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‘THAT’S BUSINESS’: ORGANISED CRIME IN G.W.M. REYNOLDS’ THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON (1844-48)

Stephen Basdeo¹

Abstract

Scholars such as Stephen J. Carver argue that G.W.M. Reynolds’s penny blood *The Mysteries of London* (1844-48) represents organised crime in the Victorian criminal underworld. Yet thus far no researcher has yet applied any theories from criminology relating to organised crime to explain *why* the activities of the Resurrection Man, the novel’s principal criminal protagonist, and his associates constitute an example of it. This article remedies this situation by applying Mark Galeotti’s definition of organised crime to a study of the Resurrection Man’s gang in Reynolds’s novel, showing how Reynolds understood that, not only was there an underworld, but there was also a criminal upper world. These two worlds overlapped, their members colluded together.

Keywords: G.W.M. Reynolds, organised crime, *The Mysteries of London*, penny blood, penny dreadful, Victorian Studies, Victorian literature

Introduction

This article builds upon the Stephen J. Carver’s research into G.W.M. Reynolds’s *The Mysteries of London* (1844-48). Carver contextualises Reynolds’s depiction of the underworld against contemporary fears relating to ‘a new and emerging dangerous class’.² He further argues that Reynolds’s story as part of a trend in ‘underworld tourism’ which began with Pierce Egan the Elder (1772-1849) and continued in the novels of Charles Dickens (1812-70) and the social investigations of Henry Mayhew (1812-87). While scholars agree that *The Mysteries of London* depicts the underworld of Victorian organised crime, researchers have not yet measured Reynolds’s representation of it through any theoretical framework.³ This article, therefore, applies concepts from theoretical criminology relating to

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² Stephen J. Carver, ‘The Wrongs and Crimes of the Poor: The Urban Underworld of The Mysteries of London in Context’, in Anne Humpherys & Louis James (eds.) *G.W.M. Reynolds and Nineteenth-Century British Society: Politics, Fiction and the Press* (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp.185-212 (p.185).

³ Further discussions of Reynolds’ *Mysteries* include: Anne Humpherys, ‘An Introduction to G. W. M. Reynolds’ Encyclopaedia of Tales’ in Anne Humpherys & Louis James (eds.) *G.W.M. Reynolds and*

organised crime to the depiction of the principal criminal characters from Reynolds's novel. It focuses upon one of the main criminal protagonists in the novel, Anthony Tidkins, who goes by the *alias* of the Resurrection Man, and his accomplices, whose activities constitute an example of 'organised crime'. Their crimes are a business venture, and they collude with members of the upper classes to cause harm to the respectable classes. Given that Reynolds sees society as being divided into three distinct classes: the aristocracy, the industrious classes, and the criminal classes, Reynolds's depiction of organised crime subtly challenged emerging Victorian stereotypes of a criminal class. Crime in *The Mysteries of London* is not merely a story of 'the wrongs and crimes of the poor'; it is also a story of the wrongs and crimes of those in the upper world, which, of course, suited Reynolds's radical sentiments.

1 Key Concepts and Definitions

Before discussing how the activities of the Resurrection Man and his criminal confederates constitute an example of organised crime, it is necessary to arrive at a definition of organised crime. Many crimes require a degree of planning and sophistication if they are to be carried out but not every crime can be classified as organised. Academics and policymakers have often struggled to formulate a definition because any explanation must take account of the adjective 'organised'.⁴ The most appropriate definition comes from Mark Galeotti who states that it is 'a continuing enterprise, apart from traditional legal and social structures, within which a number of persons work together under their own hierarchy to gain power and profit for their private gain through illegal activities'.⁵ Organised crime groups, perhaps more than any other types of criminals, are often taken to represent an elusive 'underworld'.⁶ However, the term 'underworld' must be used with caution because it can often be a vague and unhelpful term. It implies that it is a physical place and not merely an idea. In fact, Heather Shore argues that 'there is no underworld, only elite interpretations of the lives of the poor and

Nineteenth-Century British Society: Politics, Fiction and the Press (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 123-33; Rohan McWilliam, 'The Mysteries of G.W.M. Reynolds: Radicalism and Melodrama in Victorian Britain', in Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (eds.) *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J. F. C. Harrison* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), pp. 182-98; Mary L. Shannon, 'Spoken Word and Printed Page: G.W.M. Reynolds and 'The Charing-Cross Revolution', 1848', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* No. 18 (2014) DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.683>; Anne Humpherys, 'G.W.M. Reynolds: Popular Literature & Popular Politics', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 16: 3-4 (1983), pp. 78-89; Anne Humpherys, 'The Geometry of the Modern City: G.W.M. Reynolds and The Mysteries of London', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 11 (1983), pp. 69-80.

⁴ J.O. Finckenaer, 'Problems of Definition: What is Organised Crime?', *Trends in Organized Crime* 8: 3 (2005), pp. 63-83 at 64.

⁵ Mark Galeotti, 'Criminal Histories: An Introduction' *Global Crime* 9: 1-2 (2008), pp. 1-7 (p. 6); Galeotti bases his definition upon previous research presented in Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime*, 3rd Edn. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1990).

⁶ For a discussion of perceptions of the underworld and its representations see Heather Shore, 'Undiscovered Country: Towards a History of the Criminal 'Underworld'', *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, 1: 1 (2007), pp. 41-68 at 43.

working class; a collection of ideas about crime mediated through cultural and legal apparatus'.⁷ If we accept the idea of an underworld it should be taken into account that there must, of necessity, be an upper world of crime, and that both of these spheres of criminality overlap: organised crime groups often carry out their activities in sight of, and often with the tacit approval of those who wield power in mainstream society; sometimes the activities of those in the underworld are carried out under the direction of those from the upper world.

We must pause to consider whether it is good practice for a literary historian to analyse an early Victorian literary text through the framework of modern theoretical criminology. Many people today receive their understanding of organised crime from popular culture, be it 'true crime' books such as *Cosa Nostra* (2004) or films such as *The Godfather Trilogy* (1972, 1974, 1990).⁸ It was no different in preceding eras, as authors sought to understand and depict the changing nature of crime in the modern industrial city. Depictions of organised crime in this period include 'factual' accounts in newspapers that describe networks of thieves and receivers of stolen goods such as William Sheen, a Fagin-like character whose exploits were widely reported in the 1830s. There are also literary representations of organised criminal networks such as Bill Sikes, Fagin, and the gang of pickpockets in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838).⁹ It was *The Mysteries of London*, however, which was perceived by some contemporaries as primarily responsible for shaping Victorian perceptions of organised crime. For example, an article from *The Times* in 1864 states that 'the supposed "Mysteries of London"' influenced people's belief in 'an underworld of crime and horrors ... and deeds [that] are daily perpetrated in this great city of which no one ever hears'.¹⁰ Thus, this article also aims to contribute to discussions surrounding the relationship between criminology and popular culture in its nineteenth-century setting, in a similar manner to the way in which modern criminologists have also examined the relationship between study of crime and media.¹¹

2 Reynolds's Radicalism

The nature of Reynolds's radicalism also requires a brief discussion since his depiction of criminality provides nuance to emerging Victorian conceptions of it, when the problem of

⁷ Heather Shore, *London's Criminal Underworlds, c.1720-c.1930: A Social and Cultural History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 2, 6.

