

8-9-2006

Guilty Pleasures: Narrative Craft and Mass Appeal in the Newgate Calendar

Aimee Rust
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Rust, Aimee, "Guilty Pleasures: Narrative Craft and Mass Appeal in the Newgate Calendar" (2006).
University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations. 399.
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/399>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Guilty Pleasures: Narrative Craft and Mass Appeal in the *Newgate Calendar*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English

by

Aimee Rust

B.A., Beloit College, 1994
M.A., The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2002

August, 2006

Acknowledgements

Several people made this project possible. Dr. Dan Doll made the best of advisors; his patience, encouragement, and thoughtful guidance were invaluable in conceptualizing and drafting the essay. Dr. Leslie White provided supportive, insightful guidance during the compositional process. I found an invaluable editorial commentary in Dr. Kris Lackey's assessment of the defense copy, from which (I hope) this final version has much benefited.

I would also like to thank my mother; her love and sympathy were readily offered, and gratefully received. Shaye Hope cast a critical eye over the draft, and made me appropriately nervous about the defense; my cat Dilly made it possible for me to sleep anyway.

Finally, I must offer thanks to the goddess, whose work this really is. To her I dedicate all the work of my hands, whether it be dark or light.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Case Studies	
Pure Torture.....	14
Earl Ferrers.....	16
John Williamson.....	22
Disposing of the Body	25
Sarah Metyard and Sarah Morgan Metyard.....	30
Catherine Hayes.....	34
James Greenacre.....	38
Conclusion	42
Bibliography	46
Appendices	
Appendix A.....	48
Appendix B.....	49
Appendix C.....	51
Vita	75

Abstract

The *Newgate Calendar*, one of the earliest true crime documents, has rarely been studied. This paper aims to demonstrate that these texts illuminate various aspects of the culture that both produced and consumed the narratives the *Calendar* contains. In particular, I have focused on two different categories of crimes against the body. The *Calendar*'s early volumes, which were published while state-sponsored punishment was still a public spectacle, offer several accounts that deal with the confinement and torture of living victims. Later volumes do not include torture narratives. Instead, anxiety over the treatment of dead bodies caused an increased interest in stories detailing postmortem abuses like dismemberment. Through the application of critical lenses like feminist, queer, sociological, and popular cultural approaches to various criminal biographies offered in the *Calendar*, I have attempted to show the ways in which these texts tracked shifts in the dominant culture.

Introduction

Early volumes of the *Newgate Calendar* are among the oldest extant collections of true crime narratives in English.¹ Most 21st century accounts of real crimes follow the same narrative formulae the *Newgate Calendar* did; it is a foundational document in the true crime genre. By the 1770s, as Kristina Straub points out, the “predominant form” of true crime narratives had been established. And yet the *Calendar* is a difficult text to pin down; its publication history is nearly as checkered as the acts the text describes. It was published in many different editions: very early editions (1750-on), an early edition (1773), and a “standard edition” in 5 volumes (1774). Later versions were published throughout the 19th century. In 1926 the Navarre Society issued an edition, and an abridged “mass market” paperback appeared in 1969. Other than inclusion of the most notorious cases, many of these editions bear little relation to each other. A complete edition, containing all the cases included in all versions, is not available. In addition, the *Calendar* was written by a shifting ménage of corporate authors, none of whom signed or dated their contributions. The accounts were designed for a popular audience, not as potential artifacts. For the most part, too, this is how they have been received. True crime has never been the subject of much scholarship. At the present time, the *Newgate Calendar* has gone out of print.

It is also difficult to determine the sources used by the *Calendar*’s authors. Undoubtedly, some of the *Calendar*’s accounts were cribbed from broadsheets published for mass consumption and hawked at the foot of the gallows; others likely were based on conversations between the prisoner concerned and the Newgate Ordinary, or prison chaplain. Some of the earlier narratives must owe a great deal to oral tradition, while many of the later ones seem to draw on

¹ Along with other early collections like the *Malefactors’ Register* and *The Tyburn Chronicle*.

contemporary news accounts. At this remove, it is probably impossible to determine authoritatively what sources were used for a given account, or to verify most of the details the *Calendar* contains.

In any popular or sub-literary genre, audience taste strongly influences production. Consumers of the *Calendar*'s early editions worried more about theft than we do now. The capitalist market had not yet provided 18th and 19th century readers with a proliferation of disposable objects; things were harder to replace, and possessive impulses were concentrated upon a smaller territory. Then, too, as Henry Fielding argued in 1751, the collapse of feudal systems and the move toward commerce resulted in a displacement of values. The Preface to Fielding's *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers* says that the "Introduction of Trade" wrought "an Alteration in [the] Order of People," so that those "of the lower Sort" conceived a desire for goods, wealth, and luxury.² Fielding blames the "increase in robbers" on the "moral evils introduced by Trade," and then proceeds to advocate the ruthless imposition of the death penalty on all thieves, regardless of extenuating circumstance. In the 18th century, as today, people murdered to acquire property, but earlier crime narratives place much more stock in theft alone.

There are 204 accounts of property-based crimes in the *Newgate Calendar*, nearly as many as the number of murders. Many of the *Calendar*'s thieves were highwaymen, who menaced the roadside and robbed passing coaches. Some highwaymen, indeed, killed as part of their trade, and thus show up on the murder side as well. The collection also includes a substantial number of burglars, pickpockets, and other thieves. The reader finds coiners and polygamists, pirates and smugglers, arsonists, abductors, slavers, and resurrection men. In the

² Reprinted in Stephen Copley's *Literature and the Social Order*, 181-185.

Calendar's fourth volume, the number of cases dealing with robbery actually outnumber the incidences of murder (37 v. 35), while in volume II highwaymen take center stage (44 v. 35).

Later accounts, however, show an increased preference for crimes against the body. Over the dubious course of the *Newgate Calendar*'s publication, readers turned increasingly to contemplation of homicidal violence. The *Calendar* presents murder narratives more often than any other kind of crime: across the five volumes, 231 murders are recounted. For the most part, the stories told in the *Calendar* involve criminals who were confined in Newgate Prison, though exceptions were made for particularly sensational murder cases that occurred outside London (see Appendix B).

For most people, the moral issues involved in murder preclude a conscious aesthetic appreciation of homicidal violence. Fearing our own deaths, we have a sympathetic response to the victim's plight, especially if the death involves considerable pain. Socialization, too, works to repress aesthetic responses to murder. The Judeo-Christian tradition tells us that murder is sinful. "Thou shalt not kill," God tells Moses, and his message is duly reported, not merely to the fugitive Israelites, but to everyone who receives religious training in Mosaic law. Should moral education go wrong, penal systems stand ready to isolate and punish the transgressor. In most people, some combination of these considerations results in a sense that murder is wrong, and in the awareness that this offense may carry severe penalties. In other individuals, ethical conditioning fails; the desire to kill overrides social structures, and life is taken.

Murder is a pervasive feature of human culture. People killed each other long before Jewish folklore produced Cain. Essentialist scientists like David Buss believe that human beings are designed to kill, that murder obeys an evolutionary imperative.³ Certainly, there exist situations in which lethal violence is culturally acceptable. War springs to mind; so does state-

³ *The Murderer Next Door*.

sponsored execution, and killing done in self-defense. Inquisitors slaughtered heretics in great numbers, and many old women were burned as witches. Once upon a time, human victims were sacrificed as part of religious rituals. All of these operations were viewed as appropriate by the societies in which they occurred, or are acceptable now, yet all involve the taking of human life, just as murder does. The act itself is the same. The difference lies in acculturated connotation, in the way an audience interprets a given inflicted death. Some killings are viewed as honorable, just, necessary, or all three; they are acceptable under the laws of received morality. Many feel no shame about enjoying representations of such acts: many people watch war movies that reenact battle scenes where a great many people are slaughtered wholesale, and emerge from the theater feeling patriotic.

However, once we have pardoned the sheep, their separation from the goats enables us to look more deeply into the narrative construction of antisocial killing. Murder is clearly a part of the human experience – a significant part, if we consider the rate at which fictional thrillers and true crime narratives occupy bestseller lists. The literary canon abounds in murderers, as does world mythology. There has always been a large audience for stories of wrongful death. And yet scant critical attention has been paid to true crime narratives, despite (or perhaps because of) their mass appeal.⁴ True crime is a sub-literary genre, so far below the canon as to almost escape notice.

And yet, when we apply the critical methods of the academy to true crime narratives, it becomes immediately clear that some art has gone into their construction. Of necessity, the reader's experience of the crime is mediated by linguistic and narrative devices; true crime both

⁴ Foucault is, of course, the most notable exception to this rule, particularly in *Pierre Rivière*, and to a lesser degree in *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Thomas De Quincey's *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827) is foundational, as well. Other significant contributors to the literary study of true crime may be found in the bibliography of this paper.

extends from audience preoccupation and constructs the crime for the reader. Any number of narrative strategies are available here: the focus may be on the criminal or on the victim; the language may be moralizing or sensational; the bulk of the narrative may deal with the commission of the crime, or detail the investigation. Authorial choice is, by definition, aesthetic. Joel Black points out that the word “aesthetic” itself entered the English language through De Quincey’s 1827 essay “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,” an early masterpiece of true crime. Perhaps because it is partly satire, De Quincey’s argument clearly separates moral issues from aesthetic ones. I would argue, though, that moral and ethical issues form a necessary first layer of any critique involving crime. In true crime accounts, aesthetics serve cultural and psychological considerations to an even greater degree than is usually the case; unlike other creative arts, true crime is literally a life and death matter. Most readers approach these texts conscious of that weight, and anxious to interpret the events they recount. Because some forms of killing are culturally acceptable, some are abhorrent, and some exist in a gray area, moral beliefs and ethical ideas constitute a school of criticism that both assesses homicidal acts with a view to their merit and suggests lessons for the reader. Didacticism haunts the genre. The texts themselves frequently insist on moral issues; the *Newgate Calendar* and texts like it were promoted as improving books for children. Straub quotes J. Cooke, one of the *Calendar*’s earliest editors, as saying explicitly that his work was designed to help parents protect their children from “the attacks of vice.”⁵ Many accounts of true crimes affect to impart some sort of lesson about the ends of iniquity, or to inform readers of some lurking social danger.

Often, true crime texts employ sermonizing passages to edify and instruct. These polemics frequently open and close the narrative. In such passages, the narrator addresses readers directly, warning of the consequences of transgression. An excellent example of the

⁵ Straub draws this quote from Cooke’s remarks on *The Tyburn Chronicle* (1768).

sermonizing conclusion can be found in an early *Newgate Calendar* entry concerning the Elizabethan murderer Thomas Wynne. The introductory gloss tells us that Wynne was a “Housebreaker and Palacebreaker, whom Conscience made confess a murder twenty years afterwards” (I.29). After five pages spent describing Wynne’s “villainy,” the narrator ends by saying,

Thus the just judgment of God at last overtook him for shedding innocent blood, when he thought himself secure from the stroke of justice. Neither was it wanting to punish his wife and posterity for being privy thereunto, and living upon the fruits thereof, for his wife ran distracted upon receiving the news of his shameful end, and died so. Two of his sons also were hanged in Virginia...so that his posterity were reduced to beggary ever after, and died very miserable. (34)

The lesson here is pretty simple. God has judged Thomas Wynne, and damned even his heirs, for the crime of shedding “innocent blood.” Presumably, since Wynne’s blood is not “innocent,” the executioner will not have to suffer for taking a murderer’s life; Wynne’s death is acceptable, an act well done.

Sermonizing functions as a rationalizing mechanism. Such passages work to make our interest in the text a less guilty pleasure; people don’t really read true crime accounts for the moral instruction they affect to provide, any more than they gawk at a car wreck to learn motor safety. The didactic elements of true crime texts serve as disclaimers, to excuse the bloody details. After all, readers might reason, if it’s good for us, it can’t be entertainment; it can’t be wrong. Then, too, sermonizing attempts to restore faith in the dominant regime. In most true

crime accounts, the law prevails, the criminal is punished, and society is safer because of it. As in its cousin the detective novel, the moral order triumphs, and the threat of violence is removed. Most true crime accounts contain some sermonizing; from the *Newgate Calendar* to last month's pulp paperback, even the most sensational rely on adjectives like "wicked," "evil," or "monstrous" to condemn the criminal.

Of course, some accounts are more sensational than others. The sensational strategy attempts to seduce the reader by providing shocking details in the most lurid language possible. The ideal sensational murder is bloody, a gross crime against the body. In addition, the typical sensational narrative will also offer a sexual element. As Straub has suggested, the *Newgate Calendar* frequently presents female murderers as women with considerable sexual experience.⁶ An excellent example is Catherine Hayes, whom we will consider later in more detail. Before murdering and dismembering her husband, Catherine Hayes literally slept with a regiment, and later, perhaps, with her own son. The Hayes account divides narrative interest pretty equally between promiscuity and the grisly process of dismemberment. At the critical moment both come into play: the murder takes place in a bedroom, and for dismemberment Hayes and her victim assume sexually suggestive positions:

The men then drew the body partly off the bed, and Billings supported the head while Wood, with his pocketknife, cut it off, and the infamous woman held the pail to receive it. (III. 33-34)

⁶ See Straub's work on the Brownrigg case in "The Tortured Apprentice" and her discussion of the Canning, Blandy, and Branch cases in "Feminine Sexuality, Class Identity, and Narrative Form."

Like other authors, writers of true crime narratives must choose where to place the narrative interest. Some events are presented in detail, others merely glossed over. The *Newgate Calendar*'s account of Alice Arden, for example, focuses largely on Arden's efforts to exterminate her husband; the narrator merely notes that Arden was "young, well shaped, and in every way handsome" before moving on to a bowl of poisoned milk (I.13). The next part of the narrative deals with Arden's bungling attempts to entrap her husband and lure him to a painful death. The murder itself occupies relatively little space; Arden's accomplices ambush the victim and dispatch him in three bloody sentences. There follows the aftermath of the crime, in which Arden entertains guests. The body is discovered a paragraph later, and the rest of the narrative briefly recounts the investigative and punitive processes. In the Arden account, the author presents the crime as the culminating incident of a lengthy plot, the climax of a story, and then moves quickly to resolution. The focus is on Arden's designs, and the victim's repeated escapes. Suspense builds, because the reader knows from the epigraph that Arden will die; the only question is when.

From the turn of the 19th century onward, true crime accounts show a tendency to emphasize the detection of crime. Earlier narratives spent more time on the acts themselves, and included detailed accounts of the criminal's execution. As Foucault has amply demonstrated, the punitive process was a much more public spectacle in the 18th century.⁷ Executions held mass appeal: the death of a notorious felon might draw thousands. As time went on, however, the criminal vanished behind official walls. Narratives concentrated more on the state's attempt to restore order than the punishment of the transgressor. The detective was invented, both in legal procedure and in fiction. Later true crime narratives almost always take an explicitly disciplinary approach: they seek to profile murderers psychologically, or to explain them

⁷ *Discipline and Punish*.

sociologically, or to examine the phenomenon through the application of biological or evolutionary principles. Ultimately, they resort to judicial constructs like the detective, and present a narrative that focuses largely on clues and exposure of the criminal. Where early true crime stories present a murderer's genealogy, later accounts substitute explanation. Expiation disappears, as does the criminal, behind walls and barbed wire.

