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Memento Mori: Victorian Death Culture Through Murder, Morbidity, and Mourning

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Opening a copy of a mid-nineteenth century newspaper like the *London Times* or the *Illustrated London News*, one would find death saturating nearly every page. Headlines such as "FRIGHTFUL MURDER—One of the most brutal" and "Crimes of Violence" and even simply "MURDER" preceded detailed and frequent accounts of the city's most gruesome and violent crimes.[1] Weekly reports on deaths within the city described the spread of diseases and meticulously chronicled not only the manner of death but how long it took in hours for a given disease to kill you.[2] Advertisements for Mourning Warehouses called for readers "...to appreciate fully the artistic perfection to which Mourning Garments are now brought," and marketed the latest fashions in death.[3] Death loomed large in Victorian London. Murder dominated the not only headlines but also popular media such as fiction and theater, London grappled with regular outbreaks of disease, and personal mourning turned into a show of fashion and wealth. This raises of the question of why death culture in Victorian London was so prominent and why it changed so much over the century.

The ways in which a society engages with death serve as what sociologist Michael Kearl calls a "mirror of life."[4] By examining how a group of people conceptualizes and interacts with death, we can learn about what they valued in life. Kearl discusses how some societies lean into a more hedonistic approach—life is

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[1] "FRIGHTFUL MURDER. One of the most brutal," *The London Times,* 4 Jan. 1851: 5. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 26 Nov. 2018; "Murder." *The London Times,* 2 Jan. 1832: 3. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed. 26 Nov. 2018.
[2] "The Public Health." *The London Times,* 4 Jan. 1854, p. 10. *The Times Digital Archive.* Accessed 11 Feb. 2019.
[3] "Jay's Mourning House." *Illustrated London News*, 25 July 1891, p. 119. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003*, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9MiQx7. Accessed 5 Mar. 2019.
[4] Michael C Kearl, *Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying* (Oxford: University Press, 1989), 7.

short, make the most of it—while others prioritize the extension of life, even at the cost of enjoying it.[5] This reveals a culture's priorities in life: material enjoyment versus ascetism. It also reveals cultural expectations: how long do these two groups expect to live? When investigating cultures with little to no remaining written record, the archeology of graves becomes invaluable. In the instance of Victorian London, we are fortunate to have a wealth of sources, not just graves but newspaper articles, advertisements, medical reports, hair jewelry, and death photography to count a few. These act as a record of the this culture's attitude and interactions with death. How are the dead honored? Where are they buried, if at all? How do people interact with the bodies of the dead? Do they fear death? Is death sacred and religious or profane and secular? By examining how culture interacts with death, we can develop a more complete image of what those societies valued in life.

While some of the specific changes in how Victorian London negotiated with death resulted from cultural accumulations and shifts over time, many of them stemmed from how London itself grew during this period. While London has always been England's largest city, it was only during the nineteenth century that it truly expanded into a metropolis by our modern definition: "a very large and densely populated industrial and commercial city."[6] This expansion had consequences: information dispersed more quickly through the streets, but so did anxiety and disease. The population grew drastically but city limits did not, leading to both

[5] Kearl, *Endings*, 27.
[6] "Metropolis," *Google Dictionary*, https://www.google.com/search?q=metropolis+definition&oq=metropolis+&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l5.7222j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

dangerous overcrowding and a crisis of where to bury an increasing number of dead in a fixed space. This expanding population also led to higher social pressures as people struggled to assert their status in the face of increased social mobility. The ways that London developed as a city over the course of the nineteenth century indelibly impacted the ways in which its citizens conceptualized and interacted with death.

<u>Defining Victorian London</u>

Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 to 1901, and so this paper will cover the majority of the nineteenth century. For the most part this study will begin in the 1830s, with the first outbreak of cholera hitting England in 1831. Enough significant events pre-date this—such as the beginnings of industrialization and urbanization in London, the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force, and the early evolution of the newspaper industry—that the pre-Victorian period of the nineteenth century cannot be ignored. Unless explicitly discussing events that predate Queen Victoria's rule, the terms "Victorian" and "nineteenth century" will therefore be more or less interchangeable.

Furthermore, when discussing 'London', this paper will focus on the metropolis of Greater London. The 'City of London' is the name of one of the 33 boroughs that make up the larger metropolis, but for the purposes of this paper I will use the term 'city' to refer to the entire London area, rather than this one specific region. The only exception to this will be when discussing the development of organized policing in London, as the City Police and the Metropolitan Police are two

different organizations.[7] At this point London's government was extremely localized by boroughs, having nearly 300 different legislative bodies. However, the majority of the legislature discussed in this paper will be parliamentary acts, passed by the national governing body.[8]

Though images of Victorian London have been well-preserved in historical memory, it can still be difficult to imagine Victorian life on a day to day basis. What did it mean to be a Victorian? Though nineteenth-century London did not have the violent social upheavals of the late eighteenth and early twentieth century, and while the wars it did endure were considerably less traumatic and more popular than those preceding or following it, society did dramatically transform in this period. Following the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, industrialization began expanding in earnest, which led to rapid economic development and a population shift from rural areas to cities. These economic developments created a foothold for the emerging factory-owning middle class to climb the previously untouchable social ladder. This middle class occupied roughly fifteen percent of the population, but this new mobility threatened the upper classes[9]. They began to exhibit their wealth and prestige more aggressively to assert their social superiority. The middle class tried to imitate these displays to project more financial and social clout, and the working class followed suit.

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[7] Because THAT makes sense.
[8] Judith Flanders, *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London*, (New York, Thomas Dunne Books, 2012), 215.
[9] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England,* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 20.

The Victorian period also saw a series of major social reforms, including the Reform Act of 1832 that drastically expanded the voting franchise, the Factory Act of 1833 that established limitations of child labor in factories, and the Education Act of 1870 that made education mandatory for children between the ages of five and thirteen. Science grew from avocation to profession, becoming an institution rather than a loose collection of academics and redefining understandings of the natural world that had previously been taken for granted. Darwin's theory of evolution, which he introduced halfway through the century in 1859, threw both the scientific and religious worlds into disarray. To be a Victorian was to grapple with the anxiety of all these inexorable changes to the social order and the way of the world.

Defining Death

Before diving into the core argument of this paper, allow me to clarify some terminology. This paper will use the term "death culture" to refer to how a group of people interacts with death and how their ideas about death express themselves in the day to day life. For example, sociologists have referred to modern American society as "death-denying": we use euphemisms for death and generally avoid engaging with it in our day-to-day lives.[10] Other cultures may be "death-accepting" or "death-defying." For example, followers of Hinduism approach death as a tool to access rebirth. This could alternately be defined by sociologists as "death-accepting"—it readily incorporates the idea of death into the goals of life—or "death-defying"—by framing death not as something to fear but a temporary step to the next

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[10] Kearl, *Endings*, 459; Talcott Parsons, "Death in the Western World," in *Death and Identity 3rd Edition,* eds. Robert Fulton, Robert Bendiksen (Philadelphia: Charles Press, 1994), 78.

stage of life and eventual enlightenment.[11] Victorians do not fit the "death-denying" model—they engaged with death far too readily and lavishly—but too call them "death-accepting" would be a stretch: death provided a major source of anxiety for them, specifically the fear of a "bad" death.

The difference between a "good" and a "bad" death in Victorian religious thought impacted their cultural attitudes and anxieties about death. The idea of a "good" death dates back to the medieval concept of *ars moriendi*, or "art of dying".[12] The idea changes and develops along with society, but sociologist Michael Kearl summarizes the consistent themes as follows: "…serv[ing] the needs of the dying, their survivors, and social order."[13] For the most of the Victorian period, that meant as painless a death as possible, and time to put both worldly and spiritual affairs in order. The idealized Victorian death scene took place at home, in bed, surrounded by family and having had time to repent for any sins. While this ideal may not always have reflected reality, it was frequent enough in popular imagery to set the societal standard.

But perhaps more important than the ideal of a "good" death was the fear of a "bad" one. If a "good" death came peacefully, with warning, then a "bad" death struck quickly and violently. Tuberculosis, a disease that did not affect mental facilities and took long enough to kill that wills could be sorted out and confessions made, would fall under the category of a "good" death, while cholera, which ravaged the body over

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[11] Kearl*, Endings,* 27.
[12] Pat Jalland, "Victorian Death and its decline: 1850-1918" in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C Jupp and Clare Gittings, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), 232.
[13] Kearl, *Endings*, 122.

the course of a few days at most and stripped its victims of any dignity, would certainly be a "bad" one.[14] Murder, executions, and other violent deaths also fell into the realm of "bad" deaths. The fear of a "bad" death sprung not from fears of violence or pain, but primarily from the spiritual implications. The majority of Londoners in the nineteenth century were Anglicans, not Catholics, which meant that they did not have the safety net of Purgatory.[15] The state in which they died was the one in which they remained, and without time to spiritually prepare for their passing, a quick and brutal death could also mean damnation.

<p align="center">A Brief Religious Summary</p>

Victorian attitudes toward death cannot be separated from Victorian concepts of religion. After all, religious beliefs generally dictate what a person believes will happen after their death, and how to go about "properly" dying and disposing of a body. For example, mid-nineteenth-century Christians generally believed that a body needed to be both buried and embalmed in order to best be preserved for the Rapture, and thus as a society would balk at the concept of cremation.[16] During the period discussed in this paper, the vast majority of London's population practiced Anglicanism, a nominally Protestant branch of Christianity. Founded in 1534 under King Henry VIII, Anglicanism first emerged as a shadow of Catholicism, but quickly branched off to incorporate more Protestant ideology. Early Anglicanism espoused a

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[14] Jalland, "Victorian Death," 235.
Death by tuberculosis was not painless, but it was pretty, and the Romantics had their priorities.
[15] Jalland, "Victorian Death," 236.
Purgatory is the purification process after death but before heaven. Without Purgatory, sinful souls are thought to just go straight to Hell with no chance for salvation.
[16] Allen Gilman Bigelow, "Cremation and Christianity," *The North American Review*, Vol 143, No, 359, 1886, 353.

denial of Purgatory and no prayers for the dead, believing that God's judgment at death was final.[17] These ideas did shift over time, so that at the beginning of the nineteenth century Anglicans had restored the practice of confession and had reinstated the presence of religious leaders at funerals.[18] However, over the course of the century religious ideas shifted further, and those changes are necessary to understand in order to comprehend how they impacted corresponding changes in ideas about death.

In the early nineteenth century, the lingering impact of Romanticism distinctly tinted religious concepts of death. Romanticism was more a philosophical movement than a religious one, but it certainly impacted religious ideas. It introduced a new focus on the individual, and on individual relationships, both romantic and familial.[19] Romanticism emphasized sentimentality in regards to death, and as a result of that lasting influence Victorians approached death from a more emotional angle.[20] Conceptualizations of heaven shifted as well, with more emphasis placed on the reunion with lost loved ones rather than a meeting with God.[21] People who died were commonly described as "not lost but gone before."[22] Death then was softened, not a permanent theft of a loved one but a temporary removal. There was also a fascination

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[17] Philip Morgan, "Of Worms and War: 1380-1558"in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C Jupp and Clare Gittings, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), 141.
The Rapture, in Christian belief, is the second coming of Christ wherein the bodies of the pure rise up and ascend to heaven. To ascend, your body needed to be intact.
[18] Ralph Houlbrooke "The Age of Decency: 1660-1760" in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C Jupp and Clare Gittings, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), 180.
[19] Julie Rugg, "From Reason to Regulation: 1760-1850" in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C Jupp and Clare Gittings, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), 210.
[20] Rugg, "Reason to Regulation," 211.
[21] Rugg, "Reason to Regulation," 213.
[22] Rugg, "Reason to Regulation," 213.

with the moment of death itself, and an impulse to preserve that moment of transition, either through relics or portraiture.[23] That impulse would reappear in later Victorian relic culture and death photography.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the cultural impact of the Romantics was replaced by the Evangelical Revival of the 1850s and 1860s. This is not to say that Evangelical and Romantic ideals were in conflict: they overlapped to a significant degree and to a certain extent Evangelicalism merely picked up the flagging banner of Romanticism.[24] Much like the Romantic philosophy, the Evangelical Revival, often referred as the "religion of the heart", preached sentimentality and vocal grieving.[25] It also highly valued seriousness, piety, and discipline, and reinvigorated the ideology of the "good" death. The "good" death, as pictured by these Evangelicals, and summarized by historian Pat Jalland, "…required piety and lifelong preparation, as well as fortitude in the face of physical suffering."[26] Though this did not vary much from older ideas of the "good" death, it popularized the specific image of dying at peace, surrounded by loved ones knowing you would be reunited in death. Given that the Evangelical Revival primarily impacted middle class families, the idealized image of death it espoused was also tinted by class: generally speaking, violent crime or violent illness were far more likely to rob the lower classes of this "good" death. The working classes experienced more anxiety about "bad" deaths because they were more likely, while the upper and middle classes feared that "bad" deaths could smear

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[23] Deborah Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us" *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol 39 No 1, 2011, 130.
[24] Jalland, "Victorian Death," 232.
[25] Jalland, "Victorian Death," 232.
[26] Jalland, "Victorian Death," 233.

their own class standing. These religious shifts and influences on how the Victorians categorized "good" and "bad" deaths directly contributed to the various methods through which they engaged with death as a whole.

Outline of Argument

In examining the death culture of Victorian London, I analyze how changes in the newspaper industry inspired the rising fascination with murder, how the urbanization of London created a new breeding ground for epidemic diseases and how that bled over into changing attitudes towards corpses, and how new pressures to accommodate the dead led to the commercialization of mourning. Each of these aspects engages with societal ideas of death in a different way.

While many historians examine Victorian interests in murder and true crime as a separate phenomenon from more general attitudes towards death, I argue that cultural ideas of crime are inseparable from a society's broader thoughts about death. Both crime and death threaten order and create social anxiety. The anxiety tied to murder also stemmed from a theological threat: quick, violent death qualified as "bad" deaths. That the Victorians became so culturally fixated on stories of murder over the course of the nineteenth century indicates that something happened to shift their attitude towards violent death, and to a certain extent death in general, and that merits examination.

Repeated outbreaks of disease as a result of a bloated population in the city also impacted Londoners' ideas about death because it forced them to re-evaluate public health and attitudes towards corpses. The prominence of contagious disease necessitated a shift from the Romantic veneration of the body to a more wary

approach, especially when paired with a slowly developing scientific understanding of illness. As they grappled with the anxiety and trauma of repeated epidemics and mass deaths, ideas of death and bodies needed to change as a result.

While both murder and epidemics produced anxiety, the changes in mourning culture more directly addressed grief. Death is a double-edged blade: not only will you die but so will those you love. You feel anxiety for your own death, and grief for all the others. Visible mourning through dress, ostentatious funerals, and relic culture predated the Victorian Era but transformed during it. As London began to run out of room in its burial grounds, cemetery lots became commercialized under new joint-stock companies, and soon the entire practice of mourning became an industry. It was no longer enough to mourn your loved ones, you had to be seen doing and a "respectable" amount of money needed to be spent. These topics each embody a different aspect of how Victorian Londoners grappled with death. Leaving any one of them out would leave us with an incomplete picture of how and why Victorian death culture changed so much over the course of the century. Furthermore, without a thorough examination of Victorian death culture, we cannot fully comprehend how their ideas of death reflect their goals in life, and thus we would be left with an incomplete picture of their society as a whole.

Chapter One: Murder Most Foul:

How the Newspaper Industry Shaped the Victorian's Obsession with Crime

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, popular British media reserves tale of murder for the most lurid and lower class broadside newspapers and street ballads. But by the end of the Victorian period, every single newspaper in London frequently reported on murder, and crime fiction became a mainstay in not only working-class households but also in middle class, "respectable" ones. Yet crime rates themselves began to decline as early as the 1850s and plummeted around the 1870s.[1] This disparity between perceptions of crime and the actuality indicates that something happened to give murder such a prominent place in the Victorian popular consciousness. This prompts the question: what caused the Victorian obsession with murder, and to what extent does that obsession reflect that period's overall death culture?

