**PERCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF RAILWAYS AND CRIME IN BRITAIN, 1820-1900**

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**Abstract**

This thesis presents a new reading into how railways in Britain were represented and perceived in news media between 1820 and 1900. The ways in which newspapers and periodicals related railways with crime played a key role in shaping public attitudes towards them. However, when first invented and implemented, railways were condemned in news media in ways that were generally non-specific and which related primarily to their unfamiliarity, despite their being an important change for society. Over time, however, railway crime, and events perceived as criminal, became a way for people to voice their shock, disquiet, or anger about railways in general. Crime was, and is, often treated as a harbinger of or a trigger for social uncertainty, and railways were seen in the same way – they added instability, a connection often seized on in news media reporting. News media responses to railway crime followed phases which, while chronologically overlapping, were very much distinct, reflecting developments in the wider industry. The thesis traces the shift from the physical railway under construction, to the financial railway of the railway company, and then to railway travel in carriages. In doing so, it is the first study to fully assess the dynamics of these phases over the course of the nineteenth century through representations in crime reporting. Its mixed methods approach to news media charts the different stages in which the railways became normalised in Britain, and how negative associations with railways were important in this process. Its analysis ultimately informs broader questions of how societies react to and represent the new technologies that come to shape them.

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A picture containing diagram

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Fig. 0.1, Gilbert A’Beckett ‘A Railway Map of England’, *Punch*, 11 Oct. 1845, p. 163.

# **Introduction**

Railways made vast and enduring changes to nineteenth-century Britain. Their construction changed the physical landscape, their companies changed the financial landscape, and their carriages changed the social landscape. This railway age was widely depicted and represented in newspapers, periodicals, and many other forms of print, which were themselves undergoing similarly rapid change. This thesis focuses on news media and periodicals’ representations of railways, and holds that they played a key role in shaping public attitudes towards railways through the ways they reported on railway crime. By using a combined approach of quantitative assessment and analysis of large numbers of news media reports and articles with close qualitative assessment of the language and content of individual reports and reporting trends, this thesis examines how the railway line, the railway company and the railway carriage were represented in newspapers. Ultimately, it shows that there was a continual, though nuanced, process of normalisation around railways, with representations in news media leading to readers becoming used to their distinct aspects over time, with perceptions being shaped and changed both by experience of railway travel and also news media reporting which connected them to crime. In doing so, it can inform broader questions of how societies react to and represent the new technologies that come to shape them. The importance of railways to the Victorian era has particularly strong parallels with the growth of digital technologies in our own time, whose impact and meaning also continue to be established through representations in wider media, which in turn shape perceptions, which shape their familiarity and use. Historians have often focused on the impact of railways, technology, crime, or newspapers on Victorian society. However, none have assessed these four phenomena in conjunction, or indeed noted how closely they are intertwined. This introduction begins by assessing these historiographies, before then outlining the methods and approaches used in the thesis. It then describes the context and the many developments in both railways and news media across the nineteenth century, before closing with an overview of each of the chapters.

### **Histories of Railways and of Technology**

Historical research on railways has existed almost for as long as railways themselves, with railways assessed from many different angles and approaches, and has established the events that occurred in their construction and operation in copious detail, often relating them to wider social, economic and cultural dynamics. However, a large proportion of railway history is made up of inwardly-focused and heavily empirical works, with many of the limitations of existing work on railways common both to academic and non-academic literature. Perhaps the most important of these is that while many works are clear on the chronological or geographical scope of their research, very few explicitly address what a railway actually *is*. This point is less basic and less facetious than it might seem. By taking what railways are or what they entail as read, often as immutable, many works render themselves unable to assess their topic through the different aspects of railways, which came to mean different things with different levels of importance over the century, in complex and often non-linear ways. As a result, much research does not consider the differences between railways which were planned or under construction, and railways in operation – or indeed between railways as built and physically experienced and railways as they were written and read about in print. In general – though not always – railways under construction are examined from financial, political, or administrative perspectives, and railways in use from social or cultural perspectives. This separation often leads to histories ‘from above’. While such works are effective at documenting *how* the railways were formed, constructed and operated, they almost always do not or cannot adequately address their relationship with popular opinion and ongoing representation in news media and culture. Self-imposed limitations in outlook at the cost of detail are common to some extent in all fields of historical research, but they are far more common in railway history than, for example, histories of gender. Moreover, even when social and cultural histories of railways examine relationships between railways, news, and crime, they tend towards describing the stories that were on newspaper pages, rather than analysing them fully as part of a continuing, nuanced dynamic that arches over them, as is described in this thesis.

Recent histories of nineteenth-century Britain do acknowledge the importance of railway construction and railway use to all aspects of life in the period. K. Theodore Hoppen’s *The Mid-Victorian Generation* (2008) asserts that ‘railways and rail construction constitute perhaps the most distinctive manifestation of Victorian enterprise’.[[1]](#footnote-1) In 2013, Boyd Hilton wrote that although the country ‘remained a disparate collection of local economic communities’ in the 1840s, the railways were the foremost influence in bringing them closer together in the mid-century and beyond.[[2]](#footnote-2) In such general surveys, however, any specific examinations of railways are predominantly through an economic or political, rather than social or cultural lens. Hilton breaks from more detailed examinations of railway mileage and investment to mention how ‘the consciousness that England was essentially urban’ was fuelled by ‘the visual impact of railways’, but he does not elaborate on or incorporate news media into this assessment, and does not assess how that visual impact was communicated to the general public. Similarly, Hoppen’s statement that ‘the social and cultural impact of the railways was considerable, and in the main, unmeasurable’ reflects the difficulty in approaching the subject, but Hoppen does not consider how perceptions fuelled by reading about railways rather than using them might form part of that impact, nor indeed consider the nature and dynamics of that impact in particular detail. In *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906* (2018), David Cannadine takes a similarly limited approach. While he is quick to acknowledge how railway growth ‘would transform the economy and society of Britain and, eventually, much of the world’,[[3]](#footnote-3) he still focuses on what railways meant for the state or for the elite rather than for the people, leaning on elite perspectives such as Wellington’s aside that railways ‘encouraged the lower classes to travel about’[[4]](#footnote-4) rather than judging the impact of the railways through perceptions from the public they impacted. Works of this kind recognise the cultural and social impact of railways on nineteenth-century Britain, but ultimately – and by necessity, due to their being surveys – do not consider how such impacts were generated. Works of such scope on each of our three main topics cannot bring together the large, complex thematic strands of railways, crime, news media and public perception simultaneously; however, this does not preclude them from making useful points and identifying certain key themes for each of the themes separately. Although the social and cultural importance of railways to everyday life is neglected, by comparison the importance of newspapers and crime to social and cultural life in the period (discussed below) is firmly established, with many works focusing on connections between the two.

Histories taking railways as their principal subject can be split into roughly two camps – narrow-gauge and broad-gauge. The former, and larger, group consists of works whose approach is almost entirely empirical and single in their focus, such as upon the lines in local areas,[[5]](#footnote-5) institutions such as specific companies,[[6]](#footnote-6) or upon trains (or engines) themselves, the charismatic but unliving megafauna of the railway ecosystem. This is also true of the limited literature on railway workers, particularly railway construction workers, reflecting the enduring view of nineteenth-century railways as being centred around companies, engines, and carriages rather than people, even in literature specifically describing itself as written about them.[[7]](#footnote-7) Terry Coleman’s *The Railway Navvies*, originally released in 1965 and reprinted on several occasions, has defined the field, along with more recent works such as those by Anthony Burton and Ultan Cowley. [[8]](#footnote-8) All generally adhere to a narrative in which the railways’ seismic impact is taken as reason enough for chronicling the movements and numbers of railway construction workers over time.Although potentially very valuable as sources of raw information, these works are generally content to set out what existed or transpired without any sustained or critical analysis of why events happened in the way they did, or how they were important in the wider context of the impact of the railways on life in the period, in spite of the fact that railway companies, construction and operations had effects which rippled outwards beyond any lines, workforce, or depot. Just the topic of this thesis alone – namely the relationship between railways and popular perceptions and representations of crime – had consequences far beyond railways, so, for the purpose of this thesis, works about companies fall short in assessing their impact and do not explore it in sufficient detail.

However, while the lack of critical focus is most common – and forgivable – in limited, empirical railway literature intended for non-academic audiences, it is by no means limited to it. In recent years, more general histories of nineteenth-century railways have proven more popular than academic works. The most prominent of these is Simon Bradley’s *Railways: Network, Nation, People* (2016)*,* which bites off far more than it can chew by trying to tell a story in its entirety without stopping to examine much of it in detail, instead choosing to present an essentially uncritical, nostalgic view of nineteenth-century railways. Bradley’s work is thematically wide-ranging in scope, and touches on some nuances of the upheaval created by the railways, although it does not break new ground in doing so. Moreover, Bradley’s focus on changes in railway use comes at the expense of analysing how railways were discussed and perceived; in essence, he shows more interest in what railways *were* instead of what they *meant* for people, creating a false disconnect between the two. The work is also hindered by its narrow use of source material, with its privileging of elite, unrepresentative qualitative accounts, as well its over-reliance on official and company records leading, to bias in its outlook and choice of direction. Bradley’s ambition unfortunately leads him to subordinate his ‘People’ to ‘Network’ and ‘Nation’, leading to a rose-tinted view of railways as a sweeping ‘force for modernity’,[[9]](#footnote-9) wholly in line with the ‘Whiggish’ view of history which developed in the period itself.

As such, the most important and informative work on railways in the period for examining the issues covered in this thesis remains Jack Simmons’ 1991 work *The Victorian Railway*, which provides a thorough critical examination of how railways were perceived at the time, and notes how they ‘appeared dangerous to society as an agency of crime’, and that ‘to many Victorians the railway companies came to represent a power over their daily lives that was more immediately oppressive than the government’s’.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, Simmons deals very little with the mechanics of this railway connection with crime. He highlights the fraudulent crimes of George Hudson and Leopold Redpath, as well as murder and sexual assault in railway carriages – covered in chapters two and three of this thesis respectively – but does not consider how people acquired the perception that railways were linked to crime. The other pre-eminent work in the field, John Kellett’s *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (1969), has similar issues. Kellett argues that the development of urban slums was driven by railway domination and delineation of certain spaces in cities;[[11]](#footnote-11) however, his work is almost entirely from a geographical perspective, and lacks any real assessment of what the railways meant *to* people as well as for them, and does not deal with crime, despite his argument suggesting that railways played an important role in shaping areas which came to be associated with it. While these general histories were not written recently, there is a growing body of new histories of railways examining specific aspects of historical railways from a more human scale, oriented towards social history. These often come in the form of projects with a strong participatory interest for end users, such as Mike Esbester’s *Railway Work, Life and Death*, which assesses and visualises a searchable databaseon accidents and working lives of railway labourers in the late from 1880-1939.[[12]](#footnote-12) This thesis stands alongside these new works in seeking – as far as possible – to examine the broad, long-lasting changes in the dynamics around railway development through collating and analysing examples of individual people, accidents, and offences.

Most works which examine railway crime in the period reflect the sensationalist values of nineteenth-century news media by focusing on an exciting story and telling it, rather than analysing its importance. Works describing murders which took place on railways are particularly common,[[13]](#footnote-13) as well as studies of exceptional, well-documented events such as the ‘Great Gold Robbery’ of 1855.[[14]](#footnote-14) The exception to this comes in histories of railway financial crime, which tend to be more critically focused. Some of these works focus on specific individuals and their offences and can be biographical in tone. The most penetrating work on railway financial crime is undoubtedly R.W. Kostal’s *Crime and English Railway Capitalism* (2004), which is meticulous in its approach and analysis of interactions between the legal profession and railway investment, particularly in the greatest period of railway investment and expansion in the 1830s and 1840s. Kostal lays out the intricacies of how company directors and impresarios scored legal and legislative victories, and admirably charts the chaos of the Railway Mania.[[15]](#footnote-15) In recognising how the law in the early years of railway development ‘offered cheated investors almost no prospect of a successful civil lawsuit against, or successful criminal prosecution of, sham promoters’,[[16]](#footnote-16) he identifies the underlying cause of the torrent of public anger which followed the Mania and made railway companies a byword for financial crime. In doing so, he also explains why perceptions of financial crime need to be approached from angles well beyond official documentation and reports of criminal cases which came to court. However, Kostal’s work is oriented specifically towards developments in the law and the legal profession, and as such the insights he unearths on the social and cultural reception and effects of railway financial collapse are not always followed up, which would not have been possible or practical because the large amounts of digitised news media sources used in this thesis were not available at the original date of publication (1994).

However, perhaps most important for this thesis is Kostal’s approach of separating the railways ‘in construction’ and the railways ‘in operation’, which I use extensively here. This distinction can be applied very effectively to news media representations of crime, which helps in turn to underline one of this thesis’s central claims – that news media responses to railway crime took place in phases which, although overlapping at times for certain dynamics – remained broadly distinct. These phases also reflected developments in the wider railway industry while remaining distinct from it. Assessing railway developments and reactions to them as one process with distinct and related phases also serves to illustrate how many works are constrained by rigid thematic choices in approach, often leading to histories which do not talk to one another. For example, in *London and the Victorian Railway,* David Brandon’s sweeping and only vaguely substantiated claim that “railway stations from the start attracted all manner of human detritus”[[17]](#footnote-17) simply re-presents nineteenth-century opinions about who or what was criminal or likely to be criminal. This narrowness of focus also causes problems in works which look at railway crime more tangentially. Given that many historians and researchers of railways are fuelled by a lifelong personal interest in them, some works seem to gloss over their connections with crime and criminality in favour of a more whole-heartedly positive view.[[18]](#footnote-18) In contrast, rather than examining crime from a distinctly ‘railway’ perspective or vice versa, this thesis seeks to understand the relationship between crime and railways through contemporary *representations* of railway crime – by using sources which are known to be opinionated, and indeed studied for those same opinions, it avoids many of the issues around conceptualisation and perspective common to empirical studies.

Works which assess the effects of railways on nineteenth-century culture are often undermined by distinct issues over sources, chiefly the privileging of elite cultural sources over more widely read news media coverage or other popular cultural sources. The works of scholars such as Michael Freeman and Ian Carter[[19]](#footnote-19) are rigorous in their analysis of literary and artistic representations of railways in the period. However, their work was undertaken at a time when the digitised news media sources this thesis uses were not available, meaning that many conclusions are wholly based upon privileged sources from the literary and artistic canon, with news media represented only by more elite titles such as *The Times,* which had been extensively catalogued before mass digitisation and whose early digitisation compared to other titles led to similar distortions in scholarship even afterwards. Carter in particular addresses the gap in literary depictions of railways in nineteenth-century English fiction compared to the French, with even Charles Dickens’ depictions of railway construction and travel being comparatively minor compared to the attention paid to them in Emile Zola’s works,[[20]](#footnote-20) but he does not factor in how news media dominated public consumption of written material in the crucial mid-century decades of construction. Although new printing methods led to a growth in chapbooks, lending libraries and cheap fiction, these genres were outstripped by newspapers and periodicals to the extent that most of the most famous literary output of the period was fiction serialised in news media.[[21]](#footnote-21) Moreover, contemporary fears of declines in the quality of reading matter and the knock-on effects on public morals almost always focused on news media as the primary source of concern, even when, as with Matthew Arnold’s work, such critical output existed almost wholly in news media.[[22]](#footnote-22)

In summary, works which take railways as their primary focus often suffer from their choice of approach and outlook. While wholly empirical histories of lines and companies can largely exist in their own space, general and more ambitious histories of railways suffer the most from seeing railways in relation to *things,* such engines, lines, and stations, or else to groups such as companies and ‘navvies’ that are predominantly assessed for their connection to those engines, lines, and stations. There are fewer works that approach railways by examining their importance to *people*, rather than simply assuming the extent and nature of that importance solely on trust. These works, such as R.W. Kostal’s *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, prove far more insightful, and my study builds on these approaches.

This thesis is also guided by the approaches and content of more general and theoretical works about technology and history. David Edgerton notes how many histories often misrepresent a technology and its effects by failing to contextualise an innovation throughout the cycles of its development and use. Referring to works on technologies ranging from hand-mills, cars and nuclear power, Edgerton argues that there has been considerable divergence between histories of innovation and histories of technology-in-use in their geographical, chronological, and sociological outlook.[[23]](#footnote-23) Particularly relevant is his statement that the bias towards innovation in most studies of technology hampers ‘serious engagement between general history and the history of technology… conversely, an engagement with general historical problems has produced histories of technology in-use’,[[24]](#footnote-24) which particularly applies to works on railways. The only work which acknowledges this clear distinction, albeit seemingly inadvertently, is Kostal’s strong distinction between ‘railways in construction’ and ‘railways in operation’ in *Law and English Railway Capitalism*. I contend in this thesis that the distinction between the two is integral to the way that railways were represented in news media and perceived by readers. Furthermore, the lack of clarity seen in histories that treat ‘the railways’ as a monolithic phenomenon – almost always from an innovationist perspective – means that they cannot approach a full understanding of railways in public discourse. It also informs the approach in this thesis to reactions from nineteenth-century observers of railways, who experienced the relentless, uncertain, and manic sweep of chaotic developments thrown up by an emergent technology in real time. As a result, they were even more prone to oversimplify or generalise about railways, often viewing them as ‘the railways’, regardless of either a particular company’s actual connection to negative reporting, or of the differences between companies. The continuing trend to treat railways as one entity is seen in the patterns charted in this thesis’ chapters, which show how what was meant by ‘the railways’ underwent changes over time, which corresponded closely, though not exactly, with developments in the railway industry. The initial encoding of ‘the railways’ as primarily connoting physical construction shifted with the ‘Railway Mania’ of 1845 to ‘the railways’ primarily connoting railway companies and finance, before again undergoing a subsequent shift in the 1850s to encoding ‘the railways’ as passenger travel.

This last shift indicates most strongly that the processes underpinning these shifts are distinct enough to be treated separately from the goals and activities of the industry surrounding the technology in question, which often informs categorisations made in works such as Edgerton’s. The dominance of the initial view of ‘railways as something constructed’ reflects the priorities of the industry in those years; when the viewpoint of ‘railways as financial entity’ came to dominate, it reflected how the industry itself had changed in those years, primarily through the relentless focus on accumulating investment by both established and unestablished companies. However, the later viewpoint of ‘railways as something travelled on’ came to dominate in spite of comparatively little change in the railway industry when it took place. Chapter III argues that this change was underpinned by a growing public familiarity with railway travel which was then threatened by increases in reporting of violent crimes in railway carriages and stations. The very slow responses by companies to safety concerns in spite of considerable public pressure in letters and newspaper columns again suggests that changes in the public perception of relatively new technologies need not be associated with changes to the technology or the industry around it. Instead, it leads to demands for changes, demonstrating the need to incorporate broader approaches into those such as Edgerton’s in assessments of technologies. Although not focused on technology as such, Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997) concludes by stating that “technology develops cumulatively, rather than in isolated heroic acts, and…finds most of its uses after it has been invented, rather than invented to meet a foreseen need”.[[25]](#footnote-25) As the shifts in how nineteenth-century railways were perceived are not necessarily dependent on the state of the railway industry or the stage of their technological development, they support Diamond’s conclusion that any dynamics which affect the development, growth and use of technology in society will likely be subject to increasing ‘entropy’ from that society over time.

From this, I argue that two tendencies identified in this thesis are central to such responses to railways. First is the process of familiarisation around them, discussed above; the second is the focus of this thesis’ analysis on news media reporting linking railways with crime. When assessing the implementation and use of a given historical technology, we would expect the impact of crime reporting linked to the technology in news media to be proportional to the potential impact of that news media on the population adopting the technology. However, this thesis shows that any assessment made on the topic cannot be framed in such simple terms. In my subsequent sections on news media development in the period of railway growth, implementation, and use, I discuss how it was the foremost source for information in the period, as well as how crime events were almost certainly the most impactful ‘negative’ news events outside wartime in the period. This indicates that in the case of an era-defining technology such as nineteenth-century railways, contemporary perceptions of the negative aspects of such technologies are a crucial part of shaping more general opinion about them, as this thesis will argue. It is crucial, however, to understand that any dynamic will be affected to greater or lesser degree by many external factors, technological and otherwise; writing on news media, Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner invoke the quote that ‘technology is stuff that doesn’t work yet’, and that human ingenuity is such that tools are often employed for purposes other than those for which they were designed.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Many works examining technology and crime are based on specific investigations of links between them in a specific period; however, not all of them are useful for this thesis. The most prominent of these, Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s *The Railway Journey* (1977) makes bold statements about how railway travel provided democratic space and about the experience of travel in compartments, but it does not cite nearly enough contemporary material when assessing the relationship between railway travel and deviant behaviour and crime, or indeed when assessing any aspect of the cultural impact of this new technology.[[27]](#footnote-27) More recent – and more targeted – works prove more promising. Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman’s *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space and the Machine Ensemble* (2007) correctly identifies how railways had previously ‘been disconnected from the broader cultural history of modernity’ by having been appraised ‘either as a transport system [or] merely as some floating signifier for the spirit of modernity’. However, this work also suffers from a reliance upon privileged sources, leading to an over-reliance on high literary output.[[28]](#footnote-28) Freeman’s *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (1999) has a similarly narrow range of source material, but is more wide-ranging in how it describes the England into which the railways emerged. Freeman frames the national consciousness, particularly in the 1830s and 1840s, as preoccupied with the impending collapse of society, stemming from middle-class fears that their increased political and economic power that followed the reforms of the 1820s and early 1830s was threatened by rising popular radicalism, most notably by Chartism. Freeman links this fear of change with the change that the railways engendered, arguing that geographical changes made by the railways brought about similar changes in the nation’s mental landscape. He claims that the railways achieved victories over the traditional aristocracy, traditional constructions of capital, traditional geographies and the concept of the urban – and those who lived in cities – and traditional notions of space and time, all due to the increased ability to move people and goods about and the work necessary to facilitate it.[[29]](#footnote-29) While this is likely broadly true, Freeman’s conclusions are wide-ranging rather than specific and detailed, due mostly to the book’s lack of engagement with that mental landscape itself, instead inferring changes to it from the large-scale mechanisms he examines.

In conclusion, much of the work on railways is limited in the scope of its analysis, meaning that most works are descriptive histories of railway innovation and construction. Particularly when considered in the light of the distinctions drawn by Edgerton between technology as innovated and technology-in-use, almost none are adequate in making the distinction between different aspects of ‘the railways’ and the overlapping phases of their development.

### **Histories of Crime and of News Media**

Although histories of crime in the nineteenth century are not often engaged with railways or technology, their critical engagement with social aspects of historical research and extensive use of primary sources make them the most insightful body of work to inform this thesis of all those considered. Works on the history of specific crime types need not mention the railways to produce findings relevant to studying them. Much of the work on specific crime types is examined in detail in the specific historiography sections in each chapter, but some have conclusions which are important to the thesis as a whole or are otherwise of sufficient significance to discuss here. Although no work could reasonably have focused on the specific dynamics which are examined here, historians have approached crime with different goals, questions and methods, many of which have been adapted for this study. The main ongoing development in histories of crime in recent decades stems from the concern that judicial records do not provide sufficient information about crime, for example in that they often only include crimes which are prosecuted, and that what was recorded could be influenced by the choices and preferences of those recording. This has led to two divergent strategies for crime histories. The first, more epistemic approach has been to reorient works towards the study of criminal justice rather than crime. The second, more oriented towards changes in methods, has been to find out about crime through other sources than judicial records, usually retaining some level of reference to official sources for the purposes of cross-referencing and strengthening of analysis. This study belongs to the latter approach. Focusing squarely on representations and perceptions of crime, its most important sources are newly digitised nineteenth-century news media that can be assessed using different methods than were feasible for many earlier studies.