Though undoubtedly many areas of the *Newgate Calendar* would bear further investigation, my interest here lies in two different categories of crimes against the body. Torture and dismemberment are activities that occur at the extreme ends of human behavior, when social controls have failed; they permit conquest of the body in unique and forbidden ways while also engaging the audience's anxiety about death. Naturally, such stories generate immense public interest, and these accounts are among the most sensational in the collection. Earlier editions of the *Calendar* provide several accounts in which confinement and torture are used against the bodies of living victims. In later versions the *Calendar* adds an increasing number of accounts dealing with the dismemberment of the corpse after the murder has been committed, while the torture dynamic disappears. This switch in the *Calendar's* focus from crimes of confinement and pain in the 18th century to 19th century accounts in which the victim's body is dismembered suggests a powerful shift both in murderous methodology and in the public's appetite for certain types of murder narratives.

In torture, the investment is cumulative, and process-oriented: the criminal acts sadistically, and makes the victim suffer. As Elaine Scarry and others have noted, torture seeks to conquer the victim's mind through a bodily medium.⁸ Foucault links the earlier taste for narratives in which the victim is confined and tortured to the actions of the penal process.⁹

⁸ *The Body in Pain*.

⁹ *Discipline and Punish*.

During the period when these crimes occurred and the *Calendar*'s accounts were created, punishment was a public spectacle, and torture an acceptable means for extracting a confession. The state provided a model for private individuals in an endless stream of public corporal punishments and publicized executions. The accounts of torture we find in the *Calendar* describe personal appropriations of penal authority. Always, the *Calendar*'s torturers hold an official position over the victim; as husbands, employers, and members of the privileged classes they enjoyed a power that mimicked the state's. Just as the legal authorities confined transgressors and inflicted punishment on the criminal body, so the private torturer isolated, caged, and assaulted the victim, often for some minor or imagined infraction against the torturer's rules. As the spectacle of punishment waned, so did the publication of narratives recounting private torture.

At the same time, scientific and religious revolutions were transforming the ways in which we encounter the human body. In the early 21st century we seek meaning in science, in biological and genetic explanations, in death as the ultimate determination. No one is diagnosed as suffering from an imbalance of the humors. The rise of medicine pierced the veil of our skin, and gave us anatomical charts to explain the mysteries hidden beneath. The body remains a secret territory, but it is one to which we now have anatomical maps. To see guts, we need only go online or open a book. We owe this knowledge to scientific explorations conducted during the period when the *Calendar* was produced. Just as the state provided an example of punishment, science modeled the objectification of anatomy. Medical schools found themselves constantly in need of fresh cadavers for dissection. As a final extension of the state's control over the condemned body, and as an extra disgrace, executioners routinely sold the bodies of hanged felons to medical students. A black market trade in corpses also sprang up, and so-called

“resurrection men” raided new graves for a profit. A few, like the enterprising Burke and Hare, committed murder to produce their own corpses. These issues were much in the news, and many people felt anxiety over the treatment of their bodies after death. Sally Powell points out that this was especially true for the working classes and the poor, since their corpses were “more likely to fall prey to the burker and the body-snatcher”; the Anatomy Act of 1832 ruled that the bodies of indigent persons be handed over for dissection.¹⁰

From the Enlightenment on, spiritual doubts rendered this focus on the dead body doubly significant. If the spirit did not survive the flesh, then the body was all that remained after death. Postmortem respect became increasingly important in the 18th and 19th centuries, culminating in the near-orgiastic, morbid ecstasies of Victorian sentimental mourning. Death was a major lens through which the 19th century viewed its changing times. Science kept tightening the screws; from the grieving queen on down, the Victorians responded by fetishizing death, by keeping anatomical souvenirs like hair bracelets and laboratory skeletons. Murders real and fictional fascinated the Victorians. Thomas Prest’s fictional *A String of Pearls*, which told the Sweeney Todd story, wore out edition after edition in 1846.¹¹ There is a grisly, pathetic child murder in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*; Dickens’s taste for homicidal violence produced Bill Sykes and the eternally unnamed murderer of Edwin Drood. Real killings held an even greater fascination, even before Jack the Ripper appeared on the scene. Newspapers capitalized on the public taste; murderers like Florence Maybrick and George Chapman achieved a dark celebrity. Dallas Liddle’s illuminating study of the journalistic reaction to Reverend Speke’s disappearance in 1868 suggests this public preference for murder: after Speke vanished from a quiet London street, the press uniformly ignored all indications that the clerical gentleman had disappeared of

¹⁰ Powell, 46.

¹¹ Powell, 48.

his own volition, and instead constructed imaginary narratives of his abduction and murder. Speke was later found alive, well, and contemplating an elopement to Africa, to great public disappointment.¹² For Victorian readers, true crime narratives provided a screen on which the dramas of the age could be rehearsed. In a time when many moral values were being called into question, it must have been comforting to seek refuge in absolute ethics, to identify and punish an undeniable villain.

While in the 19th century the body itself was sanitized and commodified, and the dismembered body a rare public spectacle, the *Calendar's* early accounts of dismemberment make use of the official tendency to display executed bodies and body parts, as in the case of the unfortunate Mr. Hayes; after Catherine Hayes dismembered her husband, the authorities stuck his severed head on a pike and put it on public view in hopes that a passerby might identify the murdered man. Later accounts show a greater tendency to conceal the body. When Hannah Brown's severed head was found in 1836, the spectacle was greatly reduced. The head was preserved in a jar for the inspection of concerned persons; visual access was restricted to those who might aid the investigation. More and more, bodies themselves were hidden.

This would have made accounts in which a murderer dismembers a body especially attractive. Our natural human interest in the body's contents was channeled into both medical research and criminal enterprise. Doctors read the critical literature, the *Lancet* and its ancestors; the popular audience read stories like the accounts of dismemberment we find in the *Newgate Calendar*. In the dismemberment narratives, we see criminals killing sacred cows, violating corpses and public sensibility at the same time. If a culture venerates mortal remains, then the violation of a dead body will generate considerable public condemnation. Narratives detailing such actions command tremendous interest, both because of the polemical potential they contain

¹² Liddle.

and because acts that transgressive describe behavior that exists on the dark edge of cultural desire. When postmortem respect is critical and mourning rules the day, there will be stories that explore the violation of these principles. In dismembering a body the murderer denies the power of the dominant ideology.

Dismemberment also allows a murderer to assert ultimate control over the victim; the body itself is not suffered to remain intact, but instead is butchered, separated into component parts, reconfigured to suit the criminal's needs. It functions to utterly erase identity. And identity was an important issue to the Victorian mind. This period saw the first attempts at criminological identification. Gita Panjabi Trelease relates the interest in fingerprinting and other methods of adducing identity to the attempts of the imperial state to codify the body. Trelease says that Sir Francis Galton hoped through fingerprinting "to fix human personality, to give to each human being an identity, an individuality that can be depended on with certainty, lasting, unchangeable, always recognizable."¹³ Dismemberment violates the hope of bodily identity; it is a logical progression from torture, a control that extends beyond death, when nothing but the body remains behind to be manipulated.

In this dark cradle of cultural change the *Newgate Calendar* drew its first breath. This essay does not pretend to be an exhaustive inventory of the *Calendar*; that would be a forbiddingly large project. Rather, my attempt here is to examine a few specific ways of reading this much-neglected group of texts. So far as I have been able to discover, no one has broken the *Calendar* down into its component parts, and tabulated occurrences of crime across the volumes, with a view to seeing what was reported when. Appendix B attempts this, typifying the crimes presented so as to provide the criminal contents of each volume at a glance, and offer a scope against which the more specific interests of this paper may be measured.

¹³ Trelease, 196-197.

Case Studies

Part I: Pure Torture

Torture narratives offer potent rhetorical possibilities, and we find them in high culture as well as low. Percy Shelley's juvenilia includes *Zastrozzi* (1805), a story in which the title character undergoes torture on the rack. Stephen Bruhm's *Gothic Bodies* suggests that Shelley designed his narrative to illustrate that, though torture may be useless as a legitimate judicial method, it makes incredibly effective punishment.¹⁴ Through torture power is written on the body: the transgressor literally suffers a penalty. Public torture, or even torture witnessed by others within a domestic circle, makes a powerful platform for the torturer, and functions as very persuasive deterrent to those who may contemplate similar transgressions.

The *Newgate Calendar* contains six accounts that focus primarily on torture (see Appendix A). In these cases, confinement and physical abuse led directly to the victim's death. The perpetrators of these crimes all chose victims lower on the social scale than themselves. Thomas Watkins bound and killed a maidservant (1764), and Earl Ferrers murdered his steward (1760). Elizabeth Brownrigg targeted parish apprentices (1767), as did the two Sarah Metyards (1768). Thomas Colley rallied a mob to help him lynch a pair of elderly accused witches (1751), and John Williamson abused and starved his retarded wife to death (1767).

Crime has always tended to be unidirectional: blood flows downhill. In the 18th century, only the relatively affluent possessed the means to engage in this particular kind of violence. The confinement and torture of a living victim entails very specific conditions. The first of these is spatial, and has to do with the locale in which the confinement takes place. In order to be free to carry out torture, the perpetrator must either live under conditions in which his or her behavior

¹⁴ Bruhm discusses Shelley in "The Epistemology of the Tortured Body," 101.

is sanctioned by other members of the community, or have access to a separate space in which the torture may remain secret. During the period in which these crimes were committed, urban living space was at a premium. In the poorer classes, whole families lived crammed in one room, while the nascent bourgeois took rooms in crowded lodgings. Except for Thomas Colley, who performed his crime under the eyes of a mob, all of the torture accounts presented in the *Calendar* are domestic. They center around a home space, where the torturer has both the physical means to sequester a victim and the domestic power to silence or enlist other members of the household.

Another major issue has to do with the psychological ability of the torturer to enact assaultive behavior. Most of the time, torturers must depersonalize the victim; this process involves the denial of the victim's individual identity and/or human status. Any positive emotional attachment to the victim must be removed, because identification with the victim compromises the ability to inflict harm. Basically, confinement and torture are about the control of living victims. Such activities are sadistic and process-oriented: the perpetrator derives enjoyment from the power he or she holds over the victim, a power that generally extends over as many aspects of the victim's existence as possible. In targeting the body – through isolation, confinement, and the infliction of pain – the torturer seeks to exert control over the victim's mind.

Narratives that describe torture offer two dichotomous locations for the reader's emotional response: we may identify with the torturer, or with the victim, or negotiate a queasy balance between them. In identifying with the victim, readers may explore their own fear of exploitation, their own sense of vulnerability; in addition, they have the pleasure of being in the right. In identifying with the torturer, the reader enters into an alliance with the dominant

regime, with all its power, its gift for violence. Moreover, identification with the torturer assures the reader that he or she is not the one who suffers.

1760
Laurence, Earl Ferrers
Volume III

“the ungovernable passion”

Famous subjects always make for a juicy murder, and celebrity crimes generate a great deal of attention. In the early 21st century, we have actors, sports figures, and other media celebrities; the *Newgate Calendar* has a select register of criminals who bled blue. Earl Ferrers figures prominently in this group. The trial of a peer for murder is a rare event; in the lengthy account dealing with the earl’s crime, the author takes great pains to establish Ferrers as the scion of an “ancient and noble family,” a man with “the royal blood of the Plantagenets” in his veins (297). Debrett’s *Peerage* echoes through this passage: the narrator opens with a history of the title.¹⁵ But gentle birth does not a gentleman make, as this account proves. His lordship was a mean drunk whose abusive behavior resulted in an early separation from his wife, and ultimately in the murder of his steward.

When we examine the Ferrers account closely, a strong homoerotic undercurrent emerges. Earl Ferrers lived more than two centuries before the Stonewall riots ignited the gay liberation movement, in a time when homoerotic impulses were difficult to accept; gay activity and queer individuals, however, have always existed, and undoubtedly they formed the usual ten percent of any reading audience.¹⁶ In the 18th century, narratives that described homosexual desire needed to transmit these ideas carefully, in coded language and situations. The *Newgate*

¹⁵ Debrett’s *Peerage* was, and is, the standard reference material on the British aristocracy.

¹⁶ 20th and 21st century scholarship suggests that gay people make up at least ten percent of the population.

Calendar's account of his crime suggests that Ferrers' rage may have stemmed from an inability to cope with unwelcome sexual urges; perhaps, in attempting to conform to a straight model, Ferrers took out his frustration on the object of his desire. Certainly, his criminal biography as presented in the *Calendar* contains elements that strongly suggest a queer undercurrent. After all, the victim rejoices in the suggestive name of Mr. Johnson, a slang term for the male genitalia current at least since the mid 19th century. This usage of "Johnson" may have been in popular use much earlier, even at the time when Ferrers murdered his steward, but later authors, editors, and readers of the *Calendar* would surely have had access to this cultural knowledge. In addition, the narrator frequently describes Ferrers' behavior as the result of "passion." We have Johnson falling "a sacrifice to the ungovernable passion of Lord Ferrers"; after shooting his steward, Ferrers got drunk, so that "his passions became more tumultuous" (298, 301). Now, there are many kinds of passion, and some of the earl's emotion was undoubtedly rage, but in the 18th century, as now, passion frequently meant a sensual, bodily lust. Word choice in these instances, while ambiguous, remains suggestive.

The text also works to link Johnson and the earl's wife. Ferrers, it seems, tended to act out sexual conflict by victimizing the object of his desire. Though the reader is told that "under the influence of intoxication, [Ferrers] acted with all the wildness and brutality of a madman," the account gives us only two incidents where he acts violently (298). The first of these, the abuse of the countess, took place shortly after their marriage, and resulted in a permanent separation. Unable to bear her husband's "unwarrantable cruelty," the countess left Ferrers after a few weeks, during the period when their sexual relationship may be supposed to have commenced (298). The attack on Johnson also involved physical cruelty, this time with fatal results. The countess and the steward are further linked by Ferrers' professed motive: initially,

the earl said he grew angry with Johnson because the steward was “the receiver of the Countess’s portion” (299). Whether this portion was emotional and sexual as well as monetary is left to the reader’s judgment. Finally, we should note that Ferrers chose to be executed in the same suit he wore to his wedding.

Both the location of the crime and the murder weapon imply the earl’s repressed desire for Mr. Johnson. This was a planned crime: Ferrers staged the murder in his own bedroom, that most sexualized of locations. The earl called Johnson into his boudoir, and the two men settled an account, an activity that might have been more appropriately conducted in the study. What follows, though, is much better suited to intimate surroundings. His lordship confronted Johnson. He ordered the steward to kneel, and shot him. The fact that the earl felt it necessary to have Johnson on his knees is interesting, because in addition to expressing a traditional deference to the aristocracy, Johnson’s position also suggests oral sex performed in a submissive posture. The narrator of the account tells us that Johnson didn’t kneel fast enough for the earl’s taste. Ferrers fired while Johnson was down on one knee, that classic, beseeching posture in which marriage proposals are so frequently conducted.

Perhaps, had he attacked a female victim, Ferrers would have chosen a different, more interactive method than shooting for the murder. Shooting a victim is a less physically intimate act than strangulation, less obviously picqueristic than stabbing. Yet firearms are phallic in design, and they kill by penetration: the pistol used by Earl Ferrers fired a “ball” into the victim’s body (300). Modern murderers such David Berkowitz have admitted to attaining sexual release by shooting the victim.¹⁷ The use of a firearm also allows the murderer to maintain a physical

¹⁷ Douglas and Olshaker report that the “Son of Sam” felt unable to approach women through more usual – and less violent – channels (*Mindhunter*,).

distance from the victim's body, which would surely be on the earl's agenda if he were killing a thing he feared in himself.

