses not on Barnaby as an idiotic and passive yet enlightened

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<sup>33</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 421.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Marcus, *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> Juliet McMaster places Barnaby in the position of a visionary, whose dreams accurately predict the future, illuminating the 'shadowy everyman's land that lies between conscious and unconscious.' See "'Better to Be Silly': From Vision to Reality in *Barnaby Rudge*", *Dickens Studies Annual* 15 (1984), pp. 1-17; p. 15. Natalie McKnight notes that Barnaby's last speech is before he is taken off to be executed. He is a holy fool who is 'decentred, minimalized and ultimately silenced' by Dickens. *Idiots, Madmen and Other Prisoners in Dickens*, p. 91.

sort of soothsayer, but as a political activist – a man whose particular psychological characteristics are utilised by others who harness him to a violent insurrectionary movement.

However, Barnaby has a more complex role than that of a potentially violent instrument to be manipulated. Dickens also presents him as a victim of trauma situated in a very particular hereditary and social context. Frequent references to the blood that Barnaby shares with his allegedly dead father frame his idiocy as a hereditary taint. This psychological and physiological theory was to become a major plot device in sensation fiction some twenty years later.<sup>36</sup> Dickens suggests that Barnaby's violence in the crowd results, at least partially, from sharing the blood of the man who murdered Reuben Haredale in an act of individual violence. Barnaby is both a victim and a perpetrator of insane personal and political violence. His prenatal trauma, caused by his murderous father (himself physiognomically interpretable by his 'sunken jaw and staring eyes'), is symbolised by his birth mark, and externally identifies him as 'other', differentiating him from other male characters in body as well as mind.<sup>37</sup>

The dialectic between the one and the many in shaping historical events is a persistent theme in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, but is both most complex and most urgent in analysing the relationship between Barnaby and the mob. In this instance, the usual relationship between the decision-making and behaviour of a free, independent adult male and larger bodies, from the family to political groups and the state, is problematized by a mental health condition. Psychological destabilisation

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<sup>36</sup> The most well-known characters with this 'taint' are female characters, as in Collins's *The Woman in White* and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. Male examples include Stephen Monkton in Collins's short story, *Mad Monkton* (1855).

<sup>37</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 549.

has a destabilising effect on normative familial relationships. Well into his adult manhood Barnaby remains in the care of his mother who ‘watches for the dawn of mind that never came.’<sup>38</sup> After five years enjoying the light and fresh air often prescribed by late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century alienists, rambling in the countryside with his companions – ‘a score of vagabond dogs belonging to the neighbours’ and, of course, Grip the raven, Barnaby’s mind remains unchanged.<sup>39</sup> Again, Dickens confirms that ‘the daily suns of years had shed no brighter gleam of reason on his mind; no dawn had broken on his long, dark night.’<sup>40</sup> This confirms Barnaby’s status as an ‘idiot’, according to contemporary psychology. An article entitled ‘Idiots,’ published in *Household Words* in 1853, quotes Dr Voisin who defined idiocy as ‘that particular state in which the instincts of reproduction and preservation, the moral sentiments, and the intellectual and perceptive powers are never manifested, or that particular state in which the different essentials of our being are only imperfectly developed.’<sup>41</sup> The article also clearly explains Dickens’s own understanding of the difference between insanity and idiocy: ‘In the Insane certain faculties which once existed have become obliterated or impaired’, whilst ‘In Idiots, they either never existed or exist imperfectly.’<sup>42</sup>

Within the home, Barnaby’s inability to take on the male role of breadwinner is relatively unproblematic. Although he and his mother live in poverty, they have simple needs, and her strong sense of maternal duty precludes the possibility that she will abandon him in search of more lucrative employment or marriage. However, like

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<sup>38</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>41</sup> Dickens and W. H. Wills, ‘Idiots’, *Household Words* no. 7 (4 June 1853), p. 313.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

countless young men before and after him in literary history, Barnaby's downfall is precipitated by his love of money, which corrupts his natural innocence. Watching the sunset one evening, he muses, 'A brave evening, mother! If we had, chinking in our pockets, but a few specks of that gold which is piled up in yonder sky, we should be rich for life.'<sup>43</sup> Heedless of his mother's wisdom when she observes that he does not know 'what men have done to win it, and how they have found, too late, that it glitters brightest in the distance, and turns quite dim and dull when handled,' and that 'nothing bears so many stains of blood, as gold,' Barnaby insists that he wants them to be able to 'dress finely,' 'keep horses, dogs, wear bright colours and feathers', and 'live delicately at our ease.'<sup>44</sup> By aspiring to such a lifestyle, like Sir John Chester's, he grieves his mother greatly, and becomes highly vulnerable to the persuasion of Stagg, who appears moments later, promising that his mother, 'poor soul, would be happier if she was richer,' and that money is to be found 'in the world, bold Barnaby, the merry world; not in solitary places like those you pass your time in, but in crowds, and where there's noise and rattle.'<sup>45</sup>

As Dickens had already established with Fagin in *Oliver Twist* (1837-9), duplicity implies not only untrustworthiness but actively malevolent motivations, such as the corruption of innocence for personal financial gain. As soon as Barnaby leaves the room to fetch a loaf of bread, Dickens signals an abrupt physiognomical shift in Stagg's appearance:

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<sup>43</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 361.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 368-9.

The change in his manner was so unexpected, the craft and wickedness were so much aggravated by his condition – for we are accustomed to see in those who have lost a human sense, something in its place almost divine – and this alteration bred so many fears in her whom he addressed, that she could not pronounce one word.<sup>46</sup>

Stagg's feigned absence of sight is revealed as a wicked tool of blackmail, making Barnaby's genuine disability seem more divine, reaffirming his status as the kind of 'holy fool' that McKnight and others have labelled him. However, crucially, this episode also affirms Barnaby's innocent vulnerability shortly before the mid-way point in the novel. Since once the scene returns to London for the second half of the narrative, Barnaby's behaviour becomes violent, removing him from his position as a holy fool, it is vital that Dickens has already established Barnaby as a benign idiot.

The question of Barnaby's guilt for his part in the monstrous violence of the riots appears to be settled when, at the last moment, Dickens plucks him from the jaws of fate, and instead of facing execution he walks free. Perhaps this special exemption indicates that, for Dickens, Barnaby is not guilty of the crimes of which he stands accused, having merely followed the orders of others. Gashford repeatedly insists that neither he, nor Hugh, nor Dennis, nor Tappertit act on his orders or instructions, but nonetheless these mob leaders act under his suggested direction.<sup>47</sup> Alternatively, his

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<sup>46</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 364.

<sup>47</sup> Despite his brutish character, even Dennis comes to find Gashford's manipulation haunting. With wide eyes he stutters to 'Muster Gashford,' 'that that 'ere quiet way of yours might almost wake a dead man [...] so awful sly!' Gashford prefers to call his speech 'distinct,' but Dennis experiences an uncomfortable physical embodiment of his leader's instruction: 'I seem to hear it, Muster Gashford, in my wery bones.' Professing himself to be glad of Dennis's sharp sense of hearing, the secretary



release from imprisonment and execution indicates that Barnaby's status as an innocent victim in his personal circumstances, outlined in the first half of the novel, outweighs his guilt as a perpetrator of violence in the public sphere of the second half of the novel. Raising the discussion in fiction of whether, as an 'idiot,' Barnaby can be held accountable for his actions, from February 1841 onwards, Dickens engaged in the highly topical debate over the 'not guilty by reason of insanity' verdict, following Edward Oxford's high profile trial in the Old Bailey the previous summer.

Following William Palmer, Patrick Brantlinger has addressed the question of Dickens's philosophy in the case of *Barnaby Rudge*, by placing Dickens within the intellectual context of the 1830s conflict between Enlightenment rationalism, manifested in pre-*Hard Times* Benthamite utilitarianism, and Romantic measures of value. Brantlinger writes that Dickens believed

that the past had far too powerful a hold on the present for it to be easily swept aside [...]. Further, again like the Romantics, he believed that Enlightenment rationalism, as expressed in Benthamism and political economy, overlooked the irrational but necessary and often wise, emotional aspects of human nature, including the imagination.<sup>48</sup>

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reiterates his earlier claim, 'you are perfect master of your own actions, you know, and accountable to nobody – except sometimes the law, eh?' *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 422.

<sup>48</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, 'Did Dickens Have a Philosophy of History? The Case of *Barnaby Rudge*', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 30, pp. 59-74.

I suggest that although he is ‘feeble-minded,’ Barnaby demonstrates his imaginative power not only in the scope of his daydreaming, but also his kindness and sense of a moral imperative to create a comfortable, happy future for his mother and friends.

In a novel saturated by the blood of mad violence, Barnaby, the only character to be specifically labelled with mental deficiency, emerges as relatively sane. Half a century before the Idiots Act of 1886, which created a legal distinction between ‘idiots,’ ‘imbeciles,’ and ‘lunatics,’ amid the chaotic behaviour of madmen in *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens carefully separates Barnaby from lunatics in the crowd. He effectively theorises a case for the diminished responsibility of idiots, as opposed to other insane criminals, writing just months before NGRI debates would explode in the media with assassination attempts and treason trials. Barnaby’s involvement in the ‘No Popery’ riots is neither motivated by religious prejudice nor blood lust, as for his peers. Rather, he has been persuaded by Hugh that it will make his mother pleased and proud:

‘She would be proud indeed to see me now, eh Hugh?’

[...] ‘Barnaby’s right,’ cried Hugh with a grin [...]. ‘[I’ve] sent half-a-dozen gentlemen, every one of ’em with a blue flag (but not half as fine as yours), to take her, in state, to a grand house all hung round with gold and silver banners, and everything else you please, where she’ll wait till you come, and want for nothing.’

‘Ay!’ said Barnaby, his face beaming with delight: ‘have you indeed? That’s a good hearing. That’s fine! Kind Hugh!’<sup>49</sup>

An important distinction is made here between the mental conditions of Barnaby on one hand, and Hugh and Dennis on the other. Barnaby’s idiocy here amounts to a childlike innocence of the possibility that others may have ulterior motives. Dickens clarifies that the other two men are not only violent brutes under Gashford and Gordon’s instructions, but are also capable of manipulative autocracy and semi-autonomous conspiracy. In sinister undertones, Hugh explains to Dennis: ‘Don’t you see, man [...] ‘that the lad’s a natural, and can be got to do anything, if you take him the right way. Letting alone the fun he is, he’s worth a dozen men.’

Mr Dennis received these explanatory remarks with many nods and winks, and softened his behaviour towards Barnaby. Hugh, laying his finger on his nose, stepped back into his former place, and they proceeded in silence.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast to Barnaby’s ongoing dream-like oblivion, Hugh and Dennis are fully conscious of, and thus morally culpable for, what they say and do. Lord George Gordon is represented in Dickens’s fictional history, as in other accounts of the riots to which he gives his name, as a hereditarily insane man, whose religious zeal becomes

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<sup>49</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, pp. 391-2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

monomaniacal, inciting political violence against individuals and their property. Hugh, the hostler, and Ned Dennis, the hangman, become monomaniacal because their lust for violence requires little prompting to take on a psychopathological intensity. It is these three men, then, not Barnaby, who are the violent madmen whom Dickens holds morally culpable, and whom he punishes at the end of the novel.

As a professional hangman, a regulated instrument of state power, who becomes maniacal, defecting to the side of the rioters, Ned Dennis may be interpreted as a fascinating case study of a violent psychopath.<sup>51</sup> Dickens ironises the inconsistency that when Dennis acts in his state-sponsored capacity his political violence is sane and legitimate, whereas when he switches to the side of the mob his actions are anything but. In doing so, Dickens pursues one of the key investigations driving his historical fiction: why do societies view some spectacles of political violence as acceptable and justifiable and others not? Dennis initially carries out his role as executioner on the side of the establishment, before defecting to the Gordon side. On both sides he ends life by violence, and yet his actions are only seen as sane in the first instance.