One study which attempts an approach less focused on official sources is David Churchill’s *Crime Control and Everyday Life in the Victorian City* (2017), which uses selected newspapers and published books to reorient histories of crime towards public perceptions of crime. However, while Churchill uses accounts of individual and group reactions to crime in order to build its picture, most of his source material comprises of local official and judicial records, and focuses mostly on crime and responses to crime in terms of the arms race between criminals and property owners, while this study focuses squarely on the effects of reporting on crime events and subsequent discussions of them in a broader sphere. Older works tend to take a broader view. A survey currently in its fourth edition, Clive Emsley’s *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900* (2018)[[30]](#footnote-30) focuses on distinctions – made in prior works[[31]](#footnote-31) – between crimes that were seen as ‘legitimate’ – for example by dint of profession or the need for social protest – and those ‘ordinary’ crimes which were not; this thesis deals with reported incidents which reflect that distinction. News media reports and articles on fraudulent railway activity and accident-related negligence often remonstrate directly about their inadequate regulation in law. This is a reversal of what Emsley identifies – instead of actions being tried as crimes without being perceived as such, news media reported on railway events as though they were crimes, even though they were not tried as such, and often had inadequate oversight where such legal provision existed. Nevertheless, Emsley’s distinction between ‘legitimate’ and ‘ordinary’ crimes is relevant here because it grounds his approach in wider perceptions and representations of crime types; the same is done in this study’s analysis. The lack of a criminal prosecution for these events makes them almost wholly unable to be studied through judicial records. Chapter II goes into more detail on how historians have assessed the changes in fraud from legal, political, and economic perspectives, but have seldom made contemporary news media important to their assessments. Interpersonal crimes such as murder, sexual assault, or violence were, by contrast, reacted to more quickly by officials, and were tried in courts. This led to the sense, indicated by corresponding discontent in news media, that railway fraud or negligence – or ‘director’ crimes – caused more harm but were examined less stringently than individual crimes perpetrated by railway passengers or railway servants; while these crimes did cause widespread concern, the coverage of directors was even greater, and was not limited by reactions to one specific type of event.

Paul Knepper’s *Writing the History of Crime* (2016) is perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to chart crime historiography, specifically how historians have attempted to define ‘best practice’ for it over time. Writing from a criminological standpoint, Knepper presents the field as a battleground between competing methodologies, while also asserting that historical criminologists are not really interested in the past.[[32]](#footnote-32) While Knepper argues for the law’s constant presence in Britain for centuries leading to it becoming the epicentre of crime history debates, he does not consider how the rise of news media as a dominant mode of cultural expression and public debate in the nineteenth century challenges that notion of the law’s centrality. Aside from folk cultural beliefs which varied locally, the law had previously only had to compete with religion as a truly national influence on how people thought about right and wrong. However, the years of railway development marked a point at which news media growth started to provide a truly national platform for airing and influencing people’s opinion about crime. Peter King has shown how outcomes of trials involving lethal violence tried at the Old Bailey in the late eighteenth century are likely to have been influenced by levels of press reporting, [[33]](#footnote-33) and that even before the developments of the mid-nineteenth century, local newspapers in Colchester had a strong ability to shape patterns of reported crime through their output.[[34]](#footnote-34) Esther Snell’s detailed longitudinal analysis of the *Kentish Post* shows how local papers one hundred years before the railways were keenly aware of how their output could affect their readership’s attitude to crime, structuring it accordingly.[[35]](#footnote-35) Reader response is difficult to gauge, as readers are not blank slates that absorb news media articles uncritically, but circulation figures, letters to editors and the focus of articles are all at least indicative of public perception, as was the fact that editors made newspapers with the explicit purpose of maximising sales. Previous research indicates that newspaper reporting was likely to have shaped and reflected attitudes towards the railways, and this study uses methods similar to King’s article on crime reporting in Essex to assess how it did so, combining quantitative and longitudinal analysis of news media content over time with close qualitative analysis of language in specific articles.

Works which focus specifically on nineteenth-century crime oriented from the perspective of news media tend to be few in number but impactful.[[36]](#footnote-36) Perhaps the most comprehensive currently available work on crime news in the period and beyond is Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg’s 2013 work *Crime News in Modern Britain: Press Reporting and Responsibility 1820-2010*.[[37]](#footnote-37) This book gives a broad overview of how, although ‘news values [such as danger, conflict, celebrity, scandal and oddness] remain broadly constant over time’, news media coverage of crime underwent significant changes during the nineteenth century, with single trials about single crimes coming to dominate coverage of crime, and thus become more prominent in the ways people conceived crime in the period.[[38]](#footnote-38) Richard Ward asserts that eighteenth-century diaries ‘suggest that, particularly in terms of the most serious offences, many contemporaries undoubtedly based their perceptions of the nature of crime at least in part upon what they read’ in news media.[[39]](#footnote-39) If we take this in conjunction with Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg’s assertion that ‘Victorian… audiences for crime news were much better equipped to understand the language of the courts than modern counterparts’, then it appears likely that news media in the period examined in this thesis grew from an already strong influence upon public perceptions of crime to become a dominant mode through which reports of crime were consumed and conceptions of it changed. Crime news assisted its own growth within news media titles by being one of the primary drivers of their success. Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg argue that the popularity of crime news itself ‘helped shape the expansion of the press’ through the creation of titles such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Illustrated Police News*, which were even more focused on crime news than their general counterparts.[[40]](#footnote-40) However, given the wide span of their subject matter, the approach taken by Rowbotham et. al. can only treat newspaper content in general rather than in detail, and cannot draw on the quantitative analysis of news media that I attempt for a specific ‘crime theme’ here. Other research, particularly on late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century crime, has drawn on non-news media sources alongside press accounts. Robert Shoemaker examines how public knowledge about crime was created in the eighteenth century, highlighting how crime reporting in pamphlets and newspapers could outmuscle real experience of crime in its ability to shape public opinion;[[41]](#footnote-41) he also links the increasing ability of printed sources to shape opinion to the evolution of nineteenth-century conceptions of a ‘criminal class’.[[42]](#footnote-42) The sources examined in this thesis indicate that railway-related crime reporting played a role in this process, both directly through the development of ‘the navvy’ as a criminal stereotype, but also in its consistent attacks on another, ‘unpunished’ criminal stereotype, railway director. The latter is itself a surprising inversion of nineteenth-century stereotyping and ideas of ‘a criminal class’, which linked criminality squarely to poverty and is discussed in Chapter II.

Other works detailing crime reporting also inform this thesis. John Carter Wood’s account of crime news and the press in *The Oxford History of Criminal Justice*, though it also covers the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, has valuable insights applicable here. Wood argues that crime reporting was a vital method for readers to make sense of the new urban modernity of the period; he foregrounds the trial account as the central pillar of crime reporting in the nineteenth century.[[43]](#footnote-43) However, while Wood mentions the ‘New Journalism’ of later decades, he does not explicitly link it with the move away from court reporting, or to the idea that by this time developments in ideas around ‘the criminal’ and ‘the criminal classes’ may have meant investigative journalism was favoured over verbatim court reporting.[[44]](#footnote-44) This has direct implications for the content of Chapter III, as reporting on violent crime in railway carriages could not feasibly be covered by investigation, instead being overwhelmingly made up of trial reports involving unknown assailants. Alice Smalley’s detailed assessment of the *Illustrated London News* notes how these new modes of coverage in the late nineteenth century were also influenced by newspaper production methods and spatial requirements on the page.[[45]](#footnote-45) Charles Upchurch’s work on the reporting of ‘unnatural’ (homosexual) assaults in the press demonstrates how close the relationships between class politics and crime reporting could be during the period.[[46]](#footnote-46) This holds particular relevance for Chapter II, which examines the railway investment in which contemporary politics and politicians were heavily and often directly concerned, as well as Chapter III, which assesses sexual offences and murders in railway spaces, most often railway carriages.

Works which document and analyse the huge increases in circulation and readership of nineteenth-century news media are much more critically nuanced and engaged than equivalent railway histories, and are crucial for approaching the material assessed here. The work of Laurel Brake and Marys Demoor in the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* [*DNCJ*]and of Alexis Easley, Andrew King and John Morton in the *Routledge Guide to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers* provide strong analysis of the overarching dynamics of developments in news media, as well as the various approaches used to examine them.[[47]](#footnote-47) In the *DNCJ*, Brake and Demoor lay out much of the legislative and economic backdrop in which editorial decisions were made and shaped publication practices, such as the 1836 reduction of stamp duty from 4d. to 1d./sheet, the full abolition of stamp duty in 1855, which directly preceded an explosion in titles and content, and finally the full repeal of newsprint paper duty in 1861.[[48]](#footnote-48) They also emphasise the trends within that growth in output, noting that between 1855 and 1861, ‘137 papers were launched in 123 English towns previously without one’, and that in 1871 one, ‘Hastings (pop. 30k) published 9 papers, illustrating the intense competition, usually along political lines’.[[49]](#footnote-49) While the *DNCJ* is a reference work rather than one of sustained analysis, its sections – particularly those on more general aspects of news media – are highly interrelated, and demonstrate the need to refer to the wider context of reporting while assessing the contents of that reporting. Among authors of more specific works, Adrian Bingham’s research, beyond his extensive work on the twentieth-century press, addresses several aspects of news media practices and culture relevant to this thesis, such as reading cultures, and specialisation of individual titles. While his approaches to news media readerships are less feasible when approaching nineteenth-century sources, the importance of reader response and engagement he identifies is still crucial to this thesis. [[50]](#footnote-50) James Mussell’s work focuses on assessing nineteenth-century news media through a digital prism, most notably in *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (2012),[[51]](#footnote-51) through its holistic approach to the challenges and opportunities of digitisation. Several works provide excellent examples of research methods, with Richard Ward’s *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* providing the methodological template for much of the analysis in this thesis, which is discussed below in the methodology section of this introduction.

News media growth was concurrent with the growth in railway use, with the rise of the radical press, the expansion of the popular press, and the turn towards new journalism overlapping with the key developments in railway development, construction and use. Crime reporting was crucial for selling most general newspapers, so if such news could be related to railways – which were becoming increasingly important to everyday life whilst still retaining the sense of being *new*, and potentially threatening as well – then it was that much more newsworthy. The development and growth of nineteenth-century news media has been well-documented, and it is important to discuss the considerable body of work dedicated to detailing and analysing the developments to and changes in the overall shape of the press in the nineteenth century. The explosive growth of the news media led to certain types of titles becoming prevalent at different times in the period. Hannah Barker’s *Newspapers and English Society 1695-1855* examines the relationships between newspapers, readers, readerships and politics, but concentrates the majority of its analysis of primary source material to the period 1760-1790, which is outside the scope of this thesis.[[52]](#footnote-52) Joel Wiener’s work assessing the development of newspapers in nineteenth-century Britain as an Anglo-American phenomenon is more instructive.[[53]](#footnote-53) Wiener identifies the reforms begun in the 1830s as critical in driving development towards a popular press, via growth in radical titles, the explosion of titles in the mid-century, and finally the ‘New Journalism’ that came into force by 1880.[[54]](#footnote-54) Aled Jones’ work on the growing readerships also informs this thesis’ approaches.[[55]](#footnote-55) He directly associates the growth of news media with that of the railways, stating that ‘high-speed, steam-driven progress… required its own abundant source of power, namely knowledge in the form of news’,[[56]](#footnote-56) outlines the constant demand for printed material, and emphasises the difference between ‘the reader’ as written for by editors and the readers that consumed news media.

The thesis is also informed by more dedicated work on readerships in the period, particularly by Richard Altick and Jim Mussell. Considering a mixture of rising literacy rates, growth in population and disposable income, lighting in the home, and increased locations for reading, Altick and Mussell argue for the combination of these factors, rather than any single one of them, as enabling capitalism and technological advancement to define how print media and print culture developed in the period.[[57]](#footnote-57) Altick and Mussell’s research follows on from other well-known works on the development of print culture in the period. Vic Gatrell’s analysis of how London-centric satire based on scandal and outrage shaped the development of public discourse between 1770 and 1830 shows how news media was situated to be receptive to the articles considered below.[[58]](#footnote-58) Older works such as Victor Neuberg’s *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* and David Vincent’s *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* lay out the events and dynamics around print media and readerships built upon in subsequent research, particularly the relationship between broadsides and popular newspapers, with the techniques used in the irregularly published, highly popular broadsides on crime and criminals strongly informing article content, presentation and editorial choices going into the decades of the mid-century.[[59]](#footnote-59) Ongoing surveys such as the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* provide insight into individual editors, proprietors and titles; these range from biographical details to sustained analysis of print phenomena and trends, which inform this thesis throughout. Historians of news media have argued that they supplanted other forms of records as – in general – the best source for much historical analysis of the nineteenth century, with Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner stating that ‘no other medium in our history… records every aspect of human life over the last 300 years – on a daily basis – like newspapers do’.[[60]](#footnote-60)This must be qualified by recognising that throughout the nineteenth century, newspapers and periodicals were one of several competing printed sources; the other sources include ballads, pamphlets and trial accounts.

This is particularly true of the earliest decades considered here; Robert Shoemaker’s work on responses to crime in eighteenth-century London highlights how although newspapers were the most consulted source in the years before the nineteenth century, they were but one of a diverse range of sources from which readers got news about crime.[[61]](#footnote-61) However, this diversity narrowed considerably over the nineteenth century, primarily from the direct competition of increased newspaper circulation and falling prices, but also from more selective approaches to purchasing. Rosalind Crone shows in *Violent Victorians* how middle-class audiences for ballads, broadsides, and pamphlets eroded over time, with crime and criminality becoming ‘regarded by the respectable as inappropriate subjects for [this type of] literature’.[[62]](#footnote-62) As is discussed in more detail below, newspapers became consistently cheaper and more widespread over several decades, leading by mid-century to them becoming, with exceptions for specific high-profile cases or local crimes, the dominant genre for crime news.

As Joel Weiner states, ‘the shift from a traditional form of journalism with a limited circulation to a daily and Sunday press encompassing millions of readers is one of the significant events of the century’.[[63]](#footnote-63) Beyond the dominant *Times*, the fact that even less established titles such as *Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper, News of the World,* the *Weekly Times* and *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* had individual circulation rates of around 50,000 by the early 1850s and kept rising in subsequent decades,[[64]](#footnote-64) has made news media reports on crime an established focus of research. The body of research on specific aspects of news media, such as the railway press, is smaller, but nonetheless obviously relevant for this study. Brake and Demoor chart the growth of railway newspapers such as the 1830 *Railway Gazette*, and the ensuing rivalry between the largest titles, the *Railway Journal* (more commonly *Herapath’s Railway Journal* or *Herapath*) and the *Railway Times*.[[65]](#footnote-65) However, while read by more people than might be expected, particularly in the 1840s, the vastly larger readership of non-specialist titles dwarfed the reach of the railway press; as such, these titles are only used here for their insights into specific industry issues, mostly in Chapter II.

When assessing perceptions of crime through contemporary representations of it, there are inherent uncertainties around the interactions between Victorian readers and Victorian news media. The first is the problem of reader response, as the existence of such representations is no guarantee of how they were read and interpreted. However, there are certain things to look out for while researching news media sources which can mitigate this problem by indicating reader response indirectly. Letters and exchanges of letters printed in the letters pages and columns of newspapers offer insight into how readers responded to reporting. These usually, though not always, referred specifically to articles written in the title in question; some may have been faked by newspapers but it is very likely that more were genuine, especially given that editors will have received far more letters than they printed, and could afford to be selective. Stephen Colclough has cautioned that letters to newspapers were still printed at the choice of their editors as much as were the articles which prompted them,[[66]](#footnote-66) yet it also follows that such editors would be motivated to print letters which chimed with the perceived interests and opinions of their readerships. Editorial influence on readers was widely acknowledged, but was also very often opaque; Aled Jones and Joanne Shattock write that while ‘few doubted the power of the written word to charm the reader or shape certain aspects of social life… fewer still claimed to understand how such influence was effected’.[[67]](#footnote-67) Other indicators also provide insight into nineteenth-century readers, the most prominent of which in this thesis is the republication, above board or otherwise, of articles appearing in other titles. Andrew Hobbs notes that republished material in provincial titles ‘can reveal a great deal about reader reception’,[[68]](#footnote-68) most notably because editors will have selected items they presumed would be popular with readers. This is particularly likely to have been the case for crime news, which had consistently high levels of representation and reprinting across the press; as such, we can infer the level of readership engagement with an article on a railway crime event from the degree to which it was reprinted in papers beyond its original title.

Lastly, the fact that this study focuses on representations of crime means that newspapers’ choices over what to publish do not obscure data, but rather *become* data. Inclusion and omission in newspapers often occupies historians of crime. Drew Gray warns that because ‘crime, sexual scandal and sensation [were] the basis of good copy in… the nineteenth century’,[[69]](#footnote-69) the incentives and potential for editors, writers, and other actors in the process of news media production to prioritise, embellish, change or falsify must be part of any assessment of their output. Any skewing effect of editorial prerogative is likely mitigated by the vast news media expansion of the period. If, as Peter King and others suggest, public perceptions of crime were predominantly shaped by news media representations of it, and if – as is argued below – railways were the most persistently newsworthy topic in the country for several decades besides the biggest wars, then news media representations of railway-related crime are a focal point in how the British public were informed about crime. The mass digitisation of such sources makes a more comprehensive assessment possible, and that is what is attempted here, using the methods outlined in the following section. In summary, this study aims to expand upon prior research to assess news media representations of railways and crime. Existing works prompt its research questions: firstly, how were railways connected with crime in nineteenth-century news media; secondly, how did representations that connected them with crime affect public and official responses to railways; and lastly how was this process affected by ongoing developments in news media and the railways. In assessing these questions, it informs our understanding of societal responses to a technology that had a vast impact, establishing how fear of and reactions to crime affected that response.

## **Methodology**

This thesis undertakes a mixed methods study, using qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse a range of source material, with the most important single source type being newspapers. It examines contemporary news media reporting, supplemented by official sources, railway company records, and works of literature and culture. This section details the sources used in this thesis, their availability for research, and explains how the material has been prioritised and approached. Its outlook and orientation towards source material is similar to Richard Ward’s in *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in the Eighteenth* *Century*. Ward’s central research question concerned the overall dynamics of how acts of crime, acts of justice, and representations in print interacted in the eighteenth century. His major research questions, of ‘how news media representations existed alongside legal and administrative change… [and how] they might have shaped contemporary perceptions and the practices of prosecution, policing, and punishment’,[[70]](#footnote-70) are directly relevant to the nineteenth-century materials and contexts assessed in this thesis. We must be conscious of the fact, stated by Ward, that ‘the power of print was neither uniform or absolute’[[71]](#footnote-71) in its ability to influence its readership. Like their eighteenth-century counterparts, nineteenth-century news media titles were disparate in their content, approach, and outlook, and competed for readers in an environment which was subject to continued legal, economic and social flux. But newspapers were far more important to nineteenth-century public discourse than they were in the period Ward examines. As noted in the previous section, digitised nineteenth-century news media currently provide fruitful ways of gauging broader changes in perceptions of crime, but any attempt to use news media as a historical source must also be aware of Ward’s warning by exercising appropriate judgment in selecting source material.

The thesis examines sources from the development and opening of the first railway, the Stockton and Darlington, in 1825, until 1900, by which point the slow decline of violent railway crime reporting (which can be seen from the mid-1870s onwards) had become well-established through changes in reporting trends (Chapter III). Newspapers are the most important source for this thesis. Initial approaches to this wide range of material concentrated on the best methods of approaching it without becoming overwhelmed, with approaches varying according to the focus of each chapter. The themes focused on in the chapters were initially devised from examining secondary literature on their topics, rather than from primary source material of news media. This is primarily for three reasons. Firstly, the volume of total newspaper material on railways in the period would have made devising cogent themes extremely impractical and time-consuming beyond the practical bounds of the project. Secondly, as discussed above, this thesis seeks to position itself relative to several areas of secondary literature and research; as such, it is best suited to do so through examining the themes that arise from it. While such works may not always spend a requisite amount of time examining a subject or assess it with the same methods I have used here, many are perfectly able to identify the most relevant areas of research, the themes pertaining to them, or the specific lines of inquiry and argument on individual topics. Lastly, the thesis makes a broadly thematic and chronological examination of railway development and the reception of railways in news media over the course of the nineteenth century. News media reporting in the period, however, was, by necessity, *news.* As well as being unable to assess of events which had not yet occurred, deriving themes directly from contemporary news media articles would run the risk of merely reflecting the nature and content of such reporting at the cost of identifying underlying trends, which were very seldom analysed in news media in the same way as done here.This thesis approaches news media representations of railways and crime using large-scale digital resources for quantitative methods that were not or could not be employed in previous works. However, searches of primary sources were still very influential over the direction and nature of each the chapters while they were being researched. For Chapters I and II, keyword searching was used to identify broad statistical trends in article numbers over long periods, involving hundreds of thousands of individual articles; Chapter III’s more granular approach involved manual reading of upwards of 20,000 digitised articles identified in those searches for detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. Neither would not have been possible through conventional archival research, so the choice of digitised database was crucial to the feasibility of the study.

The two candidate databases for undertaking the quantitative aspects of this research were *GALE* Primary Sources (hereafter *GALE*), and the *British Newspaper Archive* (hereafter *BNA*),[[72]](#footnote-72) both of which are large-scale databases of digitised news media sources. The issues which shaped this methodology are the size of each database, how representative it is as a sample of the nineteenth-century press, and the relative accuracy and effectiveness of its optical character recognition (OCR), with the latter being discussed below in more detail. *GALE* was selected to carry out almost all the searches for this thesis. It is a commercial platform made up of from nineteen separate databases of historical news media,[[73]](#footnote-73) articles dating between 1820 and 1900, held across nine archives of news media that were published in the UK. *GALE* is a significantly smaller database than the *BNA*, with 26,353,435 articles for the period,[[74]](#footnote-74) while the number of articles in the *BNA* for the same date range number 246,902,314[[75]](#footnote-75), with large amounts of overlap between the two databases.[[76]](#footnote-76) A very small proportion of *GALE*’s articles may be duplicates held by multiple archives, but very few duplication issues were apparent when scrolling through relevant manual search results while undertaking article-by-article research for Chapter III.

While the *BNA* is a larger database than *GALE*, several factors suggest the latter is much more suited for this analysis. Not only are *GALE*’s holdings more than large enough to constitute a representative sample of the nineteenth-century press, the *BNA* also does not have rights to many influential national titles available in *GALE*, whose influence far outweighed their circulations, focusing instead on digitising large numbers of local newspapers. Moreover, *GALE* is much less prone to duplication of articles than the *BNA*, in which large-scale duplication can be readily seen in basic searches. While *GALE* does see some degree of duplication, which may inflate numbers to a small degree, this is not common beyond certain specific titles, allowing for more confidence in quantitative analysis. In searching undertaken for this thesis, these have almost always been periodicals, most often *John Bull* and *Bell’s Sporting Life*, which form a much lower proportion of results than daily titles. Outside of the largest and broadest searches, such duplication has been eliminated and does not form part of the sustained analysis, including the detailed analysis undertaken in Chapter III.

Lastly, the Optical Character Recognition (or OCR) of *GALE*, though not without issues for research, appears far superior to that of the *BNA.* Given the sheer volume of digitised news media content consulted, the methodology of the study prioritises accuracy in search methods as much as possible, since only a certain number can ever be read manually and errors in searching are magnified by the number of sources searched. Sources which have been digitally available for some years continue to benefit from technological improvements, for example in areas such as search functions, or more detailed categorisation of sources. The approach used here was designed and implemented to provide as accurate an impression as possible of changes in newspaper reporting, and in particular to mitigate the effects of errors created by Optical Character Recognition. OCR refers to the process by which print is automatically converted to the machine-encoded text that can be searched for relevant terms. OCR reliability has often been an issue for large, digitised databases, and the technology can be intrinsically limited by age, wear and damage on the original sources or microfilm. Given that the range of primary sources used is identified through keyword searching, ensuring that OCR accuracy is as high as possible is vital to ensure confidence in the conclusions drawn from that data.