At this point the narrative begins an account of the earl's ambivalence. He was by turns concerned for Johnson and aggressive toward him. Alarmed by the shot, maidservants came and fetched the wounded man to bed. The surgeon was called for, and Ferrers sat by Johnson and "asked him how he felt" (300). For a while, the earl himself tended the steward's wound with "a pledget, dipped in arquebusade water." Then Ferrers went off and got drunk. The more he drank, the more his aggressive impulses toward Johnson increased. As the *Calendar* says, "[I]n proportion as the liquor which he continued to drink took effect, his passions became more tumultuous" (301). Ferrers went back to the bed where his victim lay, seized Johnson by the wig, and nearly tore off the bedclothes in an attempt to attack the other man. On no account would he permit Johnson to be removed from his property. All of these actions suggest a man at odds with himself. On the one hand, the Ferrers's personal attendance on the wounded man suggests concern over Johnson's welfare, while the insistence that the steward remain on the earl's own grounds implies his assertion of ownership. At the same time, though, readers must remember that it was Ferrers who hurt Johnson in the first place; no solicitude would have been required without the earl's violence. The tension between these two strains of Ferrers's behavior betrays the conflict queer emotions could produce in the 18th century aristocratic breast.

The steward died the next morning. Lord Ferrers was confined in the Tower; his trial took place in Parliament, where the House of Lords could provide a jury of his peers, and where any homoerotic aspects of the crime might be addressed with greater discretion. The fact that Ferrers, unlike many other aristocratic criminals, was convicted and condemned further suggests that other issues may have complicated the lords' assessment of his transgression.

The queer elements present in the Ferrers narrative contribute to our understanding of the violence that took place between Earl Ferrers and his steward, but we should also note the sociological elements that contributed to the construction of the crime. The elements of submission here are clearly established: the aristocrat murders his employee, in the earl's own bedroom, after ordering the victim to kneel. This is a crime in which social power is critical. In no way, except for his possible charms, did Johnson have any power that matched the earl's. Johnson was, indeed, the "villain" Ferrers called him – a "villain" in the archaic sense, a low vassal. His ability to resist the earl's aggression was minimal.

A 21st century reader may also note the similarity between the account of Ferrers's execution and the traditional assumption that gay men place great importance on personal decoration and setting; one might say with equal flippancy and truth that the *Calendar's* story of Ferrers's execution reads like Queer Eye for the Condemned Guy. His lordship arrived in a landau and six, and stepped out of his carriage dressed as if for a levée with the king in "a white suit, richly embroidered with silver" (305). This is the same outfit the earl wore to his wedding, with one notable addition: Ferrers also brought a white hood to match his dress, disdainful of the black article placed over the head of more common felons before execution. The gallows were designed especially for the earl, and draped tastefully in black baize, as were the crossbeams. It is difficult to imagine a more elegant or sophisticated execution.

The spectacle, obviously, was considerable. Undoubtedly, some of this penal ostentation is due to the social status of the condemned man; no common rope should serve an aristocrat. Given that the execution would be viewed by thousands of people, Ferrers probably wanted to appear to the greatest possible advantage, and die clinging to the vestiges of his station. The relative splendor of the gallows on this occasion also served to remind spectators of the depths to

which vice could plunge even the mighty. Even earls must suffer the penalty of the law; the fineness of Ferrers's outfit was a visual reminder of both his separation from and essential similarity to even the poorest spectator.

The Ferrers narrative is useful because it illustrates the ways in which the authors of the *Calendar* could use coded language to transmit taboo ideas. Even individuals not privy to the underground vocabulary of queer desire might well understand that something funny was going on between Ferrers and his steward. In murdering Johnson, the earl projected his own confused anger onto the object of his desire, and made the other man suffer. In Ferrers's society, homosexuality was a more secret crime than murder, and the author of the Ferrers account approaches it with far more discretion. After all, he was dealing with a powerful family, and there might be repercussions. This was a time in which the power of the aristocracy was becoming destabilized, but the old regime was still ascendant. Some care must have been taken in the reporting of Ferrers's crime, both in contemporary newspaper reportage and in the *Newgate Calendar's* published account. There are, indeed, many independent sources that describe Ferrers's conduct before and after the trial. His lordship pled insanity, an increasingly popular defense in this period. In the tower, Ferrers would frequently "start, tear open his waistcoat" and gesture to "show that his mind was disturbed" (303). At trial the earl produced witnesses to testify that his lordship was of unsound mind. We should note here that before the 1980s homosexuality was pathologized, viewed as a perversion of normal sexuality and a kind of madness. After his conviction, however, Ferrers recanted this defense, saying that it had been a ploy and he was perfectly sane. In killing the "villain" who reminded him of his wife, the earl killed also the source of his anxiety. Ferrers visited his desire on the victim's body, and made sure they were both punished for it.

John Williamson
London, 1767
Volume IV

“At length he fastened the miserable creature’s hands behind her with handcuffs, and, by means of a rope passed through a staple, drew them so tight above her head that only the tips of her toes touched the ground”

There is little in the *Newgate Calendar*’s account of John Williamson’s history to suggest that he might torture his wife to death. True, Williamson was much less privileged than Earl Ferrers; he was “the son of people in but indifferent circumstances” (44). His parents apprenticed him as a shoemaker, and shortly after becoming a journeyman Williamson married “an honest and sober woman” (44). Unfortunately, she left Williamson a widower, with three children on his hands. “Some time passed,” during which Williamson supported himself and his children “in a decent manner” (44).

Eventually, though, Williamson made the acquaintance of a young retarded girl with a competence. He courted her, and though the girl’s guardian forbade the banns the two were married. Her money came into Williamson’s hands, and the abuse began shortly afterward. Three weeks after they were married, Williamson “cruelly beat his wife, threw water over her, and otherwise treated her with great severity” (44). This word, “severity,” appears more often in this account than any other adjective. “Barbarity,” “cruelty,” and “brutality” all make their appearance, but severity outnumbers them three to one. Severity, of course, implies a transgression of degree; severe behavior is at the outermost limits of a continuum, the near end of which may include socially acceptable acts. We know, of course, that a certain amount of domestic violence was winked at in the 18th century; only in the last forty years, and under pressure from feminist groups, has serious reform occurred in this area. Female readers of the

Williamson account may well have seen in it their own vulnerability taken to an extreme degree. In the London where Williamson and his victim lived, it was legal to discipline one's wife. Wives were subject to their husbands, as all people were subject to the state; the crime of murdering one's husband was petty treason, punishable by burning at the stake, while the killing of a wife merited only the usual public execution by hanging. Crimes against husbands transgressed against the nation in miniature, and wives were subject to "detainment at 'his majesty's' pleasure," whether the monarch concerned was the woman's king or her husband. This dynamic is at work in the *Calendar's* account when the author specifically refers to the torture as "punishment." After beating his wife, Williamson "threatened that if she again offended in the same way he would punish her with still greater severity" (45).

John Williamson's wife would have been subject to her husband's control to an even greater degree than was usually the case. The *Newgate Calendar* says that she "was a young woman so deficient in point of intellect that it may be said she bordered upon idiocy"; the girl did not have the intellectual resources to offer any strategic opposition to the abuse. Williamson chose his victim carefully. Not only did he benefit monetarily from her assets, but he found a ready outlet for aggression in a retarded girl unable to offer serious resistance. The violence he inflicted on her body was terrible and ongoing; the narrator himself is at pains to describe it. Williamson hung his wife from a beam with handcuffs, so that "only the tips of her toes touched the ground"; most of her body weight would have been borne by her arms and shoulders (44). Given that she was left suspended thus for "a whole month," very likely the girl's wrists and shoulder joints would have dislocated under the pressure (44). In any case, her pain must have been unimaginable. She was kept in a closet, beaten, and starved. Williamson used to "put a small piece of bread-and-butter, so that she could just touch it with her mouth" (44). On one

occasion, when the restraints made her hands swell, she begged to be allowed near the fire. Williamson allowed this, but after a few moments he observed her “throwing the vermin that swarmed on her clothes into the fire,” and ordered her to “return to her kennel” (45).

We never know her name. The author of the *Calendar*'s account says only that she was an idiot, that she possessed a small legacy, and that she suffered greatly before her death. In default, I suppose, we should call her Mrs. Williamson. After all, she belonged to the man she married. Others in the house objected to the torture: a female lodger in the house and Williamson's own daughter both offered assistance. They slipped her food and pled with Williamson on the victim's behalf, but the husband's word was, literally, law. Williamson was the king of his castle, and he was obeyed. No one seems to have thought of appealing to outside authorities until his wife died. She was Mrs. Williamson in name, though not in body or spirit, and that was all the compiler of this account felt his readers needed to know.

After discovery of the crime, the narrative moves quickly to present Williamson's repentance. His arrest and trial are dispensed with in two sentences. The rest is penitence: awaiting execution, Williamson “behaved in a very decent and penitent manner,” and on the scaffold he “sung a psalm and prayed some time” (45). In the shadow of the gallows, Williamson knew himself to be in the clutches of two powers greater than his own. The state had already judged him; all possibility for further appeal lay with God. John Williamson knew the ways of authority very well, and directed his energies accordingly.

Part II: Disposing of the Body

The *Newgate Calendar* does not report any instances of torture and confinement that occurred later than 1768. This, of course, does not mean that no torture happened after that date. Such violence is always with us. But the editors of the *Calendar* either had trouble locating reported accounts of such crimes, or felt that they were less interesting to the public, less sensational, unlikely to generate sales. In any case, the Metyards' torture of parish apprentices is the last such narrative in the *Calendar*.

Stories of postmortem abuse, however, extend over the whole length of the *Newgate Calendar*. In Volumes III and IV dismemberment appears alongside torture, but the *Calendar* shows a more durable interest in the former. Volume III introduces us to Thomas Colley and Earl Ferrers, but it also contains two instances of violence directed against the dead. As early as 1726, we have Catherine Hayes and her associates murdering and dismembering the unfortunate Mr. Hayes; in 1738, George Price strangled his wife with a whip, disfigured her face, and left the body under a gibbet. Volume IV contains four accounts of torture, and three dismemberments. Martha Alden killed and dismembered her husband in 1807, and John Holloway murdered his wife in 1831 and strewed her body parts across London. We also find the Metyards, who both tortured and dismembered their victim. Volume V contains no torture narratives at all, but the postmortem abuse of corpses goes on. George Allen killed and disemboweled his sons with a razor in 1807, and in 1836 James Greenacre killed and dismembered a woman he had promised to marry.

This shift in narrative interest was likely inspired by changing attitudes about the human body and the increasing fetishization of death. Reports of medical students pilfering bodies for

dissection had long had a purchase in the public imagination: the funerary trade grew rich on contrived devices to prevent the pilfering of an interred body.¹⁸ The clinics' main supply came from the execution of criminals like John Williamson. Despite the difficulty in getting cadavers, anatomical knowledge increased by leaps and bounds. It seems likely that the rise of dissectional anatomic study influenced the number of people willing to perform similar acts for criminal reasons. As reports of discoveries about the body were published, perhaps the skin seemed a more permeable barrier; the doctors were doing it, after all.

Unlike confinement and torture, dismemberment is not practiced on a living victim. If the victim is alive, then dismemberment is a method of torture; here, within the bounds of the *Calendar*, we can only turn to the Metyards, who amputated a victim's finger before killing her. Most of the time, dismemberment takes place after the victim's death. The keynote to torture is sadism, the infliction of suffering, but dismemberment seeks absolute control over the body itself. If torture is the denial of the victim's identity, dismemberment is its utter destruction, the breaking down of a corpse into its component parts. Often, those who mutilate their victims' bodies explain that they were attempting to prevent identification of the corpse, to render the body unrecognizable. Murderers also choose dismemberment for practical reasons. In partitioning a corpse, the dismemberer attempts to erase what little identity remains to the victim: the body itself is rendered inarticulate, both in the sense that its cohesion is violated and through the intended inability of the pieces to communicate their own history to investigators. In addition, the murderer may separate the body into smaller packages to facilitate transportation or aid in disposal. In such cases, the body becomes a vehicle for the dismemberer's convenience, an object to be manipulated, a medium for the murderer's violent and gross self-assertion.

¹⁸ For example, the rigging of bells as alarms, and the construction of tamperproof coffins and funerary vaults (see Wilkins,).

Even taking such potential benefits into account, though, dismemberment is a difficult business. Like confinement and torture, dismemberment requires access to a private place where prolonged criminal activity may proceed unhindered by the community. Dismemberment requires a room of one's own, preferably a bathroom with a drain. Since the advent of modern plumbing, the bathtub has been the setting of choice for dismembering one's victims, for obvious reasons. But bathtubs, especially those with running water, were rare in the 18th century. By the mid-19th century, increasing public sanitation provided potential dismemberers with greater facilities for disposing of the body: after the disappearance of Reverend Speke in 1898, at least one newspaper reported the ominous discovery of a chopping block connected directly with the city's main sewer.¹⁹ But, even if the dismemberment takes place in a bathtub, it is difficult to remove all trace evidence of the crime. Blood stains, and hair catches in the drain. Tools may break against the bone, and then these must be disposed of with the body parts, and perhaps replaced so that their absence isn't noted.²⁰ Then, too, the sheer amount of physical effort required to partition a human body is prohibitive. This was especially true before the advent of power tools, when dismemberment relied on manual labor. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the dismemberer had to depend on axes, cleavers, saws, knives, and elbow grease. And, even after the dismemberment and cleanup is itself complete, there still remains the problem of disposing of the parts. As a strategy, dismemberment is labor-intensive. Murderers may profess to have dismembered their victims to aid in disposal, but dismemberment really isn't any easier than other methods of secreting a dead body.

Why go to so much trouble? Why not simply weight the body, dump the victim in the river, and let the fish and the water take care of the corpse? Why not take up some flags in the

¹⁹ Liddle.

²⁰ P.D. James comments on the difficulty in (and importance of) disposing of tools used in murders in *The Maul and the Pear Tree*.

cellar, and hide the body there? To make an undertaking that requires so much effort worthwhile, there must be commensurate rewards. Something about the dismemberment itself must provide a gratification to the perpetrator that he or she is unable to obtain through simpler methods of body disposal.

The most satisfactory explanations of this issue are psychologically and sociologically based. Dismemberment provide the murderer with a control over the victim that is simply not available by other means. The components most frequently removed in dismemberment are the head, hands, and legs, all body parts that represent human agency. The head, which western culture represents as both the seat of thought and a crucial signifier of individual identity, is almost always a primary target. The hands, which suggest an individual's ability to "touch" or "handle" events, are also usually separated from the corpus. The third most common subject of the dismemberer's attention is the legs, which symbolize the victim's ability to move. Then, too, dismemberment may satisfy a curiosity about the body's contents; it is more revealing than nakedness, more penetrative than sex. The methods by which dismemberment must be accomplished all involve the insertion of phallic objects such as knives or saws into a body unable to offer resistance. Current studies in forensic psychology suggest that such behavior may be picqueristic: repeated insertion of foreign objects into a dead or dying body may approximate intercourse, and itself provide the perpetrator with a sexual release.

Clearly, the process of dismemberment involves more than simple convenience for the murderer. For readers, accounts that detail such activities offer a view of the ultimate, malign exertion of power. Dismemberment takes place after death, when the corpse is unable to offer active resistance; it imposes the murderer's own design on the body. Such crimes are widely reported because of their rarity, and because they draw readers. The most gentle reader can

satisfy his or her own curiosity through the vicarious experience offered by dismemberment narratives. Readers can explore anger, anatomy, and power without getting their own hands dirty. If, as Aristotle suggests, art should have a cathartic effect on the audience, then clearly the emotional release dismemberment narratives make available does not rely on the reader's identification with the victim. Instead it depends on the violation of a corpse; our attention is on the murderer's activities, or on the detection of the crime.