Many historians treat the Victorian fascination with crime, specifically murder, as somehow separate from the period's heavily ritualized funerary practices and general morbidity. Judith Flanders, the author of multiple books on Victorian culture, keeps her discussions of death culture and mourning to one text—*Inside the Victorian Home*—while exploring attitudes towards murder in another: *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern*

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[1] Christopher A Casey, "Common Misperceptions: The Press and Victorian Views of Crime," *Journals of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol 41 Issue 3 (2001), 391; Peter King, "Exploring and explaining the geography of homicide: patterns of lethal violence in Britain and Europe 1805-1900," *European Review of History: Revuew europeene d'histoire* Vol 20 Issue 6 (2013), 971.

Crime, with no overlap between the two topics. Similarly, Beth Kalikoff, examining the intricacies of murder as depicted in popular culture and media in *Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature,* gives no attention to how interests in crime may reflect overall attitudes towards death. While both of these authors provide an in-depth look at the Victorian interests in crime, I argue that a fixation on murder tells us something critical about a culture's attitudes towards death. Michael Kearl, writing on death from a sociological angle, argues that "Death poses the fundamental threat to the order and meaning that social systems erect to shield their members from the anomic terrors of chaos."[2] Swap out 'crime' for 'death' in that sentence and the meaning remains essentially unchanged. Murder—criminal death—represents the ultimate violation of social order and thus the ultimate source of cultural anxiety. The Victorian newspaper industry harnessed that anxiety for the sake of sales, and their rise perpetrated Victorian fears about crime and ultimately created the Victorian fascination with murder.

Anxiety here refers to what sociologist Talcott Parsons describes as the "anticipatory orientation in which the actor's own emotional security is particularly involved. It is a field of rather free play of fantasy as to what might be the consequences of an anticipated or merely possible event."[3] To simplify, it is the emotional anticipation of consequences, rather than any single threat itself. Anxieties about death are tightly interwoven with what this paper will call "crime anxiety," or a group's fear about violent crime—and who they think will perpetrate that

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[2] Kearl, *Endings,* 25.
[3] Parsons, "Western World," 77.

Kloss 15

violence—and how that fear palpably impacts their daily culture. Crime anxiety also plays an integral role in what I call the "media-cultural cycle." I created this term as a framework for explaining how mass media contributes to cultural attitudes, which in turn impacts what is reported in mass media.

In order to examine the role of the rising newspaper industry on the Victorian fascination with crime and murder, this chapter will be structured around three instances of the media-cultural cycle. Each cycle tracks a change in the newspaper industry that led to an increased reporting on crime, which in turn led to crime anxiety, which I will examine through the coverage of one particular crime. This anxiety prompted social attempts to alleviate fears about crime, which only gave the newspapers more crime-related material on which to report, which propagated the cycle all over again.

The first cycle will cover the early Victorian period, which spans 1800 to 1840 and includes a brief background on the pre-Victorian newspaper industry and attitudes towards crime. In examining early Victorian attitudes towards crime, I will examine the fascination with the 1828 murder of a young woman named Maria Marten and how both street literature and newspapers represented that crime, as well as the establishment of London's first centrally run police force in 1829. The mid-Victorian cycle covers the period from 1840 to 1875, during which the "taxes on knowledge" that severely taxed periodical publications were repealed and the newspaper industry boomed. In this period the fascination with murder turned to panic, as seen by the poisoning and garroting panics of the 1840s and early 1860s, respectively. The anxiety generated by these panics could not be abated by increased

police activity, but needed to be worked out through the new genre of crime fiction. The late Victorian media-cultural cycle stretched from 1875 to the end of the century, during which newspaper journalism transformed under the New Journalism movement and Jack the Ripper terrorized London. Jack the Ripper did not produce fascination or panic but full-tilt mania, which could only be processed emotionally by reworking crime fiction to revolve around the figure of the detective, and thus around concrete solutions and justice.[4]

<u>The Birth of the Modern Newspaper and the Murder in the Red Barn</u>

Before the nineteenth century murder still held the public's attention, but to a notably lower degree than during the later Victorian period. Certain murders and crimes received extensive media attention and continued to hold sway over the popular consciousness into the Victorian period. However, this interest in crime cannot compare to the fascination, panic, and mania surrounding the topic that unfolded throughout the later nineteenth century. This is not to suggest that crime rates, or murder rates, increased over the century (quite the opposite, as will be discussed later) but rather that something happened to make the public more conscious of these crimes. In 1810, out of a total population of around fifteen million, only fifteen Englishmen were convicted of murder.[5] Given the lack of organized policing force in pre-nineteenth century England, these records may not present an accurate picture

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[4] Of these crimes, only the Whitechapel/Jack the Ripper murders occupy a significant place in our modern consciousness. This in part stems from the fact that it was the most recent of these crimes, it was by far the most brutal, and it received a far more sensationalized coverage in the papers. Additionally, the fact that we still do not know who committed these crimes provides a lack of closure and a course of constant curiosity.

[5] Judith Flanders *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 1.

of crime rates, but the lowness of this number implies that murder occupied comparatively little space in the English popular consciousness. Policing at this time was extremely localized in England's smaller towns, and London had a very low concentration of police compared to its population.[6] Though Londoners in the pre-Victorian era were certainly interested in murder, it took the expansion of the London newspaper industry to edge this fascination towards obsession.

In order to examine how the newspaper industry expanded during the nineteenth century, we must first establish the context from which this industry came. The weekly newspaper first appeared in 1702, and as early as 1709 London had eighteen periodical publications and one daily paper called *The Daily Courant*, and according to Kevin Williams, writing on the history of British newspapers: "...by the 1750s the London press had established itself at the heart of national life and politics."[7] Annual consumption of regular publications boomed over the course of the eighteenth century, going from 2.5 million in 1712 to 12.6 million in 1775.[8] Early newspapers focused primarily on political, international, and business reporting, in part because the government heavily censored all printed materials in the 1700s.[9] This censorship was motivated in part by a fear of the power the press both as a political tool and as a threat to social order, as well as by a need for tax revenue after a series of wars with France.[10] Parliament regulated newspapers with a series of taxes referred to as the "taxes on knowledge", the most prominent being the First Stamp

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[6] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 13.

[7] Kevin Williams. *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper*. (Abington, Routledge, 2009), 49, 54.

[8] Williams, *Read All About It,* 49.

[9] Williams, *Read All About It,* 49, 60, 62.

[10] Williams, *Read All About It,* 59, 62.

Act of 1712, which decreed that a half-penny tax must be paid for every sheet of paper published.[11] This devastated less financially stable papers, and lead to the large, cramped newssheets that remained popular until the Stamp Act's repeal in 1855.[12] As a result of these taxes, in the 1720s papers pushed to expand sales and readership. Many publications, such as *The Weekly Journal*, targeted the working classes as an untapped readership by including not only radical Jacobin politics but reporting on gossip, death, and executions.[13] On the more respectable side of the industry, *The Times* was founded in 1785 on a loan from the government treasury. But as early as 1803 *The Times* established economic independence from the government and, as a result, could claim the position of London's premier, "unbiased" source of news, read by not only the elite by the vast majority of London.[14] By the dawning of the nineteenth century, London had a robust but severely curtailed newspaper industry.

The early nineteenth century and the Industrial Revolution brought about major changes in the London newspaper industry that made periodical publications more available to a wider audience. As Williams notes, an element of this was purely mechanical: "The introduction of mechanized paper-making in 1803, steam-powered presses in 1814 and multiple cylinder stereotype printing in 1827 facilitated the low-cost and high-speed dissemination of the printed word."[15] These innovations made it cheaper and faster to print papers, thus making them more available to the reading public. Additionally, social changes from the Industrial Revolution increased the

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[11] Williams, *Read All About It,* 62.
[12] Williams, *Read All About It*, 62-63.
[13] Williams, *Read All About It*, 64.
[14] Williams, *Read All About It*, 84.
Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 369.
[15] Williams, *Read All About It,* 76.

audience for periodical publications. In a growing urban setting, literacy carried greater social prestige and economic value, and London overall saw an increase in literacy rates, though not to the extent it would later in the century.[16] The working class became not just a potential audience but a viable one. While radical papers like *The Weekly Journal* had targeted this demographic in the past, an increased literacy and *desire* for literacy brought even more attention to the working class as journalistic consumers. Williams explains how Sunday publications in particular targeted working class readership: "Sundays were aimed at those who had neither money nor leisure to buy and consumer a daily paper."[17] Sunday papers, first born in the 1770s as politically grounded journals, quickly shifted their subject matter towards what Williams details as "blood, gore, and crimes," which by 1830 made up about half of their weekly issues.[18] While the "taxes on knowledge" would not be removed until the 1850s, the 1830s did see a relaxation of the advertising duty (1833), the stamp duty (1836) and the excise duty (1836).[19] This made it marginally less expensive to publish and purchase newspapers, and contributed in part to their increase in popularity.

The politically radical publications that had become so prevalent at the end of the chaotic nineteenth century gained even more traction in the early Victorian period. These papers first rose to prominence following the French Revolution, and gained particular attention in the period around Britain's 1832 Reform Act.[20] 560

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[16] Williams, *Read All About It,* 78-79.
[17] Williams, *Read All About It,* 83.
[18] Williams, *Read All About It,* 84.
[19] Williams, *Read All About It,* 95.
[20] Williams, *Read All About It,* 86, 91.

different radical journals appeared between 1831 and 1836 and around 800 people were arrested in connection to these same newspapers between 1830 and 1836.[21] Due to their controversial politics, the government did not approve of these periodicals and thus they had to be published illegally, without stamps, and were thus known as the unstamped press. This ultimately benefitted the radical press, as without government taxation they could sell their papers for lower prices. This only strengthened their appeal for their target demographic: the underrepresented working class. While political news formed the backbone of the radical press, part of the appeal for the working class was the inclusion of more salacious reporting. Williams describes how *Cleave's Weekly Police Gazette,* one of the most popular radical publications, included tales of "'shocking crime' and police court reports."[22] This paper drew on literary traditions such as street ballads and broadsides, which were generally considered "lower" forms of literature but remained extremely popular with the working class.[23] Between the radical press and Sunday papers, it soon became clear that crime reporting sold, particularly if one wanted to appeal to the working class. This would go on to shape newspapers in Britain throughout the nineteenth century.

The street literature drawn upon by the *Weekly Police Gazette* and similar papers seeking to appeal to London's working class predates the Victorian period substantially, but grew more influential as periodical papers came to see it as a source

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[21] Williams, *Read All About It,* 87, 93.
[22] Williams, *Read All About It,* 90.
[23] Williams, *Read All About It,* 90.

of inspiration.[24] Ironically, the rise of newspapers led to the demise of street literature as a genre: now that larger publications catered to the literary needs and anxieties of the working class, less formal media fell by the wayside.[25] The term "street literature" broadly describes several forms of media produced by and targeted at the lower classes. For the most part, this literature was oral: ballads and performances later transcribed and distributed.[26] Content-wise, street ballads and theatre covered a broad range of topics, from political news to gallows literature. The most remembered street literature, and that which newspapers tapped into in order to broaden their appeal, focused on contemporary murders. By exploring these killings in a contained, fictional environment, street literature allowed its audience to come to a more cathartic conclusion that reality may not have afforded them. Beth Kalikoff, writing on murder in Victorian popular culture, argues that the focus on the criminal's mentality, motivations, and eventual execution reflects this need for catharsis: "the moment of ultimate justice often occasioned violence greater than that of the original crime."[27] An excellent example of this sort of street literature in the early Victorian period is the famous retelling of the murder of Maria Marten, *Maria Martin: or, Murder in the Red Barn*.

The 1827 murder of Maria Marten was not, in and of itself, extraordinary, yet it fascinated Victorian readers. The daughter of a Suffolk mole-catcher and the mother of three illegitimate children, Maria disappeared in May 1827, supposedly

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[24] Beth Kalikoff. *Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 11.
[25] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 11.
[26] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 11.
[27] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 16.

having run off to wed William Corder, the father of her youngest child who had died in infancy.[28] A year later, Maria's father's found her corpse buried in the family barn, and Corder was arrested shortly thereafter. The murder of Maria Marten swelled immediately to massive popularity, and remained popular throughout the nineteenth century and even into our own.[29] *Maria Martin: or, Murder in the Red Barn* first appeared in 1828, and went through multiple iterations up through the 1960s.[30] More scandalous and violent crimes certainly happened in this same period, yet the death of Maria Marten captivated the public. A part of this appeal lay in the details of the crime: "seducer-murders" inherently centered on betrayal, an extremely popular theme in early Victorian street literature.[31] Maria was also found wearing men's clothing, a detail that prompted much speculation and exploration in both newspapers and street literature. Most profound, however, was the tale of the discovery of Maria's body. According to both street ballads and newspaper reports, Maria's mother "dream'd three nights o'er, Her daughter she lay murdered, under the Red Barn floor."[32] This idea of the prophetic dream so thoroughly pervaded the conception of Maria's death that it even appeared in reports of sermons held in the eponymous Red Barn: "[the reverend] dwelt forcibly and at much length on the

[28] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 45.

[29] A cover of the broadside ballad "The Murder of Maria Martn by W Corder" was released in early 2018: False Lights, "Murder in the Red Barn," track 7 on Harmonograph, Wreckord Label, 2018, Spotify.

[30] Michael Kilgariff, *Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve 19th Century Melodramas* (London: Wolfe, 1974), 206.

[31] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 17.

[32] "The Murder of Maria Marten by W. Corder" The Word on the Street. Accessed 6 Nov 2018. https://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/view/?id=15013

mysterious mode in which the murder had been detected…the instrumentality of Providence."[33]

Though the murder of Maria Marten attained great popularity in both newspapers and street literature, the depiction of events and characters varied between the two sources. The melodramatic street ballad concerns itself much more with moralizing and exploring the figure of William Corder than with the murder or with Maria herself. The ballad even misspells her name in the title itself: *Maria Martin* rather than Marten. Maria in the street ballad has been simplified to a sweet, easily betrayed girl, the favorite of her parents: "the child [her father] loved most of all…the darling, the pride of [his] heart."[34] The ballad alludes to her dead child by William Corder and implies that she or Corder or the pair of them had killed the infant, but it does not linger on this crime and her other two children get no mention.[35] Perhaps they thought this matter not worthy of dwelling on, perhaps they thought the erasure of Maria's children necessary for a morally streamlined narrative, or perhaps like many in this period the author found themselves sympathetic to the plight of an unmarried mother.[36] Newspapers, though also sympathetic to Maria, also gave her very little attention. As is typical with early Victorian street literature, the killer receives the most attention. As soon as Corder has the stage to himself, he begins soloquizing about his emotional torment and his plans to kill Maria: "The deed were

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[33] "On Sunday an immense assemblage of persons collected in the Red Barn, the scene of the murder of Maria" *The London Times,* 10 Jun 1828: 4. Times Digital Archive. Accessed 23 Oct 2018.

[34] *Maria Martin: or, Murder in the Red Barn* in *Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve 19th Century Melodramas,* edited by Michael Kilgariff 214-235, (London: Wolfe, 1974), 230.

[35] Kilgariff, *Golden Age of Melodrama,* 225. Laws at this time were surprisingly lenient towards infanticide, especially if by an unmarried mother. Infants were considered as a burden, more so than children who could be sent to work.

[36] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 224.

bloody, sure; but I will do it, and ride me of this hated plague."[37] His later confession is not motivated by repentance so much as fear at the sight of Maria's ghost.[38] This sits in stark contrast to the real William Corder's confession: "I acknowledge being guilty of the death of poor Maria Marten, by shooting her with a pistol…When we left her father's house we began quarrelling about the burial of the child…a scuffle ensued, and during the scuffle, and at the time I think she had hold of me, I took the pistol…and fired."[39] He changed his story a few times, earlier insisting that Maria: "flew into a passion" and shot herself with a pistol "she had privately taken from [his] bedroom."[40] Though the details change, he insisted until the end that the death was not planned and immediately regretted. Narratively this provides very little closure, so it is little wonder that *Maria Martin: or, Murder in the Red Barn* reframes him as a much more dedicated killer.