Critical and unbiased data on the OCR reliability of a given platform is not easy to find. Part of the problem is that the error rate of a database’s OCR process will vary based upon the material in question; in general, though not always, the older a text and the less regular its script, the more OCR errors are likely to occur. *GALE* do not provide data on the accuracy of their individual databases, but the most recent available survey by Tanner, Munoz and Ros assessed a large 20,000-page sample of the British Library’s Nineteenth Century Newspaper and Burney Collections, which are central to GALE Primary Sources. Tanner et al. found that the Project had OCR accuracy levels of:

Character accuracy – 83.6%

Word accuracy – 78%

Significant word accuracy – 68.4%

Words with capital letter start accuracy - 63.4%

Number group accuracy = 64.1%[[77]](#footnote-77)

While on its own this puts *GALE* below the threshold of 80 percent identified by Tanner, Munoz and Ros as necessary for confidence in its OCR, there are methods available on the *GALE* platform to mitigate this. Most notably, the fuzzy searching functions incorporated into its search engine mitigates this by searching for variations of a word rather than simply for the exact text of the search term itself. While this cannot be used to locate every instance of a particular word searched for, it is likely to bring the OCR reliability rate to a more acceptable level. While it cannot, however, remove any false positives from the search, these can be identified through closer analysis. The broad and descriptive quantitative work undertaken in Chapters I and II is used to identify areas to examine through qualitative work, rather than to draw concrete conclusions. In chapter III, which assesses (comparatively) fewer articles through more nuanced quantitative methods, each article entered into its database for analysis has been read and screened manually ensuring complete elimination of false positives. The approach taken by Richard Ward in *Print Culture, Crime and Justice* aimed to avoid inaccurate rekeying or OCR errors by making full use of alternative spellings, fuzzy searching, and Boolean commands such as AND, OR, and NOT while undertaking searches,[[78]](#footnote-78) and I employ similar methods here to ensure that as many prospective articles could be identified as possible, detailed in each chapter. It is, however, important to acknowledge that both *GALE*’s OCR and fuzzy searching mechanisms are opaque, in that although they produce apparently mostly reliable results, *GALE* does not make any information available on how its searches work, and there are no adequate statistics on the reliability of either. There is nothing that can be done about either issue in the context of this study, but they require acknowledgement.

It has not been possible to establish the reliability of the *BNA*’s OCR relative to *GALE*. Neither platform provide an error rate on their website, and no study similar to Tanner et. al.’s for *GALE* has been undertaken for the *BNA*. However, as most of its scans are taken from the same microfilm as the British Library Collection held on *GALE,* any differences in their reliability will most likely derive from OCR technology itself. While this has improved in general over time, the *BNA* sees markedly higher instances of non-standard characters in transcriptions of articles than *GALE*, indicating a less accurate OCR system. The *BNA*’s search platform, being more commercially than academically oriented, was unsuited for much of the detailed searches undertaken in this thesis. This was particularly true at the time when much of the quantitative work for this thesis was undertaken, as the *BNA*’splatform did not until recently support scrolling through results or refining searches by variables such as article type, and it has less support for fuzzy and Boolean searches than *GALE*.[[79]](#footnote-79)Nevertheless, even with *GALE*, any user must adopt a critical perspective, with Deegan and Tanner warning that ‘extracting content from the text of newspapers without presenting all the information around it, as well as the layout and typographical arrangement, is an impoverishing exercise, and clippings without context lose much meaning’.[[80]](#footnote-80)

There are a few major titles, such as the *Manchester* *Guardian*, which are not accessible through *GALE*, [[81]](#footnote-81) and many local newspaper titles are also not available; however, almost all the most highly read and impactful news media titles of the period – most significantly *The Times* – are available through the platform. It is important to remember that the newspapers digitised in *GALE* do not constitute anything like the full range of titles that were published in the nineteenth century, although *GALE* has almost all of the biggest titles available. The lower a title’s status or circulation, the less likely it is to be available digitally (particularly in GALE); in practice, this means that many local and specialised titles cannot be used. GALE’s coverage of national and local titles, combined with its superior search functions to other platforms, makes it a sufficiently large, important, and influential sample of contemporary news media for this thesis to detect and analyse important trends in reporting, and the most appropriate resource for this thesis’s analysis.

Existing research which uses historical news media highlights the rich potential for assessing public perceptions of crime through news media representations of railway-related crime. When trying to determine the best ways to approach crime in news media, it is best to cast a wide net, and select approaches and methods piecemeal from research across thematic boundaries to approach a complex problem. Of research which comes closest in outlook to this thesis, Peter King’s work on news media representations of crime in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century stands out in how it combines a longitudinal approach to large bodies of source material with a focus on public perception. King highlights how ‘a large proportion of the population… would have gained most of their information about [crime] from printed sources, and in particular from the newspapers’, that ‘both in London and in the provinces, items of news about crime, court hearings and other aspects of the criminal justice process had been staples of newspaper production since their inception',[[82]](#footnote-82) and that ‘they tended to focus selectively on the more violent and frightening types of offences'.[[83]](#footnote-83) As will be seen, this not only continued to be the case for crime news until the late nineteenth century, but railway-related crime provided an extremely newsworthy ‘crime theme’ for editors of titles both established and new to focus upon in an attempt to sell their papers. In terms of more specific approaches to nineteenth-century material, Rosalind Crone’s *Violent Victorians* (2012) provides perhaps the nearest approach to that taken in this thesis.It argues that any presumed process of ‘taming’ popular culture wholesale in the early- and mid-century did not take place with the exception of sexual offences, that titles as highly regarded as the *Times* and *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* did not consider ‘any details about violence and injuries unfit for publication, and that newspapers were instrumental in shifting perceptions of violence ‘from scaffold culture to the cult of the murderer’.[[84]](#footnote-84) Crone makes a detailed study of crime coverage in a range of titlesover sustained periods to gauge the overall shape of representations of violent crime, most notably in leading papers such as *The Times*.

This study’s main analysis of news media articles and reports is complemented in this study with official sources and documents, providing evidence of high-level opinion and policy as well as being a source of much of the context for railway construction. These archival and digitally-held materials include the *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* (HCPP), *Old Bailey Proceedings* (OBO) – both of which are available digitally – and records of railway companies and private individuals, held at The National Archives (TNA), the National Railway Museum (NRM), and other archives in England. As well as analysis emerging directly from *GALE* searches, the chapters provide an alternative to the approach undertaken by Ros Crone on violent crime. Crone’s analysis of the 1864 murder of Thomas Briggs by Franz Müller – which, as the first murder to take place on the railways, is analysed in detail in Chapter III – determined that coverage of it was mentioned on 7.5% of all of *Lloyd’s* pages for the year, and in 0.88% of *Times* pages, still impressive given that *The Times*, a daily,produced over seven times as many pages in the year (1408) as the weekly *Lloyd’s* (192), and was subject to a faster-moving news cycle.[[85]](#footnote-85) While Crone’s approach is strong in being able to quantify coverage in depth, this is only extended to a few of the most influential newspapers. She argues that, in general, violent crime narratives in individual newspapers (her example is *Lloyd’s*) were too random to provoke moral panics owing to too much range and variety in content. However, as is discussed in Chapter III, crimes in railway carriages could be one exception, both because the carriage was a far more standardised location for an offence to take place, thus making categorisation easier to notice and to highlight, and also because it is likely that a higher proportion of such cases would be discussed in print due to the newsworthiness of railway travel. This study aims for a more comprehensive approach to its quantitative assessment of reports about railway crime, before accounting for the added influence of specific titles in its qualitative analysis; nonetheless, its conclusions mirror those made in Crone’s analysis where comparable.

## **The Development of Nineteenth-Century Railways and News Media – an Overview**

Many of the large-scale elements and developments in railways and news media during the period need to be outlined before the main body of the study’s analysis. The following sections are broader and contextual by necessity, aiming solely to provide the reader with the lie of the land for the periods analysed in the subsequent chapters; much of this deals with the first decades of railway development. This is because many of the issues which drove the dynamics of railway crime reporting throughout the century had their roots in the landscape for railway construction and business that was formed before 1840, chiefly in its deficiencies. The only phenomenon to keep pace with the railways’ impact on society was the relentless expansion of mass-produced news media, of periodicals and journals which were written and read in numbers which grew for many years in the mid-century at rates that are unlikely to have occurred before or since. They became the dominant mode for readers to gain information, especially for fast-moving topics. Although railways were essentially uniform in how they took people or freight from place to place, nineteenth-century news media titles were disparate and constantly changing in their appearance, content, orientation, and outlook, and competed for readers in an environment which was subject to continued legal, economic, and social flux. Nonetheless, the simultaneous growth of railways and newspapers was by no means separate; investment in railway companies and familiarity with railway travel was driven by newspaper columns about passenger transport and advertisements for railway scrip and shares, while the formation, writing, printing, distribution and sale of newspapers and periodicals was enabled or else bolstered by the logistical possibilities of railway transport.

In the years leading up to 1840 – particularly before 1830 – the impact of railways was largely bound up in the slowly growing sense of their potential as commercial ventures oriented towards freight haulage. Following the experiments of Richard Trevithick and others in the early years of the century, the Stockton and Darlington Railway (SDR) was founded in 1818 and given its bill of assent in 1821, the same year the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (LMR) was founded. These were the first two of many thousands of railway companies to be proposed over the coming decades, but in the earliest years of planning, construction, and investment the potential impact of railway travel was far from apparent, with most early investment predicated upon returns made from shipping industrial freight rather than passengers. Powerful and well-established interests who felt they stood to lose out from competition with railways – such as canal magnates and large landowners – sought to oppose or otherwise hinder development. Surveys of potential routes were frequently opposed in parliament, often by powerful local landowners such as Earls Sefton and Derby, and on the ground by gangs of locals under their employ who intimidated and sometimes assaulted workers.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Opposition to railway construction was not limited directly to economic stakeholders. Criticisms aired in newspapers included editorials and letters from members of the public – both of which were often reprinted in other titles. These were frequently successful in affecting railway construction, with companies being quick to respond to certain areas of controversy. Although some attacks on the new railways and any presumed disruption they would cause were general in tone, just as many focused on more specific issues. One early letter, printed in the *Leeds Intelligencer* on 13 January 1831, wrote of the author’s ‘mortification’ at imagining his domestic life after the railway had been built, predicting that ‘in a moment my dwelling, once consecrated to peace and retirement, is filled with dense smoke of foetid gas… Nothing is heard but the clanking iron, the blasphemous song, or the appalling curses of the directors of these infernal machines”.[[87]](#footnote-87) Such accounts highlighted the widespread feeling that railways, and the smoke and noise than followed them, were a danger to public health for those living close to railway lines, whether in construction or operation, for the profit of a few directors and shareholders. Fears of soot and smoke were held by elites as well as the general populace, with the first bill to approve the Liverpool and Manchester Railway to come before parliament in 1825 being rejected on grounds including fears over smoke and soot from engines and construction.[[88]](#footnote-88)

In contrast to the 1840s investment and ‘Railway Mania’, when railways were the dominant feature in the national economy, investment before 1840 generally ebbed and flowed according to broader market trends around related industrial ventures. In the mid-1820s, large-scale investment in British-led silver mining projects in Mexico’s Real Del Monte were a catalyst for the capital investment necessary to survey and formally propose railways to Parliament. While the early and mid-1820s was the first railway investment of any substance and could perhaps technically be considered the first railway mania, it was not driven by the potential of railways, instead being entirely linked to the wider market for industrial investment. When this crashed in 1825, numbers of proposed railways went with it. The time which it took to construct those lines which were approved and funded, particularly in the earliest years of the technology, meant that few were fully operational by 1830; consequently, the potential impact of passenger travel was still not properly recognised. Opened in 1825, the Stockton & Darlington was the only passenger-carrying line of any length, and although passenger travel’s popularity was acknowledged, it was still perceived in terms of its novelty value rather than for its quotidian value, with freight still the central focus. The 1829 Rainhill trials, which determined that George Stephenson’s *Rocket* would operate on the soon-opening Liverpool and Manchester line, provided publicity for the line, but also provided publicity for the engineering process, helping to underpin confidence and subsequently driving investment.

The opening of the Liverpool and Manchester line in 1830 was a defining moment in railway development. As well as connecting two large and important cities, its first journey saw the first major railway accident and passenger death, that of the MP William Huskisson (discussed in more detail in the Chapter I section on accidents). Despite this, the massive success of passenger travel on the line sparked what was subsequently termed the ‘Second Railway Mania’ in 1834, when large capital reserves, accrued through bumper years for Lancashire cotton and agricultural harvests and stimulated by high investor confidence, caused large numbers of railways to be proposed. By this point the growth of railways seriously outstripped the capacity of existing British institutions to cope with the change they brought. The vast numbers of potential railway bills led to Parliamentary Standing Orders being introduced and applied solely to railways to limit their numbers to a manageable amount for the many Railway Committees. Moreover, progress was often slowed by a lack of understanding of the inherent nature of the new technology, with deeply ingrained and dogmatic resistance to any notion of monopolies in Parliament causing uncertainty over whether companies had sole rights to run trains on their lines, leading to brittle logistical systems and several accidents over time. Both the law and the legal system were also unready for the railway world. While the mechanisms of financial and corporate law had undergone significant change in the period – following the legalisation of joint-stock banks in the 1820s – they still did not properly address the nuances of these new modes of investment. Even more importantly, the legal system was sorely lacking in its capacity to deal with the tidal wave of complex common law cases that railways engendered; the insufficiency of the *laissez-faire* approach when things went wrong was a crucial element compounding the bitter fallout after the Railway Mania of the 1840s.

Partly due to the Parliamentary logjam, the second Mania collapsed in 1835. By this point only 400 miles of railways were in operation, and although Parliament would only authorise ten more miles of new line between 1838 and 1841, enough prospective companies had been approved that by 1840 1,500 miles of line were operational, including all the major modern routes bar London to York and Edinburgh. The passenger travel boom on these lines led to a proliferation of investment in 1844-1845 which dwarfed all that had come before; these complex events are discussed in detail in Chapter II. In simple terms, the third Railway Mania of 1845– often simply termed ‘The Railway Mania’ – and its aftermath were hugely influential economically and politically, and in shaping public opinion of railways and railway directors; it was the single biggest trope definer for railways as a subject in news media. After the market crashed in early 1846, angry investors and news media denounced the practices of many companies, boards, and directors, permanently changing the tone of how railways were depicted in public discourse, with reporting on suits and cases in common law courts that involved railways being discussed in language akin to criminal proceedings for decades to come.

The collapse of investment and confidence following the Mania, as well as the inefficiencies of competing routes, led to widespread amalgamation of railway companies that continued in the 1850s. Railways were by this point looking to earn money by out-competing each other rather than acquiring totally new business. Company policy began to seek access to strategic branch lines and routes, creating a commercial civil war centred on access to towns and increasing footfall. Newspapers, however, continued to boom, and had been doing so since the 1830s, when several duties which limited circulations were repealed. The growth towards what Joel Wiener terms as ‘a mass circulation press’[[89]](#footnote-89) was enabled by a steady stream of technological and legal developments which punctuated the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The primary inhibitor of newspaper growth was the various duties and taxes on newspapers and pamphlets, some of which were longstanding statutes designed to reduce the spread of populist agendas; they resulted, essentially, in large-circulation titles being very difficult to run as profitable businesses. The total annual newspaper circulation is estimated to have been 39,000,000 before stamp duties were reduced in 1836; in 1856, one year after the last pieces of regulatory legislation had been repealed entirely, the figure stood at 122,000,000.[[90]](#footnote-90) Repeals in duties on advertisements in 1853 and paper in 1861, the adoption of the rotary printing press in the mid-1850s, and ever-cheaper type plates and newsprint[[91]](#footnote-91) all fuelled media expansion further. The growth in news media ensured that representations of railways, and the perceptions of railways that they affected, were far more widespread than would have been possible decades before.

Many of the London dailies and weeklies which emerged in these years came to dominate the national market. Prominent weeklies such as *Lloyd’s Weekly London Newspaper, The News of the World, Weekly Times* and *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* each had circulations of around 50,000 by the early 1850s, rising to the hundreds of thousands by 1880.[[92]](#footnote-92) However, most notably in the middle decades of the century, the *Times* stood alone, even over other established titles. Its circulation of 23,000 in 1844 and 40,000 by 1850, roughly equalled every other London daily combined.[[93]](#footnote-93) However, the *Times* exerted a pull and impact that outweighed even its vast circulation and is difficult to overstate. Politicians and parties sought its good opinion, and its letters column was the foremost place of debate in the country, a Hyde Park Corner of newsprint. In the 1830s the *Times*’ threat of breaking from support for the government led Lord Althorp to send the Chancellor Lord Brougham an urgent private note, later leaked, stating:

My Dear Brougham,

The subject I want to talk to you about is the State of the Press, and whether we should declare open war with ‘*The* *Times*’, or attempt to make peace.

Yours most truly, Althorp[[94]](#footnote-94)

Although its high price of 5d. per issue or £6 per year – which remained roughly stable – meant that relatively few individuals are likely to have purchased it outside London or elite circles, its influence can be seen from the degree to which its articles and style were syndicated, quoted and copied extensively across the provincial press in the period.[[95]](#footnote-95) Its reputation grew following its self-proclaimed ‘defeat’ of the 1845 Railway Mania. There are more references to articles in *The Times* in this thesis than any other newspaper, but that reflects its power as the perceived newspaper of record in the period,[[96]](#footnote-96) as well as the landscape of crime reporting until the last decades of the century. However, while *The Times* and other nationals generally set the agenda for news media, the most dramatic aggregate increases in circulation and titles came outside London. Rachel Matthews writes that in 1854 ‘there were 289 provincial papers… by 1871 this number had not only grown to 851, [but] a daily provincial press had become established’.[[97]](#footnote-97) Railway construction and financial development had pronounced and sometimes idiosyncratic effects on the economy and society of the areas serviced by the line in question, and this was replicated in the relationships between railway companies and news media in specific locations. Power dynamics between railways and local news media could be a microcosm of national debates over undue influence – Chapter II goes into this phenomenon in more detail by looking at reporting in strongly railway towns such as Derby. However, when a story had appeal beyond a more local forum, reporting often reflected another aspect of the developing news media industry, namely that local and smaller titles took their cues from larger national ones, with articles often simply copied wholesale. In a country where the proportion of discussion that was framed as a national debate was increasing – supported by the ease of movement that was itself brought about by the railways – the bigger news media entities were the primary forum for discussion of events which were perceived as prominent. In general, therefore, when local papers are discussed in more detail in this thesis, they are assessed in relation to the specific, short-term influence of a case upon a particular area.

Publishers responded to the new but confined and chaotic reading spaces created by trains with new formats for books, newspapers, and periodicals ‘with clearly defined [layouts] which included headlines and short paragraphs.’[[98]](#footnote-98) Such formats were a more natural environment for crime news, especially news in which violent railway crimes provided some of the most newsworthy narratives; they also fuelled the growth of ‘Railway Library’ bookstores, chief among which was W.H. Smith’s. Changes in news media also prefigured, informed, and aided ‘legalist’ trends in fiction from the 1860s onwards, with works such as Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* being written from multiple perspectives to present evidence analogous to the court proceedings available in the crime section of a newspaper, while themselves being serialised in newspaper format. The influence of railway offences is present in much of that fiction, particularly the underlying threat of the carriage or the accident, as is the case in several works by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, or forced confinement in something akin to the carriage, as is the case with the asylum in *The Woman in White*.Crime news was also featured in specialist railway publications; George Bradshaw also produced, along with the ubiquitous *Bradshaw’s Railway Guide*, the *Railway Gazette*, whichcontained news about both criminal and civil courts three times a week.[[99]](#footnote-99) The overall change in public engagement with the railways is similar to the shift that Wiener argues for more broadly in the emerging news media environment of the period, one which was ‘shaped by the perspectives of its readers… [and] democratised during the course of the nineteenth century.’[[100]](#footnote-100) Compounded by increasing access to and familiarity with passenger travel among the public, this led in the 1850s and 1860s to railways becoming most often referred to as a mode of passenger transport in news media, rather than, as previously, as a line being constructed or a venture invested in. This period coincided with a sharp rise in reporting on violent and sexual offences that took place in railway carriages, which is the subject of Chapter III. That rise in reporting, and others like it, cannot however be solely ascribed to changes in railways, as the news media landscape had undergone changes that were just as frenetic and impactful in the same period.

## **Chapter Outlines**

The lengthy time span of this thesis is mitigated by the broad chronological succession of its chapters, which reflect how representations of railway-related crimes in the nineteenth century followed changes in what ‘the railways’ meant to people. In the first period of railway construction, this meant the construction of the line, and the associated threats of destruction of the land, and of the engine and its smoke. From the 1840s it came to mean the railway company and the sense of unethical financial chicanery that quickly came to be attached to it, while after 1850 it came much more to mean travel in railway carriages and the threat of the unknown passenger. Moreover, the data suggest that the reporting dynamics of these themes took years and sometimes decades to take hold. This is in line with Richard Ward’s statement that prurient interest in individual crimes was not the sole driver to their being reported in the eighteenth century, but that a metanarrative of ‘crime news’ and ‘crime trends’ also developed over time, with certain crimes becoming increasingly portrayed as representative of social problems rather than as picaresque individual tales.[[101]](#footnote-101)

In each chapter I have undertaken searches through *GALE* for articles about the main thematic aspects of the chapter, using the results as a springboard for further analysis. This has often taken the form of creating an Excel spreadsheet, with details collated from individual articles as well as in chart form using the data visualisation tools available through the GALE platform, with accompanying descriptive statistics held in an Excel worksheet. Each chapter also undertakes detailed qualitative analysis of individual articles in papers with the largest circulations and established status, in particular editorials in high-impact titles such as *The Times*, as well as letters to newspaper editors, which often show unequivocally that there was considerable back and forth between title and reading public. Individual articles are also selected for the typicality of their choice of material and reporting style, as representing wider trends.

Chapter I is the most disparate of the thesis, covering responses to the perceived physical threats posed by the early railways under construction, most notably from railway workers and railway accidents. The broad thematic strokes of this chapter and the not easily quantifiable nature of its material do not lend themselves to truly analytical quantitative methods; however, descriptive statistics of article numbers still serve to illustrate broad dynamics such as proportional growth in reporting and the rise and fall in terminology around accidents and workers over time. Combined with analysis of impactful and significant articles identified through keyword searching, the chapter shows how news media reporting on workers and accidents changed over time depending on the significant factors of railway development. Stereotyping of railway workers as drunken Irish navvies became more common over time and the further removed from railway construction an article was, while railway accidents were the most common way for the new technology to be linked with crime – namely criminal negligence – before the Railway Mania shifted the general focus of news media towards railways-as-companies.

The second chapter addresses railway financial crime in the period, focusing on the financial misdeeds which came to be associated with railway financiers and directors, particularly in the aftermath of the ‘Railway Mania’ of 1845. This chapter shares similar issues with Chapter I as regards searching for source material. The railways dominated the British economy during the peak periods of investment and construction, which broadly overlapped with the peak periods of news media coverage, with R.W. Kostal estimating that as much as a quarter of all capital outlay in the mid-1840s was spent on railway shares.[[102]](#footnote-102) The large number of articles published is not the only challenge for carrying out quantitative assessment, since the wide variety of terms used to refer to directors, both individually or as a group, as well as the lack of any criminal prosecution in many matters (which caused the most outrage), means that using simple search terms such as ‘director’ or ‘crime’ could not tell the whole story. Instead, Boolean operators and other targeted forms of searching using AND, OR, and named individuals were used to create accurate search profiles. Also making use of similar methods to Chapter I to identify key articles and reports for qualitative assessment, the chapter goes into detail on the complex dynamics of the Railway Mania and reporting around it, as well as undertaking case studies on three men – George Hudson, Leopold Redpath and Samuel Morton Peto – who were attacked in the press for different forms of financial crime in the years that followed the Mania. It ultimately argues that the Mania was the most important event in railway crime reporting in the nineteenth century, and was fundamental in fixing the image of the railway director as a villainous stock character, making investment in railways appear intrinsically unethical for several years, and connecting the railways with crime in the public imagination for much longer.

A different approach is possible in Chapter III, which examines news media responses to sexual assaults and murders in railway carriages and in railway stations. The specific focus of the topic, and its nature as a collection of reactions to specific events which led to criminal prosecutions, mean that in-depth database study and analysis is possible in a way that the more thematic and less concrete reporting phenomena assessed in Chapters I and II do not. As such, the quantitative analysis in Chapter III allows for specific insights with which to guide qualitative assessment of news media articles by assessing many thousands of articles across the period, identifying many key variables for longitudinal analysis.[[103]](#footnote-103) The narrower focus of Chapter III also allows for more detailed qualitative analysis, whether for individual cases, crime themes, or thematic trends. Because it deals with a manageable number of specific cases and articles, these can be identified, categorised, and analysed, and can therefore confidently be said to be more truly representative of a crime phenomenon than the material Chapters I and II can address. The chapter examines representations of railway sexual offences and murders in news media throughout the century, making in-depth studies of three heavily-reported murders and one sexual assault, and detailing the reporting dynamics which followed them, generating something akin to moral panics. Beyond showing how reporting was heavily centred around these incidents, it depicts how reporting was intensely concerned with the perceived respectability of both complainant and defendant, and that wider cultures of crime reporting had a direct effect on reporting of violent railway crime. Lastly, it charts the development of the process of normalisation shown in Chapters I and II, showing that between around 1855 and 1875 representations connecting railways with crime became centred on representations of railway carriages rather than companies or construction.