Each of the accounts discussed below includes the dismemberment of a victim. In most cases, the murderers explain their postmortem violence as an act of expedience. The authors of the accounts, however, suggest that other motives may well operate here. When a decomposing body threatened to reveal their victimization of parish apprentices, the two Sarah Metyards responded by dismembering one victim and removing the pieces from their premises. Catherine Hayes and her accomplices killed Mr. Hayes, cut off his head, and reduced the rest of his body to manageable chunks. James Greenacre chopped up the dead body of a woman with whom he had been romantically involved and deposited the packages at various locations around London. The narratives provoke interest by playing on the audience's anxiety about mortal helplessness, and they outline a dark and bloody path to power. Ultimately, though, the accounts must show that dismemberment fails. The public does not like true crime narratives where the dismemberer remains uncaught; capture and punishment are necessary fixtures. The punitive phase of these accounts works to reassure readers that the criminal has been neutralized; they also function to dampen deviant interest in the dismemberment itself by warning of the penalties transgressors pay.

Sarah Metyard and Sarah Morgan Metyard, Her Daughter
London, 1758 (executed 1768)
Volume IV

“if she promised to behave well in future, she would be no longer confined”

With the Metyard narrative we turn the corner from a dynamic focused on confinement and the infliction of suffering to one in which interest settles on the disposal of a corpse. The Metyards, a mother and daughter, both tortured their victim and dismembered her body after death. In 1758 the Metyards acquired five apprentices, all young girls chosen from different parish workhouses. At least one of the apprentices, a sickly girl named Anne Naylor, quickly became the object of serious abuse from her masters. The Metyards starved Anne Naylor; they tied her up, beat her with a broom handle, amputated one of her fingers, and bound her in a contorted position for three days. They displayed her to the other apprentices as a warning against misbehavior. After four days the girl lost the ability to speak. When she died, the younger Metyard beat her corpse with the heel of a shoe. Four days after the murder, the Metyards placed the body in a box and hid it in the attic. They told anyone who asked that Anne Naylor had gone away, but this seemed unlikely, given that her things remained in the garret. The dead girl's sister was also apprenticed to the Metyards, and when she voiced her suspicions the Metyards murdered her, too.

After a while, the body in the attic began to stink, and the Metyards took further action. On Christmas Day they cut up Anne Naylor's body and bundled up the pieces, except for the finger which had been cut from Anne's hand before her death; this, presumably, they kept as an anatomical souvenir. The bundles were conveyed to a gully near Chick Lane and thrown into a sewer. Though pieces of the body were found fairly quickly, the authorities declined to act in the

matter. The coroner thought it likely that the corpse had been stolen from a local churchyard by medical students, and chose not to pursue the case. The Metyards' guilt was not discovered until four years later, when an unidentified informant went to the overseers of Tottenham parish. Sarah Metyard and Sarah Morgan Metyard were tried at the Old Bailey, found guilty, and in 1768 they were executed at Tyburn.

The *Newgate Calendar*'s account of the Metyard case is fascinating for several reasons. First, it marks the transition from torture to dismemberment, from interest in the suffering of a living body to the disposal of a dead one: with the Metyards we move further down the continuum of control. As described in the *Calendar*, the Metyards' actions sought to erase their victim's identity. They wielded power over Anne Naylor at every level. The older women took her from a workhouse, which suggests that the girl's parents were either dead or in no condition to support her. Then, too, Anne Naylor was legally bound to their service, and she lived in their house: the Metyards decided whether or not she ate, or slept, or suffered. They tortured her to death, and then kept her body in the attic with other household discards. Finally, they partitioned her corpse and threw the pieces into a sewer. The *Calendar* says that Mrs. Metyard's original intention had been to burn the pieces of Anne's body and thus erase her entirely, but she abandoned this plan for fear of telltale smoke.

Significantly, Anne's death is preceded by her mutism. Voice is a major issue in all the major accounts of confinement and torture we find in the *Newgate Calendar*, and across the true crime genre generally. In order for domination to be successful, of course, the victim must be rendered voiceless. The author's word choice underscores this point: over the course of the narrative, the Metyards' actions are called "barbarous" three times. Our English word "barbarity" is Latinate: the Romans used the expression "bar bar bar" to mimic the unfamiliar

tongues spoken by the people they conquered. Whether the narrator of the Metyard account possessed a solid classical education or not, the use of a word that originated in imperialist, linguistic misunderstanding is suggestive. Certainly, the Metyards did all they could to silence Anne Naylor.

And yet, even in death, Anne managed to speak. Decomposition did its work, and her body spoke for her; not for nothing do we call bad smells “noisesome.” The Metyards were forced to react to their victim, and to what they had done. Their response was to extend the controlling mechanism, to dismember the body; they cut her down to size, and discarded her. Ultimately, of course, this plan proved ineffective, and an authority greater than the Metyards’ own intervened. The legal establishment condemned them to a confinement and death very like their victim’s. Anne Naylor was bound in a garret, the Metyards sent to Newgate prison; the apprentice likely died of asphyxiation, while her murderers swung by their necks at Tyburn. Their bodies were offered up as visual spectacle, just as Anne was displayed before her fellow apprentices. Most interestingly of all, the elder Sarah Metyard was also rendered voiceless before her death. She pitched a fit on the road to Tyburn, and the executioner hanged an unconscious woman.

Just three years after the Metyards murdered Anne Naylor and her sister, a woman named Elizabeth Brownrigg was executed for a series of similar crimes (see Appendix A). Brownrigg, a midwife, took in pregnant girls from the parish and subjected them to severe physical abuse. Like the Metyards, Brownrigg frequently directed her violence against the victim’s voice. One girl, Mary Clifford, was “frequently tied up naked and beaten with a hearth broom, a horsewhip

or a cane until she was absolutely speechless” (47). When Clifford reported the abuse to a lodger in the house, Brownrigg “flew at the girl and cut her tongue in two places” (49).²¹

No men appear as major characters in the Metyard narrative. The masculine state is distant and ineffectual, its representatives ignorant of the dark truth lingering round the homely milliner’s hearth. Watchmen find pieces of Anne Naylor’s body, but the coroner declines to prosecute. It is only at the very end of the narrative, when the legal system finally acts against the Metyards, that the masculine principle comes into play. This is a story of female cruelty and feminine control; appropriately, the action takes place almost exclusively within the domestic sphere. The Metyards keep a lodging house, a business that enables practitioners to make money while maintaining a feminine, caretaking role. Similarly, their “adoption” of young apprentices is a dark version of the maternal impulse. Seen in this light, it is evident that one attraction of the Metyard narrative and others like it is their perversion of supposedly natural female roles. In a time when Rousseau’s concept of maternity was ascending to reification, we might naturally expect to see narratives that express anxiety over motherhood, and behavior that acts out against idealized feminine nurturance.²²

As so often in the *Calendar*, the narrator of this account adopts a moralizing tone to underscore the evil associated with transgressive acts, and to defuse the reader’s enjoyment of the sensational. This was (and is) a common narrative device in sensational genres: in *Moll Flanders*, Daniel Defoe takes care to warn readers that, though the details he presents in the novel may be salacious, the account is provided for purely educational purposes. The narrator of the Metyard account vilifies his subjects: they are “barbarous women,” “inhuman wretches”

²¹ Straub’s study of the Brownrigg case detects a sexual undercurrent here, as well. Straub points to the similarity between certain of Brownrigg’s actions and the conventions of sadomasochistic sex.

²² Rousseau’s novel *Emile* and his philosophical works promote a maternal model that revised prevailing constructions of the family, and especially of women’s role in childrearing. We owe the modern concept of the nuclear family to his theories.

whose “fury” leads inevitably and without inflection to Anne Naylor’s murder. Mrs. Metyard fills the stock role of witch admirably, especially in the passage where “the old woman” crouches over the hearth and mutters “The fire tells no tales” before casting her victim’s hand into the flames. For her part, the younger Sarah Metyard acts the role of the disturbed spinster: hysterical, herself abused, dependent on her mother and given to fits of violent rage. The other apprentices are stock orphans, appropriately ragged, and given few lines; even Anne Naylor’s sister is mostly background. Reading this account, it can be no mystery why Dickens found the *Newgate Calendar* so edifying.

**Catherine Hayes
London, 1726
Volume III**

“the body next became the object of their attention”

The Hayes narrative is the earliest account of dismemberment in the *Newgate Calendar*. With the help of two conspirators, Catherine Hayes got her husband drunk, then carried him to a bedroom and struck him three times in the head with a hatchet. To dispose of the corpse, Hayes and her accomplices chose dismemberment.

According to the *Calendar*’s account of her life and crimes, Catherine Hayes was a woman who knew how to manipulate the body. The author implies that Hayes was early initiated into the mysteries of the flesh: after falling out with her parents, she left home at fifteen and headed for London. On the road, however, “she met with some officers who, remarking that her person was engaging, persuaded her to accompany them to their quarters” (30). The girl stayed with these men some time, and then “strolled on into Warwickshire,” where she got a job

in the household of Mr. Hayes, a local farmer (30). Soon “an intimacy...sprang up between her and the son of her master,” and the two were secretly married (30). At the same time, the officers remained on the scene, attempting to conscript her new husband into their ranks. Some years later, when she murdered him, Catherine Hayes enlisted the aid of a man named Billings. The text tells us first that Billings is her “supposed son...by her former connection,” but later goes on to suggest that their relationship was as sexual as filial (31). When officers came to arrest Hayes, they found her in déshabille, in her private chamber, with Billings perched half-naked on the edge of the bed.

Clearly, we can see that Catherine Hayes was a scarlet woman, even without the blood on her hands. Worse, she managed her husband; she tricked him into marrying a whore (as the saying went); she persuaded him to enlist in the military, and chose where they would finally settle. She decided the manner of his death. Significantly, in dismembering his body she first removed the head. After all, her husband was, at least nominally, head of the family, and there could be no more literal termination of his authority. In the narrative, her power is obvious, her control unquestionable. Though Hayes spoke “of her husband to his acquaintances in terms of great tenderness and respect,” to her “female associates” she described him as “contemptible” (31). On one occasion Hayes told a friend that she would think it “no more sin to murder [her husband] than to kill a dog” (31). She also enjoyed manipulating the neighbors, “creating and encouraging quarrels” (30).

Some early readers would have responded morally to the *Calendar*'s characterization of Catherine Hayes, and condemned her actions, even without the murder, as lying far outside the parameters of accepted behavior. Other readers would have been titillated by her sexual license.

Still others, women particularly, may have identified with or even envied Hayes, seeing in her strength, independence, and resourcefulness a power they felt themselves unable to claim.

In an era when women were encouraged to be silent, Catherine Hayes had a voice, and she used it. The *Calendar* quotes her extensively, and depicts Hayes as quite a storyteller. A dark creativity inspires her lies. To persuade an accomplice she alleged that “her husband was an atheist, and had already been guilty of murdering two of his own children, one of who he had buried under an apple-tree, and the other under a pear tree” (32). She was no less inventive under pressure; after killing her husband, Hayes and her accomplices were disturbed by a Mrs. Springate, who lodged downstairs. Hayes “had a ready answer” to explain the noise, and told the woman that “some company had visited them, and had grown merry,” but was that moment “taking their leave” (33). Later that night, and carrying Mr. Hayes’ head in a pail, the murderers were surprised on the stairs, again by the inconvenient Mrs. Springate. This time, Hayes acted “with incredible dissimulation” (34). She told her neighbor that Mr. Hayes was “going a journey,” and then “affected to take leave of him, pretending great concern that he was under a necessity of going at so late an hour” (34).

Mr. Hayes was indeed going on a journey; his spirit had already departed, and his head was destined for the Thames. Unfortunately, the male accomplices were less competent than Catherine Hayes. They forgot that the tide was ebbing, and failed to throw the head far enough for the river’s current to pick it up. The head was soon found, and the authorities displayed it on a pike in hopes that someone could identify it. Hayes’ masterpiece, though, comes later, when her husband has been missing some time, and his friends have begun to ask questions. The *Calendar* quotes Catherine Hayes directly:

‘Some time ago,’ said she, ‘he happened to have a dispute with a man, and from words they came to blows, so that Mr Hayes killed him. The wife of the deceased made up the affair, on Mr Hayes’ promising to pay her a certain annual allowance; but her not being able to make it good, she threatened to inform against him, on which he has absconded.’
(36)

When asked, Hayes provided further details: the body of the man supposedly killed by Mr. Hayes had been “buried entire”; her husband’s bond to the widow was fifteen pounds; he had fled to Portugal, “in company with some gentlemen” (36).

The gentleman inquiring after Mr. Hayes was less easily persuaded than Mrs. Springate. He requested another friend to call on Hayes, and with this man her invention failed at last. The story she told him didn’t match her earlier effort, and the two men became doubly suspicious. They went to examine the head, and pronounced it to be that of their missing friend.

The length of the Hayes narrative suggests the tremendous interest generated by the murder. When the early volumes of the *Calendar* appeared, paper was an expensive commodity: publishers wouldn’t have invested that much product into a humdrum crime. The Hayes case, evidently, touched a cultural nerve, and the *Calendar*’s piece responds to that interest. Women increasingly sought independence in this period, and the dominant culture responded by imposing ever-stricter rules for feminine behavior. Stories of female transgression were attractive to the patriarchal establishment because they illustrated the dangers of rampant female agency. At the same time, though, figures like Catherine Hayes offered an alternative model of femininity. Catherine Hayes was a murderer, but she was also a strong, determined woman, and it is not difficult to imagine that the women who read the Hayes account identified with her

desire for more power. Indeed, in this period few paths to power lay open to women; crime was one. Many of the fictional heroines of the day reflect the conflict the tension between women's strength and ambition and their constriction within the law. Novelists like Defoe, Fielding, and Thackeray played fictional variations on this theme: Catherine Hayes is a murderous Moll Flanders, a violent Becky Sharp. Wicked, enterprising women may be dangerous, but they are also fascinating.

James Greenacre
1836
Volume V

“some public satisfaction was afforded by this most singular event”

In the last days of 1836, a man named James Greenacre murdered a woman named Hannah Brown. He dismembered her, wrapped the pieces in coarse cloth, and deposited the packages at various locations around London. The *Newgate Calendar's* account of Greenacre's crime is structured very differently than earlier narratives. Usually, the *Calendar's* authors introduce the murderer first; they outline his or her family history, then dwell on the commission of the crime, and wind up with an account of the execution's spectacle. Such narratives tell the criminal's story. In the Greenacre account, though, the criminal himself comes in for scant attention. Readers meet James Greenacre when the police do. The author uses no pejoratives at all to describe James Greenacre; the proliferation of adjectives we see so frequently in the *Calendar* is entirely absent here, though Hannah Brown is twice described as “unfortunate” (288). And, importantly, the author of the Greenacre account wastes no time in speculating on the ethical or sinful aspects of the crime. The tone is less moralistic than matter of fact. There is

even an interest in the aesthetic aspects of murder. The author finds fault with the dismemberer's technique:

The head had been severed from the trunk in an awkward manner, the bone of the neck having been partly sawn through and partly broken off; and the legs had been removed in a similar irregular way. (287)

All these stylistic moves are far closer to the narrative strategies of detective fiction than those employed earlier in the *Calendar*. As critics from Dorothy L. Sayers to John Cawelti have noted, the classic mystery story tends to follow a very strict narrative model. The setting is laid; a crime occurs; a detective investigates. The criminal is apprehended. He confesses, and is ushered to an execution that takes place conveniently offstage. At the most basic level, detection fiction is conservative; it celebrates the power of the state, its ability to eliminate of a violent threat to order. Once the murderer has been caught and handed over to judicial authorities, normal life resumes.