⁸ J. G. Cawelti, 'The New Mythology of Crime', *Boundary 2*, 3: 2 (1975), pp. 324-57 (p. 326).

⁹ Shore, *London's Criminal Underworlds*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 9 December 1864, p. 6.

¹¹ See, for example, some of the following works: Nicole Rafter & Michelle Brown, *Criminology Goes to the Movies: Crime Theory and Popular Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Andrew Welsh, Thomas Fleming & Kenneth Dowler, 'Constructing crime and justice on film: meaning and message in cinema', *Contemporary Justice Review*, 14: 4 (2011), pp. 457-76.

crime was linked firmly to the poor. There was a variety of strains of radical thought during the Victorian era: Free Trade Radicalism, Parliamentary Radicalism, entrepreneurial radicalism; Reynolds, however, appears to have been an independent radical of the type written about by Michael J. Turner. He professed no allegiance to any particular cause but was desirous of fundamental social and economic changes, although he did become a prominent Chartist figure during the late 1840s.¹² As evident in Fig. 1, Reynolds sees several gradations in society. At the top of society, there is the monarchy and the aristocracy, an institution and a class of people for whom Reynolds certainly had no high degree of admiration. His republican beliefs took hold at an early age because, as he stated in an article for the *People's Advocate* in 1875, 'I reflected that it was perfectly monstrous for a few individuals to be allowed to revel in luxury, while millions could scarcely obtain the necessaries of life'.¹³ Although he never made personal attacks on Queen Victoria, he railed against the deference shown to certain members of the royal family, calling such actions 'degrading, and sickening specimens of grovelling and self-abasement'.¹⁴ He saved his personal attacks for members of the aristocracy: the Duke of Newcastle, according to Reynolds had 'a mental capacity amounting almost to the idiotic';¹⁵ The Duke of Cumberland was 'a monster in human shape, a veritable fiend without a single redeeming quality' whose life amounted to a progression of 'perjury, adultery, seduction, incest and murder'.¹⁶

¹² Michael J. Turner, *Independent Radicalism in Early Victorian Britain* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 2.

¹³ G.W.M. Reynolds, 'Thirty Years of English Republican History', *People's Advocate*, 17 July 1875, p. 2.

¹⁴ G.W.M. Reynolds cited in Michael Diamond, 'From Journalism and Fiction into Politics' in Anne Humpherys & Louis James (eds.) *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 91-99 (p. 91).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 23 November 1851, p. 12.

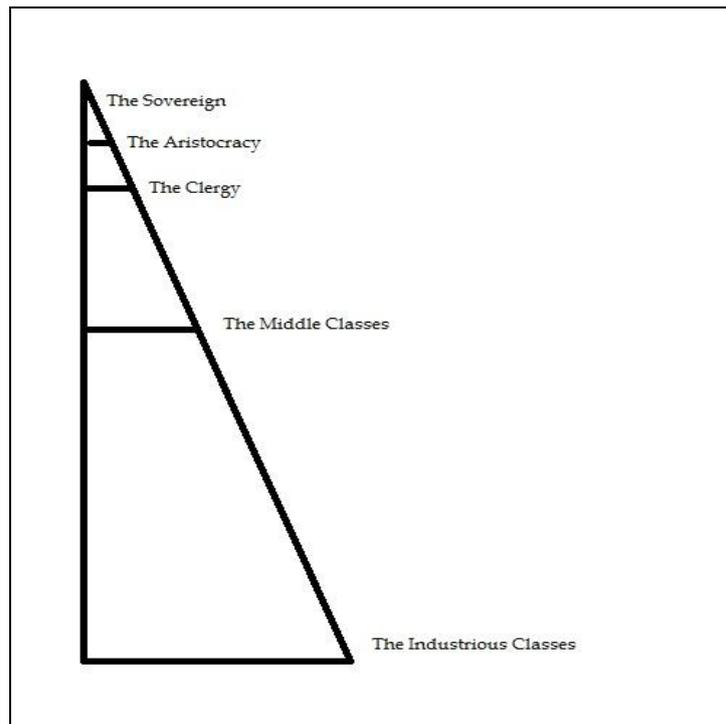


Figure 1: Reynolds's Vision of the Social Constitution of Victorian England. Adapted from *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1 (1845), p.179.

Towards the clergy and the Christian religion in general Reynolds likewise had no great regard. One of his earliest written works was a short pamphlet entitled *The Errors of the Christian Religion Exposed* (1832). In this work he writes of how he became a deist, having concluded that 'we find the Old and New Testament to be false'.¹⁷ And in the same publication he is also scathing about the hypocrisy and vices which he believed were commonplace among nineteenth-century clergymen.¹⁸ Furthermore, in *The Mysteries of London* there is the character of the initially virtuous vicar, Reginald Tracey, who is seduced by Lady Cecilia and thenceforth becomes 'an accomplished hypocrite' and denies himself nothing in the way of amorous pleasures.¹⁹ His thoughts regarding Christianity and religion in general evidently do not appear to have changed much since the pamphlet in 1832. Besides Tracey, there are other corrupt religious leaders in the novel, notably Crankey Jem's father who, knowing that he was running out of money and faced is faced with destitution, suddenly

¹⁷ G.W.M. Reynolds, *The Errors of the Christian Religion Exposed* (London, 1832), p. 13.

¹⁸ Reynolds, *The Errors of the Christian Religion Exposed*, p. 14; 'And here I may take the opportunity of observing something about the clergy of the Protestant Church. Are they humble like their pretended master? Are they willing to sell all and give to the poor? And will they deny themselves the luxuries of life for the sake of an immortal crown of glory? Do they clothe the naked and feed the hungry, and give lodging to the poor? Will they be content to suffer ignominy and reproach in the cause of their creed; and will they reject all thoughts of worldly ambition, that their hopes of a reward in heaven may be the more sure? I will ask, who have more pride than the high benefited clergy of the Protestant Church? Who are more addicted to the luxuries and sensualities of life than the ministers of God?'

¹⁹ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1 (London: G. Vickers, 1845), p. 396.

exclaims to his family: 'A call! ... A call! ... a call from above to preach the blessed Gospel and cleanse the unsavoury vessels of earth from their sinfulness'.²⁰ The father then becomes a lay preacher whom many well-meaning but deluded respectable people follow. His followers freely give him money and believe him when he says that he must take a young girl named Ruth to his bed because an angel 'ordered me to raise up the seed of righteousness [with a view to produce] fitting heirs to carry on the good work which I have commenced'.²¹ As Reynolds's remarks in *Errors of the Christian Religion Exposed*, as well as the cases of Reginal Tracey and Crankey Jem's father show, he believed that a majority of Christian religious leaders were either corrupt or were morally depraved.

Society's best classes, according to Reynolds, are the middle classes and 'the industrious' classes. The hero of *The Mysteries of London*, Richard Markham, is a member of the middle classes, as was Reynolds himself, in spite of his repeated bankruptcies. Reynolds deplored the condition of the working classes, whose problems he attributes to the aristocracy.²² He then sets working classes' pauperised condition in contrast with the gluttony of the aristocracy who enjoy a life of plenty.²³ But this is not to say that Reynolds views the poor as saints. In his opening chapter, he states that 'crime is abundant in this great city'.²⁴ And he makes clear that many of the perpetrators of such crimes come from the poorer classes. Some modern critics such as Louis James and Richard Maxwell argue that Reynolds was simply an opportunist, willing to exploit popular discontent to sell novels and newspapers.²⁵ But these arguments are unconvincing: why would Reynolds make noteworthy public appearances at workers' demonstrations if he was not genuinely supportive of causes such as working-class enfranchisement? He was popular with working people, especially Chartists.²⁶ He certainly had nothing to gain by vehemently expressing his radical and republican sentiments in the press except the opprobrium of contemporaries such as Dickens, who wrote in 1849 that Reynolds's name was 'a name with which no lady's, and no

²⁰ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2, p. 176.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-78.

²² Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 179.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁵ Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man* (London: Penguin, 1973), p.197; Richard Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 166. Scholars' arguments are summarised and critiqued in Carver, 'The Wrongs and Crimes of the Poor', pp. 160-61.

²⁶ Jessica Hinds, 'Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G.W.M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012), p.12n: 'Reynolds was elected to the National Chartist Association's National Executive in 1848 with more votes than any of his fellow committee members; 1,805 to Feargus O'Connor's 1,314'. Further discussions of Reynolds' role in working-class and radical causes are to be found in the following works: Ian Haywood, 'George W. M. Reynolds and "The Trafalgar Square Revolution": Radicalism, the Carnavalesque and Popular Culture in Mid-Victorian England' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 7: 1 (2002), pp. 23-59

gentleman's, should be associated'.²⁷ While some might argue, as Karl Marx (1818–83) did, that Reynolds simply supported radical causes to curry favour with the working classes and gain sales,²⁸ as will be illustrated below, Reynolds was not writing solely for that class. Instead, Reynolds perhaps saw himself as the Republican activist in *The Mysteries of London*: as a man who endeavoured 'to arouse the grovelling spirit of the industrious millions to a sense of the wrongs under which they labour, and to prove to them that they were not sent into this world to lick the dust beneath the feet of majesty and the aristocracy!'²⁹ It will be noted that he never attacks the middle classes here; he merely speaks of the 'industrious millions' as occupying a place beneath the feet 'of majesty and the aristocracy'. Reynolds's merging of the middle classes and working classes looks back to earlier forms of nineteenth century radicalism in which both classes formed an alliance to achieve parliamentary reform before the 'Great Betrayal' of 1832.³⁰ Thus, while he does depict many members of the poorer classes as criminal or potentially criminal, it should be remembered that Reynolds's radicalism was nihilistic: violence and criminality were the only forms of existence available to them.³¹ Reynolds's depiction of criminality amongst the poorer classes is a literary manifestation of the fact that society gets the criminals that it deserves.

3 Literary Context and Audience

Periodicals were a prominent part of Victorian print culture. Richard Cosgrove has recently highlighted the importance of legal journals to the Victorian legal profession,³² and M. Jeanne Peterson has discussed how medical journals became the preferred form for the dissemination of new advancements.³³ These academic publications likely had a limited readership, but alongside these were successful literary periodicals such as *Household Words*, *All the Year Round*, and the *Cornhill Magazine* to name but a few. The serialisation

²⁷ Charles Dickens, Letter to W.C. Maccready, August 30, 1849, cited in Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation: Or the Spectacular, the Shocking and the Scandalous in Victorian Britain* (London: Anthem, 2003), p. 191.

²⁸ Louis James, 'From Egan to Reynolds: The Shaping of the Urban Mysteries in England and France, 1821–48', *European Journal of English Studies*, 14: 2 (2010), 94–106 at 104.

²⁹ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 70.

³⁰ On working-class and middle-class radicalism, the alliances between the two classes, and the Reform Act of 1832 more generally, see the following works: Paul Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism: The Middle-class Experience, 1830–1914* (London: Longman, 1984); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780–c.1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Nancy D. LoPatin, *Political Unions, Popular Politics and the Great Reform Act of 1832* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999); Eric J. Evans, *Britain Before the Reform Act: Politics and Society 1815–1832* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

³¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 451.

³² Richard Cosgrove 'Law' in J. Don Vann & Rosemary T. VanArsdel (eds.) *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1994), pp. 11–21.

³³ M. Jeanne Peterson, 'Medicine', in J. Don Vann & Rosemary T. VanArsdel (eds.) *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1994), pp. 22–44.

of novels in periodicals frequently occurred throughout the nineteenth century. Some of the most popular Victorian novels appeared first as instalments in magazines. For example, Dickens' *Oliver Twist* appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany* between 1837 and 1839, and for a time was published simultaneously in the same magazine with William Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839).³⁴

Reynolds's novel was a penny blood: these were forerunners of the more controversial penny dreadfuls, with the latter term appearing c.1870.³⁵ Sometimes these stories were published as standalone weekly issues in the same way that comics are today. For example, Pierce Egan the Younger's *Robin Hood and Little John* appeared in 41 separate numbers between 1839 and 1841. The same author's *Wat Tyler* was published in 55 weekly numbers between 1841 and 1842.³⁶ Penny bloods were either original stories, such as his *Mysteries*, or they could be adaptations of contemporary popular works such as Gilbert á Beckett's *Oliver Twiss* (1839) and Reynolds's *Pickwick Abroad* (1837-39). Alternatively, penny blood stories were published in magazines such as *The People's Periodical and Family Library*, in which *The String of Pearls*, telling the story of the murderous barber, Sweeney Todd, first appeared between 1846 and 1847.³⁷ Reynolds's own literary periodical, *Reynolds's Miscellany* (1846-69) also published some penny blood stories: Reynolds's *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf* appeared in its columns between 1846 and 1847. Reynolds also established a

³⁴ See the following works on the serialisation of novels during the Victorian era: Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Linda K. Hughes & Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 1991); Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Margaret Beetham, 'Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 89: 3 (1989), pp. 96-100; Bill Bell, 'Fiction in the Marketplace: Towards a Study of the Victorian Serial', in Robin Myers & Michael Harris (eds.) *Serials and their Readers, 1620-1914* (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1993), pp. 125-44

³⁵ General historiography on penny bloods and penny dreadfuls includes: Robert Kirkpatrick, *From the Penny Dreadful to the Ha'Penny Dreadfuller: A Bibliographic History of the Boys' Periodical in Britain, 1762-1950* (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 2013); John Springhall, 'Disseminating Impure Literature': The 'Penny Dreadful' Publishing Business Since 1860', *Economic History Review* 47: 3 (1994), pp. 567-84; John Springhall, 'Pernicious Reading'? 'The Penny Dreadful' as Scapegoat for Late-Victorian Juvenile Crime', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 27: 4 (1994), pp. 326-49; John Springhall, '"A Life Story for the People"? Edwin J. Brett and the London "Low-Life" Penny Dreadfuls of the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 33: 2 (1990), pp. 223-46.

³⁶ For a critical discussion of Pierce Egan the Younger's penny bloods see the following works: Stephen Basdeo, 'Radical Medievalism: Pierce Egan the Younger's Robin Hood, Wat Tyler, and Adam Bell' in Stephen Basdeo & Lauren Padgett (eds.) *Leeds Working Papers in Victorian Studies Volume 15: Imagining the Victorians* (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2016), pp. 48-64; Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Chris R. Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency and the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).