Dennis is not the only man in Dickens's writings to display an alarming enthusiasm to take on the role of hangman. In 'The Finishing Schoolmaster' (1850), Dickens satirises those who have written genuine letters to apply to fill an alleged vacancy for a hangman. Reprinting a sample of the applications, which include stipulations as to convenient travel arrangements and payment in the region of £20-60,

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<sup>51</sup> By the 1860s alienists or psychologists were sometimes referred to as 'psychopaths.' The current meaning of the term as 'a mentally ill person who is highly irresponsible and antisocial and also violent or aggressive' (*OED*) has been frequently used term in psychiatry since the early 1880s, and it is the latter that I refer to here.

the article jokes that ‘the Hon. Frank Tossup’ will chair the committee to make the appointment. However, it is with sincere bitterness that Dickens reflects:

Our administrative legislature cannot agree on the teaching of The Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, the Christian History; but they are all quite clear as to the public teaching of the Hangman. The scaffold is the blessed neutral ground on which conflicting Governments may all accord [...].<sup>52</sup>

In addition to debating the sanity of the hangman, Dickens evokes a European discourse in psychology, questioning whether the inconsistencies in how Dennis is viewed are themselves sane. This hypocrisy, in other words, may reveal an irrational disjunction in the mind, forming what could in later years be understood as a ‘schizophrenic’ split in mental functioning.<sup>53</sup> The ‘ruffian’ Dennis only seems to object to Catholicism since he fears that it could interfere with his Protestant profession as a hangman. As his temperature rises, he dramatically pledging his allegiance to Gashford:

I mustn't have no Papists interfering with me, unless they come to me to be worked off in course of law; I musn't have no biling [sic.], no roasting, no frying – nothing but hanging [...] [I'll] burn, fight, kill – do anything you bid

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<sup>52</sup> ‘The Finishing Schoolmaster’, *Household Words*, vol. 3, no. 60 (17 May 1851), p. 171; p. 169.

<sup>53</sup> The term ‘schizophrenia’ was coined by Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss psychiatrist, who popularised the word with a lecture on dementia and autism in 1908 in Berlin. See Bleuler, *The theory of schizophrenic negativism*. Trans. William A. White (New York: The Journal of nervous and mental disease publishing company, 1912).

me, so that it's bold and devilish – though the end of it was, that I got hung myself.' [...] pouring out in a kind ecstasy, at least a score of most tremendous oaths; then wiped his heated face upon his neckerchief, and cried, 'No Popery! I'm a religious man, by G – !'<sup>54</sup>

Having had their first taste of the mob violence, Barnaby, Hugh and Dennis require only the very slightest, most subtle suggestion from Gashford to leave the Boot and join the crowd burning down a Catholic chapel. Dickens's narrative of the ensuing brutalities combine nightmarish impressions with visceral bodily detail:

Their hair hanging wildly about them; their hands and faces jagged and bleeding with the wounds of rusty nails; Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis hurried on before them all, like hideous madmen. After them, the dense throng came fighting on [...] some with great wooden fragments, on which they spent their rage as if they had been alive, rending them limb from limb [...] a senseless, ghastly heap. Thus – a vision of coarse faces [...] a dream of demon heads and savage eyes, and sticks and iron bars uplifted in the air, and whirled about; a bewildering horror, in which so much was seen, and yet so little [...] in which there were so many phantoms, not to be forgotten all through life.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 302.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

In Dickens's representation, these men are undoubtedly mad; acting on brute instinct a collective monster, utterly devoid of rational purpose. 'Senseless', 'drunken' and 'unconscious,' the mob is intent on wreaking destruction everywhere it goes, incapable of distinguishing human bodies from wooden fragments.<sup>56</sup> Evidently this mob, which was initiated by specific religious and political goals, has been incapable of distinguishing particular targeted properties. This lack of direction and specificity renders the crowd literally 'senseless,' and thus, psychopathic. Dickens's heavy use of barbaric imagery, combined with a sense of haunting by demons and phantoms in the smoky light, gives a strong sense that these mad men are not only inflicting scars upon their own bodies, but are imprinting new trauma upon the minds of their witnesses.<sup>57</sup>

By the time the mob reaches the Warren, the infliction of wounds upon the brain has shifted from the purely psychological to the physical. An elderly servant of Haredale's is 'said to have had his brains beaten out with an iron bar [...] burnt in the flames.'<sup>58</sup> Some of the men retain enough rationality to see the value in preserving the most valuable items, such as 'jewels, plate, and money.' Meanwhile, the more insane among them, 'less mindful of gain and more mad for destruction,' are incapable of making such discrimination, and, drunk on wine from the cellar, 'rushed to and fro stark mad, setting fire to all they saw – often to the dresses of their own friends.' Shouting and howling wildly, like demons in hell, these madmen both feed and feed from the 'crackled and raged' fire, piling on more fuel and becoming yet more

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<sup>56</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 404.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 442.

maniacally energised by the flames, which bind individuals more closely together as a collective.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 16: 'The Devastations occasioned by the Rioters of London [...]'<sup>60</sup>

Ordering the mob to disperse, Hugh finds that many of the men are past the point of following orders. No restraint can be reintroduced, since those men who have not yet been burned alive are deaf to instructions, even to save their own skins. Even the rats are emotionally superior to the arsonists, since they are capable of pitying the

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<sup>59</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 442.

<sup>60</sup> 'The Devastations occasioned by the Rioters of London Firing the New Goal [sic.] of Newgate, and burning Mr Akerman's furniture, June 6, 1780', inscribed with title, names and publication line 'Hamilton delin. / Thornton scul. / London Published by Alexr. Hogg at the Kings Arms, No.16 Paternoster Row.' British Museum.



Haredales, who have provided them with shelter. Dickens combines the gothic imagery of eighteenth-century madhouses with his depiction of hell on earth:

If Bedlam gates had been flung open wider, there would not have issued forth such maniacs as the frenzy of that night had made. There were men there, who danced and trampled on the beds of flowers as though they trod down human enemies; and wrenched them from the stalks, like savages who twisted human necks. There were men who cast their lighted torches in the air, and suffered them to fall upon their heads and faces, blistering the skin with deeply unseemly burns. There were men who rushed up to the fire, and paddled in it with their hands as if in water; and others who were restrained by force from plunging in, to gratify their deadly longing.<sup>61</sup>

As throughout the novel, Dickens pinpoints heads and eyes as markers by which to judge men's states of mind. The last of the crowd are 'red-eyed,' and, in a particularly gruesome image of the madness of self-destruction, Dickens describes the remains of a young man.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 444.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444.

On the skull of one drunken lad – not twenty, by his looks – who lay upon the ground with a bottle to his mouth, the lead from the roof came streaming down in a shower of liquid fire, white hot; melting his head like wax.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, when these ‘thirsty’ ‘savages,’ ‘swarming like insects’ loot the Maypole, they transform the bar into ‘a madhouse, an infernal temple.’<sup>64</sup> Forgetful that they are on the same side, the men turn on each other, beating each other with pokers and becoming enraged at glassware, crockery, wooden chests, and other inanimate objects. Hugh is ‘the loudest, wildest, most destructive villain there,’ but retains a limited sense of order and due process in leading discussions as to what is to be done with his former employer, John Willett.<sup>65</sup> A multitude of alternatives are suggested. ‘Some proposed to set the house on fire and leave him in it; others that he should be reduced to a state of temporary insensibility by knocking on the head.’<sup>66</sup> Dennis, with his profession as ever at the forefront of his mind, sees hanging as the obvious solution.

Interestingly, in having Hugh lead this ‘counsel’ Dickens signals that, though mad, the hostler is sufficiently in control of his senses to see that John is dealt with leniently. Given that John has treated Hugh as if he were an animal, claiming that his soul, if it existed at all, must be ‘a very small one,’ Hugh’s intervention to protect his abuser is surprising.<sup>67</sup> The implications of this brief act of compassion are complex: it

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<sup>63</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 444.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 434.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108. As Pedlar has observed, ‘Willet’s attitude to Hugh, in fact, is very similar to the eighteenth-century attitude to lunatics that Dickens the reformer so abhorred; considered to be “quite an

identifies him as less psychopathic than the hangman, but in clarifying that he is aware of the consequences of his actions his actions, he cannot be found ‘not guilty by reason of insanity’ (NGRI). When Dickens doles out punishments at the end of the novel, he effectively finds Barnaby not guilty by reason of *idiocy* (though no such legal term existed). Barnaby says to his mother, ‘You may think that I am silly, but I can die as well as another – I have done no harm, have I?’ Her response seems to voice that of the narrator: ‘None before heaven.’ This suggests that he is not morally culpable, being judged NGRI.<sup>68</sup>

Dennis pledges his allegiance to Gordon with an ‘ugly wink.’ With this closing of the eye, denoting a lack of awareness, Dickens emphasises his physiognomic and intellectual contrast with the all-seeing Scottish aristocrat, the owner of a ‘striking’ and ‘very bright large eye, which betrayed a restlessness of thought and purpose, singularly at variance with the studied composure and sobriety of his mien, and with his quaint and sad apparel.’<sup>69</sup> Dennis’s psychopathic hardness, formed in the course of years as a state-sponsored executioner, is demonstrated by his absolute inability to empathise, or even attempt to do so:

here, in the very heart of the building, and moreover with the prayers and cries of the four men under sentence sounding in his ears, and their hands, stretched

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animal, the youth is indeed treated like an animal.’ *The Most Dreadful Visitation: Male Madness in Victorian Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 583.

<sup>69</sup> Dickens’s description of Lord Gordon’s melancholic visage is complex, combining the language of contagion with sympathy to uneasy effect. Gordon’s physiognomy is difficult to read, so we cannot predict what he is capable of. His eye ‘had nothing harsh or cruel in its expression; neither had his face, which was thin and mild [...] but it was suggestive of an indefinable uneasiness, which infected those who looked upon him, and filled them with a kind of pity for the man: though why it did so, they would have had some trouble to explain.’ *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 283.

out through the gratings in their cell doors, clasped in frantic entreaty before his very eyes [...] Mr Dennis appeared to think it an uncommon circumstance, and to banter himself upon it; for he thrust his hat on one side as some men do when they are in a waggish humour, sucked the head of his stick with a higher relish, and smiled as though he would say, “Dennis, you’re a rum dog; you’re a queer fellow; you’re capital company, Dennis, and quite a character!””<sup>70</sup>

Dennis laughs at the prisoners in Newgate, who are desperate for him to save them from being burned alive or being hanged the day after next. Dickens’s shocking description of the hangman’s response emphasises his complete psychopathic divorcement from the crises of others, as he not only ignores their pleas, but even derives amusement from their desperation, ‘winking at the wall in the absence of any friend with whom he could humour the joke.’<sup>71</sup>

In his madness Dennis mocks the prisoners even further by claiming that *their* mental state would make release from the burning building inappropriate – as though anxiety to save their own skins was madness. In a grave voice, ‘elevating his eyebrows,’ he tells them, ‘you’re not in that ‘ere state of mind that’s suitable to your condition, then; you’re not a going to be released [...]. Will you leave off that ‘ere indecent row?’<sup>72</sup> Admonishing the men for displaying signs of madness such as gnashing teeth, and responding by beating the hands he sees outstretched between the

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<sup>70</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 520.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 521.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 522; 521.

bars, Dennis becomes increasingly monomaniacal, desperate to control whether they live or die.<sup>73</sup>

Hugh's violence seems almost rational compared to the hangman's. When Hugh brings the mob to that part of the prison, the hangman becomes yet more aggressive, crying, 'Don't you respect the law – the constitootion – nothing?' before adding in a lower voice, 'can't you leave these here four men to me, if I've the whim? [...] I want these four men left alone, I tell you!', and shakes his face at Hugh, 'giving him a grin, compared with which his usual smile was amiable.'<sup>74</sup> Paradoxically, it is Ned Dennis's insistence that law and order be preserved that forms the basis for the rationale behind what is arguably the most anarchistic, violent and insane individual act in the entire novel. In this gruesome earlier, hotter prototype for his critique of cold utilitarianism in *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens paints a vivid picture of the single-minded, callous, unreasonable and unjust pursuit of reason and justice.

Dickens's original title for the novel was *Gabriel Varden*. In a narrative filled with mad male behaviour, the honest locksmith is the only example of healthy, sane masculinity. He is usually interpreted as a 'benevolent patriarch,' noted for his compassion towards his enemies.<sup>75</sup> Far from being an ideal or heroic model, however, Varden's long, exhausting marriage to a vain and recalcitrant woman, consumed by self-martyrdom, has taught him to avoid confrontation at almost any cost. Dickens clearly does not associate muscularity with stable mental health in *Barnaby Rudge*, but

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<sup>73</sup> Dickens had already referenced the trope of a violent madman gnashing his teeth in the 'Madman's Manuscript' found in *The Pickwick Papers*. The narrator confesses, 'madness was mixed up with my very blood, and the marrow of my bones [...] I could have rushed among them, and torn them to pieces limb from limb, and howled in transport. But I ground my teeth, and struck my feet upon the floor, and drove my sharp nails into my hands. I kept it down; and no one knew I was a madman yet.' *The Pickwick Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 130-2.

<sup>74</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, pp. 523-4.

<sup>75</sup> Patrick McDonagh *Idiocy: A Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 174.

Varden lacks the moral strength required to make him an active positive force. Muscularity, indicating strength and thus, violent potential, is consistently brutish rather than heroic in *Barnaby Rudge*. Any attempt by characters to argue otherwise is a sinister form of feigned denial.<sup>76</sup>

As for Mr Dombey, discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, planned activity is a key requirement for healthy masculinity. After his journey back to London via the Maypole at the beginning of the novel, Varden remains in stasis.<sup>77</sup> Mr Haredale, traumatically haunted by the mysterious murder of his brother, tries to rouse Varden to protect Barnaby's mother. Shrugging that had she wanted to confide her secret in him she would have done, Varden fails to defend his old sweetheart. Although thoroughly sane, he lacks masculine energy and vitality until he is finally activated towards the close of the novel and secures a pardon for Barnaby.