This is exactly the plot arc of the Greenacre account. The principal emphasis of the narrative is on the detection of crime: the discovery of the body parts, the efforts of the police, and the apprehension of the criminal. Early on, readers run across a body. A bricklayer found a woman's trunk on his way home from work; shortly after, her head was discovered near the Regent's Canal. In early February, a laborer found her legs in a ditch. The narrator tells us that "public excitement was raised to the highest pitch" over the case, and the authorities investigated vigorously. Readers may not have a description of the murder or subsequent abuse of the body, but the investigators' activities supply their own grisly details. The police made as free with

Brown's corpse as her murderer did: they examined her wounds, and assessed the level of skill with which they had been inflicted. They exhumed her trunk, and matched it to the head they found. The head itself remained preserved in spirits at Mr. Girdwood's, surgeon of the district, where it remained "open for the inspection of all persons who it was supposed would be able to afford any information on the subject" of her identity (287). In March a broker named Mr. Gay identified the head as the remains of his sister, Hannah Brown. Gay suggested a possible suspect in one James Greenacre, with whom the deceased had been romantically involved. According to Gay, his sister was supposed to marry Greenacre, but the bride vanished before the wedding could take place.

The magistrates issued a warrant for Greenacre's arrest; the police found him in bed with Sarah Gale, the woman "with whom he cohabited" and his accomplice in the crime (289). At first, Greenacre "denied all such knowledge of any such person as Hannah Brown" (289). When police searched Greenacre's home, though, they found several items of Brown's clothing packed into trunks. Greenacre then admitted that he had promised to marry the victim, but still denied knowledge of her murder. Further examination of the trunks containing Brown's clothing revealed fabric exactly like that found with the victim's torso. Greenacre was convicted of the murder, and hanged for it.

All the elements of mystery fiction are here; we even have two prototypical detectives in the persons of Mr. Girdwood, the medical man who preserved Brown's head, and Inspector Feltham, who made the arrest and directed the subsequent search of Greenacre's house. Critics like Dorothy L. Sayers have pointed out that the fictional detective could not have been invented before the legal system achieved hegemony; the

popularity of the genre depends on the public's faith in official processes.²³ The Greenacre account's focus on the detection of a crime, instead of on its commission, reflects the transfer of attention from the criminal to judicial authority. The story told here is not Greenacre's, nor is it Hannah Brown's. This is a narrative where transgression is punished, where the state's efforts to apprehend the criminal take center stage.

²³ Sayers, 9-10.

Conclusion

The *Newgate Calendar* is a lengthy and complicated text. In seeking to analyze it, I have divided the crimes it presents both categorically, according to the behavior described, and thematically, with regard to the anxieties explored in individual accounts. This grouping allows us to chart the ways in which popular interest in murderous activities shifted over time, from the confinement and torture of living victims in the *Calendar*'s early volumes to the rehearsals of postmortem violation that dominate later accounts. In these narratives, we see the changing dynamics of power. When early versions of the *Calendar* appeared in the 18th century, England was a nation where basic social values were shifting. Increasing urbanization threw people together in higher concentrations than ever before, at the same time that philosophical and political revolutions called authority itself into question. Interpersonal control was the order of the day, in private life as well as juridically; the torturers considered here took punitive power to a personalized, transgressive level. The earlier emphasis on the spectacle of bodily punishment remains in these early volumes, supplying readers with a narrative pleasure that was rapidly disappearing. Foucault asserts that these "few decades saw the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body...exposed to public view" (8).

However true this may have been officially, there was still a popular audience for accounts describing exactly these behaviors. People still wanted to see torture inflicted, but at the same time they wished to be told that the burgeoning legal system was good for them, a positive effect of civilization. Only the government should torture, and confine; the state reserved execution as an exclusive right.

These anxieties deepened, and responded to the increasing influence of science. More than a century passed between the appearance of the *Calendar*'s first volume and its last one. By the mid-19th century, religious doubts assumed a more menacing presence. Science and medicine were like tides eroding traditional beliefs, leaving the mass audience stranded before the technological revolution. The body was viewed less as a vessel containing the spirit than a potential last resort, a machine made of muscles and tissue, subject to dismantling at the murderer's discretion. The earliest volumes show concern over crimes that violate the body, both before and after death, but in the later volumes postmortem mutilation assumes a new dominance. The culture felt greater anxiety over the body's treatment after death, so that criminals who violated the dead were more interesting than those who assaulted a living body.

All this, of course, is very gruesome; true crime accounts mine a dark and violent territory of human consciousness. Yet these narratives have a great deal to offer: they show us the ways in which violence is represented, the narrative arc murder takes in the reader's consciousness. Any true crime narrative is simply one representation of an event that (allegedly) occurred in real time, to real people. No two descriptions of a given murder will be exactly the same, even if both of the authors witnessed the event. "True crime" narratives, then, are themselves neither criminal nor true. In most situations, no civil penalties attach to the production or consumption of murder narratives; we may write and read them legally, though often such activities are called "guilty pleasures." Neither can we say that such accounts are true; they are narratives of a murder, not the murder itself, as Plato would remind us. There are infinite versions of the truth. The way in which a given account presents a crime reflects authorial preoccupation; it builds the concept of crime for the reader, and allows him or her to

explore extreme behavior. At the same time, narratives of transgressive behavior offer a tacit challenge to dominant systems. They show that ideology may be refused, that the law may be broken as easily as a body. Finally, true crime narratives close the circle by reminding the reader of the penalty to be paid for transgression.

Each of the cases accounts discussed in this paper sheds a different light on the anxieties experienced by readers of the *Newgate Calendar*. In a period when aristocratic dominance was under attack, the *Calendar* presents Earl Ferrers, who murdered his steward; the Ferrers narrative also works to transmit coded ideas of sexually transgressive behavior. John Williamson exerted his awful authority beyond the acceptable extreme when he tortured his wife to death. Sarah Metyard and Sarah Morgan Metyard committed their murders under the burgeoning shadow of capitalism; they tortured an apprentice to death, secreted the body on the premises, and finally dismembered and disposed of the victim. Catherine Hayes proved herself capable of removing the head of the family. James Greenacre's crime is hidden behind an official veil that obscures both horrific details and criminal agency. The state's power, always visible in the execution narratives that close most of the *Calendar's* accounts, in the end is expanded to include the process of detection. In this the *Newgate Calendar* looks forward to the development of the genre; contemporary true crime accounts are generally authored by a people who have known the criminal in an official capacity, either as a part of the investigative process or through psychological attempts to explain the crime.

We have come round to the murderer again, this time by way of analysis. The murderer's own experience is unavailable, even in the presence of a confession; memory blurs any action, reconstitutes and explains it; reminiscence is the ultimate unreliable narrator. No matter how many psychological studies we conduct, despite two centuries of criminological research, and

regardless of artistic attempts to reconstruct homicidal experience, the murderer's own story must remain a dark secret.

The rest of us are left with narrative, imagination, and, perhaps, scholarship. My examination of the *Newgate Calendar* is by no means definitive. I have, however, attempted to study its narrative phenomena so as to suggest the general trend of the genre as it reflects cultural preoccupation. I have also tried to describe the ways in which true crime narratives serve their readers. In the *Newgate Calendar*, we find both the ancestor of modern crime narratives and a mirror that gives us a wavering view of sociopolitical shifts.

References

- Black, Joel. *The Aesthetics of Murder: A Study in Romantic Literature and Contemporary Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins: 1991.
- Bruhm, Stephen. *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1994.
- Buss, David M. *The Murderer Next Door: Why the Mind is Designed to Kill*. New York: Penguin, 2005.
- The Complete Newgate Calendar*. <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/lpop/etext/completewgate.htm>
- De Quincey, Thomas. "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts." 1827. Kila, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004.
- Douglas, John, and Mark Olshaker. *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Fielding, Henry. "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers." 1751. *Literature and the Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England*. Ed. Stephen Copley. Sydney: Croon Helm, 1984. 179-185.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Foucault, Michel. *I, Pierre, Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother...: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*. Random House, 1975.
- Hitchcock, James. "Murder as One of the Liberal Arts." *American Scholar*, Spring 1994, volume 63, issue 2.
http://web8.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug+sid+67F26858%2D8EF6%2D4EBC%2D91...
- Hollingsworth, Keith. "The Newgate Theme." *The Newgate Novel, 1830-1847*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963. 3-17.
- Liddle, Dallas. "Anatomy of a 'Nine Days' Wonder': Sensational Journalism in the Decade of the Sensation Novel." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Ed. Andrew Maunder and Grace Young. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004. 89-103.
- Powell, Sally. "Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Ed. Andrew Maunder and Grace Young. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004. 45-58.

- Powers, Katherine A. "Notorious." Boston College Magazine, 2001.
http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/fall_2000/11_notorious.html
- Ressler, Robert K., Ann W. Burgess, and John E. Douglas. *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives*. New York: The Free Press, 1992.
- Sayers, Dorothy L. "Introduction." *Tales of Detection and Mystery*. New York: McFadden Books, 1962.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Straub, Kristina. "Feminine Sexuality, Class Identity, and Narrative Form in the Newgate Calendars." *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture*. Ed. Dennis Todd and Cynthia Wall. University of Delaware Press, 2001. 218-235.
- Trelease, Gita Panjabi. "Time's Hand: Fingerprints, Empire, and Victorian Narratives of Crime." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Ed. Andrew Maunder and Grace Young. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004. 195-206.
- Wilde, Oscar. "Pen, Pencil, and Poison." *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. University of Chicago, 1969. 320-340.
- Wilkins, Robert. *Death: A History of Man's Obsessions and Fears*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1990.

Appendix A

Confinement/Torture (6 instances):

Thomas Colley	1751	tortured elderly “witches” to death (vol. III)
Laurence, Earl Ferrers	1760	tortured his steward, Mr. Johnson, to death (vol. III)
Thomas Watkins	1764	bound and killed a maidservant (vol. IV)
John Williamson	1767	tortured and starved his retarded wife to death (vol. IV)
Elizabeth Brownrigg	1767	tortured apprentices to death (vol. IV)
Sarah Metyard, Sarah Morgan Metyard	1768	“Parish apprentices” (vol. IV)

Dismemberment/Postmortem Mutilation (6 instances):

Catherine Hayes and others	1726	murdered her husband and cut off his head (vol. III)
George Price	1738	strangled his wife with a whip, disfigured her face, and left the body under a gibbet (vol. III)
Martha Alden	1807	Samuel Alden, her husband (vol. IV)
George Allen	1807	killed his children with a razor, disemboweled his sons (vol. V)
John Holloway	1831	murdered and dismembered his wife (vol. IV)
James Greenacre and Sarah Gale	1836	dismembered Hannah Brown (vol. V)

Appendix B

Vol. I: 1100s (Henry I), 1300s (Edward II), principally 1551-1688

Murderers	F 4	M 27	T 31
Highwaymen	F 1	M 15	T 16
Other Robbers	F 1	M 5	T 6
Polygamy	F 1	M	T 1

Vol. II: 1689-1724

Highwaymen	F	M 44		T 44	
Murderers	F 4	M 35	F 1- vin.	M 4-acquitted M 1-vin.	T 45
Other Robbers	F 4	M 23			T 27
Cons	F 1	M 5			T 6
Piracy	F	M 2			T 2
Assault	F	M 2	(The "Coventry Act," Restoration)		T 2
Att. Murder	F	M 1			T 1
Abduction	F	M 1			T 1
Coining	F 1	M			T 1

Vol. III: 1724-1761

Murderers	F 12	M 54	M 1-no attempt	M 2-vin.	T 69
Other Robbers	F 3	M 16			T 19
Highwaymen	F	M 15	M 1-reprieved		T 16
Cons	F	M 14			T 14
Treason/Sedition	F	M 13			T 13
Smuggling	F	M 10			T 10
Piracy	F	M 2			T 2
Coining	F	M 3			T 3
Arson	F	M 2			T 2
Abduction	F	M 1			T 1
Polygamy	F 1(lesbian)	M			T 1

Vol. IV: 1762-1807

Other Robbers	F 3	M 37		T 40
Cons	F 2	M 35		T 37
Murderers	F 12	M 33	M 1-vin.	T 46
Treason/Sedition	F	M 16		T 16
Highwaymen	F	M 11		T 11
Arson	F	M 8		T 8
Assault	F	M 5		T 5
Suicide	F	M 4		T 4
Resurrection	F	M 2		T 2

Polygamy	F 2(1 les.)	M	T 2
Slavery	F1	M 1	T 2
Att. Murder	F	M 1	T 1
Blasphemy	F	M 1	T 1
Blackmail	F	M 1	T 1
Mutiny	F	M 1	T 1
Scuttling a Ship	F	M 1	T 1

Vol. V: 1807-1841

Murderers	F 5	M 45	T 50
Other Robbers	F 3	M 33	T 36
Cons	F 5	M 24	T 29
Treason/Sedition	F 1	M 16	T 17
Assault	F 2	M 9	T 11
Att. Murder	F 1	M 6	T 7
Arson	F	M 5	T 5
Resurrection	F	M 4	T 4
Abduction	F 2	M 2	T 4
Highwaymen	F	M 2	T 3
Unspecified	F	M 1	T 1

M 1-reprievd

Totals across the Calendar:

Murderers	F 37	M 194	T 231
Other Robbers	F 14	M 114	T 128
Highwaymen	F 1	M 89	T 90
Cons	F 8	M 78	T 86
Treason/Sedition	F 0	M 45	T 45
Assault	F 2	M 16	T 18
Arson	F 0	M 15	T 15
Att. Murder	F 1	M 8	T 9
Abduction	F 2	M 4	T 6
Resurrection	F 0	M 6	T 6
Polygamy	F 4	M 0	T 4

Total Property Crimes: 204

Key:

Arson – committed as an independent act or in the commission of another crime
 Assault – for revenge, sexual motives, treasonous activity, judicial torture, child abuse
 Cons - forgery, swindling, coining, impersonation, embezzlement
 Robbery – burglary, house-breaking, pickpocketing, jewel thievery, larceny, mugging, receiving

Appendix C: The Accounts²⁴

The Complete Newgate Calendar Volume III

LAURENCE EARL FERRERS

*Executed at Tyburn, 5th of May, 1760, for the Murder of
his Steward, after a Trial before his Peers*

LAURENCE, EARL FERRERS, was descended of an ancient and noble family. The royal blood of the Plantagenets flowed in his veins, and the Earl gained his title in the following manner. The second baronet of the family, Sir Henry Shirley, married a daughter of the celebrated Earl of Essex, who was beheaded in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and his son, Sir Robert Shirley, died in the Tower, where he was confined during the Protectorate, for his attachment to the cause of the Stuarts. Upon the Restoration, the second son of Sir Robert

[297]

succeeded to the title and estates, and Charles, anxious to cement the bonds which attached his friends to him, summoned him to the Upper House of Parliament by the title of Lord Ferrers of Chartley, as the descendant of one of the co-heiresses of the Earl of Essex; the title, which had existed since the reign of Edward III., having been in abeyance since the death of that unfortunate nobleman. In the year 1711, Robert, Lord Ferrers, was created, by Queen Anne, Viscount Tamworth and Earl Ferrers; and it appears that although the estates of the family were very great, they were vastly diminished by the provisions which the Earl thought proper to make for his numerous progeny, consisting of fifteen sons and twelve daughters, born to him by his two wives. At the death of the first Earl his title descended to his second son; but he dying without issue it went in succession to the ninth son, who was childless, and the tenth son, who was the father of the Earl, Laurence, the subject of the present sketch.

This nobleman was married in the year 1752 to the youngest daughter of Sir William Meredith; but although his general conduct, when sober, was not such as to be remarkable, yet his faculties were so much impaired by drink that, when under the influence of intoxication, he acted with all the wildness and brutality of a madman. For a time his wife perceived nothing which induced her to repent the step she had taken in being united to him, but he subsequently behaved to her with such unwarrantable cruelty that she was compelled to quit his protection, and, rejoining her father's family, to apply to Parliament for redress. An Act

²⁴ The text for these accounts was found online at tarlton.edu; I have preserved all typographical errors.

was in consequence passed, allowing her a separate maintenance, to be raised out of her husband's estate ; and, trustees being appointed, the unfortunate Mr Johnson, who fell a sacrifice to the ungovernable passion of Lord Ferrers -- having been bred up in the family from his youth, and being distinguished for the regular manner in which he kept his accounts, and his fidelity as a steward -- was proposed as receiver of the rents for her use. He at first declined the office; but subsequently, at the desire of the Earl himself,

[298]

consented to act, and continued in this employment for a considerable time.