In the conclusion, I demonstrate how examining news media reports of railway-related crime brings together several important themes in the development of nineteenth-century society. By understanding how newspapers reported railway crime, this study shows how such reports influenced broader perceptions of the railways, which brought immense changes to nineteenth-century Britain. It demonstrates how newspaper reporting shaped and changed how the railways were perceived, in three broad stages. Reporting that linked crime and railways focused on elements connected to construction in early decades, shifted to elements connected to railway companies and finance in the 1840s, and later shifted again to elements connected to passenger travel in the 1860s. Given that the most significant drivers of change in opinions about the railways came in the form of reactions to or worries about crime events rather than to more positive developments – such as lines being constructed – this also has significant implications for our understanding of newspaper history, attitudes towards crime, and, more generally, the nature of public discourse in the nineteenth century.

# **Chapter I**

# ‘**Animated and Deliberate Earthquakes’: Railway Construction, Accidents and Crime**

In 1902, H.G. Wells wrote that the nineteenth century, ‘when it takes its place with the other centuries in the chronological charts of the future, will – if it needs a symbol – almost certainly have as that symbol a steam engine running upon a railway”.[[104]](#footnote-104) However, the sense of inevitability and cultural significance that surrounded the railways by this point had taken several decades to develop, only becoming clearly established following their widespread construction; when construction first began in 1825, opinion was divided on the impact railways would have on Britain as a whole. While opinion linking the new railways and crime was initially disparate in outlook and focus, however, it was couched in the early years in terms which related to their construction – in other words, to the aspect of the railways which was most familiar at the time. This chapter examines how news media representations of railways, particularly prior to 1850, connected them to behaviour viewed as criminal by representing them as a particularly *physical* threat, rather than Chapter II’s financial threat of railway investment, or Chapter III’s conceptual threat to the passenger from a stranger in a carriage in later years.

Much of the difficulty in assessing perceptions linked to railway construction is that such construction was not uniform in when, where, how or why it was carried out. Lines were built for different reasons at different times. Before 1840, a great deal of construction was made on the presumption that freight transport would provide most value, but it quickly became apparent that passenger travel was comparatively far more lucrative. Such uncertainty about what railways were or would be *for* not only dismayed those who disliked change, but, as the Introduction outlines, meant that connections made between railway construction and crime or unethical behaviour were often diverse. However, although criticisms of the railways’ perceived effects on the landscape, health, or moral and social decay were all responses to railway construction, reports and articles which raised concerns about railway safety and railway workers were by far the most frequently printed in this period. This chapter will show how these divergent reporting phenomena came together in print, and that, although pursued independently, they readily fed into one another, particularly at moments when the railway system as a whole was under discussion.

While diverse in their doubts about railways, over the following twenty years of development inhabitants and readers in Victorian Britain became as aware as Wells would later be of their tremendous significance during the most frenetic periods of expansion. William Johnston’s 1851 commentary *England As It Is* labelled the railways:

the most important event of the last quarter of a century in English history… the changes they have produced in the habits of society… the new feeling of power they have engendered – the triumphs and disappointments of which they have been the cause –… the new and excessive activities to which they have given rise – must lead all… to admit that the importance of the general result of these great undertakings can scarcely be exaggerated.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Focusing on the ‘disappointments’, this chapter will assess how railway construction and accidents were treated by contemporary news media, how mistrust of construction workers and directors respectively following newsworthy events led to negative stereotyping that equated their behaviour with criminality, and how that affected the way railways were treated as a whole. It begins by assessing existing research on the subject, before outlining the sources and methods used in the chapter. It then assesses more general opposition to railway construction, which often viewed the railways as a whole as criminal, before examining representations of railway workers and railway accidents in news media accounts and considering how the changing dynamics in depictions of both these topics affected how they were linked to crime. Certain topics, such as the perceptions of ‘navvies’, only concerned railways under construction; others, such as fears and debates over accidents and who was to blame for them, continued to be relevant to the railways in operation. I argue that the most impactful news media representations of railways in news media were most often pitched to elicit fear rather than – or along with – excitement, with peaks in reporting on railways coming at times when such reporting was most prevalent. The language of such representations was rooted in the language used to discuss crime, and that representations stereotyping railway workers and the causes of railway accidents were influential in fixing public opinion about them throughout the century.

## **Histories of Railway Construction**

As is the case throughout this thesis, the aspects of the railways discussed in this chapter have attracted significant critical attention, both during the nineteenth century and subsequently. Railway construction workers have been a prominent theme in these works, sometimes addressing them as the central focus of a work or case study, but more often focusing on them in relation to other issues or narratives. Before discussing specific literature, however, it must be noted that most if not all work discussed below is subject to the same conflation between all railway construction workers and ‘navvies’, with the two terms often being used interchangeably both in the period and since. The word ‘navigator’ technically referred to the manual workers who constructed railway lines and prepared the ground for them by digging or tunnelling; railway construction workers could also be surveyors, accountants, or engineers. The word was also already in common parlance from the first years of railway building, having been used similarly about canal construction workers in preceding decades. The tendency to conflate all railway construction workers with navvies[[106]](#footnote-106) has been recognised in some histories, but even when it is acknowledged some works still reflect rather than engage with the negative stereotyping that indiscriminate nineteenth-century use of the word ‘navvy’ entailed. Such references to ‘navvies’ became more prominent over time in reporting, with the term becoming connected in particular with Irishness, drunkenness, violence, poverty and immorality the further removed such reporting was from actual construction, whether geographically or in time.[[107]](#footnote-107) The phenomenon also creates difficulties in locating primary source material and is mirrored in many subsequent histories. However, by addressing railway construction workers and navvies as a cultural construct this chapter aims both to analyse and to transcend this tendency.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Secondary works which address railway construction workers have traditionally been empirical, in contrast to works written at the time. These secondary works are largely uncritical accounts which generally chronicle railway building and activity in various geographic areas or on specific lines rather than seeking to place them in a wider societal context. They encompass a broad range, from critical engagement to non-academic works; however, a long time has passed since the most seminal works were written, and they do not reflect modern changes in approaches and access to source material. The foremost of these are Terry Coleman’s *The Railway Navvies* (1965), David Brooke’s *The Railway Navvy* (1983), as well as works on other construction-related aspects of railways such as R.S. Joby’s *The Railway Builders* (1983), which focuses on contractors but deals heavily with navvies.[[109]](#footnote-109) In particular, Coleman’s work has defined the field, regularly being reprinted in its original form. These works generally adhere to a narrative in which the railways’ seismic importance in the long term is treated as reason enough for detailing the movements and numbers of the men who built them, and in cataloguing the progress of their work over time.

Other works of this type are often uneven, albeit impassionate; they are nonetheless in general excellent sources of information. Most works which focus on the day-to-day work of navvies tend to be uncritical histories of certain lines or companies, while works such as Nigel Wier’s *The Railway Police* engage with the issues discussed below but do not tackle them more broadly*.*[[110]](#footnote-110) Although Wier’s focus on crime in a book on the railway police is understandable, his references and characterisations of navvies are not consistent with the material assessed here. Wier almost exclusively paid attention to high-profile clashes between navvies such as the 1851 ‘Battle of Mickleton’ and other high-impact incidents, with little to no nuanced analysis of news media representations of railway workers or events involving them. While such incidents did occur, representations of navvies in secondary literature as generally drunken, violent, and Irish (depicted negatively) reflected the attitudes towards and representation of navvies in the nineteenth century. This situation was remarked on by Brooke in *The Railway Navvy*, whose preface notes that ‘the railway navvy remains, alas, an obscure figure’.[[111]](#footnote-111) However, while there have been recent efforts to reframe the history of railway construction workers to include more material generated by the working men themselves,[[112]](#footnote-112) such efforts are focused more on unearthing archival material rather than as yet assessing it. Ultimately, while these works provide useful material, they do not go far to address the biases of the time, which I undertake in this chapter.

Recent histories have been slightly more nuanced in how they incorporate nineteenth-century perceptions of railway construction workers and navvies. By including the navvies’ associations with criminality alongside more empirical descriptions of their numbers and movements, they tend to be more outward-facing in approach, and also incorporate cultural perceptions into their assessments. However, such histories have not been able to make full use of the continually expanding primary material available, or the quantitative methods used to assess them in this chapter, and often include such materials as asides while continuing the more traditional, empirical approaches of earlier works. Trevor May’s *The Victorian Railway Worker* (2008) and Ultan Cowley’s *The Men Who Built Britain* (2013) are detailed, but focus far more on the working lives of railway employees rather than perceptions of them,[[113]](#footnote-113) and also deal far more with material from later in the nineteenth century than the period assessed below, when public engagement with railway construction was at its highest, and when conceptions of the railway worker as a cultural construct were being formed rather than perpetuated.

Railway construction workers are also approached in all-encompassing histories of railways such as Simon Bradley’s *The Railways: Network, Nation and People*.[[114]](#footnote-114) Such works, however, tend to address them too cursorily to be appropriately insightful, running the risk of reflecting rather than properly assessing contemporary attitudes about navvies. Bradley faults Coleman’s *The Railway Navvies* over its similarities in approach and focus to the work of E.P. Thompson; while Coleman does share similarities with Thompson in grounding his labour-oriented approach in debates which became relevant in the 1960s, his approach is still far more critical and comprehensive than in Bradley’s *Network, Nation and People*. While Bradley does address perceptions of navvies – albeit in terms of their being and being seen as ‘a rolling crime wave’[[115]](#footnote-115) – his work focuses far more on lines, engines, and companies rather than workers or individuals. His descriptions of railway workers injured or killed in construction, investigations into working conditions, and economic exploitation in ‘tommy-shops’ limit workers to their relationship with companies rather than wider society. Although Bradley recognises these difficulties in the life and work of railway construction workers, his opinion that ‘the navvy should not be over-domesticated’ – essentially that they were to some extent as wild as they were painted then and since – and that ‘regardless of whether anything untoward actually happened, settled populations lived in dread of an outrage of some kind’,[[116]](#footnote-116) mean that while he references nineteenth-century bias, he ultimately simultaneously perpetuates it.

This chapter examines the railway system as a whole by examining it through accounts of individuals and groups rather than companies or lines. By assessing news media representations of railway workers, it aims to situate them against the changes in how criminals and criminality were perceived in the period, most prominently the development of Victorian notions of a ‘criminal class’. Randall McGowen argues that Victorian news media articles and reports did not reveal any reality about a criminal class, or even proof that such a class existed. Instead, McGowen outlines the manner in which Victorians came to believe in the notion of ‘the criminal classes’, highlighting how middle-class readers were ‘more likely to encounter the criminal class in the pages of a journal than in the streets of the late nineteenth-century city’.[[117]](#footnote-117)

Recent studies have built upon McGowen’s research to explore the details of nineteenth-century ideas of a criminal class. Barry Godfrey, David Cox and Stephen Farrall’s study *Criminal Lives* (2007)assesses court records in nineteenth-century Crewe to show that while belief in the existence of a ‘criminal class’ was widespread in the period, ‘the likely reality is that there were few hardened, persistent offenders around at that time’. David Churchill notes how the dynamic did not exist in isolation, with the distinct but related rise in notions of ‘the simultaneous appearance of the modern professional criminal’,[[118]](#footnote-118) while Ros Crone has used quantitative assessment of Victorian literacy to emphasise that the notion of a criminal class had its basis in preconceptions rather than reality.[[119]](#footnote-119) Lydia Pantzidou has analysed how binary themes in later Victorian literary fiction – such as ‘reason against insanity, normativity against deviance, and respectable bourgeois masculinities against uncontrollable working-class masculinities’[[120]](#footnote-120) – had been influenced by the movements of underclasses into urban areas, in similar ways to how the movements of working-class railway labour prompted the creation of stereotypes in mid-century. A.L. Beier asserts that constructions of the idea of a criminal class had deeper roots than temporary responses to garotting panics or the end to convict transportation, with the concept seeing use from the late eighteenth century onwards, becoming most prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century.[[121]](#footnote-121) This narrative is borne out in Victorian representations of railway workers. The sources in this chapter indicate that representations of railway construction workers and navvies played a significant part in the growth of perceptions that they were inherently criminal, in parallel with the increasing perceptions of the growth of a criminal class. However, the way that perceptions of railway workers took shape was not always consistent, nor was it always what we might expect. Almost all works on railway construction workers refer to their being Irish or being perceived as Irish, but only some, most notably Brooke, have worked to expose the persistent myth that the Irish formed the large majority of railway construction workers and navvies.[[122]](#footnote-122) None so far have related those perceptions to conflations of criminality and class which developed concurrently in the Victorian period, and which often specifically targeted Irish people. This chapter aims to highlight the importance of newspaper articles and reports in reflecting and developing such viewpoints.

## **Histories of Railway Accidents**

Railway accidents have been even more heavily discussed than railway workers, and indeed are perhaps the most densely assessed of the individual topics that form this thesis. This is scarcely surprising given that railway accidents provided the most sustained coverage in contemporary news media of all the phenomena addressed. However, much like histories of railway workers, these histories have generally not examined railway accidents in a wider cultural context. This section will therefore be more focused on how historians have assessed responses to accidents than assessments of accidents themselves.[[123]](#footnote-123) Such reactions generally are related to one of several possible thematic areas; however, all must be assessed in tandem to assess the impact of railway accidents on perceptions of crime. Similar to histories of railway workers, older works examining railway accidents are more empirical in outlook. Prominent transport historian Jack Simmons’ work *The Express Train and other Railway Studies* contains a section on ‘Accident Reports, 1840-1890’; however, Simmons focuses very much on official and company reports and responses to accidents rather than how they were represented in news media.[[124]](#footnote-124) R.W. Kostal’s *Law and English Railway Capitalism* also focuses on such responses, but positions them in the simultaneous development of the British legal system in response to railways.

A key part of Kostal’s work involves addressing the culpability for railway accidents, exploring the use and abolition of the deodand law to argue that the dynamics of jurisprudence around railway accidents was one of the biggest single drivers in reshaping the landscape of the Victorian legal profession. In doing so, Kostal refers to the feeling in the general public that railway accidents shown to involve negligence should involve criminal charges for railway directors; however, any wider representation of these debates is limited to a few references to *The Times* and *The Spectator*, and these reflect Kostal’s analysis rather than drive it. Simon Bradley’s *Network, Nation, People* is far better in understanding and describing the difference between perceptions and reality when it comes to accidents than for railway workers. Bradley describes how the frequency of accidents and the lack of responsibility for railway directors – both real and perceived – fed into representations of railway accidents as crimes as well as disasters, also noting, like Kostal, how deodand cases were responsible for the creation of much of the major legislation and official bodies governing railway operation.[[125]](#footnote-125) However, Bradley’s approach is very selective and at times uncritical, and does not take a large range of news media titles into account. Other institutional histories are often keenly aware of how perceptions of railways as a touchstone of Victorian progress did not automatically make companies keen to incorporate other technologies. Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith note in *Engineering Empires* that the utility of the telegraph in railway safety was only recognised by railway companies almost twenty years after it became possible;[[126]](#footnote-126) however, such large-scale assessments of multiple technologies cannot reasonably assess the wider impact of perceptions of accidents.

Many works assess the importance of railway accidents to the development of Victorian debates on health. Historians of medicine and the medical profession have discussed how the existence and nature of conditions suffered by passengers in accidents such as ‘railway spine’ were debated in Parliamentary Commissions[[127]](#footnote-127) and medical journals alike.[[128]](#footnote-128) Works on health also engage with cultural and media representations of accidents to understand and contextualise accounts of trauma. Ralph Harrington notes how accidents were perceived in the nineteenth century as embodying ‘certain characteristic attributes of the condition of modernity’, arguing that the fact that they denied victims ‘any chance of controlling their own fate’ led to a paradoxical conjunction of control and helplessness that gave railway accidents a particular resonance in popular consciousness.[[129]](#footnote-129) However, while such accounts often provide an excellent description of the dynamics which are likely to have driven public responses to accounts of accidents in news media, these works do not go on to discuss the links between such dynamics and perceptions of crime.

Most common of all the themes addressed in works on railway accidents, however, are representations in contemporary literature and culture, perhaps unsurprisingly given the dramatic nature of accidents as spectacle and the effect of their cumulative news value compared to other railway events. Matthew Wilson Smith writes that ‘one of the central crises of mid-Victorian society was the almost unbearable dissonance between industrial-age trauma and the melodramatic imagination’;[[130]](#footnote-130) regardless of whether such dissonance truly defined the age, it was undoubtedly a very pertinent dynamic in public life, and one which was most often represented and viewed through the lens of railway accidents. Simon Bradley notes in *Nation, Network and People* the quantity of railway accidents in contemporary fiction, with works by Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, George Gissing, Wilkie Collins, Mrs Humphrey Ward, Edith Gaskell, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lewis Carroll and William McGonagall all describing railway accidents in some form.[[131]](#footnote-131) Curiously, descriptions of accidents in many of these works are anaemic in comparison with contemporary news media reports. Nonetheless, accidents remain the most prominent point of connection between the literary and cultural establishment and railways in the nineteenth century, aided by Dickens’ well-documented personal involvement in the Staplehurst disaster, which is also discussed here. Ultimately, for railway accidents and railway workers both, this chapter aims to connect aspects uncovered across disparate areas of scholarship. By directly assessing articles and reports in news media – the most common method of the public experiencing of railway accidents in the nineteenth century – we can best determine how accidents came to be inextricably linked with unethical and ultimately criminal behaviour.

## **Methodology**

Connections made between the early railways and crime become clearer when contemporary news media sources are assessed alongside secondary literature, although these primary sources again present significant methodological challenges. As discussed in the Introduction, although this chapter cannot hope to assess all reports of railway accidents or incidents linking railway construction workers with criminality, the large numbers of articles and reports assessed should constitute a more than adequate sample for doing so. Searches of *GALE* news media articles and reports identified the numbers of articles about accidents and railway workers from 1825 to 1900, as well as the relative proportion of articles published for a given year. Relevant articles were transcribed or otherwise recorded for more detailed content analysis, derived statistics, and data visualisations. Articles and reports were located using basic search terms such as ‘railway AND accident’ to establish the probable extent of coverage, with additional search terms such as ‘railway AND accident AND crime’ used to explore the extent of certain semantic terms within that data over time. Variations on other search terms such as ‘theft’ or ‘violence’ for crime or ‘disaster’ for accidents were included into this formula to ensure that as representative a sample of articles as possible was produced. Functions which allow for variations in spelling were also used, mitigating some of *GALE*’s deficiencies in optical character recognition. Once the relative frequencies of articles had been identified, individual articles about cases were examined to evaluate them for the qualitative assessment undertaken in the main analysis.

To support the wider context of the events seen in this chapter, I also consulted official materials which supplement and inform the main analysis of news media articles and reports, providing evidence of high-level opinion and policy as well as being a source of much of the context for railway construction. Sources which have been digitally available for some years continue to benefit from technological improvements, for example in areas such as search functions, or more detailed categorisation of sources. This chapter implements the methodological approach laid out in the Introduction to the thesis by approaching news media representations of railway accidents and railway construction workers using resources that could not be – or were not – employed in previous studies of the subject. Although the events it covers took generally place earlier than those in the subsequent two chapters – and therefore in a less developed phase of news media growth – its sources provide just as strong a base for analysis.

## **Railway Workers**

The role of railway workers in the development of nineteenth-century railways has been widely discussed in both contemporary accounts and subsequent histories. This discussion has often examined connections made between railway workers and crime, whether real or constructed in contemporary news media. This debate has centred upon representations and constructions of the ‘navvy’. Depictions of navvies, both during the nineteenth century and after, often portrayed them in derogatory terms that linked them to criminal behaviour. However, the actual amount of newspaper accounts which connected them with crime were fewer than might be expected given that reputation. However, there are nuances depending upon the type of article, what was being reported upon, and whether that report was reactive or speculative. The largest differences within news media coverage were between accounts which made specific references to ‘a’ railway worker connected with individual acts of crime, and those treating ‘the’ railway worker – or ‘navvy’ – as a homogenous and likely criminal mass based on stereotypes, many of which were crude. This difference appears to have become reinforced by the midpoint of the nineteenth century, with early accounts more likely to reflect differences between groups of navvies, such as tensions between Irish navvies and those from England or Scotland, while later accounts were more likely to air generalised suspicion of a generalised ‘navvy’, who was usually described as being brutish, violent, free-spending, criminal, and drunk.

The shift from specific to generalised representations of navvies over time cannot be shown from wholly quantitative analysis; however, such analysis can give indications of several other salient factors in how navvies were represented. As is the case with this chapter’s examination of railway accidents, the search parameters here have been extended to the end of the century in order to demonstrate longer-term trends and shifts in reporting. The shifts in news media coverage of railway workers are shown in the following two charts, which show how the language used in news media representations of railway workers shifted over time:

Fig. 1.1 - Percentage of all GALE Primary Sources documents containing terms related to railway workers, crime, and Irishness, 1820-1900.

Fig. 1.2 – Percentage of all GALE Primary Sources Documents containing terms relating to railway workers, alcohol, and violence, 1820-1900.

Fig. 1.3 – Proportion of GALE Primary Sources Documents containing terms referring to railway workers which also contain keywords related to crime, alcohol, Irishness, and violence, 1820-1900.

Data for all terms saw dramatic increases in the years to 1846, followed by slight decline until around 1860, before renewed albeit slower growth until around 1870, before then seeing a sustained period of decline until the end of the century, albeit remaining in use. The search terms for the four subcategories – ‘crime’, ‘Irish’, ‘drink’, ‘violent’ – saw changes in the frequency of their use, but other than in the mid-1840s such changes took place over many years rather than over one or two. Of these terms, the use of Irish-related terms saw the most volatile changes in use. Although all these search terms saw significantly increased usage in the 1840s, references to the Irish see the largest increase by some distance. This most likely relates to the large amount of construction occurring following the Railway Mania and the consequent labour disputes, as well as the widespread Irish displacement caused in this period by the Irish Famine, particularly between 1845 and 1855, which saw the largest concentration of Irish emigration to Britain. The rate at which articles about railway workers also referred to crime varied between approximately 10%-25% through the period; references to violence were initially common, but diminished gradually over time, while references to railway workers’ drinking increased over time. The last and most important factor is the overall frequency of mentions for railway workers, indicated by the orange trendline in figs. 1.1 and 1.2. As seen below, the percentage of coverage relating to railway workers was consistently slightly higher than the percentage referring to accidents:

Fig. 1.4 – Percentage of GALE Primary Sources Documents containing terms relating to railway workers and railway accidents, 1820-1900

The similarities in use of the terms extend to peaks and troughs in that use, indicating that increases or decreases in discussion of either workers or accidents form part of broader trends in discussions of railways, many of which are examined in the equivalent sections of Chapter II, including the Railway Mania of 1845, and in Chapter III, which includes the 1864 railway murder which accompanies a strong uptick in reporting.

Having used the quantitative analysis to identify the key patterns, we can now drill down to a qualitative analysis of individual articles to understand these trends. Many of these articles over the period were short reports of trial proceedings or criminal activity, which were common to almost all newspapers of the period, as well as most non-special interest periodicals. News media coverage of acts of crime perpetrated by individuals was often briefer than articles and reports assessed elsewhere in this chapter. The convention of short articles in these sections stems partly from the pace of criminal proceedings, as well as from the fact that criminal trials often tended to be reported in batches, leading to less attention being paid to each case. This meant that these articles had much less space for opinionated writing, and consequently were likely to be more straightforwardly descriptive and to have had less of an impact, especially given they were embedded in reports of many other crimes. As such, most did not reflect or perpetuate stereotypes nearly as much as other forms of coverage of railway workers. Although they were less obviously pejorative about navvies and other railway workers, reports of this kind could still reflect prejudices about railway workers in what they chose to report in this limited space, as well as how precisely they chose to report it. For example, an 1846 case involving an assault of a woman reported how one ‘Richard Luscombe, a navvy’, when fined the sizeable sum of 9s.6d., ‘immediately threw a sovereign on the table, at the same time making an impertinent remark to the effect that money was no object to him'.[[132]](#footnote-132) Such reporting reflected a widespread preconception that navvies were well-paid, free-spending and free with their morals. This is seen also in a *Morning Post* account in the same year titled ‘Navvy Tactics’. Reporting on proceedings in a Scottish court syndicated from an Edinburgh paper, the article noted how the local Sherriff stated ‘that he would send [the navvy] to prison instead of inflicting a fine, as it was known that, in such cases, the navvies made up the money, and thus got their offending comrade free’.[[133]](#footnote-133) Both articles show how stereotypical ideas about navvies existed in the wider public were reflected in news media reporting, and perpetrated through common journalistic practices such as syndication.