Regardless of whether or not William Corder meant to kill Maria Marten, or indeed if he killed her at all, in the eyes of the London public he was a murderer deserving of the harshest punishment. The *London Times* published an account of his trial, but by that point the public had already made up their minds. Corder was publicly executed on August 17th, 1828, in front of a crowd of 10,000 people.[41] While the size of this crowd may seem morbid, one must consider the execution's role as what sociologist Kearl calls "a public ritual of retribution."[42] The criminal's

[37] *Murder in the Red Barn*, 216.
[38] *Murder in the Red Barn*, 234-235.
[39] "William Corder, Corder's Confession" in *Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve 19th Century Melodramas,* edited by Michael Kilgariff 211-212, (London: Wolfe, 1974), 212.
[40] "The Trial and Conviction of William Corder," *The London Times,* 9 Aug 1828: 3. Times Digital Archive. Accessed 23 Oct 2018.
[41] Kilgariff, *Golden Age of Melodrama*, 209-210.
[42] Kearl, *Endings*, 327.

punishment represents a restoration of public order. Corder's body was then put on display for dissection, a relatively common practice with the bodies of executed criminals.[43] Shortly thereafter, relics pertaining to the case and particularly to Corder himself became immensely popular. Historian Judith Flanders writes that the hangman sold Corder's clothes and the rope used to hang him "for a guinea an inch," a copy of his trial was bound in his own skin, and his scalp was pickled to be put on display.[44] The fixation on the relics of Corder's execution demonstrates not only a fascination with the crime itself, but with the catharsis of justice that came with his death.

This fixation on the catharsis of justice may have stemmed from the relatively disorganized and weak police force that existed in the early nineteenth century. Rural England had no organized regulating authority, only local parish regulation that varied wildly between towns.[45] Up until 1829, London did not have a central policing force, and instead relied on several independent but overlapping groups to keep order.[46] Around 1800, London had fifty constables, eight runners at the magistrar's court, seven police officers proper, one thousand additional constables, two night Bow Street patrols of 122 men, and two thousand parish watchmen to police and protect a population of one million across eight thousand streets.[47] This disparity between police size and population was mostly the result of industrialization:

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[43] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 55.
[44] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 55.
Kilgariff, *Golden Age of Melodrama,* 209.
[45] Philip Thurmond Smith, *Policing Victorian London: Political Policing, Public Order, and the London Metropolitan Police* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1985)
[46] Flanders, *Invention of Murder,* 13.
[47] Flanders, *Invention of Murder,* 13-14.

London's populace ballooned in size at a rate unseen in history, quickly becoming the first modern metropolis.[48] The smaller regulating forces used to police the smaller rural areas in England would no longer be applicable to the central city. As a result of this, Londoners generally had very little faith in the people policing them.[49] Parliament called several committees in 1812, 1816-1818, and 1822 to discuss potential reforms to the police force but it was not until 1828 that reforms championed by Sir Robert Peel became reality.[50]

The establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force did not come as a direct response to the murder of Maria Marten, but to the general attitude that the current policing forces were inadequate to address an apparent increase in crime. That newspapers and street literature gave crimes an ever-increasing amount of attention likely only propagated this conception. Sir Robert Peel, the politician who most vocally championed these reforms, sold the necessity of a centralized police force based on the idea of rising crime rates.[51] Crime increased slightly in this period, but nothing quite as substantial as what Peel and the popular press would have had Londoners believe.[52] But while the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force meant to reduce crime and the social anxiety around it, Londoners had no more faith in the new system than the old. This came in part from a genuine lack of effectiveness: the Metropolitan Police functioned primarily as a preventative force, with little

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[48] Smith, *Policing Victorian London*, 16.
[49] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 79.
[50] Smith, *Policing Victorian London*, 21.
Flanders, *Invention of Murder,* 76.
[51] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 76.
[52] Smith, *Policing Victorian London*, 21.
King, "Geography of homicide," 970.

interest in solving crimes that had already occurred.[53] It was not until the 1830s that

police attempted to consolidate information on criminals, and investigation of crimes

only really began in 1842 with the foundation of Scotland Yard.[54] Then there was the

matter of public perception. Londoners wrote to *The Times*, complaining that the new

police force was "unconstitutional," "palpably absurd" in cost, unnecessary, an

"uncivil power," and dangerously close to a military force.[55] The extent to which the

new police force acted as an anti-riot force did not help public opinion of the lower

and working classes, who came to see the police as only interested in protecting the

interests of the wealthy.[56] The existence of an organized police force also meant a

sudden increase in actual reports about crimes. As would be seen later in the century,

a more strict policing force led to more arrests, which only led to more crimes for

newspapers to report on, which did nothing to aid the fear of increasing crime rates.[57]

Ultimately this new police force did nothing to abate Londoner's anxieties about

crime and really only made matters worse.

<div align="center">Revolutions in the Press and Panic in the Streets</div>

London's periodical press changed dramatically in the mid-Victorian period with the

repeal of the "taxes on knowledge." Originally passed in the eighteenth century and

relaxed in the 1830s, the three most restrictive taxations on newspaper circulation

finally ended entirely in the 1850s and 1860s: the advertising duty in 1853, the stamp

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[53] Smith, *Policing Victorian London*, 15.
[54] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 147.
[55] The New Police," *The London Times,* 7 Oct 1830: 6. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed. 23 Oct. 2018.
[56] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 79.
[57] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 379.

duty in 1855, and the paper duty in 1861.[58] Without the government's ever-present taxation, it became considerably cheaper and easier to produce newspaper and other periodicals. Recent innovations in chemistry cut the cost of paper and ink, and the invention of the rotary press in the 1860s—which allowed for less labor, and a faster production of more material—also contributed to this change.[59] As a result, the popularity of newspapers exploded in mid-Victorian London, with hourly production rates going from 20,000 copies an hour in 1847 to 168,000 an hour after 1870.[60] Existing papers grew even more powerful and widely read: *The Times* reached a circulation of nearly 1 million, and as early as 1854 Sunday papers sold 100,000 papers each weekly.[61] The drop in taxation also meant that new journals could enter the media fray, and the total number of newspapers published in Britain and Ireland went from 274 in 1856 to 2,295 in 1914, increasing nearly eightfold.[62] One such newspaper was *The Daily Telegraph*, launched in 1855 and possessed one critical draw to distinguish it from its more prestigious competitions: it only cost one pence, a drastic contrast to *The Times* at seven pence.[63] This low price allowed it to outsell nearly every competitor, save *The Times*.[64] The rising availability of information compounded this expansion: telegraphs took off in the 1840s, the Atlantic cable was completed in 1865, and the India cable in 1869.[65] News could be transmitted across

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[58] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 373.
[59] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 373.
Lucy Brown, "The Treatment of the News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers," *Transactions of the Royal History Society* Vol 27 (1977), 25.
[60] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 373.
[61] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 373.
[62] Williams, *Read All About It,* 99.
[63] Williams, *Read All About It,* 101.
[64] Williams, *Read All About It,* 101.
[65] Brown, "Treatment of News," 26.

not only England but also the globe at astounding rates, giving the public more information than had ever been at their disposal before. By the mid-Victorian period, London saw a major shift in the availability of both newspapers and raw information to the broader reading public.

The repeal of the "taxes on knowledge" in the mid-Victorian period contributed greatly to the decline of the radical press by removing its financial advantage. Ironically, the great unstamped press relied almost entirely on taxes such as the Stamp Act to give them a competitive edge. Without paying the tax, they could sell their papers for a lower price, which is very handy when the target audience is the working class. Following the repeal of these taxes, the radical press no longer had a shield to distinguish itself from the rest of the newspaper industry, which in turn became more affordable. The changes that proved so beneficial for other periodical publications crippled the radical press. Due to its illegal nature, the radical press could not contract with outside companies for advertisements, a fundamental source of income for legitimate papers by this point.[66] Radical publications generally used hand presses because they could not afford the more expensive variations, but by the mid-nineteenth century, the rotary press became common enough that hand presses could not produce fast enough to compete.[67] Furthermore, the social climate of the mid-nineteenth century did not support the radical press the way that of the early century had. Following the Reform Act of 1832 and the general improvement of

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[66] Williams, *Read All About It,* 96.
[67] Williams, *Read All About It,* 91, 94.

working conditions in the 1850s and 1860s, radical politics simply had a smaller audience.[68]

Contributing to the collapse of London's radical press, more mainstream and "respectable" publications began appealing more to the working classes. Not only were these newspapers more affordable thanks to the repeal of the "taxes on knowledge", but their content shifted to be more broadly appealing. Casey writes on how by the 1850s, *The Times* "averaged 599 articles about murder per year," and *The Manchester Guardian* quickly surpassed that.[69] As early as 1849, the satirical magazine *Punch* poked fun at the popularity of murder stories, and in 1870 *The Globe* published an open critique of *The Times*'s fixation on crime reporting.[70] Crime reporting had begun to break free of its "disreputable" confines in broadsides and the radical press and took up a prominent place in the mainstream press, where it would remain for the rest of the century.

But crime reporting did not conquer mid-century journalism the way it later would in the late Victorian period: international affairs regularly drew media attention elsewhere. While not as eventful as the late eighteenth century, the mid-nineteenth had enough international chaos to periodically pull reporting away from local crime, particularly in the 1860s and 1870s. This period saw a notable dip in crime reporting in *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*.[71] Instead, newspapers and public interest were preoccupied with a series of foreign affairs: the March 1863

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[68] Williams, *Read All About It,* 91, 95.
[69] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 376-377.
[70] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 375, 376.
[71] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 387.

Polish Uprising, the 1860-1865 American Civil War, the 1866/1867 German Civil War, and the 1870/1871 Franco-Prussian War.[72] The conflicts on the continent in particular prevailed in popular reporting, as anxiety shifted from rising crime rates to a potential threat of invasion.[73] This anxiety did not contain itself to newspapers or journals: a similar trend followed in the novels and fictional publications of the period, as they shifted from crime fiction to invasion literature.[74] The inverse relationship between crime reporting and international news carries a particular significance because when matters settled abroad and international anxiety became less prevalent, newspapers fell back on the reliability of crime reporting. But the decline in articles on murder over the past decade and a half had created a perception of declining crime rates, when in fact crime rates remained static. [75] So the sudden shift back to crime reporting in the 1860s created the illusion of a sudden, uncontrollable increase in crime. This caused problems.

The mid-Victorian period saw several 'panics' over certain forms of crime, most notably murder by poison and garroting—strangulation/robbery. It is important to note these were not legitimate responses to an increase in crime, but unfounded moral panics, which historian Linda Stratman defines as "a widespread acceptance of the existence of a threat to society out of all proportion to its actual occurrence. Fear of an increase in crime, especially violent crime, often lies at the

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[72] Brown, "Treatment of the News," 27, 28.
Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 387.
[73] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 387.
[74] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 387.
[75] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 387.

heart of such panics."[76] Neither poisonings nor garroting increased in frequency between 1840 and 1875, but the frequency with which newspapers reported on them, as well as the overall availability of newspapers, did. These panics showcase both the power of the media in convincing the public that crime rates were increasing, as well as the underlying anxieties pertaining to these two panics in particular.

The poisoning panic of the 1840s came about in part from the sensationalism inherent in that mode of death, and in part from anxieties about the power of women in the household. Death by poisoning frightened Victorian readers and made for good articles because it implied intent and intimacy. Poisoning, generally, does not occur as a random act of maliciousness.[77] In the Victorian period, death by poison had another layer of terror in that it was extremely difficult to detect. Arsenic in particular was easy to acquire and nearly impossible to concretely prove as a method of murder.[78] Poison was not a very common way of committing murder in this period: in 1849 out of 20,000 suspicious deaths in England and Wales only eleven were suspected intentional poisonings, fewer than .003 percent in total.[79] Yet, as Flanders describes, because of the sensationalism of poison and a few high-profile cases, the London public became convinced that "...dozens, if not hundreds, of cases of domestic poisonings were taking place every year."[80]

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[76] Linda Stratman, *The Secret Poisoner: A Century of Murder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 134-135.
[77] Accidental poisoning was another matter. Many of the deaths of the poisoning panic were likely accidents. Don't keep the arsenic in the kitchen, kids.
[78] Stratman, *Secret Poisoner*, 18.
[79] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 183.
[80] Flanders, *Invention of Murder*, 232.

Women, mostly female servants, bore the brunt of this panic. Reporting on such crimes cast the women accused of these crimes in an extremely biased and unforgiving light. Even the supposedly reputable *Times* reported the trial of a maid accused of poisoning her master as such: "Annexed are the following corroborating facts on the guilt of Eliza Fenning...her vindictive spirit, and want of veracity, were additionally displayed by a desire to criminate several members of [her master's] family: a fortnight after imprisonment she daily endeavored to implicate her fellow servant, Sarah Peer."[81] The article presents her guilt as a fact, and treats her fear after two harsh weeks in jail as the cunning maneuvers as a murderess. A crowd of up to 45,000 people attended her hanging.[82] As with the case of William Corder, the court of public opinion convicted her far before her trial. Though Eliza Fenning died several years before the anxiety around poisoning swelled to panic, her case set the unfortunate precedent for many other women: *The Times* describes Sarah Brice, accused of poisoning her husband as possessing a "violent temper"; Christina Gilmour was accused of "wickedly administering arsenic or poison in some articles [of her husband's] food."[83] The drive for a good story and the fixated reporting on poison deaths far out of proportion with their actual occurrence fueled a wave of paranoia, which had palpable consequences in regards to the deaths of innocent women.

Later in the century, in the early 1860s, another panic swept Victorian London—the garroting panic. Garroting refers to strangling a person, usually with a

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[81] "Eliza Fenning." *The London Times,* 27 Sept. 1815: 4. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 23 Oct. 2018.

[82] Flanders, *Invention of Murder,* 193.

[83] "The Trial Of Mrs. Gilmour," *The London Times,* 16 Jan. 1844: 6. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 23 Oct. 2018; "A Man Poisoned By His Wife," *The London Times*, 7 Oct. 1839: 2. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 23 Oct. 2018.

rope or wire. Beginning around 1861, London newspapers saw an increase in reporting about robberies committed by holding the victim by garroting, though only a few robberies actually used this technique.[84] Over time, though, garroting came to mean any sort of violent robbery, as seen in an 1867 *Times* article titled "The Alleged Garotte-Murder-The Inquiry," which described the robbery and death of a man who was not strangled but beaten to death.[85] Between 1861 and 1863, reports of violent robberies nearly doubled.[86] Unlike the poisoning panic of the 1840s or the fascination with the "Red Barn" murder of Maria Marten, this surge of public interest did not revolve around death but simply violent crime. Though this doesn't directly relate to the Victorian fascination with murder, it does serve as an excellent case study of the influential power of the popular press. As a result of the anxiety produced by the garroting panic, the London Metropolitan Police tried to fix the problem by cracking down on crime and arresting more people. This, in turn, inflated crime statistics and led to more accounts of arrests for newspapers to report on.[87] Combined with the periodical dip and spike in crime reporting in the 1860s concurrent with international affairs, incidents like the garroting panic created the illusion of an unstoppable crime wave. But despite popular opinion, crime rates in London and across England actually began to decline in the 1850s and would continue to do so throughout the rest of the century.[88]

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[84] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 379.
[85] "The Alleged Garotte Murder.-The inquiry." *The London Times,* 19 Dec. 1867: 9. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 31 Oct. 2018
[86] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 378.
[87] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 379.
[88] King, "Geography of homicide," 972.