His lordship at this time lived at Stanton, a seat about two miles from Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in Leicestershire; and his family consisted of Mrs Clifford, a lady who lived with him, and her four natural daughters, besides five men-servants, exclusive of an old man and a boy, and three maids.

Mr Johnson lived at the house belonging to the farm, which he held under his lordship, called the Lount, about half-a-mile distant from Stanton. It appears that it was his custom to visit his noble master occasionally, to settle the accounts which were placed under his care; but his lordship gradually conceived a dislike for him, grounded upon the prejudice raised in his mind on account of his being the receiver of the Countess's portion, and charged him with having combined with the trustees to prevent his receiving a coal contract. From this time he spoke of him in opprobrious terms, and said he had conspired with his enemies to injure him, and that he was a villain ; and with these sentiments he gave him warning to quit an advantageous farm which he held under his lordship. Finding, however, that the trustees under the Act of separation had already granted him a lease of it, it having been promised to him by the Earl or his relations, he was disappointed, and probably from that time he meditated a more cruel revenge.

On Sunday, the 13th of January, 1760, Earl Ferrers went to the Lount, and, after some discourse with Mr Johnson, ordered him to come to him at Stanton on the Friday following, the 18th, at three o'clock in the afternoon. His lordship's usual dinner-hour was two o'clock; and soon after that meal was disposed of, on the Friday, he went to Mrs Clifford, who was in the still-house, and desired her to take the children for a walk. She accordingly prepared herself and her daughters, and, with the permission of the Earl, went to her father's, at a short distance, being directed to return at half-past five. The men-servants were next dispatched on errands by their master, who was thus left in the house with the three females only. In a short time afterwards

[299]

Mr Johnson came, according to his appointment, and was admitted by one of the maid-servants, named Elizabeth Burgeland. He proceeded at once to his lordship's apartment, but was desired to wait in the still-house; and then,

after the expiration of about ten minutes, the Earl, calling him into his own room, went in with him and locked the door. Being thus together, the Earl required him first to settle an account, and then, charging him with the villainy which he attributed to him, ordered him to kneel down. The unfortunate man went down on one knee; upon which the Earl, in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard by the maid-servants without, cried: " Down on your other knee! Declare that you have acted against Lord Ferrers. Your time is come -- you must die." Then suddenly drawing a pistol from his pocket, which was loaded, he presented it and immediately fired. The ball entered the body of the unfortunate man, but he rose up, and entreated that no further violence might be done him; and the female servants at that time coming to the door, being alarmed by the report, his lordship quitted the room. A messenger was immediately dispatched for Mr Kirkland, a surgeon, who lived at Ashby-de-la-Zouch; and Johnson being put to bed, his lordship went to him and asked him how he felt. He answered that he was dying, and desired that his family might be sent for. Miss Johnson soon after arrived, and Lord Ferrers immediately followed her into the room where her father Jay. He then pulled down the clothes and applied a pledget, dipped in arquebusade water, to the wound, and soon after left him.

From this time it appears that his lordship applied himself to his favourite amusement -- drinking -- until he became exceedingly violent (for at the time of the commission of the murder he is reported to have been sober), and on the arrival of Mr Kirkland he told him that he had shot Johnson, but believed he was more frightened than hurt; that he had intended to shoot him dead, for that he was a villain, and deserved to die; " but," said he, " now that I have spared his life, I desire you would do what you can for him." His lordship at the same time desired that he would not suffer

[300]

him to be seized, and declared that if anyone should attempt it he would shoot him. Mr Kirkland told him that he should not be seized, and directly went to the wounded man. He found the ball had lodged in the body; at which his lordship expressed great surprise, declaring that he had tried that pistol a few days before and that it then carried a ball through a deal board nearly an inch and a half thick. Mr Kirkland then went downstairs to prepare some dressings, and my lord soon after left the room. From this time, in proportion as the liquor which he continued to drink took effect, his passions became more tumultuous, and the transient fit of compassion, mixed with fear for himself, which had excited him, gave way to starts of rage and the predominance of malice. He went up into the room where Johnson was dying and pulled him by the wig, calling him a villain, and threatening to shoot him through the head; and the last time he went to him he was with great difficulty prevented from tearing the clothes off the bed, that he might strike him.

A proposal was made to him in the evening by Mrs Clifford that Mr Johnson should be removed to his own house; but he replied: " He shall not be removed; I will keep him here, to plague the villain." He afterwards spoke to Miss Johnson about her father, and told her that if he died he would take care of her and of the family, provided they did not prosecute.

When his lordship went to bed, which was between eleven and twelve, he told Mr Kirkland that he knew he could, if he would, set the affair in such a light as to prevent his being seized, desiring that he might see him before he went away in the morning, and declaring that he would rise at any hour.

Mr Kirkland, however, was very solicitous to get Mr Johnson removed, and, as soon as the Earl had gone, he set about carrying his object into effect. He in consequence went to Lount and, having fitted up an easy-chair with poles, by way of a sedan, and procured a guard, returned at about two o'clock and carried Mr Johnson to his house,

[301]

where he expired at about nine o'clock on the following morning.

The neighbours now began to take measures to secure the murderer, and a few of them, having armed themselves, set out for Stanton ; and as they entered the yard they saw his lordship, partly undressed, going towards the stable, as if to take out a horse. One of them, named Springthorpe, then advancing towards his lordship with a pistol in his hand, required him to surrender ; but the latter putting his hand towards his pocket, his assailant, imagining that he was feeling for some weapon of offence, stopped short, and allowed him to escape into the house. A great concourse of people by this time had come to the spot, and they cried out loudly that the Earl should come forth. Two hours elapsed, however, before anything was seen of him, and then he came to the garret window and called out: " How is Johnson ? " He was answered that he was dead. But he said it was a lie, and desired that the people should disperse - and then he gave orders that they should be let in and furnished with victuals and drink, and finally he went away from the window, swearing that no man should take him. The mob still remained on the spot, and in about two hours the Earl was descried by a collier, named Curtis, walking on the bowling-green, armed with a blunderbuss, a brace of pistols and a dagger. Curtis, however, so far from being intimidated by his bold appearance, walked up to him; and his lordship, struck with the resolution he displayed, immediately surrendered himself, and gave up his arms, but directly afterwards declared that he had killed the villain, and gloried in the act. He was instantly conveyed in custody to a public-house at Ashby, kept by a man named Kinsey; and a coroner's jury having brought in a verdict of wilful murder against him, he was on the following Monday committed to the custody of the keeper of the jail at Leicester.

Being entitled, however, by his rank to be tried before his peers, he was, about a fortnight afterwards, conveyed to London, in his landau, drawn by six horses, under a strong guard; and, being carried before the House of Lords, he

[302]

was committed to the custody of the Black Rod, and ordered to the Tower, where he arrived at about six o'clock on the evening of the 14th of February. He is reported to have behaved, during the whole journey and at his commitment, with great calmness and propriety. He was confined in the Round Tower, near the drawbridge: two wardens were constantly in the room with him, and one at the door; two sentinels were posted at the bottom of the stairs, and one upon the drawbridge, with their bayonets fixed; and from this time the gates were ordered to be shut an hour sooner than usual.

During his confinement he was moderate both in eating and drinking : his breakfast was a half-pint basin of tea, with a small spoonful of brandy in it, and a muffin; with his dinner he generally drank a pint of wine and a pint of water, and another pint of each with his supper. In general his behaviour was decent and quiet, except that he would sometimes suddenly start, tear open his waistcoat, and use other gestures, which showed that his mind was disturbed.

Mrs Clifford and the four young ladies, who had come up with him from Leicestershire, took a lodging in Tower Street, and for some time a servant was continually passing with letters between them; but afterwards this correspondence was permitted only once a day.

Mrs Clifford came three times to the Tower to see him, but was not admitted; but his children were suffered to be with him some time.

On the 16th of April, having been a prisoner in the Tower two months and two days, he was brought to his trial, which continued till the 18th, before the House of Lords, assembled for that purpose, Lord Henley, Keeper of the Great Seal, having been created Lord High Steward upon the occasion.

The murder was easily proved to have been committed; and his lordship then proceeded to enter upon his defence. He called several witnesses, the object of whose testimony was to show that the Earl was not of sound mind, but none of them proved such an insanity as made him not accountable for his conduct. His lordship managed his defence himself

[303]

in such a manner as showed an uncommon understanding: he mentioned the fact of his being reduced to the necessity of attempting to prove himself a lunatic, that he might not be deemed a murderer, with the most delicate and affecting sensibility; and, when he found that his plea could not avail him, he confessed that he made it only to gratify his friends; that he was always averse to it himself; and that it had prevented what he had proposed, and what perhaps might have taken off the malignity at least of the accusation.

The Peers having in the usual form delivered their verdict, of guilty, his lordship received sentence to be hanged on Monday, the 21st of April, and then to be anatomised ; but, in consideration of his rank, the execution of this sentence was respited till Monday, the 5th of May.

During this interval he made a will, by which he left one thousand, three hundred pounds to Mr Johnson's children, one thousand pounds to each of his four natural daughters, and sixty pounds a year to Mrs Clifford for her life; but this disposition of his property, being made after his conviction, was not valid, although it was said that the same, or nearly the same, provision was afterwards made for the parties named.

In the meantime a scaffold was erected under the gallows at Tyburn, and part of it, about a yard square, was raised about eighteen inches above the rest of the floor, with a contrivance to sink down upon a signal given, in accordance with the plan then invariably adopted; the whole being covered with black baize.

On the morning of the 5th of May, at about nine o'clock, his lordship's body was demanded of the keeper of the Tower, by the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, and his lordship, being informed of it, sent a message to the sheriffs, requesting that he might be permitted to be conveyed to the scaffold in his own landau, in preference to the mourning-coach which was provided for him. This being granted, his landau, drawn by six horses, immediately drew up, and he entered it, accompanied by Mr Humphries, the Chaplain of the Tower, who had been admitted to him that morning

[304]

for the first time. On the carriage reaching the outer gate, the Earl was delivered up to the sheriffs, and Mr Sheriff Vaillant entered the vehicle with him, expressing his concern at having so melancholy a duty to perform; but his lordship said he " was much obliged to him, and took it kindly that he accompanied him." The Earl was attired in a white suit, richly embroidered with silver; and when he put it on he said: " This is the suit in which I was married, and in which I will die." The procession, being now formed, moved forward slowly, the landau being preceded by a considerable body of Horse Grenadiers, and by a carriage containing Mr Sheriff Errington, and his under-sheriff, ' Mr Jackson, and being followed by the carriage of Mr Sheriff Vaillant, containing Mr Nichols, his under-sheriff, a mourning-coach-and-six, containing some of his lordship's friends, a hearse-and-six for the conveyance of his body to Surgeons' Hall after execution, and another body of military. The pace at which they proceeded, in consequence of the density of the mob, was so slow that his lordship was two hours and three-quarters in his landau, but during that time he appeared perfectly easy and composed, though he often expressed his anxiety to have the whole affair over, saying that the apparatus of death and the passing through such crowds were worse than death itself, and that he supposed

so large a mob had been collected because the people had never seen a lord hanged before. He told the sheriff that he had written to the King to beg that he might suffer where his ancestor, the Earl of Essex, had been executed, and that he had had greater hopes of obtaining that favour as he had the honour of quartering part of the same arms, and of being allied to his Majesty; but that he had refused, and he thought it hard that he must die at the place appointed for the execution of common felons.

When his lordship had arrived at that part of Holborn which is near Drury Lane he said he was "thirsty, and should be glad of a glass of wine-and-water"; upon which the sheriffs, remonstrating with him, said that a stop for that purpose would necessarily draw a greater crowd about him,

[305]

which might possibly disturb and incommode him, yet, if his lordship still desired it, it should be done. He most readily answered: "That's true-I say no more-let us by no means stop."

When the landau advanced to the place of execution his lordship alighted from it, and ascended the scaffold with the same composure and fortitude of mind he had exhibited from the time he left the Tower. Soon after he had mounted the scaffold, Mr Humphries asked his lordship if he chose to say prayers, which he declined; but upon his asking him if he did not choose to join with him in the Lord's Prayer he readily answered he would, for he always thought it a very fine prayer. Upon which they knelt down together upon two cushions covered with black baize, and his lordship, with an audible voice, very devoutly repeated the Lord's Prayer, and afterwards, with great energy, ejaculated "Oh, God, forgive me all my errors -- pardon all my sins!"

His lordship, then rising, took his leave of the sheriff and the chaplain; and, after thanking them for their many civilities, presented his watch to Mr Sheriff Vaillant, of which he desired his acceptance, and requested that his body might be buried at Breden or Stanton, in Leicestershire.

The executioner now proceeded to do his duty, to which his lordship, with great resignation, submitted. His neck-cloth being taken off, and a white cap, which he had brought in his pocket, being put upon his head, his arms secured by a black sash, and the cord put round his neck, he advanced by three steps to the elevated part of the scaffold, and, standing under the cross-beam which went over it, which was also covered with black baize, he asked the executioner: "Am I right?" Then the cap was drawn over his face, and, upon a signal given by the sheriff (for his lordship, upon being before asked, declined to give one himself), that part upon which he stood instantly sank down from beneath his feet, and he was launched into eternity, the 5th of May, 1760.

The accustomed time of one hour being past, the coffin was raised up, with the greatest decency, to receive the body; and, being deposited in the hearse, was conveyed

[306]

by the sheriffs, with the same procession, to Surgeons' Hall, to undergo the remainder of the sentence. A large incision was then made from the neck to the bottom of the breast, and another across the throat; the lower part of the belly was laid open and the bowels taken away. It was afterwards publicly exposed to view in a room up one pair of stairs at the Hall; and on the evening of Thursday, the 8th of May, it was delivered to his friends for interment.

The following verse is said to have been found in his apartment :-

"In doubt I lived, in doubt I die,
Yet stand prepared the vast abyss to try,
and, undismay'd, expect eternity."

[307]

The Complete Newgate Calendar
Volume IV

JOHN WILLIAMSON

*A deliberate and cruel Murderer, who tortured and
starved his Wife to Death. Executed in Moorfields,
19th of January, 1767*

WILLIAMSON was the son of people in but in-different circumstances, who put him apprentice to a shoemaker. When he came to be a journeyman he pursued his business with industry, and in a short time he married an honest and sober woman, by whom he had three children. His wife dying, he continued some time a widower, maintaining himself and his children in a decent manner.

At length he contracted an acquaintance with a young woman so deficient in point of intellect that it may be said she bordered upon idiocy. Her relations had bequeathed her money sufficient for her maintenance, and this circumstance induced Williamson to make proposals of marriage, which she accepted. Being asked in church, the banns were forbidden by the gentleman appointed guardian to the unhappy woman.

Williamson having procured a licence, the marriage was solemnised ; and in consequence thereof he received the money that was in the hands of the guardian. About three weeks after the marriage he cruelly beat his wife, threw water over her, and otherwise treated her with great severity and this kind of brutality he frequently repeated. At length he fastened the miserable creature's hands behind her with handcuffs, and, by means of a rope passed through a staple, drew them so tight above her head that only the tips of her toes touched the ground.