³⁷ See Robert Mack (ed.), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

successful radical newspaper entitled *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, which was incredibly successful, lasting from 1850 until 1967.³⁸

The low price and the often violent and lurid content of penny bloods have led some amateur historians to surmise that it was solely the working classes who read penny dreadfuls and to whom these tales were marketed. For example, one website says that 'the 1840s ushered in an era of luridly illustrated gothic tales which were marketed to a working-class Victorian audience'.³⁹ Even the well-respected popular crime historian, Judith Flanders, in *The Invention of Murder* (2011) refers to 'working-class penny bloods'.⁴⁰ To describe them thus is to over-generalise and miss the fact that many members of the middle classes read penny bloods. The first and perhaps most obvious argument for this is simply the fact that middle-class purchasers had pennies in greater abundance than their working-class counterparts. Of course, the cost of a particular work of literature does not immediately restrict access to it. Working-class readers could read copies of periodicals and news in coffeehouses, and slightly later than when Reynolds was writing, poorer families were often said to 'club' together for a penny to buy a broadside.⁴¹ Henry Mayhew recorded the latter practice in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851).⁴² Yet the format in which most penny blood stories survive is often in their expensively-bound 'library edition'. The first and second series of the *Mysteries* was published in two handsome volumes by George Vickers, while the third and fourth series authored by Thomas Miller and Edward L. Blanchard respectively were issued as bound volumes by the same publisher.⁴³ Reynolds and his publisher evidently knew that a respectable audience would be reading the library edition of the *Mysteries*

³⁸ For discussions of Reynolds' various serials, see the following works: Anne Humpherys, 'Popular Narrative and Political Discourse in Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper' in Laurel Brake, Lionel Madden & Aled Jones (eds.) *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 33–47; Andrew King, 'Reynolds's Miscellany' in Anne Humpherys & Louis James (eds.) *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 53–74; Michael H. Shirley, 'G. W. M. Reynolds, Reynolds's Newspaper and Popular Politics', in Anne Humpherys & Louis James (eds.) *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 75–89.

³⁹ Mimi Matthews, 'Penny Dreadfuls, Juvenile Crime, and Late-Victorian Moral Panic' *Mimi Matthews: Romance, Literature, History* [Internet <<https://mimimatthews.com/2015/11/16/penny-dreadfuls-juvenile-crime-and-late-victorian-moral-panic/>> Accessed 6 September 2016].

⁴⁰ Judith Flanders, *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime* (London: Harper, 2011), p. 115

⁴¹ Marsh W. Jones, 'Debtor to the Greeks and Barbarians: Religious Periodicals and their Influence in the Victorian Prelude' in Michael H. Shirley & Todd E. Larson (eds.) *Splendidly Victorian: Essays in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British in Honour of Walter L. Arnstein* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), pp. 129–43 (p. 133).

⁴² Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 93.

⁴³ Thomas Miller, *The Mysteries of London; or, The Lights and Shadows of London Life* (London: G. Vickers, 1849); E. L. Blanchard, *The Mysteries of London; or, The Lights and Shadows of London Life* (London: G. Vickers, 1850). These items are rarer than original editions of Reynolds' first and second volumes. For further information see listings on <http://www.priceonepenny.info/>.

because some of the illustrations featuring nudity that appeared in the serials were omitted in the more expensive editions.⁴⁴ Rather than being targeted solely to the working classes, penny bloods were instead mass-market publications that had a cross-class appeal.⁴⁵

4 'Apart from Traditional Legal and Social Structures.'

No particular structure is common to all modern-day criminal networks due to the diverse range of organised crime groups in existence.⁴⁶ While a feature of many modern-day organised crime groups is one of a clear hierarchy, in *The Mysteries of London* all members of the gang appear to be on an equal footing. They are a loose association of members who work together but also commit crimes independently of one another. While it is the Resurrection Man, the Cracksman, Bill Bolter and Dick Flairer who commit the majority of criminal acts in the novel, there is a sense that they are part of a larger network of criminals. Reynolds describes them as being part of an organisation that goes by the name of The Forty Thieves and meet at regular intervals in the Mint:

The association consisted of thirty-nine co-equals and one chief who was denominated the Bully Grand. The fraternity was called The Forty Thieves - whether in consequence of the founders having accidentally amounted to precisely that number, or whether with the idea of emulating the celebrated heroes of the Arabian tale, we cannot determine, The society had, however, been established for upwards of thirty years at the time of which we are writing, - *and is in existence at this present moment* (italics in original).⁴⁷

Historically, organised crime networks typically operated in Britain as loose confederacies or collections of relationships, precisely as Reynolds describes.⁴⁸ Indeed, whether the loose association of the Resurrection Man and his accomplices can truly be labelled as 'organised crime' is open to debate. Shore points to the work of Peter Reuter in the 1980s who coined the term 'disorganised crime', implying that many criminal networks were more fragmented than is usually supposed.⁴⁹

Inspired by Eugene Sue's depiction of the 'lower' parts of Paris in *The Mysteries of Paris* (1842-43), Reynolds depicts London as a maze in which all manner of vice and crime exists. Sue and Reynolds's works signify the arrival of a new subgenre of Gothic writing: the urban

⁴⁴ Trefor Thomas (ed.), *The Mysteries of London* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 21-22n.

⁴⁵ See also Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for a discussion of audience and literary context.

⁴⁶ Philip Curry and Steeve Mongrain, 'What is a Criminal Organization and why does the Law Care?' *Global Crime*, 10: 1-2 (2009), pp. 6-23 at 6.

⁴⁷ G.W.M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2 (London: G. Vickers, 1846), p. 187.

⁴⁸ Shore, *London's Criminal Underworlds*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Peter Reuter, cited in Shore, *London's Criminal Underworlds*, p. 6.

gothic in which the city replaces the rural as the place of nightmares.⁵⁰ Reynolds was not the first to compare the metropolis to a vast, dark place as Henry Fielding writes in *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751) that the capital was ‘a vast wood or forest, in which a thief may harbour with great security’.⁵¹ The Resurrection Man, Cracksman, and their partners in crime Dick Flairer, Bill Bolter and the Buffer inhabit these dark places of the metropolis. They are described as natives of ‘all the flash-houses and patter cribs [...] of Great Saffron-Hill’.⁵² The same area is described by Reynolds as ‘a labyrinth of dwellings whose very aspect appeared to speak of hideous poverty and fearful crime’.⁵³ The places from which these criminals hail are areas into which the police seldom venture. Even if the police make an appearance in the back streets of Saffron Hill, there are places in the labyrinthine alleyways of that district ‘in which a man might hide for fifty years and never be smelt out by the police’.⁵⁴ One stimulus to the growth of criminal networks is the weakness or complete absence of state law enforcement.⁵⁵ Whether there were, historically, any places that police never ventured into by the time that Reynolds was writing in 1844 is unclear. Looking back at the history of the police force in 1870, an article in *The Quarterly Review* noted how during the late 1820s and 1830s, Deptford ‘was without a single policeman or watchman’.⁵⁶ Perhaps Reynolds was trying to give a flavour of the relatively weak policing of certain areas in the years immediately following the establishment of the police. When he began writing the *Mysteries* in 1844, the Metropolitan Police had been in existence since 1829, and the first detective branch had only been established in 1842.⁵⁷ When Bill and Dick are discussing the abilities of the police, it is clear that both criminals view the nascent force as quite inept:

⁵⁰ See the following works: Richard C. Maxwell, ‘G.M.Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32: 2 (1977), pp. 188-213; Anne Humpherys, ‘Generic strands and urban twists: The Victorian mysteries novel’, *Victorian Studies*, 34: 4 (1991), pp. 455-72; R. Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵¹ Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, 1751), p. 58.