These changing ideas about the prevalence of crime manifested themselves in shifts in Victorian crime fiction. Compared to the early century, mid-Victorian crime fiction moved away from street ballads towards melodrama and the novel. This shift in form was paralleled by a shift in theme: the stories no longer focused on the justice faced by the murderer but the cruelty of the crime itself.[89] This new crime fiction gives more attention to the criminals and their personal motivations, which serves both to address the anxiety of senseless violence by giving them concrete motives and to curb the idea of the rising crime wave. Society isn't evil, just this one particular person with understandable reasons for their actions. Mid-century crime fiction gave renewed attention to women, not just as victims but also as perpetrators of crime. In this literature, women as victims were murdered as a method of controlling their sexuality and sexual agency, whereas female killers drew their power from deceit.[90] A prominent example of this comes from the popular 1862 novel *Lady Audley's Secret,* wherein the seemingly-respectable Lady Audley murders one husband and contemplates poisoning another. [91] The novel itself roots its horror and sensationalism in this betrayal of gender roles: "His worst terrors had been too well founded. George Talboys had been cruelly and treacherously murdered by the wife he had loved and mourned."[92] Though Mary Elizabeth Braddon gave her protagonist more depth than many of her contemporaries, ultimately Lady Audley must be committed to a mental institution. This need to contain women and expose their

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[89] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 62.
[90] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 63, 66.
[91] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 90.
[92] Mary Elizabeth Braddon *Lady Audley's Secret*, ed. David Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 397.

duplicity no doubt has its roots in the poisoning panic of the 1840s. Thus, the mid-century fascination with murder as seen in the literature of the period stemmed primarily from anxiety about the so-called rising crime wave and the role of women.

<center>New Journalism and Jack the Ripper</center>

If the popularity of periodical publications boomed in the 1850s and 1860s, then it peaked in the 1880s. As early as 1881, London had eighteen daily papers in circulation, and that number reached twenty-two by 1888.[93] Of these, five sold upwards of 200,000 copies per day, with *The Standard* reaching 232,000 in 1882 and *The Daily Telegraph* hitting 250,000 in 1880.[94] The increased availability of periodical publications corresponded with a rising readership: literacy rates had been increasing across the century, and began a marked upswing after Forster's Act in 1870.[95] Forster's Act, officially known as the Education Act of 1870, made government-funded education mandatory for children between the ages of five and thirteen, and was the first of several educational reforms that promoted increased literacy.[96] The power and influence of the newspaper industry grew substantially over the course of the nineteenth century, and by the end it would have been nearly impossible to live in London without being inundated with the reports of crime so prevalent in these many publications.

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[93] Williams, *Read All About It,* 99.
L. Perry Curtis Jr, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 59.
[94] Perry Curtis, *London Press,* 58, 59.
Brown, "Treatment of the News," 25.
[95] Casey, "Common Misperceptions," 374.
[96] Dalgleish, Walter. "Synopsis of the Forster Education Act." British Library. Accessed 18 Oct 2018. https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/synopsis-of-the-forster-education-act-1870

Journalism not only expanded in the late Victorian period, but transformed with the advent of what historians refer to as "New Journalism". "New Journalism" generally refers to the dramatic increase in sensationalism and crime reporting in the late nineteenth century. Some credit New Journalism to the journalistic if a bit scandalous efforts of William T Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette.[97] Others merely consider it a culmination of a pre-existing trend towards sensationalism and scandal. Crime reporting had been a standard of periodical news since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but in the 1880s it increased both in frequency and detail. In 1883, *The Manchester Guardian* ran 1466 articles on murder, averaging four articles per day.[98] *The Times* also dramatically increased its crime coverage in this period: in the 1850s, *The Times* averaged 599 articles about murder per year, and by the 1880s, the average had ballooned to 1,003 articles.[99] But while reporting on murder nearly doubled, the actual rates of murder were nearly halved. Peter King, in his analysis of Victorian crime rates, states that "By the mid-1880s homicide rates were half of that they had been at their mid-century peaks."[100] Yet due to the radically increased reporting on crime, Londoners remained convinced that crime rates were soaring out of control.

New Journalism also meant a shift in *how* papers discussed crimes like murder: gorier details sold better.[101] For example, articles on the Jack the Ripper murders provided far more explicit detail than would be seen in earlier papers, or in

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[97] Perry Curtis, *London Press*, 61.
[98] Casey, "Common Misperception," 378.
[99] Casey, "Common Misperception," 376.
[100] King, "Geography of homicide," 972.
[101] Perry Curtis, *London Press*, 84.

modern ones. For example, *Home Office* lingers at great length on the scene of Mary Ann Nichols' murder: "…he discovered a woman…lying at the side of the street with her throat cut right open from ear to ear…the wound was about two inches wide and blood was flowing profusely, in fact, she was discovered to be lying in a pool of blood."[102] In the absence of international news to fill the papers, the London press turned to tales of murder to draw readers in. But combined with new methods of sensationalist journalism, the shift back to crime reporting spiraled out of control and pitched crime anxiety towards full-tilt mania.

Nothing exemplifies this better than the Whitechapel murders of 1888 and 1889. Between April 1888 and September 1889, the London district of Whitechapel was terrorized by a particularly violent serial killer who targeted prostitutes.[103] The name "Jack the Ripper" comes from a September 1888 letter to the Central News Office of London, supposedly written by the killer himself, though many theorize a reporter wrote it drum up more media attention.[104] Some debate lingers as to how many women Jack the Ripper actually killed, with the general estimate being either five or six and the highest assumption at eleven. Most historians and Ripperologists consider the murders of Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and Mary Jane Kelly as the 'canonical five' murders of the

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[102] "HORRIBLE MURDER IN WHITECHAPEL," *Home Office,* 31 Aug 1888, in *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Companion: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, edited by Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000)*, 26.*

[103] Keppel, Robert D; Weis, Joseph G; Brown, Katherine M; Welch, Kristen. "The Jack the Ripper Murders: A *Modus Operani* and Signature Analysis of the 1888-1891 Whitechapel Murders." *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling.* Vol 2 (2005), 3.

[104] "Dear Boss." *Central News Office* 25 Sept 1888, in *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Companion: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, edited by Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner, 191-192. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000), 192.

Ripper.[105] The other six murdered women may also have been prostitutes, but their deaths do not as neatly fit the established modus operandi of strangulation, throat slitting, and disembowelment.[106] However, Victorian papers treated the death of all eleven women as the work of Jack the Ripper, and the gross disparity between these numbers illustrates how newspapers played into the hysteria surrounding these murders.

While the murders committed by Jack the Ripper were undoubtedly horrifying, the way in which the newspaper industry reported on these crimes only fed the flames of paranoia and obsession. Over time, the reporting on the Ripper murders grew more and more sensational and detailed. Compare the *Morning Advertiser's* account of Emma Smith's murder (the first of the Whitechapel murders): "The woman…had been shockingly ill-treated by some men and robbed of her money. Her face was bleeding and her ear cut" to *Home Office's* description of Mary Ann Nichols, the third Whitechapel victim and the first of the 'canonical five' Ripper murders: "…besides the wound in the throat, the lower part of her person was completely ripped open."[107] In part the increased detail provided comes from the facts of the case: Nichols's murder was much more brutal than Smith's, which was

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[105] Keppel et al. "*Modus Operandi,"* 19.
[106] While all of the sources I drew from in my research refer to the Ripper's victims as prostitutes, there has been a recent push to center narratives around the victims of the Whitechapel murders, rather than the perpetrator. Hallie Rubenhold's *The Five* explores this refocusing in more depth.
 Alicia PQ Wittmeyer, "The Fight for the Future of Jack the Ripper: Rethinking the world's most famous serial killer—and his victims—in the #MeToo era," *New York Times*, 20 April 2019 https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/opinion/sunday/jack-the-ripper-tour.html
[107]"THE HORRIBLE MURDER IN WHITECHAPEL." *Morning Advertiser* 9 April 1888, in *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Companion: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, edited by Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner, 5-6. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000), 5.
 Home Office "HORRIBLE MURDER," 26.

likely a robbery gone wrong rather than the work of the Ripper. But Nichols's death—

the third in a pattern—convinced both the public and the police that they had a serial

killer at large, and the more sensationalist reporting reflects this. Over the course of

the murders, reporting only grew more detailed and sensational, to the point where

some papers worried about how much detail they could ethically provide.[108] The

murder of Mary Jane Kelly, by far the most brutal, received equally brutal descriptions

in *The Daily Telegraph*: "The body of the woman was stretched on the bed, fearfully

mutilated. Nose and ears had been cut off, and, although there had been no

dismemberment, the flesh had been stripped off, leaving the skeleton."[109]

Newspapers published not only gruesomely accurate accounts of these murders, but

letters supposedly written by the killer himself. Historians and Ripperologists agree

that reporters wrote the vast majority of these letters: the newspaper industry

blatantly fed the paranoia gripping London for the sake of increasing sales.[110]

The way in which Londoners engaged with the Jack the Ripper murders

transgressed fascination and panic and shot straight into mania. Londoners wrote to

newspapers suggesting methods by which the police could catch the killer, accusing

people or groups, and in some cases even assuming the persona of Jack the Ripper.[111]

Someone even sent the head of the Vigilance Committee part of a kidney,

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[108] Perry Curtis, *London Press*, 215.

[109] "THE EAST END TRAGEDY. A SEVENTH MURDER. ANOTHER CASE OF HORRIBLE MUTILATION." *Daily Telegraph,* 10 Nov 1888, in *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Companion: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, edited by Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner, 336-340. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000)*,* 337.

[110] Flanders, *Invention of Murder,* 436.

[111] Perry Curtis, *London Press*, 239.

accompanied by a letter signed "From Hell."[112] This was ultimately dismissed as a prank, but that someone thought of sending half a kidney to the police and claiming they had had eaten the other half shows the extent to which people were getting swept up in this mania.[113] This mania was in part a reasonable response to horrific tragedy but also a culmination of building crime anxiety throughout the Victorian period. While anxiety refers to the anticipation of crime and violence, and panic illustrated the fear that comes with needing to address violence that already exists, mania refers to the feeling that there is nothing that can possibly be done to stop that violence. Jack the Ripper proved the false assumption of the unstoppable crime wave: not only was crime becoming more common but also horrifically more violent and uncontainable.

This concept of crime as an inherent and uncontrollable part of life became central to the shift of crime fiction to detective fiction. The detective as a character first emerged in the melodramas and novels of the mid-century, but they did not become the central figures in fiction until the late Victorian period.[114] Notably, these detectives were never police officers themselves, at most they loosely worked *with* Scotland Yard but never *for.* Faith in the Metropolitan Police Force did not much improve over the century, and their utter inability to apprehend Jack the Ripper did not help matters any. Thus, the figure of the detective became necessary to provide closure, to give answers to senseless criminality. This new importance of the

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[112] England. City of London Police. Detective Department. *Re East End Murders.* London: England. 27 Oct 1888, in *The Ultimate Jack the Ripper Companion: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, edited by Stewart P Evans and Keith Skinner, 187-188. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000), 187.
[113] Perry Curtis, *London Press*, 177-178.
[114] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 91.

detective also banked on the idea prevalent in what Kalikoff describes as the late Victorian "belief in the criminality of human nature," an idea not necessarily pushed by the press but certainly supported by the insistent stream of crime reporting.[115] The detective figure did not exist independently of this human nature: "detectives and their criminal counterparts show strong and ominous resemblances to each other."[116] The differences between Sherlock Holmes and James Moriarty in Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes" stories does not stem from their knowledge or skills or even their personalities, but from their choices. By emphasizing the similarities between detectives and criminals, the figure of the detective provides some reassurance in a world where crime seems inherent by giving renewed importance to one's choices. Thus detective fiction addressed both the fear of the unfathomable killer, by providing closure and justice, as well as the fear of becoming a criminal oneself.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As the London newspaper industry evolved over the nineteenth century, so too did the Victorian interest in murder. From fascination to panic to mania, newspapers fed this intrigue at every turn, sometimes in the pursuit of profit—as with their initial appeal to the working classes and their later fixation on Jack the Ripper—but just as often unwittingly. Attempts to assuage crime anxiety created by the frequent reporting of violence in periodical publications only fed media perceptions of rising crime rates. The metropolitan police force did little to address these fears, and in the

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[115] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 130.
[116] Kalikoff, *Murder and Moral Decay*, 157.

instances of the poisoning and garroting panics, only perpetuated them by inflating crime statistics. Similarly, the evolution of crime and detective fiction, while on some level using fiction to work out anxieties about women, increasing crime, and the perceived innateness of criminality to human nature, also launched crime and murder firmly into popular culture. Yet throughout all of this, crime became significantly less common in London. Victorian London's obsession with murder specifically stemmed directly from the prominence given to murder in increasingly popular and influential newspapers. The newspaper industry's blind pursuit of profit without regard to the psychological impacts on their readership mirrors the actions of the developing funeral industry, who similarly exploited mourning families for their own benefit. Anxieties about crime and murder reflects Victorian attitudes toward specific "bad" deaths, and connects directly to other aspects of their larger death culture. Anxiety about "bad" deaths carried over into their struggles with the various epidemics that ravaged the city.

Chapter Two: Cholera and Corpses:

How Urbanization Created a Crisis of Epidemics and Public Health

On 7 August 1854, a perfectly healthy architect and surveyor named Mr. G Allen came to London on business. On 10 August, at around 9 in the morning, he collapsed in the street in terrible pain. A nearby policeman rushed him to the hospital, where Mr. Allen spent the next fourteen hours retching, vomiting, and seized by violent diarrhea. By 11pm that night he was dead. Cholera, the coroner and attending apothecary agreed.[1] As far as Mr. Allen's widow and four children knew, he had gone off for a presumably routine work week and then never came home, instead dying alone and in agony. Cholera inspired a special kind of fear because it struck swiftly and brutally, stripping victims of dignity and making their last hours absolutely hellish. Less than three weeks after Mr. Allen's death, cholera would strike London again, even harder, and kill over six hundred people in the span of two weeks.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, cholera became the specter haunting London's overcrowded streets. Though the disease only came to England in 1831, it quickly took a seat at the table of most feared killers alongside smallpox, typhus, and typhoid. Cholera's prominence in the obituaries of London was partially a consequence of the disease's speed and high mortality rate, but it also came as a result of London's own development over the century. As the city grew in population but not in geographic size, health standards plummeted and diseases ruled the streets. The trauma of these repeated epidemics forced Victorian Londoners to

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[1] "CHOLERA IN THE STREET.-Yesterday evening." *The London Times,* 11 Aug. 1854: 10. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 11 Feb. 2019.

reexamine their ideas of public health, and most importantly their ideas of corpses. Again, cultural interactions with death reflect a larger anxiety. But rather than anxieties about crime and the moral state of the city, anxieties around disease and bodies stemmed from much more personal preservation instincts. Furthermore, these anxieties were not worked out in the safe but less productive environment of fiction but through direct attempts to reform public health legislature. The massive population boom caused by the industrialization and urbanization of London directly contributed to the epidemics that ravaged the city throughout the nineteenth century, which in turn changed how Londoners thought of death by shifting their perceptions of corpses.

<div align="center">The Growing Metropolis</div>

The development of London into a major metropolis changed every aspect of life in the city. Most importantly, as London urbanized its population grew drastically, but the physical limitations of the city itself did not. This meant severely overcrowded conditions, which in turn meant a breeding ground for epidemic diseases. As a result of this urban development, London faced a public health crisis that changed both ideas about medicine and the city's role in regulating health and attitudes towards dead bodies.

Industrialization in London remains a difficult topic to succinctly describe. The "Industrial Revolution" is often credited to the turn of the nineteenth century, but more recent historians suggest that the process took much longer, and may have

begun as early as the 1700s.[2] The process of industrialization covers multiple facets of economic development, not just the invention of modern factories. During the industrialization of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, England moved away from a primarily agricultural economy to a manufacturing one, with a new focus on the production of iron and cotton.[3] England's ability to develop its economic methods in the nineteenth century was contingent on the expansion of imperial holdings: an economy focusing on manufactured goods needed a constant, cheap source of raw goods.[4] These changes were indeed connected to the development of steam engines and a more robust factory system, but most importantly the English economy began growing at a rapid, constant rate, rather than a sporadic one.[5] Furthermore, "industrialization" and "urbanization" are not interchangeable concepts. "Industrialization" indicates a shift in economic methods, towards factories and concentrated development and away from agricultural dominance. "Urbanization" more refers to the creation of cities and changes in how large groups of people live in a relatively compact area. The accelerated development of economy does not necessitate the development of cities, but in the case of London the two processes did intersect. By the early 1800s, industry had begun to permanently reshape the face of London. 1815 saw the end of the Napoleonic wars, which allowed Britain's new manufacturing centers to focus more on commercial

[2] Patrick K O'Brien, "Introduction: Modern conceptions of the Industrial Revolution" in *The Industrial Revolution and British Society,* eds. Patrick O'Brien, Roland Quinault (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 8.