On one side of the closet wherein she was confined was now and then put a small piece of bread-and-butter, so that she could just touch it with her mouth ; and she was allowed daily a small portion of water.

She once remained a whole month without being released from this miserable condition ; but during that time she

[44]

occasionally received assistance from a female lodger in the house and a little girl, Williamson's daughter by his former wife.

The girl having once released the poor sufferer, the in-human villain beat her with great severity. When the father was abroad the child frequently gave the unhappy woman a stool to stand upon, by which means her pain was in some degree abated. This circumstance being discovered by Williamson, he beat the girl in a most barbarous manner, and threatened that if she again offended in the same way he would punish her with still greater severity.

Williamson released his wife on the Sunday preceding the day on which she died, and at dinner-time cut her some meat, of which, however, she ate only a very small quantity.

This partial indulgence he supposed would prove a favourable circumstance for him, in case of being accused of murder.

Her hands being greatly swelled, through the coldness of the weather and the pain occasioned by the handcuffs, she begged to be permitted to go near the fire, and, the daughter joining in her request, Williamson complied. When she had sat a few minutes, Williamson, observing her throwing the vermin that swarmed upon her clothes into the fire, ordered her to "return to her kennel." Thereupon she returned to the closet, the door of which was then locked till next day, when she was found to be in a delirious state, in which she continued till the time of her death, which happened about two o'clock on the Tuesday morning.

The coroner's jury being summoned to sit on the body, and evidence being adduced to incriminate Williamson, he was committed to Newgate. At the ensuing sessions at the Old Bailey he was brought to trial before Lord Chief Baron Parker, and sentenced to death. From the time of his commitment to prison till the time of his execution he behaved in a very decent and penitent manner. The gallows was placed on the rising ground opposite Chiswell Street, in Moorfields. After he had sung a psalm and prayed some time, with an appearance of great devotion,

[45]

he was turned off, amidst an amazing concourse of people. His body was conveyed to Surgeons' Hall for dissection, and his children were placed in Cripplegate Workhouse.

[46]

The Complete Newgate Calendar
Volume IV

SARAH METYARD AND SARAH MORGAN
METYARD, HER DAUGHTER

*Executed at Tyburn, 19th of July, 1768, for the Cruel
Murders of Parish Apprentices*

SARAH METYARD was a milliner, and the daughter her assistant, in Bruton Street, Hanover Square, London. In the year 1758 the mother had five apprentice girls bound to her from different parish workhouses, among whom were Anne Naylor and her sister.

Anne Naylor, being of a sickly constitution, was not able to do so much work as the other apprentices about the same age, and therefore she became the more immediate object of the fury of the barbarous women, whose repeated acts of cruelty at length occasioned the unhappy girl to abscond. Being brought back, she was confined in an upper apartment, and allowed each day no other sustenance than a small piece of bread and a little water.

Seizing an opportunity of escaping from her confinement, unperceived she got into the street, and ran to a milk-carrier, whom she begged to protect her, saying that if she returned she must certainly perish, through the want of

[59]

food and severe treatment she daily received. Being soon missed, she was followed by the younger Metyard, who seized her by the neck, forced her into the house, and threw her upon the bed in the room where she had been confined, and she was then seized by the old woman, who held her down while the daughter beat her with the handle of a broom in a most cruel manner.

They afterwards put her into a back room on the second storey, tied a cord round her waist, and her hands behind her, and fastened her to the door in such a manner that it was impossible for her either to sit or lie down. She was compelled to remain in this situation for three successive days; but they permitted her to go to bed at the usual hours at night. Having received no kind of nutriment for three days and two nights, her strength was so exhausted that, being unable to walk upstairs, she crept to the garret, where she lay on her hands and feet.

While she remained tied up on the second floor the other apprentices were ordered to work in an adjoining apartment, that they might be deterred from disobedience by being witnesses to the unhappy girl's sufferings; but they were enjoined, on the penalty of being subjected to equal severity, against affording her any kind of relief.

On the fourth day she faltered in speech, and presently afterwards expired. The other girls, seeing the whole weight of her body supported by the strings which confined her to the door, were greatly alarmed, and called out: " Miss Sally ! Miss Sally ! Nanny does not move." The daughter then came upstairs, saying: " If she does not move, I will

make her move " ; and then beat the deceased on the head with the heel of a shoe.

Perceiving no signs of life, she called to her mother, who came upstairs and ordered the strings that confined the deceased to be cut ; she then laid the body across her lap and directed one of the apprentices where to find a bottle with some hartshorn drops.

When the child had brought the drops, she and the other girls were ordered to go downstairs ; and the mother and

[60]

daughter, being convinced that the object of their barbarity was dead, conveyed the body into the garret . They related to the other apprentices that Nanny had been in a fit, but was perfectly recovered, adding that she was locked into the garret lest she should again run away; and, in order to give an air of plausibility to their tale, at noon the daughter carried a plate of meat upstairs, saying it was for Nanny's dinner.

They locked the body of the deceased in a box on the fourth day after the murder, and, having left the garret door open and the street door on the jar, one of the apprentices was told to call Nanny down to dinner, and to tell her that, if she promised to behave well in future, she would be no longer confined. Upon the return of the child, she said Nanny was not above-stairs ; and after a great parade of searching every part of the house they reflected upon her as being of an intractable disposition and pretended she had run away.

The sister of the deceased, who was apprenticed to the same inhuman mistress, mentioned to a lodger in the house that she was persuaded her sister was dead ; observing that it was not probable she had gone away, since parts of her apparel still remained in the garret. The suspicions of this girl coming to the knowledge of the inhuman wretches, they, with a view of preventing a discovery, cruelly murdered her, and secreted the body.

The body of Anne remained in the box two months, during which time the garret door was kept locked, lest the offensive smell should lead to a discovery. The stench became so powerful that they judged it prudent to remove the remains of the unhappy victim of their barbarity; and therefore, on the evening of the 25th of December, they cut the body in pieces, and tied the head and trunk up in one cloth and the limbs in another, excepting one hand, a finger belonging to which had been amputated before death, and that they resolved to burn.

When the apprentices had gone to bed, the old woman put the hand into the fire, saying: " The fire tells no tales."

[61]

She intended to consume the entire remains of the unfortunate girl by fire but, afraid that the smell would give rise to suspicion, changed that design, and took the bundles to the gully-hole in Chick Lane and endeavoured to throw

the parts of the mangled corpse over the wall into the common sewer; but being unable to effect that, she left them among the mud and water that was collected before the grate of the sewer.

Some pieces of the body were discovered about twelve o'clock by the watchman, and he mentioned the circumstance to the constable of the night. The constable applied to one of the overseers of the parish, by whose direction the parts of the body were collected and taken to the watchhouse. On the following day the matter was communicated to Mr Umfreville, the coroner, who examined the pieces found by the watchman ; but he supposed them to be parts of a corpse taken from a churchyard for the use of some surgeon, and declined to summon a jury.

Four years elapsed before the discovery of these horrid murders, which at length happened in the following manner. Continual disagreements prevailed between the mother and daughter; and, though the latter had now arrived at the age of maturity, she was often beaten, and otherwise treated with severity. Thus provoked, she sometimes threatened to destroy herself, and at others to give information against her mother as a murderer.

At last information concerning the affair was given to the overseers of Tottenham parish, and mother and daughter were committed to the Gatehouse. At the ensuing Old Bailey sessions they were both sentenced to be executed on the following Monday, and then to be conveyed to Surgeons' Hall for dissection.

The mother, being in a fit when she was put into the cart, lay at her length till she came to the place of execution, when she was raised up, and means were used for her recovery, but without effect, so that she departed this life in a state of insensibility. From the time of leaving Newgate to the moment of her death the daughter wept incessantly.

[62]

After hanging the usual time the bodies were conveyed in a hearse to Surgeons' Hall, where they were exposed to the curiosity of the public, and then dissected.

[63]

**The Complete Newgate Calendar
Volume III**

CATHERINE HAYES

*Who with Others foully murdered her Husband, and was
burned alive on 9th of May, 1726*

CATHERINE HAYES was the daughter of a poor man named Hall, who lived at Birmingham, and having remained with her parents until she was fifteen years of age, a dispute then arose, in consequence of which she set off for London. On her way she met with some officers, who, remarking that her person was engaging, persuaded her to accompany them to their quarters at Great Ombersley, in Worcestershire. Having remained with them some time, she strolled on into Warwickshire, and was there hired into the house of Mr Hayes, a respectable farmer. An intimacy soon sprang up between her and the son of her master, which ended in a private marriage taking place at Worcester; and an attempt on the part of the

[30]

officers to entrap young Hayes into enlisting rendered it necessary to disclose the whole affair to the father. He felt that it would be useless now to oppose his son, in consequence of what had taken place, and he set him up in business as a carpenter. Mrs Hayes, however, was of a restless disposition, and persuaded him to enlist, which he did; and his regiment being ordered to the Isle of Wight his wife followed him. His father bought him off, at an expense of sixty pounds, and now gave him property to the value of about twenty-six pounds per annum; but after the marriage had been solemnised about six years Mrs Hayes prevailed on her husband to come to London. On their arrival in the metropolis Mr Hayes took a house, part of which he let in lodgings, and opened a shop in the chandlery and coal trade, in which he was as successful as he could have wished; but exclusive of his profit by shop-keeping he acquired a great deal of money by lending small sums on pledges, for at this time the trade of pawn-broking was followed by anyone at pleasure, and was subjected to no regulation.

Mr Hayes soon found that the disposition of his wife was not of such a nature as to promise him much peace. The chief pleasure of her life consisted in creating and encouraging quarrels among her neighbours. Sometimes she would speak of her husband to his acquaintances in terms of great tenderness and respect, and at other times she would represent him to her female associates as a compound of everything that was contemptible in human nature. On a particular occasion she told a woman that she should think it no more sin to murder him than to kill a dog. At length her husband thought it prudent to remove to Tottenham Court Road, where he carried on his former business, but he then again removed to Tyburn Road (now Oxford Street). He soon amassed what he considered a

sufficient sum to enable him to retire from business, and he accordingly took lodgings near the same spot. A supposed son of Mrs Hayes, by her former connection, who went by the name of Billings, lived in the same house, and he and

[31]

Mrs Hayes were in the habit of feasting themselves at the expense of the husband of the latter.

During his temporary absence from town her proceedings were so extravagant that the neighbours deemed it right to make her husband aware of the fact; and on his return he remonstrated with her on the subject, when a quarrel took place, which ended in a fight. It is supposed that at this time the design of murdering Mr Hayes was formed by his wife, and it was not long before she obtained a seconder in her horrid project in the person of her reputed son. At this time a person named Thomas Wood came to town from Worcestershire, and seeking out Hayes persuaded him to give him a lodging, as he was afraid of being impressed. After he had been in town only a few days Mrs Hayes informed him of the plot which existed, and endeavoured to persuade him to join her and her son. He was at first shocked at the notion of murdering his friend and benefactor, and rejected the proposals; but at length Mrs Hayes, alleging that her husband was an atheist, and had already been guilty of murdering two of his own children, one of whom he had buried under an apple-tree, and the other under a pear-tree, and besides urging that fifteen hundred pounds, which would fall to her at his death, should be placed at the disposal of her accomplices, he consented. Shortly after this Wood went out of town for a few days, but on his return he found Mrs Hayes and her son and husband drinking together, and apparently in good humour. He joined them at the desire of Hayes, and the latter boasting that he was not drunk, although they had had a guinea's worth of liquor among them, Billings proposed that he should try whether he could drink half-a-dozen bottles of mountain wine without getting tipsy, and promised that if he did so he would pay for the wine. The proposal was agreed to, and the three murderers went off to procure the liquor. On their way it was agreed among them that this was the proper opportunity to carry their design into execution, and having procured the wine, for which Mrs Hayes paid half-a-guinea, Mr Hayes began to

[32]

drink it, while his intended assassins regaled themselves with beer. When he had taken a considerable quantity of the wine he danced about the room like a man distracted, and at length finished the whole quantity; but not being yet in a state of absolute stupefaction, his wife sent for another bottle, which he also drank, and then fell senseless on the floor. Having lain some time in this condition, he got, with much difficulty, into another room, and threw himself on a bed.

When he was asleep his wife told her associates that this was the time to execute their plan, as there was no fear of any resistance on his part, and accordingly Billings went into the room with a hatchet, with which he struck Hayes so violently that he fractured his skull. At this time Hayes's feet hung off the bed, and the torture arising from the blow made him stamp repeatedly on the floor, which being heard by Wood, he also went into the room, and taking the hatchet out of Billings's hand gave the poor man two more blows, which effectually dispatched him. A woman named Springate, who lodged in the room over that where the murder was committed, hearing the noise occasioned by Hayes's stamping, imagined that the parties might have quarrelled in consequence of their intoxication ; and going downstairs she told Mrs Hayes that the noise had awakened her husband, her child and herself. Catherine, however, had a ready answer to this: she said some company had visited them, and had grown merry, but they were on the point of taking their leave; and Mrs Springate returned to her room well satisfied.

The murderers now consulted on the best manner of disposing of the body so as most effectually to prevent detection. Mrs Hayes proposed to cut off the head, because if the body were found whole it would be more likely to be known, and on the villains agreeing to this proposition she fetched a pail, lighted a candle, and all of them went into the room. The men then drew the body partly off the bed, and Billings supported the head while Wood, with his pocket-knife, cut it off, and the infamous woman held the pail to

[33]

receive it, being as careful as possible that the floor might not be stained with the blood. This being done, they emptied the blood out of the pail into a sink by the window, and poured several pails of water after it. When the head was cut off, the woman recommended boiling it till the flesh should part from the bones ; but the other parties thought this operation would take up too much time, and therefore advised throwing it into the Thames, in expectation that it would be carried off by the tide, and would sink. This agreed to, the head was put into the pail, and Billings took it under his greatcoat, being accompanied by Wood; but making a noise in going downstairs, Mrs Springate called, and asked what was the matter. To this Mrs Hayes answered that her husband was going a journey; and with incredible dissimulation affected to take leave of him, pretending great concern that he was under a necessity of going at so late an hour, and Wood and Billings passed out of the house unnoticed. They first went to Whitehall, where they intended to throw in the head ; but the gates being shut they went to a wharf near the Horse Ferry, Westminster. Billings putting down the pail, Wood threw the head into the dock, expecting it would be carried away by the stream; but at this time the tide was ebbing, and a lighterman, who was then in his vessel, heard some-

thing fall into the dock, but it was too dark for him to distinguish any object. The head being thus disposed of, the murderers returned home, and were admitted by Mrs Hayes without the knowledge of the other lodgers. The body next became the object of their attention, and Mrs Hayes proposed that it should be packed up in a box and buried. The plan was determined upon immediately, and a box purchased, but being found too small, the body was dismembered so as to admit of its being enclosed in it, and was left until night should favour its being carried off. The inconvenience of carrying a box was, however, immediately discovered, and the pieces of the mangled body were therefore taken out and, being wrapped up in a blanket, were carried by Billings and

[34]

Wood to a field in Marylebone, and there thrown into a pond.