According to Locke's influential definition, this apathy on Varden's part would position him as more mentally deficient than Barnaby. Too trusting to realise that he is being abused, Barnaby is easily led astray; but he is not particularly slow to comprehend information. His mind is not blank, but is always active; either in the imaginative world he shares with Grip, or in thinking how best he might make his

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<sup>76</sup> Gashford repeatedly refuses responsibility for harnessing such strength to a cause to inflict brutal violence on others. Once Dennis has pledged to go to any violent extremity required, Gashford uses a characteristically 'mild tone', ironically suggesting that a procession – 'just as an innocent display of strength' – accompany the petition to the House of Commons. Gashford's eyes cannot be seen, meaning that the physiognomy of his face cannot be read: '[He] had leant back in his chair, regarding him with eyes so sunken, and so shadowed by his heavy brows, that for aught the hangman saw of them, he might have been stone blind. He remained smiling in silence for a short time longer [...].' *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 302.

<sup>77</sup> By contrast, Barnaby is relatively active. John Locke's distinction between idiots, or 'Naturals' and 'madmen' remained largely unchallenged in the early decades of the mid-nineteenth century, following several new editions of his 1690 *Essay* from 1820 to 1850. Locke argues that the 'defect' of 'Naturals' stemmed from 'want of quickness, activity, and motion, in the intellectual faculties, whereby they are deprived of reason: whereas *madmen*, on the other side, seem to suffer by the other extreme.' *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 157.

mother proud. He is physically active, too, maintaining almost constant motion on his long walks. Given Varden's general lack of motion, Locke's emphasis on the idiot as static would therefore define Barnaby as less 'idiotic' than his eventual protector. As this thesis has argued throughout, Dickens's fiction, as well as his journalism, demonstrates that he was constantly revising existing psychiatric language and treatment, often conveying ideas which would not take hold in the medical profession until several decades later. In revising Locke's influential categorisation, Dickens creates a more nuanced approach, better suited to the increasingly specific taxonomies of psychiatry emerging in the course of the nineteenth century.

Locke's description of madmen, however, resonates strikingly with Dickens's description of some of the No Popery rioters in *Barnaby Rudge*: those who are neither psychopaths, nor members of a mindless herd, but who join in the protest because they have been arguing for what is right (albeit based on 'wrong principles').<sup>78</sup> Locke interprets the behaviour of madmen: 'by the violence of their imaginations, having taken their fancies for realities, they make right deductions from them.' Based on the mistaken belief that their poverty and misfortune results from an increase in Catholic influence, the solution which seems most logical to the Protestant rioters of Dickens's novel is to protest against legislation which would increase Catholic power.

Locke's historical context differs less from Dickens's than one might imagine. During the English Civil War, Locke was a student, and his identification of illnesses which would, in the nineteenth century, become known as 'fanciful insanity' and 'monomania' includes delusions about royalty, with 'a distracted man fancying

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<sup>78</sup> Locke, p. 157.

himself a king.’<sup>79</sup> Locke’s writings on madness followed Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651), which warns of the dangers of ‘excessive desire of Revenge,’ ‘excessive passion’ combining to form ‘Madnesse in the multitude,’ which caused indiscriminate violence, with men disposed to ‘throw stones at [their] best friends.’<sup>80</sup> The resurgence of these concerns in Dickens’s fiction two centuries years later seems logical in the context of clashes between Catholicism and Protestantism, and between royalists and reformers or revolutionaries at the time of the Gordon Riots, the French Revolution, and the mid-nineteenth century regicide attempts respectively.

Beneath the overt religious rivalry represented in *Barnaby Rudge*, a narrow though persistent plot strand voices anxieties about regicide – another contemporary debate in which Dickens engaged himself in the wake of the Oxford treason trial. The pragmatic Grueby has little patience with Gashford’s attempts to legitimise their anti-Catholic campaigns by positioning them within a vast historical sweep:

‘where’s the use of talking of Bloody Mary, under such circumstances as the present, when my lord’s wet through, and tired with hard riding? Let’s either go on to London, sir, or put up at once; or that unfort’nate Bloody Mary will have more to answer for.’<sup>81</sup>

With these words Grueby unceremoniously de-historicises the narrative foundation on which the Gordon cause is based, and roots their actions firmly in the present. He

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<sup>79</sup> Locke, p. 157.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 141.

<sup>81</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 280.



argues that such a grand trajectory from the defeat of Bloody Mary is a sham excuse in any case; merely an attempt to imbue present crime with past authority. For Dickens the past has no *de facto* superiority. Rather, it has an unhealthy hold on the present in the form of individual and personal, or collective and public, traumatic memory. Thus, as Grueby asserts, the execution of Bloody Mary is a sufficiently powerful cultural memory that through history she has ‘done a deal more harm’ dead than alive.<sup>82</sup>

Mr Haredale exemplifies refined, gentlemanly masculinity, founded on emotional restraint, in sharp contrast to Dickens’s images of angry, monstrous masculinity. Seeing his family home in flames, and fearing that his niece may be dead, he does not grow angry but hides his face lest he should visibly shed a tear.<sup>83</sup> As elsewhere in Dickens’s representations of masculinity, emotional restraint merely postpones dramatic or violent outbursts; it does not prevent them. Finding Rudge senior creeping about the ruins of the Warren, Haredale unexpectedly flings himself upon him in a hysterical outpouring of long-suppressed hunger for revenge:

‘You, whose hands are red with my brother’s blood, and that of his crying,  
‘You, whose hands are red with my brother’s blood, and that of his faithful  
servant [...] double murderer and monster, I arrest you in the name of God,  
who has delivered you into my hands. Nay. Though you had the strength of  
twenty men [...] you could not escape me, or loosen my grasp to-night!’<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 280.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

Half way between Dickens's depiction of Barnaby's idiocy as connected to heredity and past violence in 1841 and his thorough exploration of fully-formed traumatic illness in Dr Manette eighteen years later, Dickens described the effects of violence leading to trauma in a less central male character. In *David Copperfield* (1849-50), moments of trauma pierce the narrative of a present which cannot break free of its past, rupturing any possibility for the idealisation of the past through nostalgia. While studies of psychological trauma relating to *David Copperfield* generally focus on Dickens's own distressing recollections of his time working at Warren's blacking factory, it is Mr Dick whose past most disturbs the present, manifested as a severe mental illness with political associations. Mr Dick is haunted by the severed head of Charles I: at first an apparently whimsical affliction, but one which Dickens carefully reveals to be the result of his having been seriously mistreated.<sup>85</sup>

The brutalities inflicted in the past by Mr Dick's brother and brother-in-law (in whose care he had been inauspiciously placed), and concern for his sister who is trapped in an unhappy marriage create a traumatic haunting which deeply fractures his psychological sense of self, making him unable to complete his memoirs. The trauma he experiences following this violent personal history manifests itself in high levels of anxiety about political violence, specifically, regicide. His entrapment in a child-like state of wonder and fear means that he is psychologically incapable of constructing a coherent form of masculinity predicated on fully-developed adulthood. He is rescued by Betsy Trotwood from a private asylum in which he had been poorly treated. Her home in Dover is a quiet sanctuary in which he is at liberty to pursue his life's work of writing a memorial to the Lord Chancellor. Her care of Mr Dick in her Dover home

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<sup>85</sup> Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 214-16.

represents an early form of care in the community, in a setting in which he will feel most safe from the troubling demons of his past.<sup>86</sup> By asking for Mr Dick's good judgement on matters ranging from bathing the young David to educating him, Betsy's therapeutic environment serves to increase his self-respect and increase the extent to which he is rooted in the present. Nonetheless, a preoccupation with the belief that Charles I's thoughts have been somehow transplanted into his own brain takes up most of his time.

Interpretations which focus on reassurance that Mr Dick is a low-risk madman risk smoothing over the complex anxieties about personal and political power.<sup>87</sup> He is similar to the 'man of happy silliness, pleased with everything' whom Dickens encountered two years after writing *David Copperfield*, at St Luke's Hospital.<sup>88</sup> The scene he describes in *Household Words* is surprisingly pleasant and safe, given that St Luke's had a history of admitting patients who had committed serious crimes. For example, in 1829 Jonathan Martin arrived, having set fire to York Minster and been found not guilty because of insanity, and remained there until his death in 1838. Despite the presence of such criminal patients, and of idiots or imbeciles, who would

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<sup>86</sup> The integration of the insane in the community was a new and controversial idea, not implemented on a large scale in England until the 1950s. However, a pioneering policy in Scotland followed the Lunacy (Scotland) Act of 1857, under which approximately a quarter of mental patients were boarded-out. Harriet Sturdy and William Parry-Jones, 'Boarding-out insane patients: the significance of the Scottish system, 1857-1913', pp. 86-114.

<sup>87</sup> Psychologists Allan Beveridge and Edward Renvoize note that Mr Dick is 'shown as a benign, harmless creature of simple demeanour, who enjoys playing with children.' 'The Presentation of Madness in the Victorian Novel', *Psychiatric Bulletin*, vol. 12 (1988), p. 412. The symptoms of his condition are not harmful, but rather he is prone to bursts of laughter, and slow-witted and at times – what T. A. Jackson has called an 'amiable, but deranged, companion.' *Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical* (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), p.125. Gareth Cordery argues that 'Mr. Dick has already been covertly subjected to a regime of bourgeois domesticity, which is why Aunt Betsey can trust him to answer correctly her questions about what to do with David.' 'Foucault, Dickens, and *David Copperfield*,' *Victorian Literature and Culture* vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 71-85; p. 73. However, rather than being a covert reconfiguration of Murdstone's or Creakle's discipline, Aunt Betsy's strictness appears to be grounded in genuine affection and companionship. For all her eccentricities, it remains difficult to see Aunt Betsy as a sinister wielder of Foucauldian power.

<sup>88</sup> Dickens, 'A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree', p. 387.

remain there for life, the cure rate at St Luke's was high for the period. At the beginning of January 1844 the steward, Mr Stinton, recorded that 93 of the patients were curable and only 84 incurable.<sup>89</sup> The separation of criminal lunatics from categorisation as 'curable' or 'incurable' found in the Commissioners in Lunacy reports is a telling one for two reasons: it suggests that the question of whether the patient was likely to recover was deemed irrelevant for patients who had committed crimes, implying their confinement to be permanent; and secondly, it reveals that such patients were still considered criminals, despite having been found '*not guilty*' by reason of insanity.<sup>90</sup>

Dickens's article on 'Idiots' extends his argument in favour of the rehabilitation of individuals like Mr. Dick. In a lunatic asylum, a similar idiot is 'wallowing in the lowest depths of degradation and neglect; a miserable monster, whom nobody may put to death, but whom everyone must wish dead and be distressed to see alive', but in a kind home, with intellectual stimulation, he can 'immensely improve his condition, both with reference to himself and to society.'<sup>91</sup> To support his case Dickens draws on a number of prestigious doctors including Voisin, Abercrombie and Pinel, integrating medical discourses into the public debate.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Mr Nicholls, steward to Bethlem, reported a higher proportion of curable patients, since that asylum catered for fewer idiots and imbeciles: 181 'curables', compared to 84 'incurables' and 90 'criminals'. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury *Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1844), p. 210.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>91</sup> Dickens, 'Idiots', *Household Words*, vol. 7 (4 June 1853), p. 313.

<sup>92</sup> The most well-known works by these psychologists in this period were the French alienist Félix Voisin's *Des causes morales et physiques des maladies mentales* (Paris: J. B. Ballière, 1826), the Scottish medic and textbook-writer John Abercrombie's *Pathological and practical researches on diseases of the brain and the spinal cord* (Edinburgh: Stewart MacLachlan, 1845), and the famous French alienist reformer Philippe Pinel's *Medico-philosophical treatise on mental alienation*, trans. Gordon Hickish et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

Mr Dick is an important figure in Dickens's theory of memory and the past. In the case of Dr Manette, the patient's past is a complex entanglement of distrust, politically-motivated detention in prison and a retreat into the psychological mechanisms of crisis. It is Manette's present and future that represent calmness and happiness; and which are ultimately tainted by the return of the traumatic memory of imprisonment in the Bastille. For Mr Dick, the past also comprises brutal mistreatment and personal imprisonment: the former at the hands of his brother and brother-in-law, and the latter inside the walls of a private asylum. Life with Betsy Trotwood offers him stability, but his traumatic memories and distrust of those in power linger on, as he is haunted by Charles I's bloody head.<sup>93</sup>

An alternative theory is that Mr Dick suffers from 'fanciful insanity': an illness characterised by 'ideal or fanciful insanity exhibiting vivacity of imagination, when the brain is filled with strange and whimsical conceits', in which there are 'many unfortunate persons labouring under delusions produced by overwrought credulity, and the errant flights of an ill-regulated fancy.'<sup>94</sup> An article in *All the Year Round* connects fanciful insanity to royalty, describing both those who consider themselves to be sovereigns, and those who, like Mr Dick, have become obsessed with the severed heads of executed monarchs.<sup>95</sup> During Dickens's visit to Hartford Asylum in

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<sup>93</sup> Catherine Robson summarises this problem: 'in the first place, the past does not offer a simpler and purer alternative to the present; and, in the second, the past refuses to allow the present to get on with its own business.' 'Historicizing Dickens', *Palgrave Advances in Charles Dickens Studies*, ed. John Bowen and R. L. Patten (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 236.