⁵² Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London* Vol. 1, p. 149.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Stergios Skaperdas, ‘The Political Economy of Organised Crime: Providing Protection When the State Does Not’, *Economics of Governance* No. 2 (2001), pp. 173-202 at 180.

⁵⁶ *The Quarterly Review* Vol. 129, No.257 (1870), pp. 87-129.

⁵⁷ Histories of policing and detection in Britain include: Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th Century to the Present* (London: Penguin, 2009); Iain Channing, *The Police and the Expansion of Public Order Law in Britain, 1829-2014* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Chris A. Williams, *Police Control Systems in Britain, 1775-1975: From Parish Constable to National Computer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, 3rd Edn. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Gregory J. Durston, *Burglars and Bobbies: Crime and Policing in Victorian London* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012).

“Lord, how much coves as you and me laugh when them chaps in the Common Council and the House of Commons gets on their legs and praises the work of the bluebottles up to the skies as the most acutest police in the world, while they votes away the people’s money to maintain ‘em!”⁵⁸

Clive Emsley notes that in the early years, despite the successes of the police force being lauded by public officials there were often instances in the press which highlighted cases when ‘the police were not around when they were needed either to prevent crime or to help victims seize offenders’.⁵⁹ Emsley points to a case, in fact, from the very year Reynolds began writing the *Mysteries* in which the victim of a crime is quoted in *The Brighton Gazette* as saying that, after having been robbed, ‘he searched the town from Steyne to Ship Street without being able to find a single policeman to take the rascal into custody’.⁶⁰ This is not to say that the police were completely ineffective: Emsley notes that the physical presence of the police force on many Victorian streets contributed to statistical decline of theft and violence by the mid-Victorian period that was observed by both the public and the authorities.⁶¹

Another way in which Reynolds shows that his criminal protagonists live apart from mainstream legal and social structures is in their use of flash language or thieves’ cant. Since the eighteenth century there had been some publications which aimed to shed light upon the words and phrases used by criminals. Alexander Smith’s influential *A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen*, first published in 1714 and then revised and extended in 1719, contains *The Thieves’ New Canting Dictionary*, as well as *The Thieves’ Grammar*, *The Thieves Key Found Out*, and *The Thieves’ Exercise*.⁶² Reynolds does not just append a dictionary of thieves’ cant onto the end of his novel, however. Instead, he works such language into the criminal characters’ dialogue. There are numerous examples throughout the book of this, but the following one will suffice: ‘The Thieves’ Alphabet’ is a song sung by the Cracksman in one of the ‘boozing kens’:

A was an Area-sneak leary and sly;
B was a Buzgloak, with fingers so fly;
C was a Cracksman, that forked all the plate;
D was a Dubsman, who kept the jug-gate.

⁵⁸ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900*, 2nd Edn. (London: Longman, 1996), p. 234.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Alexander Smith, *A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen* (ed.) Arthur Heyward (London: Routledge, 1933), pp. 201-10, 583-96.

For we are rollicking chaps,
All smoking, singing, boosing;
We care not for the traps,
But pass the night carousing!

E was an Efter that went to the play;
F was a Fogle he knapped on his way;
G was a Gag, which he told to the beak;
H was a Hum-box where parish-prigs speak.
CHORUS

I was an Ikey with swag all encumbered;
J was a Jug, in whose cell he was lumbered;
K was a Kye-bosh that paid for his treat;
L was a Leaf that fell under his feet.
CHORUS.⁶³

One hitherto unexplored aspect of Reynolds's writings is the amount of original poetry that he authored. Footnotes then explain some of the language used by the thieves: 'ikey' is a Jewish fence, no doubt inspired by the real-life Jewish fence Ikey Solomon;⁶⁴ 'etter' is a thief who frequents theatres; 'leaf' refers to being hanged.⁶⁵ Whether Reynolds invented this thieves' slang or not is unknown: these footnotes, however, lend an air of authenticity to his depiction of the criminal underworld, much in the same way that Walter Scott had employed citations to fictionalised primary sources in *Ivanhoe* (1819). As in Scott's novels, Reynolds's footnotes provide readers with an external editorial voice which, while they might seem to shed light upon thieves' language and solve one of the many 'mysteries of London', they simultaneously make the world of thieves more alien to the reader.⁶⁶ These men are different to those in respectable society. They live apart from mainstream social and legal structures, and they have their own language. It is the world of a criminal 'other'.

5 'For their Private Gain through Illegal Activities.'

The pursuit of profit is what drives organised crime gangs, and financial gain as the motivational factor in their illicit activities is what usually separates organised criminal networks from terrorist groups. The latter group usually have either a religious ideology or a political goal that underpins their operations. This is despite the fact that both groups, in a

⁶³ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p.60.

⁶⁴ See Judith Sackville-O'Donnell, *The First Fagin the True Story of Ikey Solomon* (Melbourne: Acland, 2002).

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 60.

⁶⁶ Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 118-19.

modern context, often perpetrate the same types of crimes, such as drug and human trafficking, money laundering, and the smuggling of firearms.⁶⁷

In the undertaking of most of their criminal activities, Reynolds's villains are motivated solely by the prospect of financial gain. As the Resurrection Man exclaims, 'I can soon learn any business that's to make money'.⁶⁸ They carry out a variety of illegal activities to make money. As the Resurrection Man's *alias* implies, one of the major crimes that he commits on a regular basis is body snatching. The Anatomy Act had been passed in 1832 to regulate the trade in cadavers in response to public outrage at the illegal trade in corpses, which grew particularly when news of Burke and Hare's murders first broke in 1828. The Act allowed medical professionals to be given access to unclaimed bodies, particularly those who died in prison or workhouses.⁶⁹ Reynolds, of course, was writing in the 1840s, and the Resurrection Man's trade was all but defunct by the time he was writing. But Trefor Thomas notes that the figure of the Resurrectionist lived on as a type of folk devil in the two decades succeeding the passage of the Anatomy Act.⁷⁰ Dickens, of course, includes Resurrection Men in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), while Robert Louis Stevenson authored *The Body Snatcher* much later in 1884. While the study of the trade in bodies makes for unsettling reading, some scholars from the medical profession who have written on the subject have noted how it did contribute to medical advances.⁷¹ The Resurrection Man, however, is uninterested in the advancement of medical knowledge. He and his confederates dig up fresh corpses to earn money. When the Resurrection Man and the Cracksman give a body over to a surgeon, they are each paid ten sovereigns.⁷² That is the end of the matter as far as the Resurrection Man and his team are concerned.

Bodysnatching is not the only activity that the Resurrection Man undertakes, however: for example, extortion is another, with the motivation behind the perpetration of this crime being monetary gain. In the novel there appears a Mister Tomlinson is a crooked stockbroker who,

⁶⁷ For a concise overview of the various offences usually carried out by organised crime groups see the following: 'Organised Crime' *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* [Internet <<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/index.html?ref=menuside>> Accessed 31 December 2016].

⁶⁸ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2, p. 83.

⁶⁹ On Burke and Hare and the Resurrectionists' Trade see the following works: Alanna Knight, *Burke and Hare* (London: The National Archives, 2007); Caroline McCracken-Flesher, *The Doctor Dissected: A Cultural Autopsy of the Burke and Hare Murders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alan Bates, *The Anatomy of Robert Knox: Murder, Mad Science and Medical Regulation in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ Thomas, *The Mysteries of London*, p. 68.