[3] John Stevenson, "Social aspects of Industrial Revolution," in *The Industrial Revolution and British Society,* eds. Patrick O'Brien, Roland Quinault (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 230.

[4] Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 282.

[5] Stevenson, "Social aspects," 230.

goods.[6] The word "metropolis" first appeared in reference to London in the 1820s, and was quickly popularized by the naming of the Metropolitan Police Force in 1829.[7] While London was not the only metropolitan center of industry in England, it was the earliest and the largest, and thus formed the national model of urban anxieties about crime and overpopulation.[8]

The industrialization and urbanization of London attracted a massive influx of new residents, and the city's population spiked as a result. Between 1801 and 1831, London's population swelled from 960,000 to 1,655,000, making it over eight times the size of Liverpool.[9] England's marriage rate and birth rate stayed high during this period while London's death rate soared, so this population growth hinged entirely on the 8,000 to 12,000 immigrants entering the city each year.[10] The 1840s in particular saw a surge of continental refugees fleeing the revolutions of 1848, and the 1850s saw over 100,000 Irish escaping the famine ravaging their home.[11] By the 1840s, 330,000 Londoners were immigrants and by the 1850s, half of population had been born outside London.[12] These immigrants did not form ethnic ghettos, but integrated fairly quickly into class-based neighborhoods.[13] Rural English also flocked to the major cities, pursuing employment. In 1801, twenty percent of England's population lived in cities. By 1901, that percent reached seventy-five.[14] These massive

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[6] O'Brien, "Introduction," 9.
[7] Francis Sheppard, *London: A History,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) 279.
[8] Stevenson, "Social aspects," 236.
[9] Sheppard, *London*, 205.
[10] Sheppard, *London*, 289.
Stevenson, "Social aspects," 233.
[11] Sheppard, *London*, 291.
[12] Sheppard, *London*, 289.
[13] Sheppard, *London*, 206
[14] Sheppard, *London*, 289.

waves of immigration formed the backbone of London's significant increase in population, and also meant that the lower and working class areas in particular felt the strain of overcrowding.

This substantial increase in London's population, most notably the working class population, had dire consequences for the health of the burgeoning metropolis. As described by Steven Johnson in his analysis of the 1854 cholera epidemic, "...London in 1854 was a Victorian metropolis trying to make do with an Elizabethan public infrastructure." [15] London simply was not yet equipped to support this new population, and many of its poorer citizens were forced into severely overcrowded housing. Frederick Engels, writing on the condition of London's poor in 1844, was horrified to find "...5,366 working class families living in 5,294 'dwellings' (if they deserve this appellation!). Altogether there were 16,176 men, women and children thrown together....three quarters of the families lived in a single room."[16] This overcrowding endangered public health, and contributed directly to the many epidemics that devastated Victorian London.

<u>King Cholera</u>

Overcrowding in London as a result of population expansion stressed the city's already sub-par sanitation standards, and created an environment perfect for the spread of particularly severe diseases. Of all the epidemics and outbreaks London suffered in the nineteenth century, cholera hit the hardest and left the strongest

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[15] Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*, (New York, Riverhead Books, 2006), 3-4.
[16] Frederick Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in London, c. 1844," in *London: The Autobiography, 2,000 Years of the Capital's History by Those Who Saw It Happen,* ed. Jon E. Lewis, (London, Constabl and Robinson, 2008).

impact on the cultural psyche, thanks to the sheer speed of the disease and its severity. As a result of these outbreaks, Londoners not only had to come to grips with daily occurrences of violent, miserable death, but were forced to reevaluate their understanding of disease. They could no longer write off epidemics as a consequence of working-class uncleanliness but had to recognize that the public health of London could only be improved by systemic changes.

Disease's impact on London's cultural attitudes towards death cannot be overstated. By the nineteenth century London was no stranger to epidemics: recurring waves of bubonic plague ravaged the city from the fourteenth century onwards, and the outbreak of 1665 killed nearly 100,000 of London's citizens, which amounted to between a quarter and a third of its total population[17] But as industrialization and the burgeoning metropolis forced more and more people into closer living quarters, diseases appeared to come more frequently and with a higher toll. Between 1831 and 1833, two influenza epidemics swept the city, between 1836 and 1842 England suffered from influenza, typhus, smallpox, and scarlet fever, and between 1846 and 1849 typhus and typhoid fever hit particularly hard.[18] These outbreaks disproportionately impacted the working class due to lack of proper nutrition and an abysmal sewage system unequipped to handle a sudden influx of new residents.[19] Historian Judith Flanders, describing the impact of these epidemics on Victorian daily life, estimates that "…for every person who died of old age or

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[17] Sheppard, *London*, 128.
"The Great Plague in London," *British Medical Journal* Vol 2 No 3336 (1924), 1069-1070.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/20438634
[18] Judith Flanders, *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London*, (New York, Thomas Dunne Books, 2012), 336.
[19] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 336.

violence, another eight died of disease."[20] Death by disease became not only a visible part of life, but an inevitable one. But in addition to routine outbreaks of influenza and typhus, London's new metropolitan environment also created a breeding ground for a far deadlier and more frightening pestilence: cholera.

Of all the diseases that swept through London in the nineteenth century, "king cholera" reigned supreme in regards to the social terror and death toll in England's developing cities. Asiatic cholera only arrived in England in 1831, when an outbreak in Sunderland caused the port city and major manufacturing hub to be quarantined. "Asiatic" refers to the disease's origins in British occupied India; cholera only arrived in England and Europe as a consequence of imperialist actions in the Indian Ocean. [21] The reaction to the 1831 Sunderland outbreak displays how much fear the idea of cholera carried even this early in the century: not only was the entire town quarantined but medical professionals in Sunderland insisted that it was not the dreaded Asiatic cholera but English cholera, a far milder "variation" that was really just dysentery or food poisoning.[22] Another outbreak hit in 1848 and 1849, killing 53,000 people in England and Wales and an additional 8,000 in Scotland. Between 1853 and 1854, 26,000 people in England died of cholera, with 10,000 of those deaths happening in London.[23] The 1854 outbreak, stemming from a single contaminated pump at Broad Street, had a particularly high death rate given how quickly the disease

[20] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 336.
[21] John Snow, *Snow on Cholera, Being a Reprint of Two Papers,* (Oxford University Press: London, 1936) 1-2.; Johnson, *Ghost Map*, 33.
[22] "The Cholera Morbus," *The London Times,* 10 Nov. 1831: 3. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 26 Jan. 2019; "Cholera," *The London Times* ,18 Nov. 1831: 2. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 26 Jan. 2019.
[23] A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, (New York, W. W. Norton, 2003), 36.

spread—seventy people died within the first day.[24] In 1866, cholera killed 4,000 people in about a month.[25]

Cholera struck a special kind of terror mainly because of the disease's speed— Asiatic cholera kills within 24 to 48 hours, occasionally less depending on the victim's health, with almost no symptoms for early detection.[26] Cholera hit hard, fast, and with no warning signs. New, overcrowded urban environments promoted a faster spread of disease as well as the spread of a more severe variety of cholera, "...in high-transmission environments, the lethal strains quickly outnumber the mild ones."[27] Diseases need non-lethal strains in order to survive, so that they don't die along with their hosts. But in an environment that allows for rapid transmission to high numbers of hosts, this preservation technique is no longer necessary and lethal strands become more prominent.[28] London's developments in the nineteenth century created an environment for a faster, deadlier cholera, and its people suffered for it.

Compounding the terror surrounding cholera and the many diseases striking London in the nineteenth century, doctors of the period found themselves woefully unequipped to treat any of the epidemics they encountered. Cholera in particular stumped them. Some suggested treatments for the disease included brandy, heroin, and laudanum.[29] James Copland, a Scottish physician and medical writer, wrote in

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[24] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 57.
[25] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 209.
[26] John Snow, *Snow on Cholera, Being a Reprint of Two Papers,* (Oxford University Press: London, 1936) 10, 16.
[27] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 44.
[28] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 44.
[29] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 49.
"The Asiatic Cholera in the Pool of London." *The London Times*, 16 Oct. 1848: 7. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 26 Jan 2019.

1832 that to cure cholera   one should use"…emetics, stimulants, and bloodletting…employed as energetically and as much in conjunction with each other as possible…" in order to remove the "internal congestion."[30] Because cholera kills by aggressive dehydration, through vomiting and diarrhea, all of these suggested cures would actually hasten death. Tragically, even if doctors in the Victorian period had not prescribed such terrible "cures," there still would have been nothing they could have done to fight cholera. The only possible treatment for cholera is rehydration, but without intravenous technology, it is exceedingly difficult for victims to consume the liters of water needed to combat the disease.[31] Some physicians did manage to successfully rehydrate patients, such as Mary Seacole, a Jamaican nurse working in Crimea who had extensive experience from cholera in the Caribbean.[32] However, Mary Seacole's accomplishments went broadly unacknowledged due to her race and gender, and the majority of physicians in London during these outbreaks were unable to treat the disease.

The ravages of cholera left a severe impact on the psyche of London's citizens. Part of this stemmed from the tremendous death toll over such short periods of time. As Johnson describes, the Broad Street epidemic of 1854 devastated the surrounding neighborhood: "Nearly seven hundred people living within 250 yards of the Broad Street pump had died in a period of less than two weeks. Broad Street's population had literally been decimated."[33] A person could go to the country to visit family for a

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[30] James Copland, *Of pestilential cholera: its nature, prevention, and curative treatment*, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green: London, 1832), 118. An emetic is a substance that induces vomiting.
[31] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 45.
[32] M. Elizabeth Carnegie, "Black Nurses at the Front," *The American Journal of Nursing,* Vol 84 No. 10 (October 1984), 1250-1251.
[33] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 161.

weekend and come back to find that a tenth of their neighbors had been carted away. As *The Observer* wrote, "In Broad-street, on Monday evening, when the hearses came round to remove the dead, the coffins were so numerous that they were put on top of the hearse as well as the inside. Such a spectacle has not been witnessed in London since the time of the plague."[34] This massive death count also posed a practical problem in regards to the logistics of burial, which will be discussed later during the analysis of cemetery reform and funeral culture in the nineteenth century. But even for the citizens of London who did not have to face the logistics of burying their loved ones, the severe death toll of these epidemics exposed many to gruesome death in their daily lives.

Those who did not witness the effects of these cholera epidemics firsthand knew of their horrors thanks to through newspaper coverage. Newspapers fed the paranoia and fear surrounding cholera by promoting the widely-accepted miasma theory, which suggested that cholera spread through unpleasant odors in the air, making it, as Johnson describes "...invisible and everywhere."[35] In 1854 alone, *The Times* mentioned cholera 1,215 times. This rising newspaper industry fueled public fear about cholera, much as it did about murder and violent crime. As much as the widespread coverage of cholera contributed to London's paranoia about the disease, it also raised awareness of the urgent need for public health reform.

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[34] *Observer,* 3 September 1854, p. 5, in Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World,* (New York, Riverhead Books, 2006), 109.
[35] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 86.

Reform Movements

The repeated cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century finally pushed Londoners to seriously think about reforming their public health system. While public healthcare was still a long ways off, the pressures of cholera—created as a result of the city's urbanization and increased population—forced the government to address systemic flaws in how London handled sanitation. Most notably, they felt the need to redesign the sewer system—both in regards to where London got its water and where its waste went—and to establish mortuaries to limit the presence of corpses in the home.

Widespread public health legislature in London was all but nonexistent before the epidemics in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In 1798 Edward Jenner proposed a possible vaccine for smallpox based on infecting people with the far less deadly cowpox. While this massive breakthrough would pave the way for the eventual eradication of the disease, in its own time this vaccine was met with intense skepticism, especially from the working class who generally regarded doctors as agents of the state or the upper classes.[36] As mentioned earlier, doctors had no practical tools to address cholera, and unfortunately that ignorance applied to many other diseases and conditions as well. Jenner's vaccine was tragically a bit of an exception to the general progress of medical knowledge in this period. There was no standardization across medical schools and up until 1815 physicians did not need any sort of license to practice. Additionally, physicians occupied a different niche than surgeons, due to a medieval church ruling that distinguished between medical

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[36] John Gibbs, *Our medical liberties, or The personal rights of the subject, as infringed by recent and proposed legislation: compromising observations on the compulsory vaccination act, the medical registration and reform bills, and the Maine law*, (London: Sotheran, Son, and Draper, 1854), 7.

practices that did and did not involve the drawing of blood.[37] Physicians occupied a higher social standing, receiving college educations, while many surgeons doubled as barbers.[38] Surgery was regarded as an imprecise and dangerous practice, and mortality rates were expected to be high—if the surgery itself was not fatal, then ensuing infections often were.[39] Medical knowledge was further hampered by laws stating that only the bodies of executed criminals could be used for anatomical dissection.[40] This created a booming industry for grave robbers—which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter—but practically this hampered opportunities for medical students to practice their craft. While they were not completely ignorant of how the human body work, the limited availability of cadavers was an impediment to medical progress. The general ignorance of medical professionals carried over to government responses to major outbreaks—since the 1780s people had been connecting overcrowding with epidemics, but had no tools to address that connection. When cholera first arrived in England, the government responded with a quarantine on the affected regions and a national day of fasting and prayer.[41] The cholera epidemics in particular intensified the social pressure for public health reform in part because intensified urbanization meant intensified outbreaks

[37] Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 34.

[38] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 34.

[39] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 40.

[40] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 55.

[41] Boyd Hilton, "From Retribution to Reform." In *The Making of Britain: The Age of Revolution* edited by Lesley M Smith 37-49. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987, reprinted in *The Victorian Studies Reader* edited by Kelly Boyd, Rohan McWilliam, 235-243. Routledge: London and New York, 2007)240.

and in part because while cholera did disproportionally impact the working class, the wealthy were not spared and thus were motivated to push for change.

Edwin Chadwick, secretary of the Poor Law commissioners circa 1834, was one of the loudest voices calling for sanitary reforms.[42] In 1842, more than ten years before Snow's discoveries, Chadwick's *Report into the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* called for widespread sewer reform, and shortly after the establishment of the General Board of Health, headed by Chadwick.[43] Before its dissolution in 1858, the General Board of Health pushed through the Diseases Prevention Act of 1846 and the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers Act of 1848, and laid the groundwork for its successor, the governmental Board of Health. Before the reforms pushed by Chadwick and the General Board of Health, London's extremely localized government had not held any responsibility for the health of its citizens.[44] The disastrous aftermath of cholera pressured London's government into playing an active role in preserving public health.

But reform movements even in the wake of cholera took some time to properly develop. Despite Dr. John Snow's investigations during the 1854 cholera outbreak finding that "cholera was between thirteen and fourteen times as fatal in the population having the impure water," the general population remained extremely reluctant to abandon the miasma theory.[45] Miasma theory, mentioned earlier, argued that diseases such as cholera spread through unpleasant odors in the air.[46] This

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[42] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 214.
[43] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 214.
[44] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 213.
[45] John Snow, "Cholera, and the Water Supply in the South Districts of London," *British Medical Journal,* Vol 4-1 No 42 (1857), 864.
[46] Johnson, *Ghost Map,* 69.

theory of epidemiology dates back to the medieval period, and conveniently fit with Victorian elitist ideas that "...the squalid population do, by their filth, stench, bad clothing...not only contract and harbor infection but attract it as it were."[47] Upper class Londoners conflated the fast spread of cholera due to cramped living conditions with the miasma theory of disease spreading through the odorous working class. By attributing disease to bad smells, London's elite could blame the working class's hygiene standards for the epidemics and thus absolve themselves of responsibility.