<sup>94</sup> Dickens gives examples of patients who are under the impression of being an umbrella, clock, and hen. Dickens, 'Fanciful Insanity,' *All the Year Round*, vol. 7 (26 Apr. 1862), pp. 154-5. Similarly, Trollope writes that 'one man may be subject to various hallucinations – may fancy himself to be a teapot, or whatnot.' *He Knew He Was Right*, p. 325. Both authors adopt a playful tone, instancing comfortable, domestic, amusing symptoms which are clearly not in the same category as the bloody executions envisaged by Mr Dick and Dr Manette.

<sup>95</sup> 'When Louis the Sixteenth was beheaded, the hospitals of Paris were crowded with Dauphins destined to succeed him on the throne; and the mournful fate of the Duc D'Enghien immediately produced many aspiring impersonators. The military successes of Napoleon the First stimulated ambitious insanity in

Connecticut in 1842, he had met several patients who believed themselves to be acquaintances of the British nobility and monarchy. A 'very much flushed and heated' male patient addressed Dickens, removing his nightcap, reassuring him, 'It's all settled at last. I have arranged it with Queen Victoria.' He and the Queen had apparently agreed on how to stage a siege of New York in which British troops were to 'fire on every house' without the signal of a flag.<sup>96</sup> Dickens humoured the patients, as he did elsewhere, as though their delusions were real, and on leaving the establishment joked to the doctor that he hoped the woman who had asked for his autograph had been an admirer, and not too mad.<sup>97</sup>

However, Dickens's representation of Mr Dick's delusions and hallucination goes beyond the 'whimsical' and the 'fanciful' (both of which terms problematically imply some level of decision-making by the patient). Instead, Dickens describes a complex network of psychiatric symptomatology with implications in which the violence of regicide by execution threatens the peaceful domesticity of his present circumstances. As such, Mr Dick serves as a highly significant figure in the development of Dickens's writing about the connections between violence and male mental health, and a key transition point in the representation of these connections between writing *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. As an earlier case of mental instability and the interaction between personal and political anxiety about regicidal decapitation, Mr Dick functions as a prototype for Dr Manette. Both men live in pathological fear of the recurrence of their experience as victims of the pathological

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many men who had been his soldiers. These, in their cells at the Bicêtre, proclaimed themselves emperors.' 'Fanciful Insanity', p. 155.

<sup>96</sup> Dickens, *American Notes*, p. 64.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

abuse of power by male authority figures. For Dickens, pathology begets pathology, and violence begets violence.

### **III: *A Tale of Two Cities***

Psychologists writing in the 1850s were beginning to extend their examination of connections between various stimuli and physical responses in different parts of the body and its organs. Alexander Bain was a particularly influential figure in experimenting with such connections, and his work was soon known beyond his specific field. In 1850, Bain noted that feelings were ‘diffused’ throughout the body:

The organs first and prominently affected, in the diffused wave of nervous influence, are the moving members, and of these, by preference, the features of the face (with the ears in animals), whose movements constitute the expression of the countenance. But the influence extends to all the parts of the moving system, voluntary and involuntary; while an important series of effects are produced on the glands and viscera – the stomach, lungs, heart, kidneys, skin, together with the sexual and mammary organs.<sup>98</sup>

The effect of extreme psychological states (such as severe anger, anxiety, trauma or insanity) on the body became a theme in the science fiction (and proto-science fiction)

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<sup>98</sup> Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (New York: Cosimo, 2006), p. 4. Also see Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, which was published 22 years later.

of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>99</sup> Galsworthy also mentions the effects on the stomach and sexual organs. However, in Dickens's fiction several decades earlier, the focus is primarily on the limbs, lungs, heart and skin: hence the focus in this chapter on the circulatory and respiratory systems. Bain explains how one individual's knowledge of his own physiological responses to different psychological states enables him or her to interpret another individual's likely thoughts and feelings.

Each of us knows in our own experience that a sudden shock of feeling is accompanied with movements of the body generally, and with other effects. When no emotion is present, we are quiescent; a slight feeling is accompanied with slight manifestations; a more intense shock has a more intense outburst.<sup>100</sup> Every pleasure and every pain, and every mode of emotion, has a definite wave of effects, which our observation makes known to us: and we apply the knowledge to infer other men's feelings from their outward display. The circumstance is seemingly universal, the proof of it does not require a citation of instances in detail.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898); Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886); Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is, of course, an important precursor of this genre, as well as of Dickens's treatment of the relationship between psychology and the body.

<sup>100</sup> At any rate, these bodily responses are the non-pathological norm. The woman known as 'The Vengeance' uses a drum to artificially exaggerate her own feelings of anger, and to inspire it in others. In contrast, Madame Defarge has learnt to carefully conceal signs of her emotion, most obviously when questioned by a spy in the wine shop, and in suppressing her signs of pleasure and pride to what she considers befits the leader of the Saint Antoine tricoteuse (see p. 231). The wearing and not wearing of the rose in her headscarf on these two occasions is a more overt sign, not only of who is present in the shop, but of her resulting psychological state.

<sup>101</sup> Bain, *Emotions and the Will*, pp. 4-5.



Later in the century, Augustus Waller's research on physiology characterised the brain as a separate organ, the cognitive processes of which were visible in its physiology (as well as in the anatomy of other parts of the body, which had been the focus of mid-nineteenth century physicians and of novelists including Dickens and Wilkie Collins). Waller asserted, 'That the brain is the organ of intelligent sensation and motion is proved by the facts of comparative anatomy [...] and by common experience.'<sup>102</sup>

In *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens draws on these medical advances to represent his characters as bodies mechanised by processes in the brain and nervous system. While the driving force behind political violence and other forms of action in *Barnaby Rudge* is represented by Dickens as a deficient or perverted moral imperative, in *A Tale of Two Cities* this behaviour is rendered more complex with increased biological detail. Descriptions of the internal and external features of the body are more closely observed in the later novel, with a greater emphasis on engaging readers in a systematic method by which to read not only the moral nature, but also the psychological processes, of his characters. This method consists of the examination of key bodily indicators of mental states.

In addition to the usual repertoire of psychological effects on facial expressions, postures, movement of the limbs and other gestures used by Victorian realist authors including Eliot and Gaskell, Dickens's scientific gaze zooms in on eyes, foreheads and fingers, as if under a microscope, for particular inspection. Although individual characters in Dickens remain somewhat mysterious (since we cannot see into their minds), representations of group psychology are quite different. The surging

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<sup>102</sup>Augustus Waller, *An Introduction to Human Physiology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longmans and Green, 1893), p. 522.

crowds storming the Bastille in *A Tale of Two Cities* or setting Newgate on fire in *Barnaby Rudge* act as a whole, unified by a common purpose.<sup>103</sup> The crowds at the Old Bailey watching Charles Darnay's trial for treason also share a collective consciousness in the same way, all gleefully imagining the defendant's hanging:

The accused, who was (and knew he was) being mentally hanged, beheaded, and quartered, by everybody there, neither flinched from the situation, nor assumed any theatrical air in it. He was quiet and attentive; watched the opening proceedings with a grave interest; and stood with his hands resting on the slab of wood before him, so composedly, that they had not displaced a leaf of the herbs with which it was strewn.<sup>104</sup>

Darnay stands as a perfectly (or at least outwardly) composed male figure under the greatest mental strain imaginable, neither repressing his emotions to the point that they are liable to spill out at any moment, nor giving way to the public display of impassioned desperation which (we gather), would lose him respect of both narrator and crowd. The only indication of his emotional suffering is an entirely physiological, involuntary, change in the colour of his face:

As an emotion of the mind will express itself through any covering of the body, so the paleness which his situation engendered came through the brown upon

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<sup>103</sup> Taylor Stoehr has explored the Dickens's dream-like style in describing the storming of the Bastille. See *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 1-33.

<sup>104</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 66.

his cheek, showing the soul to be stronger than the sun. He was otherwise quite self-possessed, bowed to the Judge, and stood quiet.<sup>105</sup>

Dickens's emphasis on Darnay's quiet mental strength is important, in contrast to the strength of brute force and violence of inferior masculinities in the novel's crowd scenes. He is characterised by the poise and balance befitting gentlemanliness, rather than the strength of muscular violent manliness.

Foreheads also function in Dickens's fiction as important indicators of the state of the brains behind them. Both Mr Dombey and Dr Manette have furrowed, clouded brows, revealing internal struggle and past sorrow. Attempting to hide these feelings, the two men often sit with their heads in shadow, or with a hand covering their brow.<sup>106</sup> Dombey worries that the world will see 'the haunting demon of his mind.'<sup>107</sup> He finds that he cannot hide the 'rebel traces' of his grief, 'which escape in hollow eyes and cheeks, a haggard forehead, and a moody, brooding air.'<sup>108</sup> Lucie Manette's forehead is a particularly interesting signifier. Her usually white and smooth young brow is a barometer which Dickens uses to show her thoughts, not only to readers, but to other characters. Mr Lorry notices that 'the curiously roughened forehead was very intent upon him when she concludes that, despite his claim to 'have no feelings' as a 'mere machine', he must have been the man who returned her father to her.<sup>109</sup> At Darnay's trial Lucie's forehead 'had been strikingly expressive of an engrossing terror and compassion', showing such profound moral sympathy with the prisoner that the

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<sup>105</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 65.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>107</sup> *Dombey and Son*, p. 757.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 754.

<sup>109</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 25.

bloodthirsty ogres who fill the courtroom turn their eyes from Darnay to look at her.<sup>110</sup> As in George Eliot's depictions of sympathy, Dickens uses Lucie's physiognomy to make spectators reconsider their pre-emptive verdict. In this key moment in the narrative they stop to look at Lucie looking at Darnay, and then turn back to consider his face again. Their collective fantasy of the death penalty is, for a moment, suspended.

Dickens's most overt phrenological method is the inspection of the eye area.<sup>111</sup> In doing so, he returns to the earlier method of using the body to draw conclusions about a person's moral character, which he had employed in writing John Willet, Sim Tappertit, Hugh and other characters in *Barnaby Rudge*. Where the earlier novel associates the propensity to commit acts of violence with permanent states such as the marks of heredity and moral outlook, in the later work Dickens uses the face and eye area to trace transient states such as shock and anger in Dr Manette and Madame Defarge. In keeping with the contemporary advice that households avoid employing servants whose eyes were too close together, indicating untrustworthiness, narrow-mindedness and propensity towards thieving and deception, Dickens describes the phrenological likeness between Jerry Cruncher, the messenger used by Tellson's Bank in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and his son:

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<sup>110</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 67.

<sup>111</sup> Johann Caspar Lavater's influential *Physiognomy* claims that eye colour was an enormously important factor in interpreting a person's character. In particular, he uses eye colour to biologically essentialise gender characteristics. Blue eyes, like Lucie Manette's, indicate 'weakness, effeminacy, and yielding,' and brown eyes showing 'more strength, manhood, and thought,' although he does recall, 'I have never met with clear blue eyes in the melancholic.' (London: Cowie, Low and Co., 1826), p. 61.

Jerry took up his station on this windy March morning, with Young Jerry standing by him [...], inflict[ing] bodily and mental injuries of an acute description on passing boys who were small enough for his amiable purpose. Father and son, extremely like each other, looking silently on at the morning traffic on Fleet-street, with their two heads as near to one another as the two eyes of each were, bore a considerable resemblance to a pair of monkeys.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to the head and face, hands and fingers are also used by Dickens as clues to psychological states. Drawing on the commonplace association between the biting or chewing of fingertips and anxiety, Jerry Cruncher is described, rather more enigmatically, ‘sucking the rust off his fingers in his absorption’ at the Old Bailey.<sup>113</sup> This repulsive habit serves the dual narrative function of highlighting Cruncher’s voyeuristic participation in the court proceedings and providing Dickens with an opportunity for insight into the character’s activities outside his profession.<sup>114</sup> Cruncher’s fingers implicate him in acts of violence against the bodies of others, providing evidence that he exhumes cadavers which have been left to Rest in Peace. Jacques Three’s fingers unconsciously move over the nerves around his nose and mouth whilst listening to descriptions of extreme violence in the wake of Monseigneur’s death.