Short news media accounts of crime also reflected preconceptions about railway workers’ appearances. One 1850 article warned against 'a man having the appearance of a railway navvy' who was alleged to have been passing false notes,[[134]](#footnote-134) indicating that a navvy’s profession could be determined from his appearance. An 1852 inquest held in Doncaster into a rape and murder by forced poisoning noted the victim’s premortem description of the two men, ‘neither of whom she had seen before, were dressed like navigators',[[135]](#footnote-135) indicating how railway navvies were seen as being distinctly recognisable in their dress as well as their manner. While navvies may have dressed fairly similarly, they did not wear uniforms[[136]](#footnote-136) and so are unlikely to have appeared particularly distinct in appearance from other kinds of labourer, so it must be assumed that this description stemmed from subjective opinion. Another murder charge involved a navvy – with the term printed in quotation marks – whose appearance was remarked as being atypical, with one account describing him as ‘a most intelligent-looking young man, quite different in appearance from his class’.[[137]](#footnote-137) The stereotype of the navvy as brutish, dirty, and with a distinct threat of violence is illustrated in one *Punch* cartoon of 1876:

A picture containing text, book

Description automatically generated

Fig. 1.5 – ‘UNANIMOUS ALL ROUND’, *Punch,* 10 June 1876, p. 240.

Not all violence involving navvies received equal attention. Cases which did not involve violence or potential violence against members of the general public – as in the above *Punch* cartoon – were far less likely to be reported in such an inflammatory fashion. These cases expose a split between how specific actions taken by navvies that could be related to their role in constructing railways were far less likely to result in pejorative or stereotypical representations than actions which related to the world beyond the railways. Some of these cases involved navvies being prosecuted as a result of their paid duties, such as an 1848 case which was notable for how the North-Western Railway backed up its employees in court. The navvies were described as having had ‘the ordinary powers… for going on the lands, which they wanted for the purposes of their line’ before the local landowner authorised the use of force against them for doing so, subsequently taking them before local magistrates to be fined for trespass.[[138]](#footnote-138) The fact that the navvies and company were successful in overturning this decision indicates that both railway companies and news media did not simply seek to dismiss navvies at a matter of course, in spite of anti-navvy prejudice obviously being present.

Such unequivocally pro-railway worker accounts were rare, however, particularly in comparison to coverage of the most common issue connecting railway construction to crime – violence between groups of navvies. Throughout the period, there are reports of navvies attacking each other at work sites or in towns and cities, with animosity being represented as having its roots in national rivalries. Accounts ranged in scale, from brawls between individuals to mass scenes of riot and affray, predominantly caused by English prejudice against Irish navvies, who would work, or were thought to work, for lower pay than their English counterparts, with whole gangs being imported by labour contractors. One of the earliest reports of Anglo-Irish conflict took place around Carlisle in 1838, which required the local lancer regiment to restore order, and which the local *Westmorland Gazette* reported in great detail. It described how ‘atrocities upon both sides [were] of the most brutal and unmanly description’, and how ‘hundreds of the labourers [were] armed with mattock-handles and pickaxes' against each other. [[139]](#footnote-139) It is notable that this account was followed by a much shorter description of a separate incident involving “Glo'ster against Devon” workers which was much less emotive in its description; however, this could just as much be due to the local relevance of the Carlisle riot to the readers of the *Westmorland Gazette* as the Anglo-Irish nature of the riot. It is noteworthy that both the English and Irish workers were disparaged in news media coverage, as is the blame being placed largely on the English side. However, the Irish were not exonerated in the press despite it having generally been agreed that they were much less to blame; this was the case in almost all large-scale incidents, which effectively meant that anti-Irish stereotypes from other sources went unchecked.

The larger the navvy groups involved in violent incidents, the longer such incidents tended to last. An 1839 *Times* account of a riot between English and Irish workers on the Midland Railway reported how the bench of magistrates was informed mid-riot, ‘sending [to?] Leeds for a military force’, while ‘the riot continued, and the Irish for several miles were completely driven off the line’. As well as reporting in a dramatic and continuous narrative style, *The Times* also highlighted the violence of how workers ‘were dreadfully cut and bruised by the weapons of their antagonists, and one of them was thrown into the Barnsley canal’. The article ends by stating that ‘the cause of these disturbances is understood to be the old grievance, viz., a jealousy on the part of the English labourers in consequence of the Irish working for lower wages’,[[140]](#footnote-140) and that the incident was so serious that police were expected to remain for several days. Taken as a whole, the account demonstrates how although violence between navvy groups was highly dramatic, reactions to more specific events such as these do not stereotype navvies to the same degree as more generic representations, such as Fig. 1.5 above and Fig. 1.6 here, which depicts a navvy with a thick, caricatured accent threatening a member of the public:

A black and white drawing of two people

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Fig. 1.6 – ‘SOMETHING FROM THE PROVINCES’, *Punch*, 11 Nov. 1865.

Navvy-on-citizen crime reporting as depicted in Fig. 1.6 was particularly easy to link to fearmongering stereotypes, because readers could more readily associate with one of the parties. Navvy-on-navvy crime, however, could not draw upon these tropes of reporting in the same way, and was not as easy a story to tell, with reports of it containing fewer stereotypes. As a result, articles about it were generally confined to local news media titles unless a very large-scale disturbance took place, which is likely to have limited the influence of such reporting in the formation of wider conceptions of navvies.

Over time, however, there were many incidents between navvies that took place on a large enough scale to be newsworthy. A second, even larger incident in Cumberland in February 1846 demonstrated how both local tensions and reporting tendencies had not changed since the Carlisle riots of eight years earlier. The *Northern Star* wrote that after groups of Irish navvies were pursued along the line by larger English gangs, 800 Irish navvies marched into Penrith ‘five in a row armed with knives, sticks, clubs, pokers, pitchforks, scithes [sic], and other weapons’, before ‘upwards of 1600 of the English also entered Penrith in a body, all armed with scithes, pokers, hammers, picks, pistols, and various other weapons’ the next day.[[141]](#footnote-141) The article again blamed the ‘most determined and inveterate animosity [that] has unfortunately existed amongst the English and Irish labourers’[[142]](#footnote-142) on account of the Irish willing to work for lower wages. Although militia intervention and reading of the Riot Act meant that casualties and large-scale conflict did not occur in this instance, the *Northern Star* highlighted accounts that many Irish had been ‘hunted out and shockingly maltreated’.[[143]](#footnote-143) Yet when those arrested came to be tried at the local assizes six months later, coverage focused on claims that railway labourers were culpable *en masse*. The assize judge was reported in the *Westmorland Gazette* as highlighting the ‘misconduct of persons… brought here for the purpose of executing some public works... [who] have no certain home and no permanent interest in the county, and no character which they are anxious to maintain'.[[144]](#footnote-144) This last is likely to have applied to both the English and the Irish workers, and such blanket condemnations of railway labourers are likely to have further entrenched stereotypes of navvies as violent.

Such incidents were by no means limited to the North. An 1847 account of the Rutland Assizes remarked that the unusual number of prisoners (twelve) was due ‘to the vicinity of the railway works alone’, before continuing, under the subheading of ‘RAILWAY RIOTS’, to report an attack ‘made by about 100 English on seventeen of the Irish party’, for which the ringleader was convicted.[[145]](#footnote-145) The next trial, discussed in the same article, involved two men convicted of assault who ‘were heard to declare they should never be happy until they had killed a "------ navvy"’; these men were locals rather than navvies,[[146]](#footnote-146) demonstrating that prejudices about navvies extended throughout the country. An 1849 case in Scotland, which was widely reported, demonstrated again how local populations often became involved in fights against navvies. What began as a brawl between two railway workers was reported being as ‘the signal for a general affray, when a large number of armed [Irish] "navvies" commenced an outrageous attack on the police, and nearly demolished the temporary station house. The country people came to the assistance of the police, when a general melee ensued, in which one of the assistants... died'.[[147]](#footnote-147) More rioting, apparently undertaken by Irishmen, was reported as having taken place the next day, with the article immediately following detailing the curious case of two Irish navvies fighting the police with the help of ‘a body of seven or eight soldiers’,[[148]](#footnote-148) potentially indicating that soldiers needed to intervene to protect navvies from vengeful locals. Tensions between English and Irish navvies remained even when outside England and Ireland, as in an incident at Newport in 1850 when an episode of tit-for-tat violence between gangs over trucks resulted in one worker being ‘assaulted for no other reason than being an Irishman'. Three English and two Irish navvies were charged and convicted and bound over for 3 months, with the local *Hereford Journal*’s account concluding that ‘the energetic measures adopted by the authorities [should] prevent a recurrence of these disreputable proceedings, and that the lenient course adopted by the worthy magistrate will tend to allay the feeling of rivalry’.[[149]](#footnote-149) Although the most prolific outbursts of violence between navvies took place in the 1840s and early 1850s – most probably because most construction took place in these years and Irish migration during the Great Famine was at its height – spates of violence between navvies still remained common for as long as railways were being constructed. However, these later incidents typically attracted much less attention in news media than incidents in previous years, with total numbers of articles about such incidents falling despite the ever-increasing circulation rates (and therefore number of articles printed) shown in Figs. 1.1 and 1.2. This suggests that decreasing amounts of railway building had led to railway workers becoming fewer in number and less geographically mobile, and therefore losing their news value as a potential threat.[[150]](#footnote-150)

Rises in news media coverage attacking navvies often came about at times when tensions over Irish self-determination were high, leading to more connections between Irishness and potential criminality. The most prominent examples of this came in Ireland in 1854, when an excursion train travelling on a newly-opened line between Derry and Enniskillen was sabotaged, leading to the deaths of two passengers. While this event took place in Ireland, it was widely discussed in English papers, being unilaterally attributed to Fenian activity, with the *Hull Packet* stating that such an act as "the railway outrage near Enniskillen… could only have been conceived in Ireland, and that even there it would not  have been attempted save at priestly instigation', with the article condemning assertions that the accident had been caused simply by ‘the vindictiveness of the drunken "navvy"'.[[151]](#footnote-151) Even though the article gave short shrift to these allegations, the fact that the comparison was made at all indicates how navvies undertaking work in England could be perceived as potentially criminal in the context of political unrest and conflict in Ireland.Another account published in the wake of the sabotage attacked a Dr O’Brien as having shockingly taken ‘the form of an Enniskillen navvy; some might have been profane enough to sustain no shock had he been found even in the form of the priest from whom that navvy derived his pious instructions',[[152]](#footnote-152) indicating again preconceptions that Irish navvies undertook the sabotage owing to their religion, and that they were credulous and easy to sway to violence.

Not all news media accounts of navvies condemned them, however, with some articles upholding the navvy as an exemplar of certain working-class values, albeit with character faults. One *Preston Chronicle* report dating from 1849 argued that employers ought to favour Lancashire workers – including navvies – over workers from elsewhere:

[The Lancashire navvy] is strong and determined in purpose, and can undergo great physical exertion… thoughtful and industrious, but liable to occasional excesses, and, when irritated with drink or passion, boisterous, overbearing, and pugnacious; without education, but an expert workman in that to which he has been accustomed, and capable of adapting himself with facility to any new undertaking; possessing a good natural understanding, but not the capacity or qualifications which confer intellectual superiority[[153]](#footnote-153)

However, it is notable that this was a description specifically of Lancashire navvies in a Lancashire paper, and therefore suggests local pride as a likely motive for the article. Comparisons on a wider scale also highlighted positive traits of English as opposed to foreign navvies, but many others also highlighted their shortcomings. One 1871 debate taking place in the letters page of *The Times* warned against easy claims of the superiority of English navvies, arguing that although they were physically superior they were inferior in both craft and technique.[[154]](#footnote-154) Moreover, articles which sympathised with individual navvies also tended to focus on their shortcomings, depicting them as needing to be reformed rather than despised.

As seen in Fig. 1.2, worries about drunkenness among navvies were widespread and increased over time, with drink being the topic of articles about both individual navvies and navvies in general. A long *Daily News* leader of 1846 lamented:

the condition of the temporary colonies of navigators is frightful; they live in a kind of promiscuous brutality to which forethought, decorum, or even common decency is truly unknown… their amusements, when work is done, are drinking and fighting; and violence, plundering, disorder and disease are the natural fruits of this more than savage way of living.[[155]](#footnote-155)

Navvies’ high rates of pay were directly linked to drunkenness. In 1856, one *Glasgow Herald* report generalised that a quarrel between navvies and local militia originated ‘most likely in drink and foul language, the highly paid navvies taunting the redcoats about their dress, fare, poverty, &c.’, asking ‘where is the whisky got on Sundays? An example should be made of those public-houses proved to supply it’.[[156]](#footnote-156) Such examples were often used to deter readers from the dangers of drink as well as to rail against the drunkenness they described. A further *Daily News* column, appearing a year after the example above, which printed prisoner confessions and biographies highlighted ‘a few extracts relating to railway excavaters [sic] or "navvies"’.[[157]](#footnote-157) These were melodramatic accounts of navvies spending large sums of money – ten shillings or more – each week on alcohol. The last account provides a contrast, with anonymous and newly-sober ‘T.’ working on a line where ‘tickets to "tommy" shops, or to beer-shops, are unknown’, as opposed to ‘the usual and injurious system of monthly or fortnightly payments in connexion with tickets for provisions and liquor'.[[158]](#footnote-158) However, although the link between navvies’ pay and drinking was often mentioned, with some articles being couched in reformist sentiment, much of the length and the emotional weight of reporting lay on the more sensational acts of drunkenness being reported rather than any potential reform, contributing to and reflecting a reporting environment where navvies were subject to increasing levels of stereotyping.

By 1850, generalized descriptions of ‘the navvy’ and presumptions about what he *might* do had become more common than reports about individual railway workers and what they already had done. The increased amount of railway construction, coupled with more stereotyped depictions of navvies in news media, meant that ‘the navvy’ became a stock character with exaggerated traits and tendencies. The assumption that navvies were low in every sense could be seen in letters from the public. One, printed in the *Times* of 1861, attacked railway proprietors for allowing drunks into carriages, citing a ‘repulsive-looking navvy, with a bundle on his back, conducted into the third-class carriage'.[[159]](#footnote-159) The writer appears to have presumed the drunk’s occupation rather than having had it confirmed, indicating both that stereotypes about ‘the navvy’ were widespread and that news media were happy to reprint them. Most common, however, were articles which equated railway construction with the symbol of the stereotypical navvy, attacking them simultaneously. The most controversial period of railway building after 1850 came in London, which did not experience nearly as much construction as the rest of the country until the early 1860s. Many news media titles played upon fears of philistines destroying the capital. One *Daily Telegraph* account in 1863 compared impending railway work in London to the sack of Rome, writing that 'ATTILA bears a theodolite instead of a burning brand, GENSERIC a pick in lieu of a battle-axe, and ALARIC appears in the similitude of a "navvy", in hob-nailed boots, a striped nightcap, and a keg of beer shining at his stalwart hip'.[[160]](#footnote-160) The paper’s coverage then shifted to – and coalesced around – concerns about the physical railways destroying London and the potential behaviour of navvies, with one piece attacking the proposed Ludgate Hill station as blocking the view to Saint Paul’s. The article framed construction as an attack on ‘the central temple’ of Anglicanism, across which ‘the bricklayer and the navvy are to project a blank wall, killing the life of the one prospect which redeems and is in a curious harmony with our sombre dwellings'.[[161]](#footnote-161) Other papers – most often Tory in outlook – also contrasted London with presumed provincial brutalism. A *John Bull* article under the title of ‘RAILWAY SPOLIATION’ asked whether London was about to become another Manchester: ‘having accepted the lessons of political economy from Cotton-opolis, [are we] to adopt her moral code also?’, before echoing the religious tone of the *Telegraph’s* opposition in lamenting how ‘churches go down before the pick of the navvy'.[[162]](#footnote-162) *John Bull’*s coverage was followed by a letter from a reader attacking ‘the wholesale tyranny of capital’, emblematised by how 'the ruthless navvy [will] pursue his brutalising vocation upon the more respectable dead of ancient London'.[[163]](#footnote-163) This showed how coverage of railway construction was affecting public perceptions of navvies, making them into the ready scapegoat for any perceived evils of railway construction in the same way the railway directors were the scapegoats for perceived evils of railway operation (see Chapters II and III).

Railway construction in the 1860s prompted *The Telegraph* in particular to use the navvy as a byword for lower-class immorality and violence in other contexts, particularly if it related to railways in general. One 1864 sexual assault which took place in a railway carriage, examined in more detail in Chapter III, characterised the wealthy perpetrator as 'this Buckinghamshire gorilla’, and compared his conduct to that expected of a navvy, arguing that 'the culprit is no rough labourer from the "black country" - no half-brutish "navvy" who has scarcely been taught the difference between right and wrong”.[[164]](#footnote-164) Another 1864 account perhaps provides the best example of how the stereotype of the violent navvy had become fixed by this point. In recounting the story of a policeman appearing in court charged with a crime, the author conjures a fictitious ‘typical’ case to contrast with it: 'JOHN SMITH…a navvy on the works of the Grand Peddlington and Puddlington Junction, is accused of having battered out the brains of TOM BROWN, potboy at the sign of the Railway Inn, because the favours of POLLY JONES, the barmaid, were distributed with too impartial equality between the rival suitors for her hand’.[[165]](#footnote-165) Less than 40 years after the first railway was built, negative stereotypes of ‘the navvy’ had become byword in Victorian society. While many facets of such stereotyping were separate, such as navvies being violent, or navvies being Irish, or drunk, or thieves, they served to reinforce each other by association with the word ‘navvy’; these stereotypes have only been reinforced in subsequent histories, with navvies becoming viewed and written about in as homogenous a way as the railways they helped to build.

## **Railway Accidents**

Railway accidents, in particular fatal accidents involving passengers, were the subject of extreme media interest throughout the century. The relationships between accidents and crime or criminality in news media accounts differed from those for other railway themes over time. Railway accidents remained extremely newsworthy even after the issues which they catalysed and the dynamics of how they were reported became set; however, I will focus here on news media reporting of accidents up to the Staplehurst crash of 1865, and most of all upon reports and debates around railway accidents between 1830 and 1850. It was in this period that the tendencies of such reporting and the connections between railway accident and perceived criminality became established. First and foremost, accidents involving passenger trains were reported upon more heavily than those involving freight or other trains, with fatal accidents involving passenger trains reported on more heavily still. Distinct differences in tone between immediate reports of accidents, reports of inquest proceedings, and of later opinion and comment pieces became established over time, but changed according to how railways were perceived at the time of a specific accident. Members of the public and representatives of railway companies argued over accidents both specific and in general in letters and articles, and in all forms of reporting there was a strong emphasis on violence and destruction. However, while newspapers were naturally interested in reporting natural disasters or large-scale accidents such as mine collapses at this time, articles about railway accidents were far more likely to have prompted discussion of the culpability – and therefore potential criminality – of directors, as might be expected of a more noticeably man-made and man-administered system.

One factor which informed and drove all the reporting dynamics was the assumption that passengers on the railway *ought* to be safe and had a right to feel safe. Writing on how Victorian middle-class society was increasingly shocked to find violence in public, J. Carter Wood identifies ‘the emergence of new built spaces… and changes in the ways that people imagined the legitimate use of public and private areas’[[166]](#footnote-166) as central to the debate over the presumption of safety. While railways did not explicitly promise safety, it was part and parcel of the vision of easy passenger travel with which they heavily marketed themselves. The feeling that this inherent right was not being met led to opinions such as those found in an 1840 letter which said, ‘I think the public have a right to expect from railway companies a security that may be provided at as cheap a rate [as might be acceptable]'.[[167]](#footnote-167) Readers, almost all of them potential passengers, could relate to being involved in a potential ‘railway smash’, as accidents were often termed, similar to those they read about in news media, and the assumption that accidents were preventable drove the angry responses to such articles, most often directed at railway companies and those who owned them, but sometimes at employees and elected officials; this phenomenon is at the core of the accounts examined below.

Before examining individual accounts, I assess the broader quantitative outline of reporting on railway accidents in the period. Note that although my assessment of individual accounts ends in 1865, these charts depict coverage until the end of the century. This is to illustrate that, although debates connecting railways and crime had largely shifted towards the railway companies and railway travel by 1864 and the proportion of news media articles discussing accidents declined after 1870, responses to individual accidents in newspapers still remained fairly high in later decades, as shown in Fig. 1.7 and Fig 1.8:

Fig. 1.7 – Percentage of all GALE Primary Sources documents by year referring to railway accidents, crime, and directors, 1820-1900

Fig. 1.8 – Percentage of all GALE Primary Sources documents by year referring to railway accidents, negligence, and fatalities, 1820-1900

Fig. 1.9 – Proportions of GALE Primary Sources documents by year that refer to both railway accidents and crime, or railway accidents and directors, in proportion to those referring to railway accidents, 1825-1900.

The figures demonstrate the strength of nineteenth-century news media interest in railway accidents. The line depicting ‘railway AND accident’ in both charts indicates this most clearly; in 1853, following widely-reported accidents at Mangotsfield and Straffan, tens of thousands of articles (4.37% of all newspaper articles) related to railway accidents. The earlier, slightly lower, peak centred around 1846 came at the time of the Railway Mania (assessed in Chapter II). Not only did the Mania galvanise negative opinions about railway companies, it also led to the construction of many dozens of lines and thousands of miles of track, meaning that not only were more accidents likely to occur, but that the demand for potential news media representations of railways at their most controversial period was extremely high. Despite these peaks of interest, railway accident coverage remained consistent over the decades, almost never falling below 3% of articles before the late 1880s, showing that, as might be expected, newspapers remained highly motivated to report on fatal or highly destructive accidents even when they were not catalysts for debates over the rights of passengers and perceived criminality, as was more often the case in the 1840s. Fig. 1.10 compares railway accidents with the biggest major news issues of the century:

Fig. 1.10 – Percentage of GALE Primary Sources documents by year referring to Ireland, War, Reform, Parliament, and Railway Accidents, 1820-1900

Although articles about war, Ireland, and parliament were even more prevalent over time than articles about railway accidents, they were printed at a comparable scale, with the difference between them decreasing over time, particularly at mid-century. Railway accident reporting even eclipsed the number of articles about such a major topic as reform in the mid-1840s and 1860s, and roughly kept pace with it from the early 1840s onwards.

When examining Figs. 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10, the figures for 1864 and 1865 indicate how coverage of railway accidents was likely becoming more dependent upon interest stimulated by other railway-related factors. The two major accidents that took place at Rednal and Staplehurst in 1865 were more newsworthy than any that took place in 1864, having resulted in more destruction and loss of life; in addition, Charles Dickens’ presence at Staplehurst drove news media to cover the accident heavily. Despite this, however, the percentage of articles concerning railway accidents fell from 4.21% in 1864 to 3.91% in 1865, most likely due to higher interest in railways in 1864 following the murder of Thomas Briggs by Franz Muller, the first to take place on British railways, and of a particularly prominent sexual assault in the same week. These incidents (discussed in detail in Chapter III) are likely to have stimulated interest in news media coverage of railways, indicating that anything associated with railways was more likely to attract newspapers’ attention in 1864, accidents included.