⁷¹ Piers D Mitchell, et al. 'The Study of Anatomy in England from 1700 to the Early 20th Century', *Journal of Anatomy* 219: 2 (2011), pp. 91-99.

⁷² Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 127.

having made bad investments, accuses his faithful clerk, Michael Martin, of embezzlement. Tomlinson emerges from the affair unscathed and returns to his former profession after having declared bankruptcy. The Resurrection Man, however, is acquainted with the real truth of the matter and decides that he can make money out of the stockbroker. This following scene depicts the extortion:

"And what can I do for you, Mr. Tidkins?" asked the stock-broker, in a tremulous tone; for he felt a desperate alarm lest the Resurrection Man should have discovered the one secret which he had taken so much pains to conceal — the secret of the abode of old Michael Martin. "I have but two wants in the world at any time," answered the Resurrection Man, lighting his pipe: "money most often — vengeance now and then. But it is money that I want of you."⁷³

Extortion is still one of the principal means of financial gain for modern organised crime groups, and it is one of the ways in which the activities of the Resurrection Man and his accomplices correspond closely with modern organised crime groups.⁷⁴ There are cases of blackmail and extortion carried out by gangs which were referenced in the Victorian press. While E. L. Blanchard was writing the fourth series of *The Mysteries of London* in 1849, for example, the following letter appeared in *The Times*:

Sir, - Would you, through the medium of your columns, put the timid on their guard against a horrid system of extortion, carried on at dusk by a gang of wretches who infest the passage leading from St. Martin's Church to Bear and Orange streets, Leicester-square? The plan adopted is as follows:- A smartly dressed, well-looking boy comes up to you, and asks some frivolous question as to the time of closing the National Gallery. He manages to keep you in conversation for some seconds, and walks on by your side as far into the obscurity as may be. On a sudden a man comes up, and asks, "What are you doing with my son?" On this, the boy affects to cry, and hints that the gentlemen got into conversation with him for a grossly immoral purpose. The man then says, "There, you hear what he says; now the only way to get out of it is to give the boy a sovereign, or to the police you go." Now, Sir, a nervous man is so thrown off his guard by this threatened imputation, that he submits to this or any other infamous demand. Surely, Sir, the police must be remiss in their duty not to scare away a gang of monsters who loiter at dusk near what are meant to be "public conveniences," but which have become "public nuisances." The foregoing, Sir, happened to me the other night, and if you would insert the same, others might profit by my experience and loss.
I remain, Sir, &c.

A VICTIM.⁷⁵

Quite how the victim who wrote the letter to *The Times* expected the police to tell the 'monsters' apart from honest citizens is unclear. Evidently arrests were made, however, as

⁷³ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2, p. 238.

⁷⁴ David Anzola et al. 'National Mafia-Type Organisations: Local Threat, Global Reach' in *Social Dimensions of Organised Crime: Modelling the Dynamics of Extortion Rackets* (eds.) Corinna Elsenbroich, David Anzola & Nigel Gilbert (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 9-25.

⁷⁵ *The Times* 11 December 1849 [Internet <<http://www.victorianlondon.org/crime/extortion.htm>> Accessed 31 December 2016].

there was certainly a steady supply of defendants who were found guilty of extortion in the 1840s, the decade that Reynolds was writing. The Old Bailey Online database lists thirty guilty offenders who appeared in the dock between 1840 and 1850. The offence was considered to be severe enough by the authorities to be punished with transportation. Although Reynolds's case is centred on financial misconduct, a lot of the extortion cases that appeared at the Old Bailey during this period were related to alleged sexual offences on the part of the victims.⁷⁶ In 1841, for instance, William Fletcher and James Chittem were found guilty of attempting to extort money from Matthias William Cundale, 'and threatening to accuse him of having attempted and endeavoured to commit the abominable crime of -'.⁷⁷ While Reynolds was writing another such case appeared at the Old Bailey: one George Middleditch was found guilty of 'accusing Frederick Rennell Thackeray, of a certain infamous crime [...] with a view to extort and gain money from him'.⁷⁸

As stated above, organised crime groups usually carry out their activities with the often tacit approval of those in the upper world.⁷⁹ There is an instance in the novel which neatly illustrates the collusion between people from the upper world and underworld: the Cracksman's undertaking of a highway robbery. *The Mysteries of London* is essentially the story of two brothers, the virtuous Richard Markham and his not-so-virtuous brother, Eugene. Although Richard experiences some misfortunes throughout his life, he rises in society through his own virtue, and eventually marries into the family of an Italian nobleman. Eugene, on the other hand, also advances in society through means of corruption, embezzlement. He eventually becomes the MP for a place called Rottenborough, the naming of which is an allusion to pre-Reform Act constituencies such as Old Sarum. Eugene, who goes under the assumed name of Montague Greenwood, plots to defraud Count Alteroni of his fortune but he must first acquire a vital document from him. For this, Eugene must employ the services of the Cracksman and his fellows:

"What's the natur' of the service?" demanded the Cracksman, darting a keen and penetrating glance at Greenwood.

"A highway robbery," coolly answered [Eugene ...]

"All right!" cried the Cracksman. "Now what's the robbery, and what's the reward?"

"Are you man enough to do it alone?"

"I'm man enow to try it on; but if so be the chap is stronger than me –"

⁷⁶ See also Joseph S. Bonica, 'The Unmanly Fear: Extortion Before the Twentieth Century', *Law, Crime and History*, 3: 2 (2013), pp. 1-29.

⁷⁷ William Fletcher, James Chittem Theft > extortion, 1st February 1841 (t18410201-645) *Old Bailey Online* [Internet <www.oldbaileyonline.org> Accessed 11 January 2017].

⁷⁸ George Middleditch, Theft > extortion, 19th August 1844 (t18440819-1916) *Old Bailey Online* [Internet <www.oldbaileyonline.org> Accessed 11 January 1844].

⁷⁹ Kelly Hignett, 'Organised Crime in East Central Europe: The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland' *Global Crime* 6: 1 (2004), pp. 70-83 (p. 71).

"He is a tall, powerful person, and by no means likely to surrender without a desperate resistance."

"Well, all that can be arranged," said the Cracksman, coolly. "Not knowing what you wanted with me, I brought two of my pals along with me, and they're out in the street, or in the alley leading into the park. If there'd been anything wrong on your part, they would either have rescued me or marked you and your house for future punishment."

"I am glad that you have your companions so near [...] I will now explain to you what I want done. Between eleven and twelve o'clock a gentleman will leave London for Richmond. He will be in his own cabriolet, with a tiger, only twelve years old, behind. The cab is light blue – the wheels streaked with white. This is peculiar, and cannot be mistaken. The horse is a tall bay, with silver-mounted harness. This gentleman must be stopped; and everything his pockets contain - everything, mind – must be brought to me. Whatever money there may be about him shall be yours, and I will add fifty guineas to the amount: - but all that you find about his person, save the money, must be handed over to me."⁸⁰

Note the precision with which the robbery is to be carried out: clear and concise instructions are given. The deed is not a romantic highway robbery of the type conducted by William Harrison Ainsworth's Dick Turpin in *Rookwood* (1834); according to Reynolds, crime in the urban, industrial society is cold and calculated. Before the Cracksman commits the crime, he receives an 'advance' of 20 guineas, at which the Cracksman exclaims: 'that's business!'⁸¹ The robbery is carried out, and at Eugene and the Cracksman's second meeting the villains are paid in full for their work. The meeting is concluded with the Cracksman hoping '*that he should have his custom in future*' (italics in original).⁸² To the villains of *The Mysteries of London* crime is a business carried out with the sole purpose of financial gain. Surgeons are their customers, or they make themselves available as henchmen-for-hire willing to do the dirty work of those in from supposedly more respectable stations in life as long as the price is right.