Temperature is another key indicator of mental states used by Dickens in dialogue with nineteenth-century medical research. In relation to political violence,

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<sup>112</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>114</sup> The violence encoded in the rusty residue on Cruncher’s fingers recalls the barbarous mob in *Barnaby Rudge*, whose hands and faces are ‘jagged and bleeding with the wounds of rusty nails.’ *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 404.

heat represents anger, but not necessarily unpremeditated action. Although men may join the mobs in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* ‘in the heat of the moment’, the characters Dickens highlights as the decision-makers, including Mr Chester and Madame Defarge, are cool-headed planners who bide their time. As with the other indices explored here, a healthy balance is desirable, with the thermometer’s two opposing extremities indicating pathology. Mr Dombey’s response to, or symptom of, mental unease is coldness, indicating emotional displacement, while Soames Forsyte’s heat signals irrational extremities of anger. This apparent lack of feeling and immunity to traumatic events is as psychologically damaging as heated emotional excess. Later in the century, scientific research showed that physical coldness was an involuntary response to the emotional experience of grief. During the 1880s William James and Carl Lange strengthened connections physiology and psychology, focusing on muscular contractions and the nerves, as Chapter Two explored. Conversely, as we saw in Chapter Three, Soames Forsyte’s sexual frustration, social humiliation and angry monomania are accompanied by a hot and rising physical temperature. His blood gets hotter and hotter over the summer, over the course of his wife’s affair with his architect, until it is virtually boiling in his veins.

In contrast, Dr Manette’s home in Soho is cool when its owner is in a calm state of mind. Being situated in a shady spot, the house lacks the bright sunlight associated with happiness, but avoids the risk of becoming overheated and thus associated with anger: ‘the quiet lodgings of Doctor Manette were in a quiet street-corner not far from Soho-square [...]. It was a cool spot, staid but cheerful [...] and a

very harbour from the raging streets.’<sup>115</sup> The storms which coincide with the height of Dr Manette’s traumatic symptoms resulting from political violence are caused by unseasonably tropical weather.

In his portrayal of Dr Manette as a sufferer of severe mental trauma resulting from imprisonment, Dickens draws on his impressions of the system of ‘rigid, strict, and hopeless solitary confinement’ in use at the Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia, which he visited in 1841:

Occasionally, there is a drowsy sound from some lone weaver’s shuttle, or shoemaker’s last, but it is stifled by the thick walls and heavy dungeon-door, and only serves to make the general stillness more profound. Over the face and head of every prisoner who comes into this melancholy house, a black hood is drawn; and in this dark shroud, an emblem of the curtain dropped between him and the living world, he is led to a cell from which he never again comes forth [...]. He is a man buried alive; to be dug out in the slow round of years; and in the mean time dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair.<sup>116</sup>

The psychological damage of Manette’s experience in the Bastille stretches for years after his release, and he continues to suffer relapses during his recovery in the therapeutic domestic environment of his quiet home with Lucie and Miss Pross in Soho.

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<sup>115</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 104.

<sup>116</sup> Dickens, *American Notes*, p. 83.

In *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens demonstrates his engagement with contemporary medical discourses on blood circulation by describing blood in the veins and the flushed or pale countenances of his characters, indicating that good physical health is shown by the ability to achieve and regulate a steady temperature which, mirroring the good character and good mental health of an individual, is neither too hot nor too cold, and neither too active nor too passive. In 1850 Alexander Bain wrote that ‘the effect of objects of fear, shame, and anger upon the blood-supply of the skin, especially the skin of the face, are too well known to need remark.’<sup>117</sup> Nine years later, Dickens refers to Dr Manette’s initial pallor as a key symptom warning Mr Lorry of the relapse Manette suffers immediately after his daughter’s marriage. In one of many instances in which Dickens’s psychological study of his characters pre-empts Freud’s work on the subject, this passage highlights the role of repression in Manette’s coping strategy.

He had naturally repressed much, and some revulsion might have been expected in him when the occasion for repression was gone. But, it was the old scared lost look that troubled Mr Lorry [...] his absent manner of clasping his head.’<sup>118</sup>

The main indication of traumatic memory is Manette’s ‘old scared lost look.’ Whereas Mr Lorry is able to recall that night in a psychologically healthy way, as a past anxiety associated with business which has long ended happily, Manette remains in an ongoing

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<sup>117</sup> Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, p. 374.

<sup>118</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, pp. 201-2. The media’s reliance on stock images showing people clutching their heads to indicate depression is criticised by Stephen Fry’s ‘Get the Picture’ campaign, which argues that it increases the stigmatisation of the illness, and assumes that symptoms are easily visible. Christopher Hooton, ‘Campaign launched to stop depression being illustrated with head-in-hands pictures’, *The Independent*, 18 Mar. 2015 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/campaign-launched-to-stop-depression-being-illustrated-with-headinhands-pictures-10116855.html>> accessed 6/4/15.



state of terror. His past fear is experienced again in the present, as he involuntarily relives his experience of political violence in the Bastille because of a psychological mechanism Freud would later refer to as the ‘return of the repressed.’<sup>119</sup>

While Freud’s late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century focus was on personal events within the context of the perversion of family and other close relationships, Dickens’s representation of Manette’s repression focuses on the broader, though no less intense, context of the perversion of the relationship between individuals and the state. Under the *ancien régime* in France, the doctor had been imprisoned without trial with the use of a *lettre de cache*. Manette’s residual trauma many years later in England results from the failure of the state to meet its primary obligation, which, according to Rousseau, is to protect its citizens.

The influence of Rousseau’s writings on the social philosophy discussed by Dickens is clear. It is possible that Dickens also borrowed Rousseau’s analysis of the psychology of walking habits for his representation of Sydney Carton.

Apparently [Rousseau] had acquired the habit of making a detour as he approached a certain boulevard. On questioning himself with the regard to his origin of this ‘mechanical habit’, he came to the following conclusion: ‘This is what my reflection discovered, for none of it had until then been present in my mind’; it was a matter of avoiding a little beggar whose chatter he disliked.

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<sup>119</sup> This phrase is used in Freud’s published work dating from c. 1901 onwards. However, the term ‘repression’ had been in general usage in fiction to describe concealed emotion and altered states of consciousness well before its application to psychoanalysis. For example, in *Camilla* (1796), Fanny Burney describes Eugenia’s emotional control, without which ‘some agitation and anxiety would have betrayed her secret soul. The internal workings of hopes and fears, the sensitive alarms of repressed consciousness [...]’ *Camilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 341.

‘We have no mechanical impulse,’ Rousseau continues, ‘the cause of which may not be found in our hearts if we but knew how to seek it there.’<sup>120</sup>

As Eysenck observes, ‘This is indeed the essence of the Freudian doctrine of meaning, a doctrine which was widely accepted and discussed hundreds of years before Freud was born, but of which he was an extremely effective populariser.’<sup>121</sup> Set in Rousseau’s century but written in Freud’s, Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* explores this idea of semi-conscious aversion by invoking its opposite: a magnetic pull which draws Carton to a location (Lucie’s home) associated with conflicted emotions of love. Carton’s emotional attachment to this painful place echoes Bill Sikes’s compulsive return to the room in East London where he murdered Nancy.<sup>122</sup>

The clearest case of social experience resulting in madness is Dr Manette, whose past trauma of imprisonment in the Bastille has left him with the compulsion to make shoes whenever he experiences distress or social awkwardness. The rate of his shoe production serves as a barometer by which readers may measure his relative calmness or anxiety. While this activity does not function as a mechanism of self-harm, Manette’s continuing habit prevents him from genuinely inhabiting the present. Although theoretically a happy milestone for the family, his daughter Lucie’s

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<sup>120</sup> H. J. Eysenck, *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), pp. 152-3.

<sup>121</sup> Eysenck, p. 153.

<sup>122</sup> Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 398-9.

departure for her honeymoon leaves him alone, and vulnerable to reliving the solitary confinement of his traumatised past.<sup>123</sup>

In the wake of *The Terror*, Dr Manette takes on an equivalent role to that of a returning soldier. If he seems disagreeably self-centred in his willingness to risk his daughter's happy development and marriage prospects, we might do well to recall the intense psychological need of victims of trauma to attain both recognition and restitution. In Manette's case, restitution is severely limited by the absence of a public apology or any attempt and compensation from his oppressors. This makes the urgency for recognition of his suffering from his daughter and others greater still, which drives him to return repeatedly to a fixation with shoe-making. Although this activity appears nonsensical, it plays a vital role in Manette's psychiatric health. This obsessive compulsive behaviour is a method by which to protect his psyche from direct exposure to his most acute traumatic memories.

The psychological effects of trauma may be seen in other characters besides Doctor Manette. Like those discussed in the previous chapter, Gaspard, whose child was killed beneath the wheels of Monsieur's carriage, is condemned to death despite a petition presented to the King, 'showing that he was enraged and made mad by the death of his child.'<sup>124</sup> Dickens highlights the parallels between Gaspard's alleged insanity and the insanity of the state-sponsored violence by which he is to be

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<sup>123</sup> Judith Herman has highlighted the vital function of community support in rehabilitating victims of political terror and other forms of violence. She argues that 'sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world [...]. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma [...]. [It] must take action to assign responsibility for the harm and to repair the injury.' *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 70.

<sup>124</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 176. Dickens's contemporary readers may have recalled the case of Margaret Nicholson, who attempted to stab George III when he reached out to receive a petition she was handing him.

gratuitously executed. The guards who bind him, dragging him down the hill, ‘tramp, tramp!’ through the village and into the prison, seem strikingly dislocated from all moral awareness of their actions, rushing and laughing as though hysterical. The witness, a mender of roads who is later named Jacques Four, recalls the scene with the vividness of a trauma victim reliving his experience, using the present tense:

As they descend the hill like madmen running a race, he falls. They laugh and pick him up again. His face is bleeding and covered with dust, but he cannot touch it; thereupon they laugh again. They bring him into the village; all the village runs to look; they take him past the mill, and up to the prison; all the village sees the prison gate open in the darkness of the night, and swallow him.<sup>125</sup>

In this passage it is the state-sponsored guards who evince irrational madness, demonstrating a psychopathic moral disconnect by finding humour in their victim’s suffering. In contrast, the victim, though traumatised, exhibits a rational response to irrational behaviour.

Following his son’s death Gaspard makes a non-violent protest but is scorned, labelled ‘mad’ by the authorities. Desperate for redress, and having exhausted the alternatives, Gaspard murders Monseigneur, fast asleep in his bed at the château. It is not this act but what follows which Dickens describes as complete insanity. Punished disproportionately for what is categorised as parricide, he is hanged at the public

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<sup>125</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 175.

fountain by a long-outlawed method, impaled on a knife blade in full view of the villagers, whose water supply is thus polluted. Again, the scene is marked by indications of grotesque hysteria, as the gag in the prisoner's mouth is tied tightly, 'making him look as if he laughed.'<sup>126</sup>

Throughout the recounting of these events, the storyteller and the various Jacques who make up his audience register their horror with involuntarily bodily responses, including sweating, shaking, and wandering fingers. Jacques Three's response is particularly intricately observed by the narrator: several times over we are told that he listens intently, 'with his agitated hand always gliding over the network of fine nerves about his mouth and nose.'<sup>127</sup> Jacques Three is later represented as particularly bloodthirsty in his lust for revenge, and becomes a juror at the Revolutionary Tribunals.

Whilst Dickens's descriptions of blood flow and temperature are indicators accessible only to readers, the more visible physiological shifts they facilitate serve as signs for other characters to read in a form of extended physiognomy. Upon hearing from a spy in the wine shop that Lucie Manette and Charles Darnay have become engaged, Madame Defarge skilfully conceals her surprise and diverts the conversation, observing, 'She was pretty enough to have been married long ago. You English are cold, it seems to me.'<sup>128</sup> Reacting to the same news, her husband's anxiety is revealed by the most telling external sign of an agitated nervous system, the tremor:

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<sup>126</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 178.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Madame Defarge knitted steadily, but the intelligence had a palpable effect upon her husband. Do what he would, behind the little counter, as to the striking of a light and the lighting of his pipe, he was troubled, and his hand was not trustworthy. The spy would have been no spy if he had failed to see it, or to record it in his mind.<sup>129</sup>

The spy's profession demands that he have sharp eyes, like Madame Defarge, being able to decode not only what clues may be revealed by speech, but also by involuntary unconscious physical signs. On this occasion he is outwitted by Madame Defarge's consciously coded use of domestic signs with politically violent connotations. Just as the symbols on her knitted register are intelligible only to her, only the revolutionaries have access to her second physical signifier. Regular customers at the wine-shop know that when a rose, usually left by her work on the counter, is placed in the handkerchief around her head instead, there is an enemy spy on the premises, and they had better leave. When the rose is removed, the spy has departed, and:

Either Saint Antoine had an instinctive sense that the objectionable decoration was gone, or Saint Antoine was on the watch for its disappearance; howbeit, the Saint took courage to lounge in, very shortly afterwards, and the wine-shop recovered its habitual aspect.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 191.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193

Several recent scholars have alleged that Madame Defarge is essentially a masculine character within a woman's body, citing her physical and mental strength, her cunning plotting, her authoritarian role and her domination of her husband as evidence.<sup>131</sup> However, Madame Defarge is not the only woman in the novel who is associated with hatching secret plots to exert control over forthcoming events. Chapters describing the relationship between the French couple are juxtaposed against Jerry Cruncher's anxious paranoia that his wife prays for God to ruin his prospects of success when he goes 'a fishing.'<sup>132</sup> Dickens clarifies the irrationality of this fear in his descriptions of Cruncher's pious, 'dejected', 'decent wife.'<sup>133</sup> In this marriage it is the husband who is in control of the family 'business' and who takes charge in decision-making, while the Defarges operate under a system with reversed gender roles.