The secondary terms depicted in these charts indicate some of the most common terms either associated with accidents, such as ‘fatal’, or else those usually connected to accounts related to culpability for a given accident, such as ‘negligent’ (and variations), ‘crime’, and ‘director’. Despite a comparative lack of proceedings in criminal courts after railway accidents, there was a consistent strain of letters and articles linking railway accidents with crime and criminality throughout the period. These accounts used words such as ‘negligent’ to allege that companies, directors or employees were responsible for accidents and associated consequences to a degree which warranted trial under criminal rather than civil law. Lastly, although the number of fatal accidents was dwarfed by those which were not, the high proportion of articles containing ‘fatal’ is a quantitative indication that the potentially lethal nature of accidents on passenger trains was what made them most newsworthy. The steady decline in percentages of articles using either term indicate that fewer lives were being lost in accidents, and, likely as a consequence, fewer reports were focusing on culpability for them, leading to the issue becoming less emotive over time.

It is, however, analysis undertaken at the level of the individual news media account on railway accidents which yields the richest results. News media interest in accidents was strong from the first years of railway development and construction, despite a relative lack of national and regional titles in comparison with later decades. However, the reported fears of passengers and of potential readers were sometimes very different in character than would subsequently be the case, as were the contents and style of media accounts. One of the first railway accident reports was the *Manchester Courier*’s account of a test run of the locomotive *Sanspareil* in 1829, which mentioned how, when ‘a temporary wooden plug was blown out of the boiler [by steam]… the immense noise of the steam and water… at first terrified the ladies extremely’, but that ‘when informed that the accident arose more from negligence than from any defect in the machinery, they would have proceeded to Bolton, if the engine could have taken them’.[[168]](#footnote-168) Such defences and reassurances – whether made by the company or by individual employees – would be tolerated far less in later years, becoming the cornerstone of debate over culpability for accidents when they occurred.

Incidents involving prominent individuals – or at least purporting to involve them – were also widely reported. Early reports of an accident in September 1830 indicated that the railway developer and engineer George Stephenson had been killed on the soon-to-be-opened Liverpool and Manchester Railway. This was corrected in one later account, which reported that 'some malicious person had changed and fastened one of the moveable tongues in the wrong direction’, resulting in the death of a worker and injuring but not killing Stephenson, and was at pains to point out that the company had ‘organized a numerous and active police, for the protection and safety of the road in future'.[[169]](#footnote-169) The involvement of railway and non-railway celebrities such as George Hudson[[170]](#footnote-170) and Charles Dickens in accidents prompted articles throughout the century. *The Times* would become the most well-known newspaper attacking railway company negligence following railway accidents, but its article on the September 1830 accident was dismissive of such views. It stated that companies and railway innovators ‘never did assert… that travelling by locomotive would be safer than by horsepower’, and asked whether critics of rail travel had ‘seen or read of the accidents which are almost perpetually occurring by the overturning of stage and other coaches on the public roads’, before categorically stating that ‘the truth is, that travelling by means of locomotive engines is yet in its infancy.[[171]](#footnote-171)

Accidents were undoubtedly newsworthy between 1825 and 1830; however, railway development was not sufficient at this point for accident reporting to constitute a forum for impassioned debates on railways and criminal culpability. The amount of mileage constructed was still low, with most lines oriented towards goods rather than passenger transport, reducing the likelihood of newsworthy accidents involving passengers. This also meant that few people would be familiar with railway travel and associate themselves with the risk of accident, in turn likely lessening the demand for accident narratives. Accounts both for and against railways therefore come across as ill-defined, making arguments about railways being good or bad that were more grounded against abstract ideals of anti-modernity rather than the realities of railway experience.

This tendency would change significantly after the accident which caused the death of William Huskisson in September 1830. As the first passenger fatality to take place on the railways,[[172]](#footnote-172) the incident was already extremely newsworthy. However, the accident was propelled far beyond any ever seen before by virtue of Huskisson’s status as a sitting MP, killed during the inaugural journey on the newly-constructed Liverpool-Manchester line while trying to reach the carriage of the Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister; any combination of these factors would have been newsworthy in itself, and their combination increased the incident’s news value exponentially. As well as being vastly reported, many – although not all – of the staple features of later accounts of accidents were in evidence in reports of Huskisson’s death. Nearly all articles focused on the dramatic events of the accident, and the horror of death and destruction that was as yet unfamiliar in this new context. One article, titled *Dreadful Accident and Death of Mr. Huskisson*, which was described as being collated from accounts in other papers, characterized the accident as ‘one of those calamities which sometimes occur in the happiest hours of human enjoyment, and which in the present instance was equally unexpected and distressing’, and spared no detail in describing how ‘the wheel went over his left thigh, squeezing it almost to a jelly, broke the leg… in two places, laid the muscles bare from the ankle nearly to the hip, and tore out a large piece of flesh, as it left’. As well as emphasizing the sense of calamity and the accident’s violence, the article also indicated how there was an hour of impassioned debate between Wellington, Peel and the presumably anxious railway directors over whether the journey should continue to Manchester or return to Liverpool immediately, with Wellington only being convinced to order the journey to continue due to ‘possible rumours of [a?] general accident which might have painfully spread through the country if the procession had returned'.[[173]](#footnote-173)

Some titles, particularly radical papers, chose to focus on Huskisson’s politics rather than focus on the accident itself, such as in *The Age*, which wrote that Huskisson – known as a parliamentary intriguer – had been ‘cut off in the midst of his scheming for place’, and that although the incident would be gravely reported, ‘as those things will be sufficiently done by the maudlin eulogies of the press, we leave them to congenial pens'.[[174]](#footnote-174) The article illustrates how an accident with more than one potential point of interest, such as fatality, particularly violent injury, and connection to celebrity, was far more likely to provide a forum for lasting media coverage, although such debate did not describe such accidents as criminally negligent in the earliest years of railway development. In the face of continued attention being paid to the risk of accidents, some titles, often prompted by railway companies, published articles and letters rebutting allegations that railways were unsafe. Following a second, less well-known fatality, of a publican while attempting to get on a train outside a station, the *Morning Chronicle* stated that in ‘contrast to… numerous *casual* railway accidents…, we have much pleasure in calling to attention…that, since the opening of the railway on the 15th of last month [October], no less than *fifty thousand passengers*have been conveyed without a single accident of a serious nature having occurred to any one of them’.[[175]](#footnote-175) This attempt to reassure readers by implying that such incidents did not happen to *genuine* passengers; future rebuttals from companies and other interested parties would be more direct in denying culpability for accidents, or indeed in warding off even potential accusations.

As railway construction continued in the years following Huskisson’s death, so did railway accidents and accident reporting. The flush of railway mileage which followed the mass incorporation of new companies in 1835 led to growing public familiarity with railway travel, while the stock market crash which immediately followed the 1835 bubble led many to become more suspicious of railway companies and railways in general. Many aspects of media coverage which had been present at Huskisson’s death became more pronounced in the years leading up to 1840. As seen above in Fig. 1.7, the proportion of news media coverage linking railway accidents with crime, criminality and directors increased and peaked later than the average for all articles on railway accidents, indicating that ill-feeling and a desire to hold directors culpable picked up pace over time.

Other factors, while not as intrinsically related, served to catalyse interest in accident coverage and therefore had a secondary influence upon them. By far the most noteworthy of these was a continual focus on the violence or potential violence of railway accidents. Gory details of incidents were almost always included in accounts, either being described directly or else euphemised in such a way as to have a similar effect. Evocative and chilling descriptions of how passengers on one train ‘were alarmed by a violent, irregular movement of the carriages’, causing one man to be ‘dreadfully mutilated'[[176]](#footnote-176) are likely to have driven up readerships for accident narratives. This was the case even if such accounts did not involve passenger trains, as with one accident on a railway building site where 'the corpse was taken up with some difficulty, presenting a shocking spectacle, the head and neck being literally beaten to a mass'.[[177]](#footnote-177) Others were keen to stress how a non-fatal accident could either portend a similar more deadly one in future, or else how the same could have easily become so. One article argued that if an 1834 accident had taken place 200 yards closer to Leeds, ‘it would inevitably have proved extensively destructive to human life’.[[178]](#footnote-178) Of all fatal accidents, the most common were those which caused only the death or deaths of railway employees; however, accounts of such accidents were as keen to highlight the danger to passengers as much as the death of railway workers. This was the case in one 1836 account, which mostly discussed the danger to the three or four hundred passengers, before stating that 'when taken up he [the dead worker] presented a spectacle too shocking to describe',[[179]](#footnote-179) a method just as effective as direct description in eliciting shock by prompting readers’ imaginations. This sensationalist language was often found in articles about crime in the period,[[180]](#footnote-180) particularly with respect to murder, and so will have been familiar to readers of crime columns, providing another potential means for readers to connect accidents with criminal behaviour.

As more fatal accidents occurred, more inquests into the causes of deaths in accidents were reported in news media. Coverage of inquests, which tended to be word-for-word reports of the proceedings, and involved discussions of the potential culpability of individuals for accidents, defined in law far more clearly than issues around corporate or company responsibility for safety and culpability for accidents. Inquest reporting therefore tended to differ from other types of coverage, especially comment pieces or letters, in how accidents were portrayed. The difference was not total, and companies were often condemned at inquests, but these accounts were far more likely to revolve around the culpability of low-level employees than other coverage, with the ‘little armies of lawyers’ hired to protect railway companies’ financial interests referred to by R.W. Kostal being deployed to defend or muddy the waters around accident culpability.[[181]](#footnote-181) There is evidence that railway companies, who had a strong incentive for blame to be assigned to individual employees, were keen both to assist inquests and to publicise any results favourable to them. Accounts of an inquest into a fatal accident which ended with a pointsman being severely reprimanded by jurors were described as being 'furnished by the agent for the Birmingham Railway', [[182]](#footnote-182) and noted that jurors called for ‘more vigilance used by the servants of the company on the railway, or much more direful consequences must ensue’.[[183]](#footnote-183) An 1840 inquest account recorded the coroner stating that ‘we cannot hold the man who has the care of the lights guilty… We have no jurisdiction over him… That will be for the Company to consider when they view the conduct of the man.’ After reporting the ruling of accidental death, the account ended by stating that ‘we understand that the Company intend to prosecute [the driver] Turner’,[[184]](#footnote-184) again indicating railway companies’ active engagement with the legal process even in the early years of the railways.

Some papers, however, chose to publish accounts of when inquest juries made a point of stepping outside their assigned role of assessing individual guilt, making statements condemning companies. One such report noted how the jury felt bound to express ‘its disapprobation of the conduct of the railway company, in not placing their own responsible servants at every turn where such switches are placed, or insisting upon Lord Carlisle, and all others having private depots, giving such security for proper attention to the switches leading to such depots'.[[185]](#footnote-185) Likewise, it is important to note that the inquests reported on in the period did not represent whitewashing *en masse* in favour of railway companies; it is extremely likely that individual employees were indeed at fault for a large number of accidents. Instead, what this coverage suggests is that, while there were exceptions, these inquests were perceived as reflecting how debate in official settings around accident culpability did not represent the whole truth of the situation.

This gap gave rise to the most noticeable trend in news media coverage of accidents in the late 1830s – a steady increase, seen in Fig. 1.7 in the volume and passion of accounts which judged railway companies as being criminally responsible for accidents. The increased frequency of fatal and non-fatal collisions by 1840 had made them familiar: one report documented ‘another of those frightful railway accidents, which it has lately been so frequently our painful duty, as public journalists, to notice’.[[186]](#footnote-186) Some accounts continued to treat accidents as proof the railways were wholly bad, such as a *John Bull* article which equated ‘the perilous character of steam-travelling [to] the consequent perilous character of steam speculation’. It alleged the new railways sought to ‘invade private rights and property, destroy the face of the country, and irrevocably injure the comforts and security of the people, for no other purpose than to make the iron trade temporarily prosperous, and fill the pockets of Jews and jobbers’.[[187]](#footnote-187) The debate reached its height in the early 1840s, although the arguments were visible for years before and after. It took place across news media but was at its fiercest in articles and letters printed in *The Times*, which made by far the most sustained attempts to highlight what it perceived to be wanton negligence on the part of companies, reflecting its editorial priorities of championing the individual over the system in these years.[[188]](#footnote-188) While many of its accident reports were similar in their descriptive nature to those in other titles, *The Times* also published editorials whose primary focus was attacking a company rather than reporting a collision. One 1840 article began ‘The Hull and Selby Railway company seem determined to earn for themselves the unenviable distinction of surpassing all their brother speculators in wanton disregard for the commonest precautions’. [[189]](#footnote-189) As well as identifying corporate culpability for accidents with speculation and profiteering, the article termed ‘the recklessness of human life on the part of [the] company… as not merely culpable, but criminal’, before stating that ‘unhappily, there is no law in existence by which the guilty parties can be visited with an adequate punishment’.[[190]](#footnote-190)

However, it was *The Times’* letters page which provided the most sustained debate and discussion of railway accidents and culpability for them. Most letters written by members of the public were in response to reports on specific accidents; however, newspapers often elected to publish letters on specific accidents which then served more as a catalyst to air wider criticisms of railway companies. A letter in 1840 from ‘A Daily Passenger by the Croydon Railway’ reflects this, responding to ‘accounts of two dreadful events – “accidents” (by courtesy) on the North Midland and Eastern Counties Railways’ which were not fatal but caused mass injury. The author used them as a springboard to condemn the practice of using two engines to push trains, which the writer argues would have meant ‘the great majority [of passengers] being killed’. While this is related – if tangentially – to the two collisions, the letter’s sweeping final statement was not:

The railway system pervades the country, and whilst no one disputes its benefits, its abuses must not be passed over; it must not be allowed, as a European Juggernaut, to be propitiated by its chariot wheels being steeped in blood. Rules may be made too late.[[191]](#footnote-191)

This is revealing in how, even before the major accidents of the period or other emotive railway-related events such as the Railway Mania, railway accidents provoked strong opinions and prompted newspapers to print letters which connected railway accidents with potentially criminal abuse. Letters in this vein were a constant. An 1840 letter from ‘A CLERGYMAN AND A SUFFERER’ spoke out in opposition to how the South Western Railway’s account of an accident ‘attempted to show that the whole was occasioned by the criminal neglect of one man’, and that as one might prevent ‘forgery of bank-notes by punishing a bank director… a manager of the Southampton Railway [could be] convicted of manslaughter.’[[192]](#footnote-192) Elite figures also wrote to *The Times* to argue that legal provisions were inadequate. In the wake of the 1841 Sonning Cutting accident, John Hardy, an ironworks magnate and MP, wrote deploring both ‘the awful destruction of life and limb on the Great Western Railway…[and] the criminal thoughtlessness of those whose duty it was to arrange the order of carriages’, stating that the law ‘ought to subject those who do it to the penalties of manslaughter’, and declaring his ‘intention, if the matter not be taken up by some member of more weight in the houses [of Parliament], to call for proper legislative provision on the subject’.[[193]](#footnote-193)

Such legislation would eventually come about in 1846 through the Fatal Accidents Act. However, its provisions were limited to accidents causing fatalities rather than all forms of accident, and it did not address many of the concerns voiced by members of the public in letters about accidents before and after it was passed, demonstrating their frustration over the perceived neglect by the railway establishment. An 1845 letter in response to an accident at the height of the Mania lambasted how, because 'the railway monopoly [would] soon be complete, rendering it impossible to travel anywhere by any other means’, the public needed stronger laws to prevent accidents, with the writer arguing that it was ‘necessary to punish severely, in their persons as well as their purses, all the responsible officers, whether they be directors, engineers, or what not, through whose parsimony or neglect these accidents occur'.[[194]](#footnote-194) This in effect argued for criminal as well as civil punishments to be applied to those responsible, including directors. Many simply argued for financial punishment, such as one 1853 letter arguing that companies had an incentive to ensure passenger safety because ‘the mere “compensation” awarded to the maimed victims of our Railway Juggernaut’ would outweigh any costs involved in implementing safety measures.[[195]](#footnote-195) This letter was published several years after the legislative changes made via the Deodands Act and the Fatal Accidents Act (both 1846), which made it easier for relatives of people killed in railway accidents to receive compensation; despite this, the letter highlights how legislation did not alleviate public perceptions of criminal neglect on the part of railway companies. A similar 1855 letter, signed ‘DAILY IN DANGER’, stated that ‘the beggarly economy of the directors caused the death of five persons, besides mutilating several more’,[[196]](#footnote-196) while one from 1851 expressed its agreement with a prior *Times* article ‘that railway accidents arise almost exclusively from preventible [sic] causes, and that they are traceable in the vast majority of instances, to the mismanagement of directors’, concluding that ‘I think there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone on whom the responsibility will rest'.[[197]](#footnote-197) Another response, in this instance to an 1852 accident on the Great Western Railway, called for ‘a searching inquiry’ into railway accidents that the writer hoped would convince directors ‘that, insult and neglect the public as they may, a day of retribution [had] at last arrived’, but that ‘nothing short of a verdict of manslaughter against the chairman of the board [would] convince those gentlemen that their functions and responsibilities extend beyond jobbing in Parliament and on the Stock Exchange’.[[198]](#footnote-198) The furious tone of these letters indicates that there is little evidence that legislation changed widespread perceptions that directors were criminally responsible for railway accidents, as well as demonstrating a progression from attacks on railway companies in general to railway management in particular.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this debate, however, and the one which illustrates the central importance of news media to the issue, was the fact that *The Times* consistently attacked other papers in this period for being stooges to railway interests. In 1840, the year in which *The Times* was most active in condemningrailway companies, it published several articles attacking railway-supporting newspapers, especially *The Morning Chronicle*, for being wholly partisan. Its first salvo labelled these titles as ‘labouring for some time past to neutralize the effect produced upon the public mind by the dreadful accidents which have of late become so frequent’, and attacked the *Chronicle*’s assertion that railways were sixteen times safer than coach travel firstly as dubious in itself, as well as being unmindful of the opinion that ‘railways *ought*to be safer than coaches'. It ended by promising to ‘enlarge more fully upon this subject when we come to consider the *Morning Chronicle*'s notable scheme of a junta, or central board of direction [of railway administration], to be formed from the directors of the several railway companies themselves'.[[199]](#footnote-199) When it did so, *The Times* wrote that ‘the impudence of [the *Morning Chronicle*’s suggestion] absolutely astonishes us’, and alleged that it amounted to railway directors saying:

Our monopoly is in danger of being disturbed, and our dividends of being diminished. We cannot muzzle the public press, or prevent the daily publication of railway accidents, though we suppress or gloss over as many as we can. People will be stupid enough to think that accidents which happen daily are frequent, that such as are attended with the loss of numerous lives are frightful, and that effects of this nature must have their causes.[[200]](#footnote-200)

This scathing comment also attacked the practice of company representatives sending letters to *The Times*,which it printed in good faith, only then to be contradicted by later accounts.[[201]](#footnote-201) *The* *Times’* attack on the *Chronicle* culminated in a lead editorial which came in the wake of an accident on the South-Western Railway which led to the death of a woman. After attacking the company’s lack of a replacement driver for the service as 'an admitted instance of... fraudulent practice', the article then moved to direct attacks on the SWR and the *Morning Chronicle.* While stopping short of accusing the SWR of tampering with inquest witnesses 'without positive proof', *The Times* alleged it very strongly. Decrying a separate, closed-doors investigation undertaken by SWR and the *Morning Chronicle*, *The Times* drew attention to what it saw as the chief motive for corruption in the affair, namely that both companies were owned by the same man, a sitting MP:

It must not be forgotten that the chief proprietor of [*The Morning Chronicle*] is also the chairman of the South-Western Railway Company, and is, or till very recently was, a stockbroker and dealer in railway shares. If MR EASTHOPE has now ceased to carry on the latter business, we believe it is continued by his son.

The article ended by pouring scorn upon the result of the inquest, namely ‘a paltry deodand of £300’, stating that such ‘an inquiry so conducted should have ended in such a miserable, puerile [result] no one can be surprised’.[[202]](#footnote-202) The sustained nature of *The Times*’ campaign, its meticulousness in approach to detail, and the depth of feeling aired led to railway accidents becoming represented as being primarily the fault of railway directors and those in control of railway companies, and that that fault should be liable to be tried under criminal as well as common law.

However scrupulous it was in attacking what it saw as partisanship, *The Times* was careful to give space to letters from companies which rebutted allegations of culpability. These were in evidence from the earliest stages of large-scale railway construction and operation. Following an article reporting one dead and several wounded after an engine’s boiler exploded on the London and Greenwich Railway, a director of the company sent a letter stating that ‘the boiler did not burst, but… the accident was owing entirely to the carelessness of the individual who unfortunately lost his life’, and that he had been ‘repeatedly warned of the danger of standing in the way of the train of carriages which was in sight’,[[203]](#footnote-203) indicating how companies even at an early stage were keenly aware of how their responses could shape the reporting environment for railway accident coverage. *The Times*’ willingness to present a company’s side of the argument was not limited to railway companies. An 1839 letter from an ‘engine manufactory’ in response to a similar incident requested that ‘you will do us the justice to contradict… the bursting of the boiler, which did not take place, as will be proved at the inquest to be held on the unfortunate sufferers’;[[204]](#footnote-204) the fact that the letter predated the outcome of the inquest demonstrates how quick companies were to react to potential bad press. Letters were also published in *The Times* condemning individual employees as negligent rather than railway companies. One letter in 1844, while bemoaning the lack of rules and regulations, came down far harder on employees in stating that ‘it is too bad that the lives of whole families should be endangered by rashness or carelessness of railway servants'.[[205]](#footnote-205) These contrasted, however, with others which commended employees working on passenger trains, presenting a picture seldom seen through accounts of inquests in news media. A letter sent in 1852 commended one engine-driver for his bravery in attempting to prevent a chance accident at the cost of being 'frightfully maimed', commending his actions as being just as patriotic as those undertaken by soldiers in the ongoing Crimean War, arguing: ‘could the mariner or the soldier, actuated by the highest patriotism or the most chivalrous ambition, risk or suffer more?'[[206]](#footnote-206) Surprisingly, accounts of the period which characterised railway workers as symbols of patriotism were more likely to focus upon railway construction workers, most often navvies, albeit only when such accounts contrasted their more physical courage with railway directors. However, although such letters grew rarer, the fact that such letters were printed at all indicates how railway accident coverage in news media was often seen as unfair to common workers by many readers.

While accidents continued to occur, the tone of accident reporting changed over time. While coverage of accidents fell from the peak of intensity it reached during and following the Railway Mania of 1845, there is also evidence suggesting that members of the public felt that newspaper spotlight on companies had had an effect over time. One 1852 letter praised *The Times* for the efforts it had ‘made for the purpose of obtaining a more careful management of railways’, but felt that ‘despite the exposure… so frequently and ably made [by *The Times* on] the careless conduct of railway officials… every additional letter may induce directors to see that such carelessness will not be tolerated'.[[207]](#footnote-207) This encapsulated the dynamics of railway accident coverage at this time. There was a sense that, while unresolved, accidents as an issue had progressed from a state of crisis. By the time the most heavily reported railway accident of the period occurred – the Staplehurst crash of 1865 – [[208]](#footnote-208) news media coverage of it tended more towards the language of natural disaster, mirroring responses to the very earliest accidents rather than focusing on company culpability. The Staplehurst crash site was described as ‘such a scene of agony and bewilderment’,[[209]](#footnote-209) and *The Times* reported how ‘through broken sides and shattered windows were to be seen protruding human legs, arms, and heads, and from every one of them was to be heard the piercing cry of human suffering’.[[210]](#footnote-210) However, accounts of Staplehurst portrayed it more in terms of a natural disaster rather than as an outrage perpetrated upon railway passengers, despite an inquiry into company culpability leading to large damages. The involvement of Charles Dickens as a passenger in the crash also served to distract news media attention, although Dickens’ presence was to some extent hushed up in news media as he was travelling incognito with Ellen Ternan, his mistress. As seen above, news media coverage of railway accidents decreased rather than increased between 1864 and 1865, in spite of the extreme news value of the Staplehurst crash, with the long course of the Muller murder case of 1864 reflecting how offences in carriages now drove media responses to railways.

In the period between 1830 and 1850, accident coverage was the primary means of connecting railways to crime and criminality. As explained in the following chapter, after the 1845 Railway Mania railway investment and management became the most common targets for those who linked the railways with crime, rather than the accidents that were perceived as resulting from it. The enactment of legislation, the effects of the sustained period of railway amalgamation, and the gradual shift in focus from railway construction to railway operation all also served to lessen the potential for accident reporting as a springboard for wider debate. As seen in Figures 1.7 and 1.8, the proportion of reporting on accidents declined after 1865, but accident reporting had become less impactful from well beforehand. Arguments about railways and criminal responsibility continued, and since railway accidents remained newsworthy, they continued to feature in these debates, but after 1850 accidents reflected rather than drove them, playing a secondary role to the much more highly-debated threats from crooked railway companies or unknown fellow passengers.