6 'A Continuing Enterprise'?

Modern-day organised crime groups have proven time and again that they are resilient. If the head of the organisation or some of its key members are killed or incarcerated, the network usually carries on. The reader does not, in fact, encounter the Resurrection Man until chapter twenty-eight, for both him and Crankey Jem are incarcerated in Newgate.⁸³ Nevertheless, in the early part of the novel, despite the absence of their accomplices, Bolter and Flairer express their intentions to carry on with the 'jobs' which were planned at a previous point by their now-imprisoned accomplices:

"Well, now, about this t'other job, Dick?" said Bill.

⁸⁰ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 149.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 149.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

"It's Jem as started it," was the reply. "But he told me all about it, and so we may as well talk it over. It's up Islington way - up there between Kentish Town and Lower Holloway."

"Who's crib is it?"

"A swell of the name of Markham. He is an old fellow, and has two sons. One, the eldest, is with his regiment; t'other, the youngest, is only about fifteen, or so - a mere kid."

"Well, there's no danger to be expected from him. But what about the flunkies?"

"Only two man-servants and three vimen [sic]. One of the man-servants is the old butler, too fat to do any good; and t'other is a young tiger."

"And that's all?"

"That's all. Now you, and I, and Jem is quite enough to crack that there crib. When is it to be done?"

"Let's say to-morrow night; there is no moon now to speak on, and business in other quarters is slack."

"So be it. Here goes, then, to the success of our new job at old Markham's;" and as the burglar uttered these words he tossed off a bumper of brandy.⁸⁴

As the novel progresses, it transpires that the Resurrection Man turns evidence against Crankey Jem in return for immunity from prosecution, while Jem is sentenced to Transportation.⁸⁵ But the gang survives despite the fact that one of its prominent members is transported. Although Jem returns to England at a later point in the novel, he never re-joins his old accomplices. Matters only become complicated for individual gang members when they commit crimes that are not related to the pursuit of financial gain. For example, in a scene reminiscent of Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy, Bill Bolter kills his wife:

The woman fell forward, and struck her face violently against the corner of the deal table. Her left eye came in contact with the angle of the board, and was literally crushed in its socket – an awful retribution upon her who only a few hours before was planning how to plunge her innocent and helpless daughter into the eternal night of blindness. She fell upon the floor, and a low moan escaped our lips. She endeavoured to carry her right hand to her now sightless eye; but her strength failed her, and her arm fell lifeless by her side. She was dying.⁸⁶

However, Bolter's wife is not a sympathetic character such as Dickens' Nancy is: she had plotted to make her four-year-old daughter blind as she believes that the well-to-do will be more inclined to give a small blind girl charity. But in adherence to the adage, 'murder will out', despite his attempts to hide from the law, Bolter is eventually arrested and hanged for his crime.⁸⁷

The seeds of the Resurrection Man's downfall are laid at the beginning of the novel when he turns evidence against Crankey Jem. Nineteenth and twentieth century organised crime gangs are known for having a code of honour. The Italian Mafia is reputed to adhere to

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

omerta, a code which stipulates that its members should keep silent about their criminal activities and that no member shall give evidence to the police about a colleague.⁸⁸ Although a code of conduct for the Resurrection Man and his gang is not explicitly stated in the novel, it appears to be understood amongst its members that they shall not betray each other. At another point in the exchange between the Cracksman and Eugene Markham, referred to above, for example, the former exclaims that ‘the Resurrection Man and the Buffer will stick to me like bricks’.⁸⁹ Because the Resurrection Man initially betrays Crankey Jem, the latter swears vengeance upon him by foiling his plans to abduct and murder Richard Markham. Eventually, the Resurrection Man is imprisoned in a subterranean dungeon by Jem to perish by starvation:

Ten days afterwards, Crankey Jem set to work to open the door of the dungeon [...] And what a spectacle met his view when he entered that cell! The yellow glare of his lantern fell upon the pale, emaciated, hideous countenance of the Resurrection Man, who lay on his back upon the cold, damp pavement – a stark and rigid corpse!⁹⁰

Had the Resurrection Man adhered to the unwritten rule of organised crime not to betray a fellow gang member, he should not have met such a violent end at the hands of Crankey Jem. In spite of the deaths of Bill Bolter and the Resurrection Man, however, the wider criminal network known as the Forty Thieves continues. To quote one of Reynolds’s statements again: ‘*the Forty Thieves [...] is in existence at this present moment*’ (italics in original).⁹¹

7 ‘The Wrongs and Crimes of the Poor’?

As stated in the introduction, Reynolds does not portray the poor as saintly. The preceding discussion has shown that Reynolds imagined some members of the poorer classes to be guilty of heinous criminal acts. But it is the way that society treats the poor that makes the upper classes responsible for their criminality. This is the case with the Buffer, for example, who is given a lengthy history in chapter ninety-nine. He is briefly incarcerated when a young man. When he completes his sentence, he is released from gaol with no means of support and so enters the workhouse. It is an abhorrent place, and the Buffer discharges himself from the workhouse after six weeks. On the evening that he discharges himself he falls in with some criminals, and they immediately set about robbing a watchmaker’s shop, and they

⁸⁸ Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 13-14.

⁸⁹ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p. 149.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

⁹¹ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2, p. 187.

earn 30 guineas from a fence for the stolen goods.⁹² Clearly, to the Buffer, crime is a more attractive mode of life than living in a workhouse.

Although the Resurrection Man is a menacing character, Reynolds humanises him by giving him a lengthy backstory. In his youth, his father is arrested for smuggling and, despite the fact that the local worthies all purchased his contraband without compunction, and even the local Baronet is implicated in the smuggling ring, he finds his whole family condemned:

“This business again set me a-thinking; and I began to comprehend that birth and station made an immense difference in the views that the world adopted of men's actions. My father, who had only higgled and fiddled with smuggling affairs upon a miserably small scale, was set down as the most atrocious monster unhung, because he was one of the common herd; but the baronet, who had carried on a systematic contraband trade to an immense amount, was looked upon as a martyr to tyrannical laws, because he was one of the upper classes and possessed a title. So my disposition was soured by these proofs of human injustice, at my very entrance upon life.”⁹³

He is soon after imprisoned at the whim of a local baronet, and the Resurrection Man begins to realise the inherent nature of the hypocrisy of the upper classes towards their social inferiors. He starts to resent the double standards of morality applied to the aristocracy and the working classes. He then relates his metamorphosis from a once virtuous adolescent into a hardened criminal in the following manner:

I could not see any advantage in being good. I could not find out any inducement to be honest. As for a desire to lead an honourable life, that was absurd. I now laughed the idea to scorn; and I swore within myself that whenever I did commence a course of crime, I would be an unsparing demon at my work. Oh! How I then detested the very name of virtue.⁹⁴

The Resurrection Man says towards the close of history that ‘the rich are prepared to believe any infamy which is imputed to the poor’.⁹⁵ By this means, as Reynolds shows, nineteenth-century society has received the criminal that it deserved. The Resurrection Man is merely living up to society’s expectations of him.