This also diverted blame from the London sewer system, which needed reforms for a number of reasons. These sewers fed into the sources of several drinking wells, which propagated the spread of cholera. Even from the perspective of the miasma theory, these sewers were hazardous, due to their improper drainage and intense odor. Despite the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers Act of 1848 finding the vast majority of London sewers to be defective, reforms dragged.[48] The upper classes did not feel the impact of these dysfunctional sewers as immediately as the working classes, and local authorities actively resisted a larger government calling for reforms.[49]

Not until the Great Stink of 1858 were the elite of London finally moved to address much-needed sewer reforms. The summer of 1858 was unusually hot, reaching ninety degrees Fahrenheit at some points.[50] This would not have been such a problem if the Thames had not suffered such intense pollution—at this point all the

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[47] "Cholera Morbus," Times.
[48] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 214.
[49] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 215.
[50] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 224.

sewers of London still found their way into the river. Charles Dickens described the stench as being of "a most head-and-stomach-distending nature" and George Godwin, an influential architect and journalist, wrote "the condition is too bad for description. Many of our readers may have noticed the black, offensive, and dangerous matter which is taken from choked drains in the neighborhood of cesspools."[51] The government dumped massive quantities of lime and chloride into the river in an attempt to alleviate the stink, but to no avail.[52] Eventually the smell grew so bad that Parliament could no longer meet, and were finally forced to address the sewer issue. To quote the *Times*, "Parliament was all but compelled to legislate upon the great London nuisance by the force of sheer stench."[53] Though much of the sewer reform movement was motivated by the incorrect miasmatic assumption that the stench from the Thames was not only unpleasant but full of "poisonous matter."[54] Regardless of the misinformed reasoning behind the expensive redesign of London's sewers, it had a major impact on the public health of London. The 1866 outbreak of cholera only hit the neighborhoods not connected to the new sewer system and by 1868, when the new sewage system was completed, cholera had all but disappeared from the city[55] While Parliament's reforms were motivated by the miasma theory, these sewer reforms did ultimately prevent cholera from wrecking further havoc in London.

[51] Charles Dickens, George Godwin, "The Great Stink, Summer 1858" in *London: The Autobiography, 2,000 Years of the Capital's History by Those Who Saw It Happen,* ed. Jon E. Lewis, (London, Constable and Robinson, 2008), 301.

[52] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 224
Dickens, "Great Stink," 301.

[53] Disreali, *The London Times*], 3 July 1858, in Judith Flanders, *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London*, (New York, Thomas Dunne Books, 2012), 224.

[54] T. S., and ROBERT BARNES,"The State Of The Thames." *The London Times*, 18 June 1858:. 12. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 7 Feb. 2019.

[55] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 225.

Public health reform movements in London impacted the city's death culture by permanently changing the way its residents thought about the bodies of the dead. Attitudes towards corpses fluctuated in nineteenth century London. On one hand, the bodies of loved ones were something to be cherished, a relic of an emotional connection. But following the devastation of multiple outbreaks of influenza, typhoid, typhus, and cholera, people began to view corpses as potential carriers of disease, and thus threats. According to Dr. John Simon, a medical officer of health to the City of London, "There is no part of the subject which I have considered with more anxiety than that which relates to delays in internment, and to the prolonged keeping of dead bodies in the rooms of their living kindred."[56] As Dr. Simon notes later in the quoted report, the practice of keeping a corpse in the home for prolonged periods of time was a far more common practice among the already endangered working classes, who had neither the funds for a "leaden coffin" in which to safely store the body nor the money to hold the funeral immediately after death.[57]

This perceived threat led to the public mortuary movement, which restricted the storage of bodies in the home, especially those of disease victims. As early as 1850s, medical professionals began rallying for public mortuaries so that working class families specifically would not store bodies in their already over-crowded homes.[58] The Nuisances Removal Act of the 1840s and the Diseases Prevention Act of 1866 gave the government authority to remove potential health threats from civilian

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[56] John Simon, "The Corpse amid the Living," in *Golden Times: Human Documents of the Victorian Age*, ed Royston Pike (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 286.
[57] Simon, "Corpse amid the Living," 286.
[58] Lydia Murdoch, "The Dead and the Living: Child Death, Public Mortuary Movement, and the Spaces of Grief and Selfhood in Victorian London," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* Vol 8 No 3, 2015, 382.

homes, something that grieving working class families did not approve of.[59] The Irish Catholic working class in particular felt the brunt of these new laws, as their traditional wakes—which were not practiced by the dominant Anglicanism—now fell under the category of public nuisance and potential health threat.[60] Despite the pushback from citizens, London's government felt the threat of cholera and the danger posed by decomposing corpses was potent enough to encroach on private lives and mourning. In 1875, the Public Health Act established public mortuaries funded by public funds, and the 1890 Infectious Disease (Prevention) Bill gave mourning families 48 hours to remove the body of a disease victim from their home.[61] The development of public mortuaries pushed personal mourning into public spaces and made the disposal of the dead a matter of public concern and performance.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

When cholera first came to England in 1831, Parliament issued an official day of prayer and fasting to combat the disease.[62] When it appeared again in 1866, the city responded by constructing new drains and sewers.[63] Repeated epidemics forced London to reform its public health laws, both in regards to safely supplying the city with noncontaminated water and by reclassifying corpses firmly as a threat. The prevalence of cholera itself came as a consequence of imperialism and of London's rapid industrialization and urbanization, as the population of a bustling metropolis in overcrowded conditions provided the perfect environment for the rapid and

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[59] Murdoch, "Dead and the Living," 388.
[60] Murdoch, "Dead and the Living," 385.
[61] Murdoch, "Dead and the Living," 382.
[62] Hilton, "Retribution to Reform," 240
[63] Hilton, "Retribution to Reform," 240.

devastating spread of disease. These new anxieties about corpses permanently changed how the Victorians engaged with death by conceptualizing dead bodies into health hazards that needed to be distanced from the living, and directly impacted cemetery reform movements and the larger mourning culture of the nineteenth century.

<u>Chapter Three: Grief and Greed:</u>

<u>How Industry Exploited Death and Commercialized Mourning</u>

1861 was a difficult year for Queen Victoria. That March she lost her mother, dowager Queen Victoria, with whom she had a famously distant relationship, only to discover in her mother's personal writings that her mother had fiercely loved her all along.[1] Nine months later, her beloved husband Prince Albert died. Victoria subsequently fell into a deep depression from which she never truly emerged. She also entered into deep mourning. After her husband's death, Queen Victoria wore nothing but the most opulent and devout mourning clothes. She would not wear a color other than black until her own funeral. While this complete retreat from society and perpetual grief was seen as excessive, and to a certain degree irresponsible for a monarch, her lavish displays nonetheless set the fashion standards for "respectable" mourning.

Rather than starting new fashions, the desire to emulate Queen Victoria only spurred on existing trends in mourning. As early as 1832, the consequences of the city's urbanization created a dire demand for new burial grounds, which provided the opportunity for new, privately owned cemeteries to spring up. These cemeteries, unlike the churchyards run by Anglican parishes, demanded much higher prices for their burial lots and made their funerals into public displays. This trend spurred the correlation of funerals with one's own wealth and thus social clout, and encouraged grieving families, even those who could not afford it, to spend more and more to bury their loved ones.

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[1] A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, (New York, W. W. Norton, 2003), 242.

Victoria's eternal mourning encouraged the public display of grief to spill over to ritualized mourning clothing, in addition to funerals. While the practice of mourning clothing far predated Victoria herself, the combination of her high-profile and high fashion grief and the pre-existing trend of commercializing the industry of death led to a booming market for mourning clothing. In addition to mourning dress, mourning relics also skyrocketed in popularity under Victoria's reign, in part due to her own affinity for relics of Albert, in part due to the new opportunities for mass production of relics like hair jewelry, and in part due to shifting religious ideas around holy and personal relics.

While the transitioning attitudes about public health and corpses discussed last chapter certainly impacted Victorian standards of mourning, there is one critical difference between the topics of true crime fascination, the impacts of disease, and mourning culture that must be noted. The Victorian interest in murder was fueled fundamentally by fear and anxiety: anxiety about supposedly rising crime rates, about the state of morality in London, and about the threat of becoming a victim of violent crime. Similarly, changing attitudes towards the public health of London and towards corpses themselves stemmed from fear of deadly diseases. Mourning culture may have been impacted by these anxieties, but it fundamentally stems from grief. At the heart of every lavish funeral, every set of widow's weeds, every piece of hair jewelry, there was someone struggling to carry the weight of a loss. Therefore the majority of changes in mourning over the course of the nineteenth century stemmed not just from anxiety, but from the emerging funeral industry's greed and exploitation of grief. Mourning became commercialized in the Victorian era as a result of industrialization,

urbanization, and increased social pressure to perform mourning in a way that displayed personal wealth.

<p style="text-align:center">Cemeteries versus Churchyards</p>

By the early nineteenth century, London had already begun to run out of room for its dead. As London grew into a metropolis its population increased dramatically, but the borders of the city itself stayed more or less fixed, and the burial grounds within London soon felt the strain of accommodating a steadily rising number of dead. Disposal of the dead is not something a city can afford to cut corners on. The cholera epidemics and changing ideas about corpses meant that these bodies needed to be properly removed from the realm of the living, which in this period meant properly buried. But these bodies were not merely hazards, but also the remnants of loved ones that demanded respect and reverence alongside that caution, so they could not simply be dumped in a mass grave either. As a result of these changing attitudes that reconfigured corpses as dangerous and of the new strains on the existing burial system stemming from the new urban population size, Victorian London needed to find new accommodations for its dead.

In the early Victorian period, Anglican churchyards had a de facto monopoly over burials, as most Londoners followed Anglicanism.[2] Non-Anglicans had limited burial options, as "dissenters"—the Anglican term for anyone who did not practice Anglicanism—had to be buried either in unconsecrated ground or in a smaller cemetery run by their specific religion. But burial grounds attached to churches did

2 Maximilian Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies: The Fight over Cemetery Construction in Nineteenth-Century London," *Journal of Urban History* Vol 43 No 3, 2017, 447.

not have the physical capacity to contain all of London's dead. Most took up less than

an acre of land, and even the larger ones struggled to accommodate demand—such

as Bethnal Green, which covered two full acres but contained more than 70,000

dead.[3]. For reference, two acres takes up a little less than two football fields. In order

to fit these massive numbers of bodies into such small areas, churchyards were forced

to fit multiple bodies in a single grave, often stacking several graves on top of each

other. But this was a temporary fix, not a permanent solution.

The cholera outbreaks across the first half of the century only compounded

this crisis, as burial grounds struggled to accommodate the rapid influxes of diseased,

"dangerous" corpses.[4] Londoners began to see burial grounds not as quiet resting

places for a loved one, but also as potential threats, a cesspool of disease. Edwin

Chadwick—a prominent voice for public health reforms and later head of the General

Board of Health—described the common perceptions of overcrowded burial grounds

in his 1843 "Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great

Britain," thusly: "Neglected or mismanaged burial grounds superadd to the infinite

terrors of dissolution, the revolting image of festering heaps, disturbed and scattered

bones, the prospect of a charnel house and its association with desecration and

insults."[5] Alternatives to burial were not much of an option throughout the nineteenth

century: cremation would not become legal until 1885 and even then remained

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[3] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 446.
Arnold, *Necropolis*, 97.
[4] Arnold, *Necropolis*, 114.
[5] Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain: Sanitary condition of the laboring population of Great Britain: a supplementary report on the results of a special inquiry into the practice of interment in towns : made at the request of Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Home Department*, (W Cloves and Sons, London 1843), 142.

relatively unpopular.[6] In 1850, Parliament passed the Metropolitan Internments Act, which set out to determine which burial grounds in London were fit to continue interring. A subsequent inspection of said burial grounds in 1854 found that of 241 burial grounds, 229 were already over capacity, and that the surviving twelve would hit their capacity within five years.[7] The burial system in London needed to change, urgently.

The issues with London's burial system were compounded by the fear of grave robbers. Until 1832, the only bodies anatomists could legally use for dissection in medical schools were those of executed criminals. As one may imagine, this severely hampered medical studies and provided a heightened demand for corpses among anatomists and medical students. Grave robbers, or "resurrectionists," dug up bodies in order to sell them to medical students.[8] Prices varied over the years, from as little as two guineas to as many as twenty.[9] Grave robbing in the early nineteenth century was not just a phenomenon but a bustling business. The poor conditions of London's burial grounds in the early nineteenth century provided the perfect opportunity for resurrectionists to thrive: churchyards forced more bodies into cramped, shallow graves that were both easily assessible and difficult to tell when disturbed.[10] Grave robbing struck a particular fear in Victorians primarily because stolen corpses were

[6] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 446.
T. Spencer Wells, "The Progress of Cremation in England" *The British Medical Journal*, Vol 1 No 1484, 1889, 1280-1281.
Allen Gilman Bigelow, "Cremation and Christianity," *The North American Review*, Vol 143, No, 359, 1886, 354.
[7] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 448.
[8] Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute*, 55.
[9] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 57.
[10] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 61.

used for dissections, a fate generally reserved for the most heinous of criminals. The Anatomy Act of 1832 attempted to curb the business of grave robbing by legalizing the dissection of donated corpses, but in practice it meant that those who could not afford a burial had little choice but to allow their loved ones to be taken apart in the name of science.[11] Therefore, the lower classes who struggled to afford funerals conversely felt even more pressure to shell out for them, in order to spare their loved ones such a fate. But affording burials and funerals only became more difficult as London began to address the issues of its graveyards.

Some relief from the overcrowding of London's burial grounds came between 1832 and 1841, with the establishment of seven joint-stock cemeteries in London. "Joint-stock" companies were privately owned limited liability companies that Parliament made into shareholder enterprises.[12] Joint-stock companies like these were established by Acts of Parliament and run by shareholders, who directly profited from the cemeteries' activities. Kensal Green opened in 1833, West Norwood Cemetery in 1838, Highgate Cemetery in 1839, Abney Park, Nunhead, and Brompton in 1840, and Tower Hamlets Cemetery in 1841.[13] All of these cemeteries were owned and operated by joint-stock companies incorporated by Parliament: the General Cemetery Company, the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company, the London Cemetery Company, the West of London and Westminster Cemetery Company, the Abney Park Cemetery Company, and the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery

[11] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 374.
[12] Arnold, *Necropolis*, 125.
[13] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 446.

Company.[14] Kensal Green, the first of these new cemeteries, planned to take up eighty acres—vastly more than any churchyard could hope to—and estimated to accommodate 10,880 people a year.[15] These cemeteries obviously alleviated the pressure on London's burial grounds, but they did not do so intentionally. The Metropolitan Internment Act that condemned so many of the Anglican churchyards only passed in 1850, and public health reform movements in regards to cemeteries only gained traction after the cholera epidemics. Though private cemeteries posed themselves as allies of public health, they did not meet the sanitary standards demanded by reformers in their own time, using lead coffins that trapped gases released during decomposition and thus contributing to the "buildup of noxious gas" that contemporaries feared in cemeteries.[16] These cemeteries were established to not alleviate anxieties about the conditions of burial grounds in London, but to cash in on that anxiety and to profit off the severely heightened demand for new graveyards, especially the demand coming from London's wealthy.

These new joint-stock cemetery companies faced a good deal of opposition from the people of London upon their establishment. The fact that these companies, although established by acts of Parliament, were privately organized and operated for profit, led many Londoners to consider them "...immoral capitalist innovation."[17] To quote one particularly irritated letter to the editor of the London Times in 1847:

> The disgusting details of Dissenting and other burial-grounds in the metropolis, coupled with the threatened advent of Asiatic cholera, indicate very clearly the necessity of legislative interference; whilst on the other hand,

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[14] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 448.
[15] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 447.
[16] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 452-453.
[17] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 448

the scarcely less offensive advertisements with appear, from time to time, puffing the merits of rival joint-stock cemetery, indicate that this is not the kind of reform we want…Kensals, Highgates, and Abeny-parks, should cause even a speculative age like our to blush. I would suggest…that all new cemeteries be of a public nature, and the profits devoted to public purposes.[18]

No one objected more to the joint-stock cemeteries than the Anglican Church. The Church framed this objection as a moral one—how could they abide the commercialization of the dead in such a way—but their concerns were more financially rooted. Before the establishment of these joint-stock cemeteries, the Anglican Church controlled the funeral industry, and made a hefty profit off it. Chadwick calculated that in 1843 about 32,000 Anglicans died in London each year. Even taking into account the low cost of Anglican churchyard funerals—prices varied by parish but hovered around a pound—the funeral industry provided significant income for the church.[19] The Anglican Church—that had several clergyman in the House of Lords—managed to wrench a concession from Parliament: for every Anglican buried in a cemetery rather than a churchyard, the church received financial compensation.[20] However, these payments would only continue so long as the parish churchyards had room for burials. Following the Metropolitan Internment Act of 1850, which closed the vast majority of churchyards, joint stock cemeteries became even more prominent in the industry of death. Churchyards also profited from death, but the predominance of joint-stock cemeteries marked a shift towards commercialization, not just of death but of the mourning process.