No abuse results from this unconventional arrangement, whereas in the Crunchers' nuclear family the wife is submissive, exhausted by her husband's demands. His instruments of oppression range from accusing her of neglect as a mother (her son is thin, even though 'a mother's first duty is to blow her boy out') to the frequent physical violence, assisted by a saucepan lid together with his crowbar, rope, chain and other 'fishing tackle.'<sup>134</sup> Madame Defarge exerts real control while

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<sup>131</sup> Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of the Family*, pp. 124-141. Despite her masculine energy and fearlessness, and her unfeminine lack of pity for little Lucie, her body is sexualised (as was that of her elder sister, a victim of rape). As Waters observes, 'There is something rather tantalising about the narrative emphasis given to the deadly weapons hidden in these erotogenic zones upon the body of Madame Defarge – the pistol secreted in her bosom, the dagger at her waist – despite their function as evidence of her 'unwomanly' activities.' *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 14: 'The Honest Tradesman' and Chapters 15 and 16: 'Knitting' and 'Still Knitting.' *A Tale of Two Cities*, pp. 159-99. His slow wittedness is indicated at several points in the narrative, and not knowing why Miss Pross seems to be deaf (after shooting Madame Defarge), he is so perplexed as to find 'his mind much disturbed' by ruminating, p. 384.

<sup>133</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 165.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Mrs Cruncher is falsely accused of it. In the storming of the Bastille Defarge leads the crowd of women with ferocious gusto at least equal to any man's.

Wilkie Collins and other contemporaries of Dickens associated symptoms of anxiety (such as tremors and fainting) with femininity – a common trope in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature across genres including sensation, realism and the gothic.<sup>135</sup> Like Ernest Defarge, Lucie Manette is characterised by these responses, which are exaggerated by their contrast to her polar opposite, Madame Defarge, reaching a climax when the latter knits her name into the register. As the political leader of the *tricoteuses*, Madame Defarge uses the domestic medium of knitting to shape public events. However, it is in her personal vendetta against Lucie, as the wife an Evrémonde (and even little Lucie as his child) that her knitting is represented as irrational to the point of pathology:

“Is that his child?” said Madame Defarge, stopping in her work for the first time, and pointing her knitting-needle at little Lucie as if it were the finger of Fate [...] the suppressed manner had enough of menace in it – not visible and presented, but indistinct and withheld.<sup>136</sup>

Shockingly (but rather gloriously), the highly domesticated, reserved Miss Pross resorts to violence to defend her ‘Ladybird’ against Madame Defarge, whom she calls

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<sup>135</sup> See, for example, the title character in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Emily in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Mrs Bennett in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

<sup>136</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 278.



‘Boldface’, ‘wife of Lucifer’, ‘woman imbecile’, and ‘pig-like.’<sup>137</sup> The comedy of their altercation lies not only in their inability to understand insults in each other’s language, but in Dickens’s representation of Pross violence in response to the Frenchwoman’s determination to have Lucie executed.<sup>138</sup> Usually highly skilled at interpreting emotional signals, Defarge meets her match with Pross, assuming her tears to be a sign of weakness. Instead, the Englishwoman’s ‘courage was of that emotional nature that it brought irrepressible tears into her eyes.’<sup>139</sup> Pross’s brief intervention in political violence only requires that she is temporarily un-ladylike, and the scuffle is brief. Her maintenance of logical thought throughout means that this is not even a moment of madness, let alone a sustained, premeditated violent attack. Her shooting of Defarge is presented as rational, since she acts in self-defence, saving Lucie at the same time.

#### **PART IV: Conclusion**

Ned Dennis, the hangman in *Barnaby Rudge* and Madame Defarge, a violent and highly influential revolutionary in *A Tale of Two Cities*, have a surprising amount in common when contextualised by contemporary psychology. A new interpretation of the two characters may be reached by considering how their behaviour may be understood within their contemporary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century symptomatology, developing theories of psychiatry, and legal contexts. Both figures repeat acts of extreme violence, executing their victims without remorse. Linking individual psychological states to collective insanity, both perpetrate acts of violence on behalf of a collective mass of others. Taking their idea of justice into their own

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<sup>137</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 277; pp. 380-1.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

hands, they each act as one on behalf of the many. The key difference between the two arguably psychopathic individuals is that whereas Dennis kills in keeping with the law, on behalf of the state, Madame Defarge kills in acts of extreme civil disobedience in order to overturn the state. This is criminal as opposed to state-sponsored violence.

If Dennis in *Barnaby Rudge* shows us a brutish individual administering irrational, arguably insane, punishment by death, Madame Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities* represents a more evolved incarnation of the same trope. Rather than being a creature of unthinking, uncritical brute force, this somewhat masculinised, bloodthirsty, French female character is more sophisticated and fully-formed, with a sharp mind to match her sharp eyes. Unlike the other female characters mentioned in this chapter, the antiheroic Madame Defarge is directly involved in political violence, working the names of those to be executed into her knitting. Paradoxically, this knitting impulse is notably un-domestic, since it produces violent imperatives rather than clothing or items to furnish the home. Instead, her unceasing, fixed, attention on her knitting seems to represent a phallic allegiance with her male counterparts, with her needles, and later, weaponry, acting as an extension or prosthesis of her body.<sup>140</sup> During the storming of the Bastille, Madame Defarge is determined to take a place at the centre of the action, rousing the revolutionary women by insisting that they are as strong and well-armed as their male comrades. In fiction written in the same period but set in England, female characters are considered transgressive for being present at scenes of political violence, where they risk being caught in crossfire.

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<sup>140</sup> This psychoanalytic interpretation may be contextualised by considering Madame Defarge whilst reading Lacan's 'The Signification of the Phallus.' If the naturally desired punishment for sexual violence is castration, it follows less absurdly that Madame Defarge's urge for revenge takes the form of adopting phallic symbolism to behead members of her sister's rapist's family. See Jacques Lacan, 'The Signification of the Phallus' in *Écrits: a selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 311-22.

Margaret Hale in Gaskell's *North and South* is slightly injured by a stone thrown by workers protesting outside Thornton's factory. Gaskell's implication renders the crowd unsympathetically as a brutish, unthinking mob.

The three central male characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* all experience some form of mental instability. Despite his anti-aristocratic principles, Charles Darnay does little to improve the situation for peasants on his land after his uncle's death. In contrast to Carton and Manette, he displays very little emotion. Sydney Carton is the most overtly melancholic central character in *A Tale of Two Cities*, but his case is a complex one. We are able to follow his behaviour closely when Dickens describes his walks in the vicinity of the Manette-Darnay household in Soho. Like Dickens himself, Carton seems to favour lengthy night walks in London as an opportunity to form ideas and to clear the mind. He automatically gravitates to the area on his walks, though he rarely steps into the house for a visit. Instead, these night walks have a dream-like quality – another instance of Dickens's pre-empting of Freud, this time in representing dreams as 'wish fulfilment.'<sup>141</sup> Freud's idea of finding routes towards wish-fulfilment seems to be the same as that expressed by Carton's physical behaviour; he walks

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<sup>141</sup> See Freud, 'The Dream is a Wish-Fulfilment', *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 98-105. Freud's emphasis on linguistics is also useful here, particularly when we note that the German translation of 'dream' is 'träume': 'We observe now that we would have found the shortest route to our theory of the hidden meaning of dreams if we had only looked to linguistic usage. Proverbial wisdom often speaks scornfully enough of dreams, it is true – it seems to want to admit that science is right when it judges: *Träume sind Schäume* [dreams are froth] – but in linguistic usage the dream is nevertheless the sweet fulfiller of wishes. "I wouldn't have imagined it in my wildest dreams," we cry in delight when we find our expectations surpassed in reality.' *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 105. For Frances Power Cobbe, dreams are connected with the same range of physiological experiences as waking: 'Our sentiments of love, hate, fear, anxiety, are each one of them the fertile source of whole series of illustrative dreams', with 'our bodily sensations of heat, cold, hunger, and suffocation.' 'Unconscious Cerebration', *Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), p. 332.

various routes around the house where Lucie lives, but, knowing that his desire for her cannot be fulfilled, he remains in circuit rather than reaching the destination.<sup>142</sup>

For Dr Manette, traumatic memory is persistently physical, composed of the sights and sounds of his shoe-making tools and materials. For Dickens, then, dreams are not always wish-fulfilment, and often reveal unconscious fears of violence or fears that the past will be repeated. In *Unconscious Cerebration: A Psychological Study* (1870), Frances Power Cobbe described connections between the sentiments of the mind and the sensations of the body in altered states of consciousness, and sleep in particular. In traumatic dreams, these bodily symptoms reinforce the impingement of the past upon the present, since the sensations of the traumatic memory are experienced again. Dickens's violent mobs in *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* share a collective state of altered consciousness.

By applying Cobbe's theory that increased activity in the body may be symptomatic of dreaming (as opposed to the previously conventional idea that this indicated an increasingly conscious, wide awake state of mind), the higher pulse rates, strength and speed of members of those crowds may be interpreted as causing a reduction of mental activity. Increased blood flow to the muscles of the limbs, for example, is at the expense of supply to the brain, in the same way that for Galsworthy, Soames Forsyte's increased blood flow to other parts of his body prevents his brain

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<sup>142</sup> Freud's emphasis on linguistics is also useful here, particularly when we note that the German translation of 'dream' is 'träume': 'We observe now that we would have found the shortest route to our theory of the hidden meaning of dreams if we had only looked to linguistic usage. Proverbial wisdom often speaks scornfully enough of dreams, it is true – it seems to want to admit that science is right when it judges: *Träume sind Schäume* [dreams are froth] – but in linguistic usage the dream is nevertheless the sweet fulfiller of wishes. "I wouldn't have imagined it in my wildest dreams," we cry in delight when we find our expectations surpassed in reality.' *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 105. For Frances Power Cobbe, dreams are connected with the same range of physiological experiences as waking: 'Our sentiments of love, hate, fear, anxiety, are each one of them the fertile source of whole series of illustrative dreams', with 'our bodily sensations of heat, cold, hunger, and suffocation.' 'Unconscious Cerebration', *Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), p. 332.

from functioning properly. Cobbe suggests that in dream-like states, a person's moral awareness is numbed, so that they might dream of committing a violent act of which they would be quite incapable when they were fully conscious:

So far as I have been able to learn, it is the rarest thing possible for any check of conscience to be felt in a dream, even by persons whose waking hours are profoundly imbued with moral feeling. We commit in dreams acts for which we should weep tears of blood were they real, and yet never feel the slightest remorse [...]. Our dream-selves, like the Undines of German folk-lore, have no Souls, no Responsibility and no Hereafter.<sup>143</sup> Of course this observation does not touch the fact that a person who in his conscious life has committed a great crime may be haunted with its hideous shadow in his sleep, and that Lady Macbeth may in vain try and wash the stain from her 'little hand.'<sup>144</sup>

If we accept the critical tradition of understanding Barnaby as a 'holy fool' who dreams the events of the future, as Natalie McKnight and others have done, his political violence may be mitigated or entirely excused by Cobbe's theory.

Historical figures of the Gordon Riots and the French Revolution provide a rich context of possible sources for Dickens's fictional representations of pathologised

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<sup>143</sup> 'Undines' are water nymphs. This idea that there is 'no Responsibility' and 'no Hereafter' is fitting with Dickens's representation of the Gordon Riots and the French Revolution as apocalyptic events, in which moral values are overthrown. It also supports the argument that the remorselessness of Madame Defarge and others is indicative of a psychopathological state.