## **Conclusion**

The period in which the railways were most unknown was also the period when opposition to their construction – and connections to crime – was at its most diverse. Fictional, critical, and news media accounts attacked railway lines, workers and accidents on social, medical, moral, geographical, cultural and aesthetic grounds. Opposition from famous writers and cultural commentators, while widely read and enduring, was ultimately ineffectual. Representations of railway workers in newspapers were initially factual, and were on the whole far fairer-minded towards the Irish than is assumed in subsequent histories. Over time, however, articles and reports became more and more stereotypical in their depictions, despite – or perhaps because of – those depictions becoming far less common over time, against a backdrop of potentially fewer such incidents to report on.

Following construction, railway accidents were the most heavily covered railway-related phenomenon in news media, yet the reaction to such accidents was shaped not only by the severity of the accident in question, but also by the wider context of public perceptions of railway management and railway investment. Whether written in opposition to railway workers, railway accidents, or to railways in general, news media and cultural representations reflected and shaped perceptions of how, in their first years of construction and operation, the railways constituted a primarily physical threat, and demonstrated how public familiarity with the technology had a direct effect on opposition to it. Such criticisms of the railways shifted over time, from attacks on railways as a general concept to attacks on navvies and railway directors. Prompted by a torrent of investment in the mid-1830s, and then again in the early 1840s, railways came to be known in these years through the railway company, and when the Railway Mania’s bubble burst in 1845, the political dynamite of lost investments and accusations of financial corruption was channelled chiefly through reporting in news media, and came to dominate how newspapers reported on railways, sidelining interest in workers and accidents.

# **Chapter II**

# **Stock Villains – Railway Financial Crime**

The third volume of Marx’s *Capital*, published in 1895,laid the blame for Britain’s economic crisis of 1847 on ‘the debacle of the railway swindle’ which preceded it.[[211]](#footnote-211) Marx associated the swindle with ‘the gentlemen who had tied up their floating capital in railways and relied on credit to replace it’.[[212]](#footnote-212) Such attacks did not begin with Marx. In both news media and public discourse, railway investment and railway management had gone hand in hand with financial crime since well before the 1840s. Railway joint-stock companies were the first large-scale organisations whose output affected daily life in Britain in a manner directly visible to the public.[[213]](#footnote-213) Constructing railways needed massive amounts of capital and investment, and the unprecedented scale and potential profits of the new railway companies caused massive economic upheaval. On several occasions, railway investment broke down entirely, and on one occasion almost took the whole economy with it. The public became far more involved and familiar with railway investment than any other prior type of investment, and they relied on the press for information about it. This chapter examines how those companies were represented in news media, and shows how they came routinely to be cast in a negative light, as either immoral or wholly criminal in nature. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, and particularly in the 1840s, railway companies and capital were represented as being just as critical as lines, engines, and journeys in the developing notions of what constituted ‘the railways’ – often more so. When trust in railway companies turned sour, prompted by lost investments and reports on dealings that appeared criminal, the degree of public outcry that followed was so intense that it bound railway companies, financial crime, and financial criminals together for decades. The archetype of the crooked railway director would be used as a point of reference in financial crime cases generally, and also contributed to a wider narrative connecting directors with all forms of railway crime. While it had already been used to pass blame on management in many of the cases assessed in Chapter I above, the financial misdeeds of 1840s railway companies led to the trope being sharpened, and ultimately surpassing the locomotive as the primary means of coupling railways with crime and criminality.

Reporting ranged from straightforward crimes, such as sales of stock in non-existent companies, to complex systems, such as large-scale fraudulent systems such as Hudson’s, or corrupt sales of land; these seldom resulted in trials, but often sparked panics which kept pace with the fervour to invest. While market crashes in 1825, 1835 and 1866 curtailed railway investment to some extent, the panic that above all others is remembered as ‘The Railway Mania’ refers to the market collapse of 1845.[[214]](#footnote-214) While wide-scale criminal activity did undoubtedly take place around nineteenth-century railway capital, much of it went unprosecuted, and its extent is something we can only guess at. The shock and ill-feeling it engendered therefore earthed itself to some extent through ongoing representations of railway mismanagement and investment. Even when such anger was largely misattributed – as was the case in the 1840s – narratives that vilified railway directors proved more influential than those based upon empirical reality, shaping news media engagement with railway and non-railway financial crime for decades to come.

This chapter assesses how the railways and financial crime were linked by focusing on news media representations linking events that took place in the major periods of railway investment to crime, as well as representations of prominent individuals such as railway directors. It examines how the language of reporting often signified and precipitated shifts in how railway financial crime and railways in general were perceived. After appraising how financial crime and railway development have been written about in previous research, it details the important developments in railway investment and development in the years up to and including the 1845 Railway Mania and the fallout from it. This is accompanied by a broad quantitative analysis of how news media represented railway financial crime, which serves as a scoping exercise. This analysis is then arranged chronologically in the chapter’s three case studies, which examine George Hudson, Leopold Redpath, and Samuel Morton Peto. Each of these studies involves an individual and acts or perceived acts of crime that were associated with them, as represented in a developing narrative through news media. The ways in which Hudson, Redpath and Peto were represented served both to conform to and to shape contemporary attitudes to railway financial crime, reinforcing the dominant reporting theme of the director as villain. The chapter concludes that, in the search for clear, easily digestible narratives in the aftermath of the 1845 Mania, news media reporting began to link railway investment and management with crime and unethical behaviour with increasing regularity. This is likely to have affected the growth of the railways for decades, and damaged trust between readers, railways, and officials. Of the three chapters in this thesis, it is through these cases and reports that railway crime was most closely linked to the Victorian economy, Victorian politics, and to the development of Victorian society.

## **Histories of Railway Financial Crime**

The history of railway expansion and construction is well-documented, as is the development of railway law. Its relationship with emerging ideas of nineteenth-century financial crime have been noted in more general works, but not examined in detail. Sarah Wilson describes how the very phrase “financial crime” ‘lies on a fault-line in British societal consciousness’,[[215]](#footnote-215) emphasising how many of the traits attributed to ‘the criminal’ in general – whether in the Victorian period or today – are seldom attributed to those accused, prosecuted, or convicted of financial crime. While no work has fully recognised the role of news media representations, the importance of railways to the development of ‘financial crime’ has been recognised in contemporary and nineteenth-century accounts. David Morier Evans’ 1859 work *Facts, Failures, and Frauds: Revelations Financial, Mercantile, Criminal* (1859) assessed the economic change brought about by railways as the point of ‘the inauguration of “High Art” crime’,[[216]](#footnote-216) as his work sometimes refers to financial crime. Sarah Wilson assesses Evans as exemplifying, though ultimately not challenging, a ‘dominant trend within the sparse [contemporary] historiography regarding Victorian Britain as a “haven” for white-collar criminals’, given that he highlighted his contemporaries’ suggestions that ‘the 1840s railway boom had concretized the seriousness of impropriety in financial dealings’.[[217]](#footnote-217) More modern scholarship has also recognised the importance of railway financial crime, but such crime is rarely assessed on or for its own merits, and is disparate in its orientation, methods and conclusions as a result. However, scholars agree on the centrality of the railway mania of the 1840s, the importance of George Hudson as a symbol, and the sense that railway development changed how financial crime was viewed in general. Those that examine the financial side of the railways as part of a broader assessment – of crime, economics, or other areas of history – generally only aim to draw conclusions about that broader research area. By contrast, those that take railway financial crime as their primary focus tend only to chronicle such incidents rather than assess their wider significance. While no work has the particular focus on representations and perceptions of such crime found here, there are three authoritative works on financial crime in the period that inform my approach here. These are Sarah Wilson’s *The* *Origins of Modern Financial Crime*, Andrew Odlyzko’s unpublished ‘Collective Hallucinations and inefficient markets: The British Railway Mania of the 1840s’ (2010), and R.W. Kostal’s *Law and English Railway Capitalism* (2004).[[218]](#footnote-218) Wilson’s conceptualisations of financial crime heavily inform the questions this chapter aims to address, while Odlyzko’s detailed use of news media in assessing the development of the Railway Mania informs its methods.

Wilson sets out to form ‘an account of Britain's earliest experiences of what would today be recognised as ‘financial crime’ and to write ‘a study of Victorian fears of financial crime’.[[219]](#footnote-219) She also aims to describe and understand the development of the Victorian view that it was during the mid-nineteenth century ‘that financial crime, as we understand it, was discovered’ by uncovering ‘the lexicon of Victorian financial crime’.[[220]](#footnote-220) Wilson highlights how contemporary representations and perceptions of offences have been neglected in both financial- and crime-oriented studies,[[221]](#footnote-221) an inconsistency given that it was financial crime’s being ‘widely perceived as somehow distinct’ which has most led to what Wilson guardedly terms its ‘special nature’.[[222]](#footnote-222) As Wilson’s study is geared towards understanding ‘special responses within criminal policymaking’,[[223]](#footnote-223) it is by necessity limited in scope, with her sources being primarily legal and official documents. Works in the same field as Wilson’s which mention the railways in the context of Victorian financial crime seldom ascribe as much importance to them in its development. Their focus is instead squarely on financial institutions and official policy,[[224]](#footnote-224) reflecting the lack of critical focus on the influence of news media on railway development and public perceptions of such crime, as well as on the media influence on policymaking on the issue.

Railway-oriented histories have also assessed the relationship between railways and financial crime, the most crucial of which for this chapter are R.W. Kostal’s *Law and English Railway Capitalism* and Andrew Odlyzko’s ‘Collective Hallucinations and inefficient markets: The British Railway Mania of the 1840s’. These buck the general trend in railway-centric histories of not assessing the relationship between news media of the period and railway financial deviance. Kostal’s thesis – that the legal profession was central to and greatly revived by the development of ‘English railway capitalism’[[225]](#footnote-225) – involves analysis of many of the events referred to in this chapter, most notably the Railway Mania of the mid-1840s, as well as those in the 1820s and 1830s and the subsequent bubble of the 1860s. While Kostal is meticulously detailed in his description of the complex events involved, his focus, however, is the ‘powerful dialectical exchange between… railway companies and … [the] system of law and lawyering’[[226]](#footnote-226) and on understanding the mid-1840s Mania. Perceptions of its events as criminal activities are very much understood in relation to their effect on the law rather than assessed as a subject in themselves. Odlyzko’s wide-ranging work on the mania (2010) is an even more detailed examination of the economic aspects of market irrationality, which also addresses many of the different forms of source material assessed in this chapter, albeit not as great a proportion of news media titles;[[227]](#footnote-227) his approach is discussed in more detail in this chapter’s methodology.

Other railway histories are more narrative in approach but nevertheless remain informative, particularly given the density of the events involved. Adrian Vaughan’s *Railwaymen, Politics and Money* (1999) charts the growth and competition of railway companies in Parliament, but seldom analyses the effects of such dynamics and relationships in the wider context of Victorian society.[[228]](#footnote-228) The inherent tensions within works on railway financial crime and deviance – between individual narratives and the wider, collective impact of financial events – can also be seen in those works which specifically pertain to the chapter’s three case studies. Works which assess George Hudson have often focused upon either blaming or exonerating him for his actions by examining the events of his career in minute detail. While Arnold and McCartney argue in *The Railway King* – the foremost recent assessment of Hudson – for a ‘dispassionate biography’ rather than Hudson being assessed ‘in simple terms as either a heroic or as an almost villainous figure’,[[229]](#footnote-229) the scope of their analysis does not go beyond Hudson himself. This is also the case for works concerning Leopold Redpath[[230]](#footnote-230) and of Samuel Morton Peto;[[231]](#footnote-231) when works that are critical originate from a financial crime context, the railway aspects of their cases are lost, and vice versa, while biographical approaches are not critical.

In short, existing histories have done a great deal to document the origins, nature, narratives, and individuals involved, but do not assess the significance of contemporary perceptions either of these individuals or of railway financial crime in general. As a result, they cannot assess several issues which follow, such as the divergence between representations of financial crime and the empirical events, which often went unprosecuted or at least not tried in criminal courts. The closest any work comes to making such assessments is again found in Kostal’s *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, which is still grounded far more in the effect of railway management upon the law and legal practice. This chapter aims to demonstrate the importance of news media representations to the development of railway financial crime, by detailing the ‘speculative frenzy’ that existed before the Mania to show how the anger which followed it took shape.

## **Methodology**

As discussed in the introduction, much the analysis carried out in this chapter concerns accounts and discussions of railways and financial crime in nineteenth-century news media. Except in certain instances, GALE Primary Sources has been the platform used to access and analyse the material assessed in my analysis. These news media sources are supplemented by official and company records, as well as other specific documents relating to the three central case studies. These include House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), as well as records of railway companies held at the National Archives (TNA), the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (OBO), and other individual sources.

This chapter does not undertake quantitative analysis of representations of railway finance and crime to a degree that is possible in the following chapter (Chapter III), which as far as possible attempts to collate every given news media article about a specific offence as part of a database for analysis. While quantitative methods are certainly useful in examining links between representations of railway finance and crime, it is both a much larger and more generalised reporting phenomenon than Chapter III’s responses to specific violent and sexual offences. The railways were the primary outlet for economic activity in mid-nineteenth century England, and news media reporting on railway financial development was vast; there are well in excess of 30,000 articles in the GALE database between 1830 and 1870 that relate to George Hudson alone. Many are simply short statements of railway company activity or reports of committee meetings, although the detail in which many of the latter are reported make them valuable as sources of railway information, as well as indicating the high level of presumed reader interest in railway news. Moreover, the fact that the law was unable to keep pace with new developments in railway-related financial activity in the period – combined with several other factors – meant that financial offences were seldom tried under the criminal law. Not only does this hinder more direct searches for crime-related terminology, it led to articles that made heavy use of allusion and euphemism when referring to potential railway financial impropriety. While this approach was noteworthy in developing a far more arch tone than reports on other types of crime in the period, it renders coming to conclusions through keyword searching and other such techniques more difficult. This chapter therefore adopts a similar mixed methods approach to the previous chapter. The available material is far too disparate to attempt a wholly definitive approach to the topic through quantitative assessment alone, but it can show that concerns around railway financial crime broadly crystallised around key individuals, who became ‘trope makers’ for narratives about this category of crime. Three of these individuals are then examined through detailed qualitative assessment of individual reports that form part of the reporting trends identified through quantitative analysis. In summary, the sheer volume of material and the fact that discussions of financial crime tended to coalesce around specific individuals both point to a case study approach.

The three case studies assessed in detail concern the career of ‘The Railway King’, George Hudson, the fraudulent crimes of Leopold Redpath, employed by the Great Northern Railway in the 1850s, and the ruin of Samuel Morton Peto and his railway companies following the Overend Gurney crisis of 1866. Several works on financial crime advocate this more detail-oriented approach. George Robb stated that ‘A non-statistical approach… [involving] other forms of evidence… is more profitable in researching the history of white-collar crime’, since it highlights ‘specific crimes and general types of criminal activity that have not found their way into official statistics’,[[232]](#footnote-232) which is particularly relevant given the ever-fluid contemporary legal status of railway financial activity. Micro-histories of individual cases such as those undertaken here can address what Sarah Wilson has identified as the ‘perceived "silence" [or lack of discussion] about financial crime that simultaneously reflects an almost axiomatic failure of the public to understand its nature and a failure of academic interest in its perpetration and wider implications’, and that ‘micro-history can bridge the gap between historians and criminologists’.[[233]](#footnote-233) This chapter attempts such a bridge to assess how representations and perceptions of the link between railways and financial crime crystallised around strong narratives featuring prominent individuals.

The differences between news media titles, their reporting and outlook in the period – both in general and with respect to railway financial crime – have to be properly contextualised in any analysis. Of each of the thesis’ chapters, the differences between national, local and regional newspapers and periodicals is most profound here, as railway construction and financial development had an extreme effect on the economy and society of the areas serviced by the line in question, and often on the newspapers themselves. Lines and companies were discussed in a regional and local press which grew at a similar rate to the railways it variously defended, attacked, and discussed. In 1854 there were 289 provincial papers; by 1871 this number had grown to 851 and a daily provincial press had become established.[[234]](#footnote-234) Railway financial development played a key role in sparking this boom, and the reaction to it was as much played out in local titles as it was in influential nationals such as *The Times*. However, that very influence – particularly of *The Times*, but also of other national titles – reflected another aspect of the developing news media industry, namely that local and smaller titles very often took their cues from larger national papers; often, articles were copied wholesale without acknowledgement. In a country where the proportion of discussion that was framed as a ‘national’ debate was increasing – supported by the ease of movement that was itself brought about by the railways – the bigger news media entities were the primary forum for information about and discussion of events which were perceived as prominent, including the case studies in this chapter. Where local papers are discussed in more detail, they are assessed in relation to the specific influence of a case upon a particular area. These included reactions to Samuel Morton Peto’s bankruptcy in his political constituency, but most prominent are local reactions to George Hudson’s activities in the many towns and cities whose economies in the 1840s turned largely on supporting or opposing one of the railway companies he controlled. In wider terms, local papers were often much more directly tied by financial interest to the fate and the direct influence of the railway companies and lines in their area, and as such were more prone to take partisan points of view. While it is unworkable to incorporate differences between local and national titles into quantitative analysis, the qualitative assessment of articles in the three case studies and on the Mania analyse linguistic and semantic reporting differences between local and national news media.

Finally, my selection of three case studies relates to their impact on the changing perceptions of financial crime. Their influence on the development of railway financial crime as an empirical phenomenon has been overstated both then and now. However, the influence that reports of their activities and personalities had on the development of railway financial crime as a *perceived* phenomenon was, and is, unparalleled. The case studies examined here were highlighted by quantitative analysis as receiving high levels of coverage at specific times in the developing narratives around railway management. They are well suited to understanding the wider process of the railways’ effect on perceptions of financial crime. However, we need first to examine the events and context that took place before the reporting trends that reacted to them, namely the course of railway development up to and including the Railway Mania.

## **Early Developments: Manias and News Reporting**

The tropes concerning railway financial crime and criminals in nineteenth-century news media were predicated upon the narrative that surrounded railway investment in its first decades – upon a growing clamour for investment and dizzying heights of speculation, and upon financial ruin, confusion, resentment, and revenge. This section describes the key events concerning the financial development of railways, and the effects that representations of those events had upon discussions of subsequent cases – either criminal or perceived as such – in news media and other sources up to and including the Mania of 1845-6.

As discussed above, quantitative methods cannot form the crux of this chapter’s analysis. However, a general quantitative overview of the developing news media engagement with railways in the period is revealing. Railways commanded a larger and larger proportion of attention in UK news media, which itself underwent continual rapid expansion in the period. From 1845 the word ‘railway’ – which was always the dominant term used to refer to the technology – was mentioned in roughly 20% of all articles until the mid-1870s:

Fig. 2.1: Proportion of all UK news media articles available through GALE Primary Sources containing the word ‘railway’ (1825-1900)

Across the entirety of British news media available through the GALE corpus,[[235]](#footnote-235) the proportion of all published articles which referred to railways rose from 9.9% in 1840 to 21.5% in 1845. However, the narratives around investment and reporting that reached their apex at the Mania were also influenced by the two smaller manias of 1825 and 1835, as well as the developing narratives around railway construction, legislation, and reporting. As Andrew Odlyzko describes, ‘it is simply impossible to say anything intelligible about the financial and economic aspects of the Mania of the late 1840s without some understanding of what had happened a decade earlier. The railway mania of the 1830s was a part, by some measures about half, of the more general investment mania of the mid-1830s’.[[236]](#footnote-236) There was an acceleration towards the 1845-6 mania through the sluggish official and government responses to railway capitalism, the increased willingness of the wider public to engage in speculation, and the inherent deficiencies in ‘railway law’. This was aided by wider social and political unrest around various aspects of reform in the period, which created an atmosphere which is likely to have affected judgements and reversals of judgements in several key specimen lawsuits in favour of elite directors. In the earliest years of railway development, investment in the new technology was not driven so much by their potential for passenger transportation as much as the potential for railways to transport goods. While the economic effect of transporting goods by rail was substantial on its own – in the 18 months that followed the construction of the Stockton and Darlington line in 1825, coal prices fell by almost two-thirds[[237]](#footnote-237) – it would be their ability to transport passengers that proved most profitable, as well as normalising railway building, popularising investment and stimulating general interest in railways. However, in the boom of 1825 – and, to a lesser extent, 1835 – this potential was not understood, either by investors or by railway companies themselves. When combined with the fact that railways were still an unknown quantity in general, the early markets for railway investment were far more beholden to wider forces than would be the case in 1845. The collapse of the far greater investment bubble associated with South American development in 1825 led to a credit crisis for early railway companies, curtailing their growth.[[238]](#footnote-238)

The next railway investment bubble possessed more of the characteristics of the 1845 Mania, but, ultimately, would also burst on account of external circumstances. The ‘scores of new companies’ that drove the bull market of 1835-6 were created by promoters ‘in the business to speculate in railway paper, not to build operational railway lines'.[[239]](#footnote-239) However, although a proliferation of projected lines such as these – that could not have been built and were most probably never intended to be built – would also be the principal cause of the 1845 Mania, the collapse of the 1835-6 bubble was caused by the external factor of bad harvests, rather than the internal collapse of ten years later. The market for railway investment and the practices of prospective companies still received less attention from government, media and public than it would in later years, much less so than their actual construction; this was related to the lack of familiarity with railway investment, which in turn related to the limited geographical impact of railways in the 1830s, as well as there being far more of a focus upon goods transport than passenger transport. However, practices of varied legality were noted in, and subsequently informed, official and news media accounts. The Parliamentary Report which led to the 1844 Joint-Stock Companies Act stated that, during the 1835-6 bubble, ‘dividends were declared from capital accounts [and] sham directors held lavish entertainments at the sham offices of sham companies. All of this and more was done to create the illusion of ‘the *bona fide*character of the undertaking’.[[240]](#footnote-240) An increasing proportion of proposed railway companies had no real relation to railway construction, and, as in 1825, their collapse curtailed investment for several years, although construction for approved companies continued, and served to make the investment potential for railways more and more obvious, aided by the growth in discussion of railways in news media reporting in the 1830s shown above in Fig. 2.1.

Reactions to railway-related financial crime, criminals, and deviancy in the second half of the nineteenth century were shaped by the developments of prior decades, as well as by events surrounding the Mania. As such, while I have attempted to describe the events below with as much brevity as possible, there is simply no way of assessing the relevant case studies without doing so. Reporting on the development of English railway capital covers a phenomenal amount of ground, much of it sparsely dealt with in prior histories. In 2011, Andrew Odlyzko characterised the 1845 Mania and the subsequent fallout as the ‘great complexity’, the drama of which has led historians **‘**to concentrate on the most spectacular events of 1845, and ignore the lengthy period afterwards when most of the waste occurred, and most of the investors’ dreams got broken’.[[241]](#footnote-241) The analysis undertaken in the three case studies assesses both that ‘lengthy period’ – lasting well into the mid-1850s – as well as the influence of the tropes that were formed by it, which lasted well beyond the 1866 mania and became a permanent fixture of reporting on railway companies. This section serves to contextualise that analysis, showing how the spectacle and drama of the Mania was the largest part of a yet larger narrative of hope, disaster, betrayal, and broken dreams. The fact that this substantial increase in discussion came during the Mania of 1845-6 and remained at substantially higher levels than before it in the years that followed suggests that railway investment is likely to have been integral in framing discussion and subsequent opinion of railways. This is also implied in Fig. 2.2, which details the articles mentioning both ‘crime’ and ‘railway’:

Fig. 2.2: Proportion of articles available through GALE Primary Sources mentioning ‘railway’ that also mention ‘crime’, 1830-1880.