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[18] W.P "Cemeteries" *The London Times* ,13 Nov 1847: 7 The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 28 Feb. 2019.
[19] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 447.
[20] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 447-448.

<center>The Price of Death</center>

The emergence of joint-stock cemeteries provided options for burial, and with those options came stratification by price. Burials in notably expensive cemeteries and lavish funerals established class status even in death. The creation of joint-stock cemeteries provided more opportunities for social standing to be displayed though funerary customs as they provided new places to differentiate between an upper class and a working class burial. The pressure to provide your loved one with a "proper" funeral was compounded not just by this but by the idea that a good funeral could counteract a bad death.[21] Proper funerals thus had a religious impact, which made the increasing social pressures to conform to more expensive standards of "proper" even higher.

Though joint-stock cemetery companies did provide much-needed space to accommodate London's dead, their primary influence on London's death culture came from their class prestige. Prices did vary by cemetery—Tower Hamlets and Abney Park charged considerably less than their counterparts—but on the whole these cemeteries built their reputation on their opulence.[22] Highgate's common graves went for 2 pounds 10 shillings, over twice the amount charged by churchyards.[23] This is just looking at common graves—multiple people put in a single grave, the absolute cheapest and least desirable kind of burial—and just the cost of burial, without taking into account the costs of the funeral itself. According to

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[21] Clare Gittings, "Sacred and Secular: 1558- 1660" in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C Jupp and Clare Gittings, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), 156.
[22] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 451.
[23] Felix Barker, *Highgate Cemetery: Victorian Valhalla* (John Murray: London, 1984), 15.

Chadwick's investigations, the average cost of a working class funeral in 1843 came

to four pounds, without including grave and burial fees.[24] To put this in fiscal context,

by the late century the thirty percent of London's population living in poverty made

between eighteen and twenty-one shillings a week.[25] Given that there were twelve

pence in a shilling and twenty shillings in a pound, the average funeral came out to a

month's wages for the working class. These costs seemed so exorbitant to laborers

that it became common for workers to bury their loved ones in dissenters' graves,

unconsecrated but significantly cheaper ground.[26] More lavish graves and memorials

raked in even more. One Prussian merchant commissioned a mausoleum for himself

at the price of 1500 pounds.[27] Joint-stock cemeteries thus became associated with

wealth, and with social prestige. By being interred at Kensal Green or Highgate,

London's upper classes could maintain their social status and superiority even in

death. Displays of mourning thus became an opportunity to display one's wealth, and

Victorian funerary customs grew more and more lavish.

　　　Expensive funerals, in addition to publicly displaying one's wealth, acted as a

way to show one's affection for the deceased. After all, if you really loved someone,

you would spare no expense to commemorate them. Chadwick describes an example

of this in his report: a widow of a clergyman paid 110 pounds for her husband's

funeral because she felt it "her duty to have a respectable funeral, and ordered the

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[24] Chadwick, *Report on sanitary condition,* 48.
[25] Ellen Ross, "Fierce Questions and Taunts: Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914."
Feminist Studies, 8 (Autumn 1982) 575-602. Reprinted in *The Victorian Studies Reader* edited by Kelly
Boyd, Rohan McWilliam, 235-243. (Routledge: London and New York, 2007). 326-327.
[26] Chadwick, *Report on sanitary condition,* 48.
[27] Scholz, "Over Our Dead Bodies," 452.

undertaker to provide what was respectable."[28] Undertakers and the funeral industry

took advantage of overwhelmed, emotionally vulnerable people and convinced them

that expensive funerals were necessary to respectable shows of grief. This sort of

rhetoric and social pressure picked up as lavish funerals became more common

throughout the century and functioned as a way to muffle critics who took umbrage

with the commercialization of mourning. And there was much to commercialize: in

addition to the matter of where to bury the deceased, families needed to select a

gravestone, purchase mourning clothes, choose and decorate a coffin, hire a priest for

the ceremony, engage bearers for the coffin, pick horses for the procession, and hire

"mutes"—men to silently stand outside your home holding plumes to indicate a

household in mourning.[29] These costs added up quickly: according to Chadwick's

1843 investigation, mutes cost between eighteen and thirty shillings, bearers and

official mourners cost twenty two shillings just to dress properly, and ministers ran

eighteen shillings, without accounting for an additional two guineas for their dress.[30]

Skimping on any of these elements could bring social stigma and the personal

guilt of not caring enough to send your loved one off properly. Arnold Bennett, in his

1908 novel *The Old Wives' Tale*, describes the mid-Victorian attitude towards

funerals: "The funeral grew into an obsession, for multitudinous things had to be

performed...in strict accordance with precedent."[31] By the 1870s, by which point

funerals were actually growing simpler, the simplest of funerals ran at 3 pounds 5

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[28] Chadwick, *Report on sanitary condition,* 50.
[29] Judith Flanders. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England.* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 371.
[30] Chadwick, *Report on sanitary condition,* 49.
[31] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 371.

shillings, while a solidly middle-class funeral cost about 53 pounds.[32] Despite the exorbitant cost of funerals, working class and lower income families still shelled out for more elaborate funerals, even when they had to lean on mourning societies to help them with finances.[33]

Nothing better exemplifies the lavish excess of the mid-Victorian funeral industry better than the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington and hero of the Battle of Waterloo, died in 1852 after a lengthy decline following a stroke in 1839.[34] Wellington had long loomed large in the Victorian popular imagination, as a war hero and controversial politician. His name became synonymous with "hero worship," and consequently his funeral and funerary parade celebrated British national identity and pride more so than it did the man itself. Upon his death, Wellington left his body and funeral arrangements to Queen Victoria, possibly as a show of devotion to the state, and possibly because he did not want to deal with the matter himself. Two months after his death—a very long time between death and funeral—Wellington's corpse was driven through London, packaged in four nested coffins and escorted in a funeral car of Prince Albert's own design. The funeral cost England 14,698 pounds, and was attended by a crowd of some 100,000 people.[35] The lying-in-state, where Wellington's body was put out on display, received 235,000 visitors and two women were crushed to death in the rush to enter and catch

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[32] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 374.

[33] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 375-376; Sonia Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning: From Victorian Crepe to the Little Black Dress," *Omega*: *Journal of Death and Dying,* Vol 57 No 1, 2008, 41.

[34] Cornelia DJ Pearsall, "Burying the Duke: Victorian Mourning and the Funeral of the Duke of Wellington" *Victorian Literature and Culture* Vol 27 No 2, 1999, 366; Judith Flanders. *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 335.

[35] Flanders, *Victorian City*, 336, 340.

a glimpse of Britain's hero.[36] This air of fanaticism carried over into the sale of Wellington relics: Wellington's letters, locks of hair, and personal effects sold for exorbitant prices following his death.[37] For all the pomp and circumstances and for all the rhetoric of lavish funerals as a way of honoring the dead, it appears universally agreed upon that Wellington would have despised—or at the very least been made profoundly uncomfortable by—this funeral. Wellington was a private, conservative man with no small amount of disdain for the masses. That his funeral turned into a public cacophony and his personal belongings were sold off to the highest bidder seems a bit of an insult to the man's memory. Nevertheless, the lavishness of Wellington's funeral set a standard for funerals to aspire to, especially for people desperate to compare their social and financial status with his.

The opulent evolution of the Victorian funeral industry was not without its critics. Many thought the prioritization of high-profile and expensive burials devalued the emotional weight of death, and made "proper" mourning nearly impossible for those without the money to afford such ridiculous displays. No one thought this louder than Charles Dickens. In his journal *Household Words*, Dickens wrote several articles critiquing the Victorian funeral industry, which he referred to as "a system of barbarous show and expense."[38] While he abhorred the disingenuous pomp and circumstances that had come to surround funerals, his criticisms were also founded in a genuine concern for the lower classes of London. As social pressure to perform more elaborate funerals heightened, no one felt the financial pressure more than

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[36] Pearsall, "Burying the Duke," 373-374.
[37] Charles Dickens, "Trading in Death" *Household Words* Vol 6 No 120, 1852, 242-244.
[38] Dickens, "Trading in Death," 241.

laborers. As Dickens sniped, "The competition among the middle classes for superior gentility in Funerals….descended even to the very poor: to whom the cost of funeral customs was so ruinous and disproportionate to their means that they formed Clubs among themselves to defray such charges." [39] These clubs, also called Burial and Friendly Societies, provided funeral insurance for those who could not afford it out of pocket. [40] Membership fees cost a few shillings a month, depending on one's membership level—how fancy a funeral you wanted—and age—older member paid higher dues.[41] Working class anxieties about the rising price of death were compounded by the lingering fear of the Anatomy Act of 1832 that legalized the dissection of donated corpses. If you could not afford a proper funeral and burial, you may have no option but to donate a loved one's body to anatomists and thus have them suffer the same fate as executed criminals. As funerals and even simple burials grew more expensive in the joint-stock cemeteries, this threat grew ever more present. Some of this pressure was alleviated in 1850 with the establishment of Brookwood Cemetery, a city-owned graveyard outside London city limits, specifically built to provide lower-priced options for burial. But by that point, the elaborate funeral ceremonies had already been popularized by the lavish joint-stock cemeteries, and the funeral of the Duke of Wellington in 1852 further promoted such opulence. As Sonia Bediken summarizes in her analysis of mourning customs in England, "…style and social acceptability held sway over the populace…" despite

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[39] Dickens, "Trading in Death," 241.
[40] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 41.
[41] Chadwick, *Report on sanitary condition,* 58.

criticisms.[42] Not until the outbreak of the first World War would any English mourning traditions change significantly.

<div align="center">Dressing for Death</div>

As funerary practices grew more elaborate and regimented by societal expectations, so too did displays of mourning through clothing. Though the practice of formalized mourning dress dates back to the fourteenth century, it became increasing regulated and ostentatious during the Victorian Era, due to the increased commercialization of mourning, the growing availability of clothing in general as a result of industrialization and as a consequence of the model set by Queen Victoria.

Queen Victoria's influence over nineteenth century London cannot be compared to any monarch who came before her. The young queen came to the throne in 1837, shortly after the initial rise of the newspaper industry and the relaxation of the "taxes on knowledge." She figured in the popular press more than any monarch before her, simply because there was a much larger press and a much larger readership. This was also shortly after the Reform Act of 1832, which greatly expanded the voting franchise and ended a period of political tensions.[43] This created a more favorable attitude towards the monarchy among the common people, and created a vacancy in newspaper articles that left room for extensive coverage of the royal family's daily activities. She featured particularly heavily in the *Illustrated London News*, which loudly proclaimed its political neutrality and put a good deal of focus on the domesticity of the royal family.[44] This imparted onto the public not only

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[42] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 43.

[43] John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

[44] Plunkett, *Media Monarch*, 99-100.

the idea that Queen Victoria did not play a heavy hand in politics they may or may not have supported, but also presented them with weekly images of the royals. The monarch was no longer a faceless, impersonal ruler, but a high-profile, high-class citizen to be emulated.

Compounding Victoria's presence in the media was the fact that politically she had very little power and fewer official duties. By the early nineteenth century Britain had become a constitutional monarchy, meaning that while the queen still had meetings with Parliament and an important public presence, practically speaking she had very little power over her country.[45] Up until 1861, Victoria instead used her public presence and popularity to sway politics, and worked to ensure that the people of England thought well of the monarchy. Victoria's substantial public presence in the first half of her reign made it all the more obvious and impactful when she retreated from her public duties following the death of Prince Albert.[46] While Victoria's deep mourning and lack of involvement in her own country did bring about criticisms of the monarchy, her grasp on the public consciousness did not wane in her withdrawal. Instead, she became a model for mourning—not in her personal isolation and refusal to move on but in her fashion and the publicity of her grief.

Mourning dress in the nineteenth century was much more complicated than just a widow wearing black. While widows certainly bore the brunt of social mourning expectations—having the strictest rules and the longest mandatory mourning period—there were also demands for mourning nearly every sort of relation. Mothers

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[45] Plunkett, *Media Monarch*, 14.
[46] Plunkett, *Media Monarch*, 67.

mourned longer for a child than for an infant, daughters needed at least six months to mourn her parents but eighteen for her husband's, and daughters wore mourning for six months in honor of her step-mother but needed a year if the two still lived in the same home.[47] Additionally, mourning came in four different stages: first, second, third/ordinary, and half mourning. First mourning took the longest and had the most regulations: widows in first mourning had to wear all black, mostly bombazine and crepe (material that would not produce a disrespectful shine) and a widow's cap.[48] Crepe became less prominent by second mourning and by third mourning vanished entirely, replaced by silk and wool and the occasional piece of jewelry. Half mourning allowed for new colors: in addition to black one could wear gray, lavender, mauve, and the thrilling color combination of black and gray.[49] While these regulations may seem arbitrary to a modern reader, in the context of the nineteenth century they acted as social cues. A woman in black crepe would not be available for courting or for trivial conversation. Mourning dress had its roots in this element of practicality, of broadcasting one's grief so as to adjust social interactions accordingly, but over time and throughout the commercialization of mourning in the nineteenth century in particular, it ballooned to more of a weight than a benefit.

Through mourning dress, it becomes clear how intensely gendered expressions of Victorian grief were. When a woman lost her husband, society dictated that she enter into nearly two years of mourning: a full year of first mourning, nine months of second mourning, three months of third mourning, and potentially an

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[47] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 386-387.
[48] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 386.
[49] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 386.

additional six months of half mourning.[50] In addition to physically displaying her obligatory grief (regardless of her actual feelings towards her husband), widows need to enter into near-complete social seclusion in the year following her husband's death, wherein "[they] did not go out at all, and accepted visits only from relations and very close friends."[51] Widowers, on the other hand, were expected to wear a black hatband and black suits for three months, and were permitted to re-enter society after about a month, rather than a full year.[52] This demonstrates the deeper implications of Victorian gender roles: men, as the breadwinners, could not afford to linger at home for extended periods of time, but women, as the backbone of the household, could easily curtail their excursions with no major impact on the running of the house. While household management would not be impacted by this practice, the same cannot be said of the mental and emotional health of those involved. Victorian women were expected to carry the entire emotional burden of grief without any relief from social networks, while men were denied the time to properly process their grief. Even outside of the widow/widower dichotomy, women wore mourning twice as long as men, regardless of the relation. Wives even bore the weight of mourning on her husband's behalf: women were expected to spend eighteen months in first mourning for her husband's parents but only six for her own.[53] The strict regimentation of Victorian mourning provided structure for sorrow, but that structure put the emotional labor completely on women's shoulders and left very

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[50] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 39.
[51] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 377.
[52] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 377, 386.
[53] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 386-387.

little opportunity for personal variation of emotion, let alone for variation in the financial practicality of such a prolonged mourning.