In the meantime the head had been discovered, and the circumstance of a murder having been committed being undoubted, every means was taken to secure the discovery of its perpetrators. The magistrates, with this view, directed that the head should be washed clean, and the hair combed; after which it was put on a pole in the churchyard of St Margaret's, Westminster, that an opportunity might be afforded of its being viewed by the public.¹ Thousands went to witness this extraordinary spectacle; and there were not wanting those among the crowd who expressed their belief among themselves that the head belonged to Hayes. Their suspicions were mentioned by some of them to Billings, but he ridiculed the notion, and declared that Hayes was well, and was only gone out of town for a few days. When the head had been exhibited for four days it was deemed expedient that measures should be taken to preserve it; and Mr Westbrook, a chemist, in consequence received directions to put it into spirits. Mrs Hayes soon

¹It was formerly customary to oblige persons suspected of murder to touch the murdered body for the discovery of their guilt or innocence. This way of finding murderers was practised in Denmark by King Christianus II, and permitted over all his kingdom; the occasion whereof was this. Certain gentlemen being on an evening together in a stove, or tavern, fell out among themselves, and from words came to blows (the candles being out), insomuch that one of them was stabbed with a poniard. Now the murderer was unknown by reason of the number, although the person stabbed accused a pursuivant of the king's, who was one of the company. The king, to find out the homicide, caused them all to come together in the stove, and, standing round the corpse, he commanded that they should, one after another, lay their right hand on the slain gentleman's naked breast, swearing that they had not killed him. The gentlemen did so, and no sign appeared against them: the pursuivant only remained, who, condemned before in his own conscience, went first of all and kissed the dead man's feet; but as soon as he had laid his hand upon his breast the blood gushed forth in abundance, out of both his wound and his nostrils; so that, urged by this evident accusation, he confessed the murder, and was, by the king's own sentence, immediately

beheaded. Such was the origin of this practice, which ~as so common in many of the countries in Europe for finding out unknown murderers.

[35]

afterwards changed her lodgings, and took the woman Springate with her, paying the rent which she owed, Wood and Billings also accompanying her; and her chief occupation now was that of collecting the debts due to her husband, by means of which she continued to supply her diabolical assistants with money and clothes. Amongst the incredible numbers of people who resorted to see the head was a poor woman from Kingsland, whose husband had been absent from the very time that the murder was perpetrated. After a minute survey of the head she believed it to be that of her husband, though she could not be absolutely positive; but her suspicions were so strong, that strict search was made after the body, on a presumption that the clothes might help her to ascertain it.

Meanwhile, Mr Hayes not being visible for a considerable time, his friends could not help making inquiry after him; and a Mr Ashby in particular, who had been on the most friendly terms with him, called on Mrs Hayes and demanded what had become of her husband. Catherine pretended to account for his absence by communicating the following intelligence, as a matter that must be kept profoundly secret. " Some time ago," said she, " he happened to have a dispute with a man, and from words they came to blows, so that Mr Hayes killed him. The wife of the deceased made up the affair, on Mr Hayes's promising to pay her a certain annual allowance ; but he not being able to make it good, she threatened to inform against him, on which he has absconded." This story was, however, by no means satisfactory to Mr Ashby, who asked her if the head that had been exposed on the pole was that of the man who had been killed by her husband. She readily answered in the negative, adding that the party had been buried entire, and that the widow had her husband's bond for the payment of fifteen pounds a year. Ashby inquired to what part of the world Mr Hayes had gone, and she said to Portugal, in company with some gentlemen ; but she had yet received no letter from him. The whole of this detail seeming highly improbable to Mr Ashby, he went to Mr Longmore, a

[36]

gentleman nearly related to Hayes ; and it was agreed between them that Mr Longmore should call on Catherine and have some conversation with her upon the same subject. Her story to this gentleman differed in its details from that which she had related to Mr Ashby; and Mr Eaton, also a friend of Mr Hayes, being consulted, they determined first to examine the head, and then, if their suspicions were confirmed, to communicate their belief to the magistrates. Having accordingly minutely examined the head, and come to the conclusion that it must be that of their friend Hayes, they proceeded to Mr Lambert, a magistrate, who immedi-

ately issued warrants for the apprehension of Mrs Hayes and Mrs Springate, as well as of Wood and Billings, and proceeded to execute them personally. Going accordingly to the house in which they all lived, they informed the landlord of their business, and went immediately to the door of Mrs Hayes's room. On the magistrate's rapping, the woman asked, "Who is there?" and he commanded her to open the door directly, or it should be broken open. To this she replied that she would open it as soon as she had put on her clothes; and she did so in little more than a minute; when the justice ordered the parties present to take her into custody. At this time Billings was sitting on the side of the bed, bare-legged. Some of the parties remaining below to secure the prisoners, Mr Longmore went upstairs with the justice and took Mrs Springate into custody; and they were all conducted together to the house of Mr Lambert. This magistrate having examined the prisoners separately for a considerable time, and all of them positively persisting in their ignorance of anything respecting the murder, they were severally committed for re-examination on the following day, before Mr Lambert and other magistrates. Mrs Springate was sent to the Gatehouse, Billings to New Prison, and Mrs Hayes to Tothill Fields Bridewell. When the peace officers, attended by Longmore, went the next day to fetch up Catherine to her examination, she earnestly desired to see the head ; and it being thought prudent to grant her request, she was carried to the surgeon's; and no sooner

[37]

was the head shown to her than she exclaimed: " Oh, it is my dear husband's head! It is my dear husband's head! " She now took the glass in her arms and shed many tears while she embraced it. Mr Westbrook told her that he would take the head out of the glass that she might have a more perfect view of it and be certain that it was the same; and the surgeon doing as he had said, she seemed to be greatly affected; and having kissed it several times, she begged to be indulged with a lock of the hair; and on Mr Westbrook expressing his apprehension that she had had too much of his *blood* already, she fell into a fit. On her recovery she was conducted to Mr Lambert's, to take her examination with the other parties.

It is somewhat remarkable that it was on the morning of this day that the body was discovered. As a gentleman and his servant were crossing the fields at Marylebone they observed something lying in a ditch, and on going nearer to it they perceived that it was some parts of a human body. Assistance being procured, the whole of the body was found except the head ; and information of the circumstance was conveyed to Mr Lambert at the very moment at which he was examining the prisoners. The suspicions which already existed were strengthened by this circumstance, and Mrs Hayes was committed to Newgate for trial ; the committal of Billings and Mrs Springate, however, being deferred until the apprehension of Wood.

The latter soon after coming into town, and riding up to Mrs Hayes's lodgings, was directed to go to the house of Mr Longmore, where he was told he would find Mrs Hayes; but the brother of Longmore, standing at the door, immediately seized him, and caused him to be carried before Mr Lambert. He underwent an examination; but refusing to make any confession, he was sent to Tothill Fields Bridewell. On his arrival at the prison he was informed that the body had been found; and, not doubting but that the whole affair would come to light, he begged that he might be carried back to the justice's house. This being made known to Mr Lambert, the prisoner was brought

[38]

up, and he then acknowledged the particulars of the murder, and signed his confession. This wretched man owned that since the perpetration of the crime he had been terrified at the sight of everyone he met, that he had not experienced a moment's peace, and that his mind had been distracted with the most violent agitation.

His commitment to Newgate was immediately made out, and he was conducted to that prison under the escort of eight soldiers with fixed bayonets, whose whole efforts were necessary to protect him from the violence of the mob. A Mr Mercer visiting Mrs Hayes in prison, she begged him to go to Billings and urge him to confess the whole truth, as no advantage, she said, could be expected to arise from a denial of that which was too clearly proved to admit of denial; and he being carried before justice Lambert again gave an account precisely concurring with that of Wood. Mrs Springate, whose innocence was now distinctly proved, was set at liberty.

At the trial Wood and Billings confessed themselves guilty of the crime alleged against them, but Mrs Hayes, flattering herself that as she had said nothing she had a chance of escape, put herself upon her trial; but the jury found her guilty. The prisoners being afterwards brought to the bar to receive sentence, Mrs Hayes entreated that she might not be burned, according to the then law of petty treason, alleging that she was not guilty, as she did not strike the fatal blow; but she was informed by the Court that the sentence awarded by the law could not be dispensed with.

After conviction the behaviour of Wood was uncommonly penitent and devout; but while in the condemned hold he was seized with a violent fever, and being attended by a clergyman, to assist him in his devotions, he said he was ready to suffer death, under every mark of ignominy, as some atonement for the atrocious crime he had committed. But he died in prison, and thus defeated the final execution of the law. Billings behaved with apparent sincerity, acknowledging the justice of his sentence, and saying that

[39]

no punishment could be commensurate with the crime of

which he had been guilty. He was executed in the usual manner, and hung in chains not far from the pond in which Mr Hayes's body was found, in Marylebone Fields. The behaviour of Mrs Hayes was somewhat similar to her former conduct. Having an intention to destroy herself, she procured a phial of strong poison, which was casually tasted by a woman who was confined with her, and her design thereby discovered and frustrated. On the day of her death she received the Sacrament, and was drawn on a sledge to the place of execution. When the wretched woman had finished her devotions, in pursuance of her sentence an iron chain was put round her body, with which she was fixed to a stake near the gallows. On these occasions, when women were burned for petty treason, it was customary to strangle them, by means of a rope passed round the neck and pulled by the executioner, so that they were dead before the flames reached the body. But this woman was literally burned alive ; for the executioner letting go the rope sooner than usual, in consequence of the flames reaching his hands, the fire burned fiercely round her, and the spectators beheld her pushing away the faggots, while she rent the air with her cries and lamentations. Other faggots were instantly thrown on her; but she survived amidst the flames for a considerable time, and her body was not perfectly reduced to ashes until three hours later.¹ These malefactors suffered at Tyburn, 9th of May, 1726.

¹ Until the thirtieth year of the reign of King George III. this punishment was inflicted on women convicted of murdering their husbands, which crime was denominated pefit treason, It has frequently, from some accident happening in strangling the malefactor, produced the horrid effects above related. In the reign of Mary (the cruel) this death was commonly practised upon the objects of her vengeance ; and many bishops, rather than deny their religious opinions, were burned even without previous strangulation. It was high time this part of the sentence, a type of barbarism, should be dispensed with. The punishment now inflicted for this most unnatural and abhorred crime is hanging.

[40]

The Complete Newgate Calendar
Volume V

JAMES GREENACRE

*Executed at Newgate, 2nd of May, 1837, for murdering
and mutilating a Woman*

IN the year 1836 some dwellings, called the Canterbury Villas, situated in Edgware Road, at a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the spot at which the Regent's Canal emerges from under the pathway, were in progress of completion. On the 28th of December a man named Bond, a bricklayer, engaged upon the buildings, visited his place of work. About two o'clock in the afternoon he was proceeding in the direction towards Kilburn when his attention was attracted by a package enveloped in a coarse cloth
[286]

or sack, which appeared to have been carefully placed behind a paving-stone which rested there, for the purpose of concealment. He removed the stone in order to obtain a more distinct view of the package, and was horrified to observe a pool of frozen blood. He called the superintendent of the works and another person to the place, and they found that the package consisted of a portion of the remains of a human body. The trunk only was there, the head and legs having been removed. It proved to be the body of a female, apparently about fifty years of age. The head had been severed from the trunk in an awkward manner, the bone of the neck having been partly sawn through and partly broken off ; and the legs had been removed in a similar irregular way.

An inquest was held on the body on Saturday, the 31st of December, at the White Lion Inn, Edgware Road, when the jury returned a verdict of " Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

Public excitement was soon afterwards raised to the very highest pitch by a notification being given of the finding of a human head in a place called the " Ben Jonson Lock " of the Regent's Canal, which runs through Stepney Fields. The exhumation of the body now took place, when the necessary comparison was made, and Mr Girdwood, surgeon of the district, at once declared that the head and the trunk were portions of the same frame.

Although some public satisfaction was afforded by this most singular event, still no clue whatever appeared to have yet been found to conduct the police to the murderer. The head was accordingly placed in spirits, and was preserved at Mr Girdwood's, where it remained open to the inspection of all persons who it was supposed would be able to afford any information upon the subject. The mystery which surrounded the case, however, seemed to become greater every day. The inquiries of the police for the remainder of the body were unsuccessful until the 2nd of February. On that day James Page, a labourer, was employed in cutting osiers in a bed belonging to Mr Tenpenny,

in the neighbourhood of Cold Harbour Lane, Camberwell,
[287]

when, as he stepped over a drain or ditch, he perceived a large bundle lying in it, covered with a piece of sacking, and partly immersed in the water. His curiosity prompted him to raise it, and he saw what appeared to be the toes of a human foot protruding from it. He became alarmed, and called for his fellow-workman, who was only a short distance off. When they opened the package they found it to contain two human legs. These, like the head, were transmitted to Mr Girdwood for examination, and proved to be portions of the frame which had been discovered in the Edgware Road.

On the 20th of March, Mr Gay, a broker, who resided in Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, applied to Mr Thornton, the churchwarden of the parish of Paddington, for permission to inspect such of the remains of the deceased woman as had been preserved above ground. He founded his application upon the fact of the sudden disappearance of his sister, whose name was Hannah Brown, and who had quitted her home on the afternoon preceding Christmas Day and had not since been seen or heard of. When Mr Gay saw the head, he at once declared his belief that it was that of his unfortunate relation. From the inquiries of the police it was elicited that the unfortunate woman had received with favour the advances of a man named James Greenacre, to whom she was about to be married; and that on Christmas Eve she had quitted her lodgings in Union Street, Middlesex Hospital, in order to accompany her intended husband to his house, in Carpenter's Buildings, Camberwell, preparatory to their union on the ensuing Monday. Greenacre was the person in whose company she had been last seen ; and to him, therefore, the authorities naturally turned for information as to the manner in which they had parted, if they had parted at all, before her death. A warrant was granted by the magistrates of Marylebone police office for the apprehension of this man ; and after considerable difficulty he was at length taken into custody, on the 24th of March, 1837, at his lodgings at St Alban's Place, Kennington Road, together with a woman named

[288]

Sarah Gale, with whom he cohabited, and her child.

The apprehension of Greenacre and Gale took place under circumstances which tended to confirm the suspicions of their guilt of murder, and to give conclusive evidence of their perfect cognisance of the fact of the death of the deceased. Inspector Feltham was the person by whom this capture was effected ; and he took the prisoners into custody at a small house, No. 1 St Alban's Place, Kennington Road.. Accompanied by a police constable of the L division, he proceeded to that house and found them in bed together. When he entered the room he informed them of the

object of his visit. Greenacre at first denied all knowledge of any such person as Hannah Brown ; but subsequently, when questioned further, he admitted that he had been going to be married to her, although he did not then know what had become of her. The prisoners having dressed themselves, Greenacre declared that it was lucky the officer had come that night, as they were to sail the next day for America -- a fact which appeared to be true, from the appearance of a number of boxes which stood in the apartment ready packed and corded for travelling. A minute examination of the contents of the trunks afforded highly important evidence. Many articles were found in them which were known to have belonged to Hannah Brown ; but besides these, some remnants of an old cotton dress were discovered, exactly corresponding in pattern and condition with the pieces in which the body had been wrapped when first discovered in Edgware Road.

On the 10th of April, 1837, the two prisoners were placed at the bar of the Central Criminal Court, and arraigned upon the indictment found against them. Greenacre was charged, as the principal, with the wilful murder of the deceased, and Gale was indicted for being an accessory after the fact, in consorting, aiding and assisting her fellow-prisoner.

Lord Chief Justice Tindal, Mr Justice Coleridge and
[289]

Mr Justice Coltman were the judges, and the court was crowded in every corner.

The Lord Chief Justice began to sum up at a quarter past six o'clock on the second day of the trial, and after an absence of a quarter of an hour the jury returned a verdict of guilty against both prisoners. Greenacre was sentenced to death, and the woman was ordered to be transported for the rest of her natural life. Greenacre was hanged on the 2nd of May, 1837.

[290]

Vita

Aimee Rust was born in Arkansas and raised in the Midwest. She was educated at the Milwaukee High School of the Arts and Beloit College. In 2002 she received an M.A. in Fiction Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; she is currently a Master's candidate at the University of New Orleans. Her publications include "Grace," a short story published in 2003 and nominated for *Best New American Voices* that same year. Aimee Rust has no spare time, but if she did she would be writing a bestselling novel, refinishing the floors, and training her dog.