<sup>144</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, 'Unconscious Cerebration: A Psychological Study', originally published in *Macmillan's Magazine* (Nov. 1870). Reprinted in *Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), pp. 332-3.

political violence. While Lord Gordon's violent insanity appears to have been hereditary, Robespierre's pathology seems to have been rooted in experience. In the final year of his life, Robespierre's behaviour was characteristic of psychopathic mania and paranoia.<sup>145</sup> He never witnessed any of the executions he authorised himself: a detachment from the realities of his actions in keeping with a psychopathic retro-diagnosis. However, his avoidance may simply have resulted from his realistic fear that he might be assassinated. Christopher Hibbert writes that Robespierre 'had once expressed the opinion that public executions coarsened and brutalised the character of the people', though he made no attempt to stop them.<sup>146</sup> Dickens shared this view, though his articles on the subject of public executions seem to assume that he, himself, was immune to these effects.<sup>147</sup> Concerned with the psychology of this coarsening process some years later, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch made a distinction between two natures, but characterised them differently. 'Coarse nature is ruled by individual arbitrariness: cunning and violence, hatred and destruction, disorder and sensuality are everywhere at work. Beyond this lies the greater primary nature, which is impersonal and self-conscious, sentimental and supersensual.'<sup>148</sup> The voyeurs at Charles Darnay's treason trial in *A Tale of Two Cities* are represented by Dickens as coarse and arbitrary

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<sup>145</sup> Robespierre's obsessive study of Rousseau could be interpreted as borderline monomania, although he shares this interest with healthy men and fictional male characters, including Enjolras, Hugo's student leader in *Les Misérables* (1862).

<sup>146</sup> Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 248. According to Donald Hook, this 'pathologically suspicious' man sent more than 6,000 men and women to the guillotine in the space of a year. *Mad Men of History* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996), p. 30. He was later executed by the same method.

<sup>147</sup> Dickens described his horror at 'the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd' gathered to see the Mannings being hanged at Horsemonger Lane: 'the atrocious bearing, looks and language [...] made my blood run cold [...] there was no more emotion, no more pity, no more thought that two immortal souls had gone to judgment [...] nothing that ingenuity could devise to be done in this city, in the same compass of time, could work such ruin as one public execution, and I stand astounded and appalled by the wickedness it exhibits.' See Letters to the Editor, *The Times* (14 Nov. 1849).

<sup>148</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 'The Three Women in Masoch', *Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 54.

in nature. In imagining his gruesome execution this crowd are themselves individually guilty of acts of extreme political violence.

Similarly, in *Barnaby Rudge*, the rioting crowd's arbitrariness and lack of precision precludes Dickens from identifying the movement as legitimate. The driving force, a demand for the restriction of religious freedom, is not itself sane because of its irrational prejudice. Furthermore, the crowd's descent into a raging mob, violently destroying all the property in its path (not just Catholic property), marks it as insane even on its own terms: it loses sight of its initial aim. In contrast, Dickens represents the revolutionary crowds in *A Tale of Two Cities* as both just and sane in their call for increased (rather than decreased) equality and liberty. The vast scale of political violence on the streets of Paris is not, however, depicted as sane. Although Dickens does not overtly condemn Madame Defarge's 'an eye for an eye' philosophy in wanting to avenge the rape and murder of her sister, her desire for the blood of Charles Darnay, as the perpetrator's sole living relative, is disproportionately violent, irrational and pathological.

In *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens uses two of the largest riots in eighteenth-century Europe as his setting. He employs a psychiatric lens to zoom in and out from private psychology and behaviour to the public mass, creating a dense and complex dialectic web of relations between the individual and the collective. In both novels, the rise of collective madness is signalled by the collapsing of specific boundaries. Time becomes indistinct in the fever of the crowd, and with it, moments of planning and reflection are subsumed into ongoing movement. In Paris:

there was no pause, no pity, no peace, no interval of relenting rest, no measurement of time [...]. Hold of it was lost in the raging fever of a nation, as it is in the fever of one patient.<sup>149</sup>

Time only pauses for a moment when:

breaking the unnatural silence of a whole city, the executioner showed the people the head of the king – and now, it seemed almost in the same breath, the head of his fair wife which had had eight weary months of imprisoned widowhood and misery, to turn it grey.<sup>150</sup>

Similarly, distinctions between friend and foe are collapsed, creating an anarchic whirlwind in which discriminations are no longer made, events cannot be planned, guilt cannot be felt, and thus, necessarily, the need for intellect is usurped by a desperation for constant motion.

Saturating both novels with mental unease and instability, Dickens draws out the individual narratives of several characters, forming case studies of political violence as insanity, both informed by and informing nineteenth-century medical discourses on masculine madness. This chapter has focused on Barnaby Rudge, Hugh and Ned Dennis from *Barnaby Rudge*, and Dr Manette and Madame Defarge from *A*

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<sup>149</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 283.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.



*Tale of Two Cities*, demonstrating that with these characters Dickens establishes a basic taxonomy of mental illness, by which each may be categorised using three diagnoses: idiocy, trauma and psychopathic (mono)mania. In addition, I suggest that these characters may be placed on a scale or spectrum of madness, stretching from good health on one side to complete mania on the other.

In turn, this scale may be mapped on to a metaphorical set of scales or balance which Dickens uses to represent justice. Weighing each character's relative mental state against their commission of a violent crime, Dickens lays out the medical and legal evidence in the course of each novel as if before a jury. As each text reaches its conclusion, Dickens takes the role of a judge, establishing moral culpability and distributing punishments and rewards at the end of each narrative accordingly. At the far end of the innocent side of the balance sits Dr Manette, a victim of trauma. His mental health is damaged by others, but despite having a substantial reason to seek revenge he does not perpetrate violence. Barnaby Rudge might be placed towards the centre of the balance, carrying slightly less weight on the innocent side. He is the victim of pre-natal violent trauma, but he also inflicts trauma on others by perpetrating violence as part of Lord Gordon's mob. The question of Barnaby's moral culpability for his crimes is finally settled when Dickens has him rescued from the gallows by Gabriel Varden, enabling him to live out the rest of his life peacefully in the countryside, far from the madding crowd.

Madame Defarge may be placed on the guilty side of the balance of justice. Although her sister's rape by Monseigneur Evrémonde is the reasonable root of her desire for revenge, her motive becomes irrational when the aristocrat dies and she displaces her violent plans onto the next generation, seeking hereditary revenge. Her bloodlust increases with her leadership of the storming of the Bastille and subsequent

mob violence, and her desperation to find any possible substitute in lieu of Evrémonde reaches psychopathic extremity when she sets her eyes on little Lucie. Hugh is represented as a naturally amoral man, who becomes increasingly animalistic working for John Willett, living, working and sleeping alongside horses in the Maypole stables. Having no personal revenge to seek, no political principles of his own, and nothing to lose, Hugh willingly enters the service of Sir John Chester for additional payment. His subsequent involvement in the anti-Catholic movement is a matter of course: the riots provide the only arena in which he is likely to excel, given that physical strength and disinterest in asking questions are his primary qualities. Hugh seems immune to the usual, relatively healthy, psychological repercussions of committing murder, especially given the enormous scale of the violence. He is psychopathic to the extent that he cannot feel remorse; but he pales in comparison to Dennis. The hangman is represented in actively satanic terms rather than passive, amoral ones, surrounded by flames at Newgate, and incapable of listening to Hugh's relatively reasonable pleas. With no personal grievance and no political motivation, Dennis is Dickens's most complete representation of a psychopath: the epitome of mindless violence.

In *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens reconfigures the role of the past in determining the present and future. The first case of male madness to appear in *Barnaby Rudge* is the title character, whose idiocy, Dickens suggests, may be traced to the pre-natal trauma caused by his violent father, who has committed two murders and has not yet been brought to justice. Furthermore, his mysterious disappearance is punctuated by occasional visits and messages to Barnaby's mother. This persistent threat of potential future violence is configured by Dickens as a haunting, casting a 'dark cloud' over Barnaby's intellectual life. Dickens later reveals that Rudge senior is himself haunted by his guilty conscience, manifested as violent hallucinations and

terror that Reuben Haredale and his gardener will wake in their graves and wreak revenge. Dickens describes these symptoms when Rudge finds John Willet (who in contrast is ‘without so much as a twitch in a single nerve of his face’) at the Maypole, and, hearing the bell toll, is driven backwards, ‘as though a thunderbolt had struck him.’<sup>151</sup>

What follows is one of the most vivid depictions of extreme mental instability to appear in Dickens’s fiction, drawing together apocalyptic imagery of light and darkness, blood, graveyards, pathetic fallacy, and a violent assault on the senses of sound, sight and touch. Persistently embodying the psychological phenomenon of paranoid oral hallucination, Dickens repeatedly catalogues the effect on the eyes, head and limbs, and extremities in temperature:

With eyes that started from his head, his limbs convulsed, his face most horrible to see [...] holding something visionary, back and down, with his other hand, drove at it as though he held a knife and stabbed it to the heart. He clutched his hair, and stopped his ears, and travelled madly round and round; then gave a frightful cry, and with it rushed away: still, still, the Bell tolled on and seemed to follow him – louder and louder, hotter and hotter yet. The flare grew brighter, the roar of voices deeper; the crash of heavy bodies falling, shook the air; bright streams of sparks rose up into the sky; but louder than them all – rising faster far, to Heaven – a million times more fierce and furious

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<sup>151</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 439.

– pouring forth dreadful secrets after its long silence – speaking the language of the dead – the Bell – the Bell!<sup>152</sup>

It is impossible to Rudge that the ringing of the church bell could have any purpose besides singling him out as a murderer. It could not simply be telling the time, for example:

Who could hear that bell, and not know what it said! There was murder in its every note – cruel, relentless, savage murder – the murder of a confiding man, by one who held his every trust. Its ringing summoned phantoms from their graves.<sup>153</sup>

Dickens's use of facial physiognomy as an indicator of malevolence even extends beyond his live characters to the ghosts and phantoms rising forth from Rudge's imagination. He pictures a face which cannot read clearly, creating a mutable and profoundly disturbing effect:

a friendly smile changed to a look of half incredulous horror, which stiffened for a moment into one of pain, then changed again into an imploring glance at Heaven, and so fell idly down with upturned eyes, like the dead stags he had

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<sup>152</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 440.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440.

often peeped at when a little child: shrinking and shuddering – there was a dreadful thing to think of now! [...] a hundred walls and roofs of brass would not shut out that bell, for it spoke in the wrathful voice of God, and from that, the whole wide universe could not afford refuge!<sup>154</sup>

With the repercussions of Rudge's past violence so forcefully breaking through into the present, it seems almost remarkable that his son, Barnaby, experiences the hereditary taint of violent paranoia in a relatively peaceful form as idiocy. Although the younger Barnaby's idiocy is permanent, he is largely blissfully ignorant, and his mother's reassurance that before God he has done no harm enables him to continue in this state, free of the guilt of his violence in the mob. Dickens develops his ideas about trauma leading to idiocy, particularly with reference to anxiety about regicidal beheadings, following the threat of Bloody Mary in *Barnaby Rudge*, several years later in *David Copperfield*. Here, the narrative emphasises that idiocy does not present a threat to others, and so does not require asylum incarceration.

In 1859, Dickens describes the traumatic madness experienced by Dr Manette. Like Mr Dick's, this trauma is post-natal: Manette was not born an idiot, but is reduced to this state by his experience of political violence. A myriad of minor characters in Dickens's novels struggle to free themselves from haunting, including Mr Haredale, whose thoughts are generally sufficiently lucid to let him explain the nature of his paranoia: 'It is not a mere whim [...]. My thoughts and dreams all tend to it, and fix it in my mind. I have no rest by day or night; I have no peace or quiet [...] I am

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<sup>154</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 440.

haunted.<sup>155</sup> Through these representations of obtrusive trauma, Dickens implies that the past has too strong a hold on the present, not only de-sentimentalising the past, but demonstrating its sinister potential to inflict madness on current and future generations. Healthy masculinity can only be achieved when men can fully inhabit the present, free from the burden of the past.

Dickens uses physical embodiment to represent the extent to which characters are truly situated in the present. Throughout his historical fiction ‘demon heads and savage eyes’ are used to denote mental instability in physiognomic or phrenological terms, from minor characters such as Jerry Cruncher, through to historical figures, with the half-sympathetic melancholic cyclopia of Lord Gordon. Joe Willett finally achieves full, adult manliness when he has broken free from his past as a victim of abusive paternal power. His loss of an arm in the American Revolution becomes a metaphor for the completion of his psychological growth. Dickens implies support for that revolutionary violence, in contrast to the unjust cause and futility of the Gordon Riots, in which Sim Tappetit’s limbs are damaged. Real or imagined severed heads (ranging from those displayed at Temple Bar to that of Charles I) signify regicidal threats and the terror of ‘the figure of a sharp female called La Guillotine’ in Paris and the hangman’s noose in London. Dennis experiences desperate panic at the prospect of his own execution, leading him to question his past behaviour.<sup>156</sup> These feelings come too late, but serve as a final indicator that this psychopathic madman shares a bond with his fellow men – rational, mortal terror. This awakening of Dennis’s intellect is counterbalanced by the breakdown of his body in a ‘wretched spectacle.’<sup>157</sup> In the

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<sup>155</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, pp. 337-8.