In addition to emotional cost, proper mourning dress had a high financial price. Much like the ostentatious funerals encouraged by the new joint-stock cemeteries, mourning dress became a method to express not just grief for the departed, but to showcase the family's wealth. As Flanders summarizes, "Women in mourning, like household decoration, were the outward manifestation of the family's status."[54] Society expected women to purchase a new set of mourning clothes for each person they grieved, which allowed wealthy women to keep their mourning within the realm of current fashions but took a heavy toll on less well-to-do families.[55] For those who could not afford new mourning weeds every few years, Burial and Friendly Societies, much like those that helped working class people to afford funerals, would lend out clothes.[56]

For those who could afford it, however, there was no shortage of businesses clamoring to meet their demands. London's first mourning warehouse, Jay's London General Mourning Warehouse, opened in 1841 and specifically advertised to "ladies…compelled to the painful necessity of proceeding from shop to shop in search of distinct article of dress."[57] A later advertisement for the same company called customers to "appreciate fully the artistic perfection to which Mourning Garments are now brought" and specifically used Queen Victoria's crest to show that you, too, could

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[54] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 379.
[55] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 39, 41.
[56] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 41.
[57] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 380;"[Advertisement.]-Mourning.-The London General." *The London Times,* 1 Nov. 1845; 9. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 21 Jan. 2019.

sample the same mourning clothes offered to the Queen herself.[58] Mourning warehouses, described by author Catherine Arnold as "department store[s] of death" existed to provide every possible article of mourning dress a lady could have need for, all in one convenient location.[59] The scope of the Victorian mourning industry is difficult for modern readers to comprehend, though some authors have likened it to the current industry around weddings.[60] That such a massive industry emerged around exploiting this need for "proper" mourning dress shows not only the consistent demand for new weeds, but that society put enough emphasis on these specific expressions of grief to support an entire trade.[61] Industrialization only bolstered these demands, by making elaborate mourning dress more available to a wider range of incomes. Working class and the rural poor may still have struggled to afford new mourning after every funeral, but the emerging middle class could now comfortably shell out for a new wardrobe when needed. Even though the middle class only occupied a small percentage of the population, the visibility of mourning dress increased social pressures for the lower classes to follow expensive trends of grief.

Regimented grief and mourning dress lingered long past practicality, until the dawn of the twentieth century, dying first symbolically and then practically. The first blow to the mourning dress of the Victorian period came in 1901, with the death of Queen Victoria herself. Not only did the eternal widow's influence over fashion end with her demise, but her funeral itself was a radical departure from cultural norms.

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[58] "Jay's Mourning Warehouse," Illustrated London News.
[59] Catharine Arnold, *Necropolis: London and Its Dead*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2006), 211.
[60] Arnold, *Necropolis*, 211.
[61] "Weeds" is another term for mourning dress, specifically used to refer to that of widows.

Instead of decorating in black, as was customary and the backbone of the funeral industry, Victoria's mortuary chamber "was hung in crimson, her pall was in sumptuously embroidered white satin, and the funeral draperies were violet."[62] Additionally, two princesses—one of Queen Victoria's own daughters and another from continental royalty—who attended her funeral refused to wear crepe, a hefty blow to the mourning crepe industry.[63] Queen Victoria's death and funeral shifted mourning trends away from the strict customs of her reign, but the final blow came with the outbreak of World War I. It simply became financially impossible and impractical for women to go into full mourning every time a man in their lives died. The nation did not have enough money or resources to keep the ornate customs of mourning dress alive. Furthermore, as women began to take up the roles abandoned by men heading off to the front lines, they could no longer observe the social isolation so integral to "proper" mourning.

What We Leave Behind

The matter of relics is slightly more complicated than that of new cemeteries, funeral reform, or the increased regimentation of mourning dress. Relic culture did not become immediately commercialized in the same way that other facets of mourning did. Rather, Victorian conceptualizations of death grew more secular as a result of that commercialization of mourning—particularly in regards to the shift from churchyards to cemeteries. Relic culture shifted to become less religious and more personal, and that shift to a personal emphasis created opportunities for

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[62] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 43.
[63] Bedikian, "Death of Mourning," 43.

commercialization, particularly of hair jewelry and death photography. Following

that, relics moved from items of religious veneration to commodities.

While religion undoubtedly held a significant influence over Victorian daily life

and attitudes towards death, much debate surrounds the degree to which Victorian

society experienced a trend of secularization. For many years, historians have framed

the Victorian era as a time of industrialization and declining religion, as class

consciousness began to emerge and push back against the hierarchy inherent in the

church.[64] But more recently historians have begun to consider the nineteenth century

as a period of religious revival in England, with heightened church attendance.[65] At

the same time, changes in scientific knowledge and philosophy also challenged

religion: Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, and while it did not

immediately pose a threat to Christianity's grip on England, it certainly forced some

people to re-evaluate the relationship between their faith and the modern world. The

question of "how religious was Victorian London?" is a tricky one. How are we to

define "religious"? Church attendance may not have dwindled, but to what extend did

religion hold sway over public policy? How much did Victorians use religious logic

and explanations in regards to their everyday lives? Suffice it to say that even in the

light of scientific challenges and changing ideas about faith, by modern standards

Victorian Britain remained deeply religious. However, Victorian attitudes towards

death specifically did trend more secularly over the course of the century. The shift

from church yards to cemeteries indicated to many people that the Anglican church

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[64] Jeremy Morris, "Secularization and Religious Experience: Arguments in the Historiography of
Modern British Religion" *The Historical Journal* Vol 55 No 1, 2012, 200.
[65] Morris, "Secularization and Religious Experience," 202.

had lost its direct authority over death, and this trend was reflected in changing attitudes towards relics.

The keeping of relics began as a religious concept. The term "relic" originated with the medieval Catholic church, where it referred to an item belonging to a significant holy figure, or a remnant of that holy figure's body itself.[66] A segment of Mary's belt, the bones of a saint, or a fragment of the True Cross would all qualify as holy relics. The most prized relics were generally part of the body, while secondary relics were an item touched by or used by the deceased. The emotional logic of relics hinges on the idea of synecdoche—the part representing the whole.[67] By preserving a part of a person, you preserved the whole, the spirit, and thus could keep them with you, even after their death. This differed from later anxieties about dissection because preserving a portion of a body and keeping relics allowed the spirit to live on in memory, while a total dissection desecrated the body and barred them from the Rapture. As historian Deborah Lutz explains: "…the relic…might mark the continued existence of the body to which it once belonged."[68] In regards to holy relics, to possess a part of a saint meant you had portion of their own holiness.

Even as general society moved away from the devout Christianity of the middle ages and towards more secularization, the notion of relics remained popular. As early as the sixteenth century, focus began to shift from holy relics to celebrity relics. This trend compounded the ideology of preserving a part to maintain the whole with the impulse to possess the narrative of fame. By owning something that once

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[66] Deborah Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us" *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol 39 No 1, 2011, 128.
[67] Lutz, "Dead Still Among Us," 131.
[68] Lutz, "Dead Still Among Us," 130.

belonged to the Duke of Wellington, one could claim a stake in his story. The appreciation of celebrity relics was not universal, as seen in Charles Dickens' revulsion around the sale of the Duke of Wellington's personal effects and hair. Dickens' revulsion was in part motivated by shifting perspectives about relics in the Victorian period, as they became more a symbol of personal connection and grief. While celebrity relics were certainly not an invention of the Victorians, they did become more visibly advertised, as a result of a robustly booming newspaper industry. As mourning became commercialized, so too did relics, both celebrity and personal.

The rise of personal relics in the nineteenth century indicates a noticeable shift towards more secular attitudes about death. As society grew less religiously preoccupied, relics became representative not of devotion or of a claim to fame, but as a method of expressing grief. By preserving and possessing something symbolic of a loved one, you could keep them with you regardless of their death. Obviously there was the keeping of a loved one's possessions or clothing, but relic culture also bled through in a number of unusual forms that have not been preserved into the modern era. For example, casts of a faces—known as death masks—or hands were not uncommon. Queen Victoria went so far as to be buried with casts of her court favorites' hands.[69]

But the most popular form of personal relics by far were hair jewelry. The term "hair jewelry" encompasses several varieties: a piece of hair in a locket or a more elaborate design made out of hair, perhaps a name or a likeness or certain flowers.

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[69] Wilson, *The Victorians*, 616.

Watch fobs made of hair were particularly popular among men.[70] The emotional significance of hair jewelry predated its use as a mourning relic—locks of hair were common gifts between lovers for many years.[71] While the use of hair as a death relic was not uncommon by the nineteenth century, the industry surrounding it boomed in the 1850s. Artisans like Garrad—the royal jewelers—and Antoni Torrer gained a reputation specifically for the hair jewelry they crafted.[72] This jewelry was not so simple as braiding locks in a locket: hair jewelers wove intricate designs and even portraiture into their work.[73] At the Great Exhibition in 1851, eleven pieces of hairwork were displayed, including several images of the royal family, and by the mid-1850s hair jewelry was considered "a mark of middle-class respectability."[74] Part of the popularity of hair jewelry stemmed from convenience: unlike other parts of the physical body it did not decay, and remained recognizable after many years.[75] It maintained the identity of the dead, and thus functioned perfectly as a memento. Over the course of the century it became more common for people to make their own hair jewelry, rather than send a loved one's hair to an expensive jeweler. [76] Though this shift was primarily motivated by anxieties about whether or not the hair in the jewelry really belonged to your loved one, it doubled as a way for lower-income families to cheaply mimic the trends of the upper and middle class. Yet again, genuine

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[70] Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2015), 130-135.
[71] Lutz, *Relics of Death,* 132.
[72] Lutz, *Relics of Death,* 132.
[73] Lutz, *Relics of Death,* 132.
[74] Lutz, "Dead Still Among Us," 129.
[75] Lutz, *Relics of Death,* 134.
[76] Lutz, "Dead Still Among Us," 136.

grief turned into performative mourning for social standing, encouraged by the development of new industries.

Another new industry that shaped how the Victorians engaged with death and mourning was that of photography. The first publicly available photography, daguerreotypes, were invented by Louis Daguerre in 1839.[77] In the early days of photography, post-mortem portraits were a staple of the business, as people were far more likely to pay to commemorate a lost loved one than a wedding or other events.[78] Queen Victoria herself had photographs taken of Albert after his death in 1861, which no doubt spurred on the trend.[79] Photographers generally arranged the dead bodies they captured to look as though they were sleeping. This suspended death, as people looking at these pictures could imagine that their loved ones were not lost, but merely resting, only temporarily unattainable. Post-mortem photography was a particularly common relic for commemorating children and infants who had not lived long enough to produce any other sort of relic.[80] Death photography provided the photography industry a foothold to establish its financial viability, which indicates that taking pictures of dead people brought in enough money to support a fledging industry. Photography was not cheap, but it provided an opportunity to create a relic

[77] Nancy M West, "Camera Fiends: Early Photography, Death, and the Supernatural" *The Centennial Review* Vol 40 No 1 1996, 177.
[78] West, "Camera Fiends," 172.
Though they both fall under the label of death photography, post-mortem photography and spirit photography differ in that post-mortem photography was a memorialization of a dead body, whereas spirit photography attempted to capture images of ghosts. Spirit photography emerged as a branch of Spiritualism, a religious movement originating in America and migrating to England in the 1850s and 1860s. Since spirit photography was more caught up in attempting to commune with the dead, rather than commemorating them, it does not count as relic culture.
[79] Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 160.
[80] West, "Camera Fiends," 171.
Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 161.

of a loved one who may not have left anything else behind. Yet unlike other relics, photographs lacked the crucial connection to the body itself, and thus were often embellished with more direct relics, such as hair, to lend them that vital connection.[81] As photography became more affordable and more easily reproducible, it began to lose the direct connection to the body that gave it the same magic as a relic in the first place. Relics became less holy and more a commemorative commodity.

Ironically, the rise of photography ultimately signaled the end of mourning relics as they existed in the Victorian era. As photography became more common and more affordable, people no longer needed death masks or ornate hair jewelry to commemorate their loved ones. They had images of these people in life, and those eventually supplanted those of them in death. As Lutz summarizes in her book *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*, "Photographs were increasingly used on their own…the scopic became sufficient for memory; the corpse fell away."[82] As with so many other aspects of mourning and relic culture, the final blow came with the First World War. The physical distance and often complete loss of the bodies of loved ones meant that relics of the body, like hair jewelry, were no longer possible. As mourning and memorialization of loved ones was forcibly divorced from the body itself, people began to lean much more heavily on increasingly available imagery instead.

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[81] Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 162.
[82] Lutz, *Relics of Death*, 166.

Conclusion

The population boom that resulted from London's growth into a metropolis in the nineteenth century led to a logistical crisis of where to bury the ever-increasing number of dead. Traditional Anglican churchyards no longer had the capacity to accommodate all of London's dead, so privately owned companies capitalized on this demand. Funerals moved from religiously managed operation to a heavily commercialized showcase of wealth, and mourning dress quickly followed as outwardly showcasing one's grief became necessary not only to display one's sorrow but also one's social standing. Mass production as a result of industrialization sped this process along, as mourning dress could be made in the latest fashion with increasing speed and lower costs, thus making them widely available. As these trends of commercialization removed death from the direct authority of the church, it became more common to use relics such as hair jewelry and death photography to commemorate loved ones rather than to celebrate the lives of holy figures. In line with the larger trends of capitalizing on mourning, these relics became commodities, goods to be bought and sold rather sacred objects of reverence. The emerging funerary and mourning industries exploited the genuine grief of mourning families in order to turn a profit.

Conclusion

The intricate death culture of the Victorians came to an abrupt halt during World War I. Much like in the mid-century when newspapers shifted their focus from murder and crime to the international conflicts on the continent, World War I quickly dominated headlines and left no time for the salacious focus on true crime seen at the turn of the century. This mirrored a displacement of anxiety in English society: foreign threats seemed much greater and more likely than domestic ones. The scapegoated "other" was no longer the so-called criminal class but the Central Powers in Europe. Similarly, as public health conditions improved in London itself—at the cost of the earlier epidemics—conditions in the trenches deteriorated rapidly, and anxiety about health shifted to focus on men abroad and any diseases they may bring home. The elaborate rituals of mourning also could not survive the devastation of World War I, in part because often there were no bodies to send home—which hampered elaborate funerals and relic culture—but also because London simply did not have the time or money to support the intricate displays of mourning so prominent in the previous century. As more women joined the work force to support the war effort, a year of seclusion and an entirely new wardrobe to mark the death of their husbands seemed not only luxurious but irresponsible. There were more pressing matters to attend to. By the time the war ended, death culture in London had changed so substantially that people could not return to the way the world was before.

The unique death culture of Victorian London properly began in the 1830s and shuttered to a close in the 1910s. Looking back to Michael Kearl's assertion that death provides a "mirror of life," what then does this specific timeframe of society's

interactions with death tell us about the people living in nineteenth century London? On the one hand it tells us they were a deeply anxious people. The world changed drastically during Queen Victoria's reign, and that quite rightfully scared her subjects. The dramatic expansion of the newspaper industry brought massive amounts of information to a previously unaware people; they could now read about international politics and local violence on a daily basis. Routine outbreaks of deadly diseases served as a constant reminder that they did not understand how these epidemics spread or killed, despite advancements in other areas of science. Furthermore, as the overcrowding of churchyards and commercialization of mourning shaped interactions with grief, death slowly began to move out of the purview of the Anglican church and into the capitalist sphere. Though a more thorough secularization of society would arguably not transpire until the mid-twentieth century, this undermined an important aspect of the church's authority and stripped away that element of religious security. The greater social order of the nineteenth century was changing around these people, and this created an atmosphere of uncertainty and constant anxiety.

But on the other hand, Victorian engagements with death also show that they were intensely sentimental. Despite their repeated, often violent, exposures to death in their daily lives they did not become numb or attempt to distance themselves from the inevitability of demise. Instead they proudly showed their grief, literally wearing it on their sleeves and proclaiming to all of society that they cared, that they suffered. They did not conceal their emotions of anxiety and grief, but worked them into their literature, their clothing, and every aspect of their culture.

Death mirrors life. By studying a death culture we can learn intimate details about a living society. The Victorians feared specific forms of death but venerated others, honored their fallen through lavish ceremonies and ornate costumes. They saw corpses as a threat to the living but still clung to physical remnants of loved ones as relics. They feared how quickly the world around them was changing and developing, but they did not let that fear overshadow how much they valued the time they had with their loved ones. The Victorians valued a good death, just as they valued a fulfilled life.

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