The biographies of the criminal characters provided in *The Mysteries of London* is Reynolds’s way of providing nuance to emerging views surrounding the existence of a supposed criminal class.⁹⁶ The idea of a criminal class was not fully developed until the

⁹² Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, pp. 304-10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ For discussions of the ‘criminal class’ see the following works: Randall McGowen, ‘Getting to Know the Criminal Class in Nineteenth-century England’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 14: 1 (1990), pp.

1850s, but as previous research by other scholars has pointed out, moves towards a class-based explanation of criminality were evident as early as the 1830s.⁹⁷ Most of the offenders who appeared in the dock during the early part of the nineteenth century were drawn from the poorer classes. In tandem with the fact that British society was perceived as becoming increasingly stratified according to class, so a great majority of the working poor were increasingly perceived of as a criminal other, or class.⁹⁸ At other times they were spoken of as a race. Shore points to the words of William Augustus Miles who said of juvenile criminals in 1839:

There is a youthful population in the Metropolis devoted to crime, trained to it from infancy, adhering to it from education and circumstances, whose connections prevent the possibility of reformation, and whom no punishment can deter; a race *sui generis*, different from the rest of society, not only in thoughts, habits, and manners, but even in appearance, possessing, moreover, a language exclusively of their own.⁹⁹

It is likely that the Resurrection Man and his accomplices, many of whom were trained to crime from their youths, formed their own separate society, and speaking in their own cant would have fitted neatly into Miles' assessment.

Although examples have already been given of collaboration between members of the upper world and the underworld, Reynolds shows that members from the supposedly respectable classes were capable of committing crime independently of their counterparts from criminal class. Eugene Markham, for instance, along with several MPs, a Lord, and the Sheriff of London are seen conspiring together to establish a fraudulent railway company at a dinner party held by Eugene for his fellow conspirators:

Algiers, Oran, and Morocco Great Desert Railway.
"(Provisionally Registered Pursuant to Act.)
"Capital £1,200,000, in 80,000 shares, of £20 each.
"Deposit £2 2s. per Share.
Committee of Direction: The Most Honourable Marquis of Holmesford, G. C. B.
Chairman. – George Montague Greenwood, Esq. M.P. Deputy Chairman.¹⁰⁰

33-54; Drew Gray, *Crime, Policing & Punishment in England, 1660-1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 19-21; Emsley, *Crime and Society in England*, pp. 56-91.

⁹⁷ Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 65: This is in contrast, of course, to the early modern idea that crime was the product of original sin.

⁹⁸ Emsley, *Crime and Society in England*, p. 56.

⁹⁹ William Augustus Miles, *Poverty, Mendicity, and Crime* (London, 1839), p. 45, cited in Heather Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 2, p. 95.

The conspirators require capital, but as Eugene assures those assembled at his dinner party, no such railway scheme exists, and it has only been devised solely for defrauding investors:

And now, my lord and gentlemen, we perfectly understand each other. Each takes as many shares as he pleases. When they reach a high premium, each may sell as he thinks fit. Then, when we have realized our profits, we will inform the shareholders that insuperable difficulties prevent the carrying out of the project,- that Abd-el-Kadir, for instance, has violated his agreement and declared against the scheme,- that the Committee of Direction will, therefore, retain a sum sufficient to defray the expenses already incurred, and that the remaining capital paid up shall be returned to the shareholders.¹⁰¹

This is an example of what might now be termed 'white collar crime' and reflects the 'Railway Mania' of 1846-47, precisely when Reynolds was writing. The enthusiasm for investing in speculative railway schemes was felt among both the upper and middle classes, and it was the first time that companies relied heavily on investors' capital rather than on government bonds.¹⁰² As George Robb notes, the mania for investing in railway companies was perfect for fraudsters wishing to embezzle funds from their investors: bills for the establishment of new railway companies could be obtained from parliament relatively easily, and investors had little access to sound financial advice and accurate financial data.¹⁰³

The Victorians were under no illusions about the opportunities for fraud and embezzlement that were available to unscrupulous and dishonest businessmen in the nineteenth-century financial world.¹⁰⁴ There are many characters in Victorian literature who exemplify the crooked businessman. Clive Emsley points to Uriah Heep in Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849-50), a snakelike, devious character who extorts money from the good Mr. Wickfield. Similarly, there is Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins' sensation novel *The Woman in White* (1859-60), who plots to claim Laura Fairlie's fortune by faking her death.¹⁰⁵ Shore similarly points to some contemporary press reports which expose she what calls 'a hidden financial criminal underworld, straddling a line between the criminal class and the respectable class'.¹⁰⁶ For the most part, however, members of the supposedly respectable upper and middle classes who turned to crime were just viewed by contemporaries as 'bad apples' that had been led astray or placed in tempting situations.¹⁰⁷ But Reynolds's depiction of criminality amongst members of respectable society is more nuanced than Dickens or

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² George Robb, *White-Collar Crime in Modern England: Financial Fraud and Business Morality, 1845-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 31-32.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.34.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.3.

¹⁰⁵ Emsley, *Crime and Society*, p.58.

¹⁰⁶ Shore, *London's Criminal Underworlds*, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ Emsley, *Crime and Society*, p.58.

Collins: according to Reynolds there is a criminal upper class, and a criminal lower class; the underworld mirrors the upper world. Sometimes members from both spheres collaborate to cause harm to members of 'the industrious classes'. Eugene Markham is not merely a 'bad apple' who has been led astray. Instead, he actively pursues a white collar criminal career. Portraying the upper world of crime, of course, suited Reynolds's radical sentiments: as we have seen, he detested the political establishment and ensured that in *The Mysteries of London* its members were implicated in criminal acts, even if their complicity is limited to merely purchasing smuggled goods.¹⁰⁸ If a majority of the poor are indeed criminal, it is because their upper-class counterparts facilitate or indeed, as we saw with the exchange between Eugene and the Cracksman, take a leading role in directing such crime.

Conclusion

This article has used concepts from criminological theory relating to organised crime to explain Reynolds's depiction of the criminal underworld. Reynolds sought to give readers a glimpse into the changing nature of crime in the modern industrial city, showing how it was increasingly *organised*. The Resurrection Man and his gang form a separate society with their own codes of behaviour and language. Their sole purpose is financial gain, and it is only when the principal members of the gang deviate from the pursuit of money and the unspoken criminal code that problems arise and the network breaks down. Reynolds did not only tell a story of 'the wrongs and crimes of the poor'.¹⁰⁹ He told a story of the wrongs and crimes of the criminal lower class and the criminal upper class, who colluded together on multiple occasions. The two classes mirrored, complemented, and colluded with each other. The members of the establishment who collaborated with organised criminal gangs in Reynolds's novel, such as Eugene Markham, are not simply 'bad apples' but are heavily involved with shady characters such as the Resurrection Man and his gang. Reynolds shows how both criminal classes wished harm upon the industrious classes, which to him constituted both the working classes and the middle classes. What is more, the criminal upper class was responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the 'wronges and crimes of the poor'.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol. 1, p.191.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 202.