<sup>156</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 283 and *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 618.

<sup>157</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 618.

condemned cell he is held between two men, and ‘trembled so, that all his joints and limbs seemed racked by spasms.’<sup>158</sup> Trembling and grovelling on the ground, Dennis appeals to the gentlemanliness and honour of the governor and sheriffs, begging that they be reminded that he is the same man who serviced them for three decades as hangman. ‘Looking wildly round for sympathy’, he perversely claims that being hanged is far worse for a hangman than for anyone else.<sup>159</sup> A gentleman standing by the scaffold assures him that ‘he was well known to have been a hangman, when his sentence was considered.’<sup>160</sup> Barnaby is the one set apart here, protected against fear by his innocent idiocy as he hopes to cheer his half-brother by his ‘merry-making’:

‘I’m not frightened, Hugh. I’m quite happy. I wouldn’t desire to live now, if they’d let me. Look at me! Am I afraid to die? Will they see *me* tremble?’  
Hugh gazed for a moment at his face, on which there was a strange, unearthly smile; and at his eye, which sparkled brightly.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 618.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 619-20.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 620.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 618.

## CONCLUSION

### The ‘borderlands of insanity’ and the pursuit of gentlemanliness

In 1875 Dr Andrew Wynter, an influential insanity specialist who had edited the *British Medical Journal* from 1845-60, turned his attention to ‘the borderlands of insanity.’<sup>1</sup> Exploring the cultural and psychological landscape of this ‘borderland’, this thesis has demonstrated why attempts by numerous fictional and real men, to achieve various different components of ideal gentlemanly masculinity have been problematic. Two particular findings have had a considerable impact on the direction this research has taken. Firstly, it became apparent that these male characters illustrate a range of multiple, coexistent (and not necessarily competing), masculinities. What they shared, however, was their concern with *gentlemanliness* within the broader category of manliness. Secondly, preliminary research quickly challenged the assumption that self-sufficient, individual efforts were the most effective for achieving male success and strength. More detailed lines of enquiry pursued in the four chapters have revealed that the full adoption of that model could be seriously detrimental to male mental health.

A major component of the failed efficacy of such endeavours is guilt, which has an adverse impact on the health of the men concerned. Mr Dombey’s extreme grief following the death of his son is exacerbated by latent feelings of guilt at having failed to engage emotionally with, or fully appreciate, his wife, Fanny, having felt no grief at

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Wynter, *The Borderlands of Insanity and Other Allied Papers* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1875).



the time of death. Trevelyan's ill-treatment of his wife Emily is aggravated rather than alleviated by the spark of conscience which alerts him to the possibility of his having been wrong (when, as the title makes clear, he not only thought but *knew* he was right) to accuse her of infidelity. Similarly, Soames Forsyte becomes increasingly abusive when criticised by June and others for the perceived failure of his marriage. This thesis has not pursued a thorough investigation of these cases as pre-Freudian representations of suppressed guilt, but future research in this area may prove illuminating. A proud, deeply entrenched inability to admit that they have been wrong in jumping to conclusions, or in their treatment of another person (perhaps especially a female person), is represented as a major cause and symptom of mental decline in many of the cases considered. Such an admission threatened to destabilise the convention that a woman should (and legally, must) obey her husband, by questioning his allegedly superior powers of reason.<sup>2</sup> The ideal, more modern marriage can only be attained by mutual respect, and a reformulation of the admission of misjudgement as manly strength rather than weakness.

A unifying feature across the great range of Victorian constructions of gentlemanly masculinity as military, muscular, religious, scholarly, creative, inventive, emotionally intelligent, socially enlightened or family-oriented, is the imperative to be of 'good character.'<sup>3</sup> In addition to appropriate manners, dress, speech and behaviour, good character requires sound judgement.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the extent to which feminine

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<sup>2</sup> Having become entrenched in the Anglican service in 1662, the bride's vow to obey did not become optional until 1928.

<sup>3</sup> The increasingly popular psychological concept of 'emotional intelligence' was first used in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1873 *St Paul's Magazine* (previously edited by Trollope) cited this quality as a primary characteristic of mankind: 'man is an emotional intelligence as well as well as an erect, bimanous mammal.' Anon, *St Paul's Magazine* (Feb. 1873), p. 224.

<sup>4</sup> David Castronovo, *The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society* (New York: Ungar, 1987); Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London: Allen and

influence is admissible for these different styles of masculinity, men generally remained the primary decision-makers. This required the weighing up of different possible outcomes to determine the best course of action on any given subject.<sup>5</sup>

As Chapter One has demonstrated, ongoing unemployment, redundancy or a poor decision in investment, was frequently perceived as a failure of male judgement, and the burden and blame fell squarely on his shoulders as the primary bread-winner. Such pressure had the potential to paralyse gentlemanly manners so that apologies implied weakness, making stubbornness inevitable.<sup>6</sup> A male admission of wrongdoing, however much Emily Trevelyan's or anyone else might demand it, could be culturally constructed as virtual castration. In *The Way We Live Now*, Trollope configures the business mogul's swindling as far worse than the habits of Felix Carbury, Dolly Longestaffe and the upper-class regulars at the Beargarden. For them the stock market is largely a hobby, and does not replace engagement in homosocial relationships. Confined by loneliness and blinded by the monomaniacal symptoms of greed, addiction and pride, Melmotte's mental state rapidly declines. Self-serving crime through fraud and money laundering is represented as a form of hyperactivity in itself, becoming maniacal when the arrogance built by past success leads to unreasonable risk-taking. As an alternative, Trollope advocates balanced judgement in finance, as in all male professional and personal spheres. The relatively prudent approach of the young, energetic Paul Montague represents a healthy, sane compromise between the extremes of Melmotte's dangerous risks and the tedious

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Unwin, 1981); Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> The most notable exception to this is in the military, in which obedience to orders was preferable to independent, potentially mutinous decision-making (and where any allegedly feminising effects of submission could be outweighed by the alternative prioritisation of masculine strength and muscularity).

<sup>6</sup> Trollope traces this process of entrenchment and increasing emotional unavailability with Rev. Crawley in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.

restraint of Roger Carbury's Tory feudalism. Montague's vigorous masculinity extends to his enthusiasm for adventure, enterprise and travel, balanced by an equal appreciation of domestic life. This appealing combination secures his marriage to Hetta Carbury, who shares his mental equilibrium despite Paul's earlier misdemeanours.

Each of the social origins of mental breakdown discussed in this thesis is triggered by the fracturing of bonds, or social contracts, between individuals. Following some form of betrayal, these men are no longer able to trust people upon whom they have previously relied. As Chapter One demonstrates, Dickens and Trollope share profound disgust for the financial abuse perpetrated by swindlers and sympathy for their investors. However, these responses are tempered by the immense psychological burden carried by the former, and a crushing indictment of the greed and gambling addictions of the latter. In Chapter Two the fracturing of trust is even more destructive, intensified by its location in the central relationship in a man's life: his marriage. Here again, a vital social (and indeed, legal) contract breaks down, since Trevelyan and Forsyte fail in the primary duty of a husband, as defined by the words of the marriage service, on which all models of masculinity agree: to protect his wife. In allowing their unreasonable jealousy, and their socially and legally sanctioned obsession with absolute control, to rupture their domestic security, both men become monomaniacally abusive husbands.<sup>7</sup>

In Chapter Three, the fracturing of central relationships is also irrevocable: the Duke of Omnium and Mr Dombey are severed from figures on whom they have relied

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<sup>7</sup> I say 'allowing', since before their pathology takes hold, both Louis and Soames are represented as making an initial *choice* to behave as they do, from a privileged position even amounting to perfection.

for their sense of wellbeing and purpose, recognising their value too late. These two outwardly cold, emotionally undemonstrative patriarchs, must undergo a major reconfiguration of their masculinity in order to complete the grieving process and return to health. In relatively advanced age, both men must be coaxed, however reluctantly, into therapeutic activity and community, depending on new or reinforced bonds with others. In Chapter Four, the social contract is broken and reworked across an enormous canvas by the constant negotiation of bonds between individuals, social and political groups, and the state itself. In depicting the intensity and immediacy of Dr Manette's trauma, Dickens makes his most damning indictment of the state's failure to protect its citizens. Dickens extends his argument from *Dombey and Son*, which exposes the fallacy of the Carlylean, Smilesean hypothesis that self-reliance is a guarantor of male mental health. Manette's only chance to recuperate and regain his self-respect is to allow himself to lean on others for support, and gradually to reacquaint himself with the activity and freedom of movement which his abusers have previously denied. Movement and companionship are also the most effective remedies for men who have been isolated by their imbecility or idiocy, such as Mr Dick and Barnaby, both of whom Dickens presents as largely successful cases of care in the community.

Within the context of Dickens's novels, which for many readers are defined by memorable characterisation, an important site in the borderland of insanity is eccentricity, and the point at which peculiar behaviour becomes pathological. One reasonable method for judging this might be to consider whether they present a threat to themselves or others, either by direct violence or other means. However, if we accept the M'Naghten rule, various men would be categorised as malevolent without being mad. In the cynical world of high capitalism described by Trollope in *The Way*

*We Live Now*, it is difficult to mitigate charges of non-violent crime such as fraud by the suggestion of madness. Despite his best efforts to ‘brave it all like a man’, Melmotte’s ‘back had been so utterly broken’ as to indicate possible temporary insanity.<sup>8</sup> Melmotte and Dombey retain mental balanced until a minor event occurs: the discovery of a forged signature and a passing comment by Toodles. Neither man would normally give these circumstances a second thought, but they are already stretched to their maximum mental and emotional capacity. In these representations Dickens and Trollope reinforce an observation made in many of the asylum case notes: that the very lightest of straws can break a camel’s back, causing even those men who have seemed immune to cross the borderline to a state of severe psychological crisis.

Male mental strength in this literature is not characterised by a serene, calm stasis and certainty, but by constant change and inquiry. The conservative, stoical masculinity of Mr Dombey and the Duke of Omnium, for example, proves to be insufficient, either as a temperament or a deliberate strategy, in unexpected emotional crises. It is only by drawing on reserves of a different form of strength and energy that these widowers are roused to action, able to recover from the shock of loss. Dickens and Trollope demonstrate that, counterintuitively, one of the most effective cures for a distressed and exhausted mind is an increase in mental stimulation and physical activity. Contrary to the repressive hypothesis, these new interventions and pursuits are represented as genuinely therapeutic recovery methods, rather than mere distractions which postpone mental breakdown.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Way We Live Now*, p. 673.

<sup>9</sup> These recommendations are evidently class-specific. An exhausted labourer, like the men considered in the ‘hungry madness’ section of Chapter One, would emphatically *not* be suited to more action, and yet they were the patients most likely to be placed in asylums where they would be set to work building and gardening.

One purpose of this research project has been to re-evaluate various assumptions about madness and masculinity in the Victorian period which are, as the interdisciplinary sources explored have shown, incredibly nuanced, multi-layered and full of apparent contradictions. So too, are definitions of soundness of mind, however absolute or extreme the word ‘madness’ might sound to modern readers. By way of intervention in Victorian Studies research, this thesis has opened up new fields in which to explore ideas about insanity at its borderlines, beyond the existing work on femininity, female madness, hysteria, and sensational or melodramatic genres. I have focused my attention instead on realist fiction and lived experiences of male pathology which blurs medical and lay ideas about the separation of reason from unreason. Contrary both to reductive modern stereotypes and to popular fears in the period, dangerous mania, psychopathy and ‘raving madness’ were extremely rare. The circumstances faced by men in the real and fictional cases studied here all point towards the curiously *unextraordinary* precariousness of mental balance in navigating the borderland of insanity. Rather than being an extreme state, right at the edge of possible human experience, madness emerges as a central component: even at the heart of models of masculinity which first appear so fiercely opposed to it.

This thesis has not only demonstrated the considerable heterogeneity of gentlemanly ideal models, but it has also revealed that this mode of masculinity was neither a static nor a stable construct. Despite the primacy of heredity in many Victorian understandings of psychology, as in biology and anthropology, there were often considerable shifts within a single generation of a single family. Even in their forties and fifties, patriarchs like Mr Dombey, the Duke of Omnium and Dr Manette must constantly revise and refine their identities and mental strategies, employing a self-reflective practice to analyse how best to approach public and private challenges.

The recalcitrant inability (or indisposition) to evolve and adapt can provoke their decline into mental pathology. Stability then, paradoxically, cannot be achieved by stasis. Far from being the backbone of healthy Victorian masculinity, the fatal incapacity for flexibility and adaptation was in fact the most common mental defect which drew men in crisis across the borderline to insanity.

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