This chart demonstrates that during the period in which investment and company development was the most prominent aspect of the railways, crime was an integral aspect of that reporting; the slight decrease in proportion of articles through the period should be seen against the huge rises in the total numbers of articles in the period. Although we cannot know what kind of crime is discussed in each individual article, across the large population of sources available through GALE rises and falls of this degree are likely to speak to specific rather than general factors. Although the early 1830s produces the highest peak, the drastic increases in the volume of reporting in the first decades of this period – which dilute the impact of individual stories and themes – meant that the more significant peaks come during the key years for railway financial crime: the Railway Mania of 1846-7; the downfall of George Hudson in 1849, and the Leopold Redpath case in 1856/7. The peak in 1864, the year of the Franz Muller murder, indicates that violent railway crime had by this point superseded railway financial scandals such as Samuel Morton Peto’s involvement in the 1865-6 Overend Gurney crisis in news media reporting.

## **The Great Railway Mania**

The two previous downturns in railway markets, while serious in terms of their consequences for railway investment and construction, had been the result of larger, external economic forces. The collapse that followed the 1845 Mania, by contrast, was driven primarily by a crisis in confidence over railway investment. When several excellent harvests generated what one contemporary writer described as ‘the most plentiful supply of money than had occurred in the memory of the oldest capitalists’,[[242]](#footnote-242) this served as a catalyst for the torrent of capital invested in both new and existing railway companies. This investment came from across society, with ‘Duchesses, widows, spinsters, clergymen, army officers, tailors and gentlemen’ all investing their money in railway companies.[[243]](#footnote-243)

The rush of investment that took place in 1845 was enabled by several miscalculations passed into law by the 1844 Joint-Stock Companies Act. The legislative and financial conditions of 1844 and 1845 combined to create a ‘sheer scale of promotional activity, which dwarfed all previous joint-stock enthusiasms’.[[244]](#footnote-244) A vastly over-inflated market populated with many purely speculative ventures was followed almost total collapse of the market for railway shares and scrip, with negative coverage in news media coming to dominate almost overnight. While Kostal notes that the term ‘Railway Mania’ itself was being used as early as the spring of 1844, and that it often carried a sense of recklessness,[[245]](#footnote-245) it was only during 1845 that the term became popularised, as seen in the chart below:

Fig. 2.3, Proportion and number of articles mentioning both ‘railway’ and ‘mania’, 1825-1880. Blue line denotes the percentage of all GALE Primary Sources articles for the year (plotted on left y-axis), orange line denotes the total number of articles for the year (plotted on right y-axis).

The frequency and proportional use of the term ‘Railway Mania’ rose in the 1840s before soaring in 1845, with 0.65% of all articles (1,372) published that year referring to the term. While the use then receded, it did not fall to pre-1844 levels for many years, indicating the sustained interest in covering the fallout from it.

Before the bubble burst, the journalistic tone used to characterise investment only condemned the speculation in general rather than specific terms, seeing the frenzied investment as symptomatic of a society that was unhinged rather than specifically immoral. Several measures intended to apply greater controls on new railway companies only served to give promoters greater opportunity to bamboozle investors. While full incorporation required an Act of Parliament, it was simple for a company to register and sell scrip, all the while being able to present impressive legal documents.[[246]](#footnote-246) The new legislation had in effect allowed lawyers, boards and committees of railway companies more opportunities to bamboozle investors, or else simply to sell to speculators, known as ‘stags’. The greater familiarity with passenger travel by the 1840s contributed to the degree of speculation being exponentially larger than beforehand; several hundred prospective companies had come out of the 1825 and 1835 booms, but ‘almost 1,400 new railway companies were registered by promoters in England in the first ten months of 1845’, representing double the existing mileage of track.[[247]](#footnote-247)

Previously, this change has been attributed to greater familiarity with railway travel among the wider public. However, before 1845 such familiarity is likely to have been driven more by second-hand engagement with railway travel and railway companies – most notably through news media – than through personal use of passenger trains, [[248]](#footnote-248) as access to railway travel was limited by geography far more in these years. News media were hugely influential in shaping the Mania, both directly and indirectly. The costs of printing newspapers decreased throughout the 1840s, and advertising revenue from railway companies fuelled growth yet further. Kostal notes that ‘in London alone at least a dozen individual railway journals had swelled total weekly circulation to nearly 20,000 copies’ by the height of the Mania in September 1845; at the beginning of the year there had been four railway trade papers nationwide.[[249]](#footnote-249) Trade papers could earn between £12,000 and £14,000 per week from railway advertisements,[[250]](#footnote-250) with nationals making far more. The *Times*, which was routinely a voice of caution and frequently one of full-blown doom concerning railway speculation, still ran adverts for bubble railways at the height of the Mania.[[251]](#footnote-251) Although such advertising had been lucrative for both trade papers and national titles, they were quick to criticise such advertising after the bubble burst. The *Railway Record* attacked prospectuses which ‘routinely described town meetings which had never taken place, paid-up capital that had not been paid, and subscriptions sold that had not been and would never be sold’.[[252]](#footnote-252) Prior to the collapse, the general atmosphere represented in the press was one of frenzy at the prospect of money to be made, allied to the gleam and smoke of the new technology, or else satirising it. A rhyme in *Punch* published at the height of the Mania captures the mood:

That's where all occupation's fled

Gone, presto! With hop, jump, and skip;

How now, then, can I earn my bread

Except by railway shares and scrip?[[253]](#footnote-253)

The same sense of anguish can be seen in Fig. 2.4 (11th August 1845), a satirical *Punch* cartoondepicting the logical conclusion of proposed railway building, and in Fig. 2.5 (25th October 1845), whose caption depicts Queen Victoria asking her husband: ‘Tell me, dear Albert, have *you* any railway shares?’.

A picture containing text

Description automatically generatedA picture containing text, book

Description automatically generated

Fig. 2.4: Fig. 2.5:

‘A Railway Map of England’, The Momentous Question’,

*Punch*, 11 August 1845, *Punch*, 25 October 1845,

p.163. *Punch Historical Archive.* URL: p. 5. *Punch Historical Archive*. URL:

<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8BA9x3> <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85fcTX>

Kostal identifies how ‘advertisements in scores of general newspapers and trade periodicals fed the public's hunger for new share offerings and stock quotations’,[[254]](#footnote-254) and that before 1845 there were four weekly railway newspapers in England, but by September – the peak of the Mania – over a dozen journals in London alone had brought the railway press to weekly circulations of over 20,000, not counting the widespread advertising in non-railway titles.[[255]](#footnote-255) However, the vast number of proposed new lines could never possibly be built, or the companies associated with them incorporated. The combination of widespread advertising and ‘the concurrent development in England of regional securities markets’[[256]](#footnote-256) meant that there was a vast supply of investment opportunity as well as an inexhaustible demand, with news media the means of bringing the two together. Adrian Vaughan notes that many investors were ‘uncommercial’ middle-class people whose only experience of investment had been in government stocks, traditionally considered much safer than commercial investment, indicating how the sense that people had a certain right to safety around railways extended to investment. While it is difficult to break down the provenance of investment across the board, much of it was triggered, as was the case in 1825 and 1835, by high levels of available investment capital from several years of strong agricultural harvests. Some shares, however, were secured against returns from future stock values, with such investment becoming the centre of specimen legal cases when desperate companies, in similar vein to the 1720 South Sea Bubble, attempted to outmanoeuvre investors by demanding that it be redeemed.[[257]](#footnote-257)

News media use of the term ‘Railway Mania’ itself mirrored the Mania’s significant events, as shown in Fig. 2.6:

Fig. 2.6: Number of GALE Primary Sources articles containing ‘Railway’ AND ‘Mania’ by month, 1845-1846.

The highpoint and fall in share and scrip prices in September and October 1845 and the reading of the Dissolution of Railway Companies Bill in Parliament in April 1846 are identifiable by high levels of reporting. However, whether news media reporting was a cause or a consequence of the Mania’s collapse is much less clear. The traditional view of the *Times* ‘pricking the bubble’ in September 1845 is challenged by Odlyzko, who argues that although the *Times* was ‘the most prominent opponent of the Mania… [it] was neither the first to raise an alarm about the Mania, nor the most penetrating’.[[258]](#footnote-258) While the *Times*’intervention signified that trouble was in the offing, there are many other possible explanations both for the cause of the collapse and for the ways in which it transpired. While there remains disagreement about the relative importance of the various contributing factors to the Mania, all commentators are in general agreement concerning the actual events that took place during and immediately following it. Warning voices grew in number – particularly in the *Times* – and while speculation allowed the market to remain artificially inflated, news of poor harvests acted a catalyst once more, and ‘finally caused premiums on railway paper to edge downward for the first time in months.’[[259]](#footnote-259) On October the 17th a half-percentage increase in the exchange rate prompted a full-scale panic; ‘as news of the decline of prices reached the provincial markets, shaken investors began to dump their railway paper’,[[260]](#footnote-260) with prices falling to an ‘absolute collapse’.[[261]](#footnote-261)

What complicated matters further was the fact that, although the initial September crash was devastating, the collapse that followed the Mania was prolonged. By the end of 1845, 549 provisionally registered companies had ‘disappeared’, with hundreds soon to follow, causing ruin for investors.[[262]](#footnote-262) The differing status of the thousands of railway companies meant that individual investors did not give up hope *en masse*. It thus took months – if not years – for confidence in railway investment to complete its collapse, for the trajectories of railway stocks to stabilise, and for it to become clear which companies were worthless and which were merely damaged; in short, for the general environment for railway investment and construction to become remotely intelligible. By this time, legal events had progressed apace. Kostal describes the legal action that immediately followed the Mania as ‘a torrent’, identified subsequently by Wilson as an apt summation of the importance of railways and railway development to the development of nineteenth-century financial crime.[[263]](#footnote-263) Kostal identifies three broad categories among the ‘hurricane of litigation’: directors being sued by providers of goods and services to companies; directors being sued by scripholders and/or shareholders to redeem the value of their investment; and the same shareholders and scripholders being sued in turn by directors for full payment of those same investments, since many were made using either five or ten percent deposits.[[264]](#footnote-264) Kostal extensively describes the complexity of the cases involved, as well as the lack of provision in either the common law or the judiciary to adequately settle the individual cases, let alone the underlying issues they represented. While that complexity is likely to have drawn out the legal process, it is also likely to have discouraged sustained reporting of that process in news media as a whole. The long, legally intricate, and confused occurrences of 1846 and 1847 did not make for a good news media narrative. Because previous works – including Kostal, Taylor, Vaughan and others – have focused on railway and legal titles, often supplemented by the *Times*, they present little sense of how these events were conveyed in national and local titles in general. It is likely that, in spite of the difficulty in reporting suits and legal cases or covering many legal cases – or indeed because of such difficulties – the Railway Mania led to railways being more widely connected with crime throughout the press as attitudes hardened:[[265]](#footnote-265)

Fig. 2.7: Proportion of GALE Primary Sources articles referring to ‘Railway and Mania’, ‘Railway and Fraud’, and ‘Railway and Scandal’, 1820-1900.

The 1845 peak for mentions of ‘mania’ shown in the chart above – only the most prominent example of many words used to describe the phenomenon – was accompanied by a substantial increase in articles mentioning the railways in conjunction with both ‘crime’ and ‘fraud’, with the latter’s peak and sharp fall around 1845 centred on the many claims and civil suits that were tried in those years. The fall is likely to have been affected by courts largely finding in favour of the railway establishment rather than investors, making any subsequent representations of such cases in news media much more likely to be deemed libellous if terms such as ‘fraud’ were used. The increase in articles containing both ‘railway’ and ‘director’ correlates heavily with the periods of heaviest investments in and controversies about railways. The court cases referred to above did not come to a conclusion until several years after the Mania collapsed. Although all of these were civil cases, many of them raised questions over criminal misconduct; an increase would also be expected given the political, social, and financial climate in the years leading up to 1848 and the social revolutions and upheaval that took place in England and Europe that year. Britain was gripped, and believed to be gripped, by several crises in 1848, with the government challenged domestically and abroad on many fronts, and the general sense of a lack of legal provision and rumours of partisanship in the legislature and judiciary reflects that turmoil, particularly in terms of the significant social tensions and the class dimensions of investment. The second reason – related to the first – is that it took a great deal of time for the dust to settle after the Mania in broader economic terms. Although it began in September of 1845, the fact that the collapse continued well into 1846 – and the consequences well beyond that – indicates that it would not be natural to expect confusion to turn to anger and subsequent blame in news media particularly quickly; however, the fact that ‘Mania’ fell the most of the terms after 1846 indicates that the themes it was linked to had more staying power as news items, even if the event itself did not. Fraud continued to be heavily associated with railway crime, with the final search term ‘scandal’ being the term of choice for the collapse of Overend Gurney in 1865/6, also identified in a peak of articles referring to railway directors. Its use in the 1840s is likely linked to the failure of several criminal prosecutions over railway shares, and a move away from using terms such as ‘fraud’ – which suffered a sharp downturn – and towards less potentially libellous descriptions.

While the individuals likely to have been largely responsible for the Mania – directors and lawyers of unincorporated railway companies – were embroiled in legal action, the eventual targets for news media recrimination – directors of operational railway companies – were undertaking the many ‘necessarily large amalgamations’[[266]](#footnote-266) that resulted in the survival of larger companies such as Midland Railway (controlled by George Hudson), the Great Northern Railway (controlled by Edmund Denison), and the London and North Western Railway (controlled by Mark Huish). Men such as Hudson, Denison and Huish became rich, prominent and powerful through their companies – Hudson and Denison were both elected MPs – but their prominence also provided a potential target for the ill feeling caused by the Mania which the legal morass that followed it could not. The chart below shows how media discussion of the Mania coincided with increased discussion of George Hudson, the ‘Railway King’:

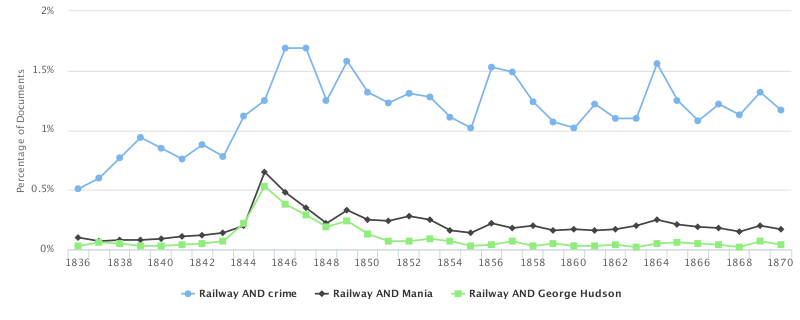


Fig.2.8: Proportion of Articles referring to ‘Railway and Crime’, ‘Railway and Mania’ and ‘Railway and George Hudson’, 1836-1870.

The fact that ‘railway AND crime’ peaks later than ‘Railway AND Hudson indicates that anger was becoming focused upon directors in general rather than specifically on Hudson, although the levels of reporting on Hudson post-Mania still outstrip the proportion of reporting on activities of his companies in those years. Reporting on Hudson closely tracks that on the Mania, but he was not the only individual for whom increased news media coverage coincided with coverage of acts of financial crime. The chart below contextualises the three case studies examined below by showing how news media references to Hudson, Redpath and Peto to some extent mirrored changes in the dynamics of railway crime reporting throughout news media:

Fig. 2.9: Proportion of GALE Primary Sources Documents referring to ‘Railway and Crime’, ‘Railway and George Hudson’, ‘Railway and Redpath’, and ‘Railway and Peto’, 1830-1900.

The peaks in reporting about the three subjects of this chapter’s case studies can be seen here. Coverage of George Hudson overlapped strongly with the 1845 Mania, and sparked an upswing in general coverage (though not specifically of Hudson himself) connecting railways with crime. Similarly, the discovery and prosecution in 1856 of the frauds perpetrated by Leopold Redpath against Great Northern, his employers, corresponds with a general rise in discussion of railway crime in the same year as well as the year that followed. The exception to this is Samuel Morton Peto, whose downfall in 1866 over the LCDR’s role in the Overend Gurney crisis does not represent the highpoint in which he was discussed in news media, although there is a significant increase in references to him in 1866. Peto’s case, however, is illustrative of his specific narrative as a railway developer, since his civil engineering firm undertook several prominent projects, including during the Crimean War, when media references to him reached their highpoint. The levels of reporting on Peto compared to Hudson are likely to relate to his extensive involvement in non-railway construction such as in the Crimean War, but also relate to the decreasing frequency of references to railway directors and financial crime between 1850 and the early 1860s. Instead, the increasing numbers of reports on violent crime in carriages became the most prominent way in which railways were associated with crime in news media. This can be seen from the 1864 and 1881 peaks in articles containing both ‘railway’ and ‘crime’, which are associated with two of the railway murders discussed in the following chapter. Ultimately, however, while the graphs above show some significant patterns, they cannot reveal the contexts of any specific keywords used in reporting, and as such we can only conclude that there are significant patterns in reporting levels, which demand further investigation. The following three case studies therefore aim to examine this reporting in more depth by drilling down into the content of individual news reports.

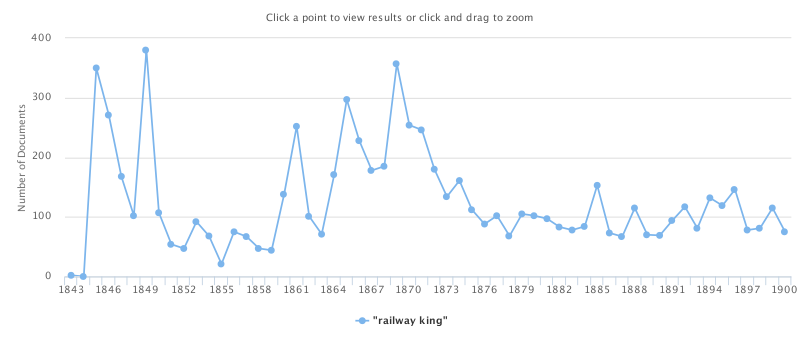
## **George Hudson, ‘The Railway King’**

George Hudson’s prominence as a railway director and promoter led to him being blamed in news media for both the 1845 Railway Mania and the large-scale economic downturn that followed it in 1847. This study will establish that, while what was referred to as ‘the Mania’ had very little directly to do with Hudson, his prominence and celebrity as ‘The Railway King’ gave writers and editors an easy target in the chaotic aftermath immediately after the railway bubble had burst. Deficiencies in legislation, the dominance of Parliament by railway interests, and the mass of railway lawsuits were not viable targets for news media; they took place on impersonal scales, were difficult to understand, and remained unresolved, none of which reflected the ‘news values’ of the period which aided sales of newspapers. Vilification of Hudson picked up speed to the extent that his reputation was already tarnished well before he was eventually ousted by the boards of the companies he controlled. For all that it was based largely upon misattributed blame, Hudson became the blueprint for the treatment of railway directors in news media for the remainder of the century, with accidents, assaults, overcrowding, and construction issues all cast as direct results of avarice and recklessness on the part of directors, whether named individuals or as a group in general. Such presumed avarice was most often referred to in news media using the same language and tone as that used to describe crime and criminals. By assessing how directors were depicted in news media, this section aims to establish the process of how Hudson – and through him, railway directors as a whole – became stock figures of greed and villainy. The fact that Hudson was not responsible for the Mania matters little to a history such as this, which seeks to establish what reactions to Hudson in contemporary news media entailed, rather than whether such reactions were truthful.

Hudson’s life is well documented, but the relationship between his career and subsequent perceptions of railway financial crime is less well understood. His background as the son of a York draper and his inheritance of £30,000, which he later regretted,[[267]](#footnote-267) firmly establish his narrative as one of rags-to-riches-to-rags. While other powerful directors and promoters of the period, such as GNR’s Edmund Denison or LNWR’s Mark Huish, were as influential over the dynamics of railway investment, Hudson and the narrative around him were *storied* in a way which no other powerful railwayman was.

The first connection between Hudson and railway capital in the national press came in 1835; however, his name appeared simply as one of a long list of directors for the new Northern and Eastern Railway,[[268]](#footnote-268) which never reached York itself and would only come under Hudson’s control ten years later, through its association with the Eastern Counties Railway. While the much-quoted statement that Hudson wanted ‘to mak’ all t’ railways come t’ York’[[269]](#footnote-269) underestimates his ambitions for a national network, his railway activity before 1840 was largely confined to his home city. Although his political and business career did not draw the same level of censure as in the late 1840s, Hudson still attracted strenuous opposition in this early period. As early as 1837, he was attacked by the Liberal element of the York City Council over several matters, most notably concerning a land purchase made by his York and North Midland Company. The proceedings, reported in great detail in the *York Herald*, stated that when Hudson rose to speak on the issue after his conduct had been declared ‘irregular’ by the Lord Mayor, ‘a scene of tumult occurred which we never before witnessed’, and the opposing speaker stated that ‘here is a gentleman *convicted of irregularity*, [emphasis added] and he has the impudence to get up to explain’.[[270]](#footnote-270) The legalistic tone and the suggestion that Hudson had been convicted of a crime – although ‘irregularity’ was not itself a crime in the period – would remain a constant theme in attacks on Hudson, even when no specific charge was brought or any allegations formally made.

As seen above, news media focus on Hudson intensified in the early 1840s. Although no reference to Hudson as ‘the Railway Napoleon’ exists before 1845, the lack of explanation for the first recorded reference of the term indicates that it was widely known beforehand.[[271]](#footnote-271) This is supported by the declaration in June 1840 that the two new engines on the completed York and North Midland Railway would be the “Wellington” and the “Hudson”.[[272]](#footnote-272) In June 1844 the *Times* stated that ‘yesterday, the anniversary of the victory of Waterloo, [has] been fixed upon as the day for celebrating the more peaceful triumph achieved… in the extension of the great chain of railway communication’; the piece named both Hudson and the companies he directed, before describing how Hudson and ‘a large party of friends’ would arrive in Newcastle by ‘the great procession train’.[[273]](#footnote-273) The comparison with Napoleon encapsulated the double-edged view of Hudson in news media; his brash persona and track record of expanding companies led him to be loved by his supporters and loathed by his enemies in roughly equal measure, particularly in a country less than thirty years removed from Waterloo. It was the epithet of ‘The Railway King’, rather than ‘Napoleon’, however, that was most commonly used to refer to Hudson in the news media. While there are several claims that noted Victorian wit the Rev. Sydney Smith coined the nickname in 1844, the term ‘Railway King’ was first used in news media in the title of an 1843 *Leicestershire Mercury* article reproducing an attack on Hudson in a letter published in *Herapath’s Railway Journal*, the leading national railway trade paper. While the *Herapath* letter simply referred to Hudson as ‘King George’ throughout,[[274]](#footnote-274) the *Mercury*’s title when reprinting it was ‘New Railway Schemes – The Railway King’.[[275]](#footnote-275) As seen in the chart below, the term ‘Railway King’ – which overwhelmingly referred to Hudson – continued to be referenced in many news media articles available through GALE, often hundreds per year until the end of the century, well after Hudson’s death in 1871:

Fig. 2.10: Number of articles available via GALE Primary Sources referring to ‘Railway King’ by year, 1840-1900.

The peaks and troughs in mentions of ‘Railway King’ tended to fluctuate with important events in Hudson’s life and career, starting with the Railway Mania in 1845, but also encompassing his defeat in the 1859 general election and subsequent flight from England to avoid creditors, his return in 1864 and arrest in 1865. After his death, references tracked with major railway events, particularly those involving his old companies such as the Midland Railway, which opened its Birmingham New Street station in 1885, coinciding with a rise in coverage for that year. Hudson’s North Midland Railway was incorporated in 1842, and in the same year he also gained control of the Midland Counties and the Birmingham and Derby Railways, which would amalgamate into the Midland Railway two years later.[[276]](#footnote-276) leading the *Standard* to identify him one of the most powerful railwaymen in the country and one of ‘a deputation of railway companies’[[277]](#footnote-277) to Gladstone – then head of the Board of Trade – that disputed the Railways Regulation Bill, which related, among other things, to the mandatory availability of company accounts. Given that accusations of false accounting would later cause Hudson to be ousted from his companies, it seems likely that his opposition to government regulation even at this early stage reflected irregularity in his ‘high-handed approach’ to keeping accounts.[[278]](#footnote-278) Reports and articles which defended Hudson tended to do so as vehemently as those that attacked him. In 1843, the *Era* gave effusive praise to the amalgamation of Hudson’s companies into the Midland Railway, calling it ‘so fortunately conceived and so ably and energetically carried out by Mr. Alderman George Hudson’ and describing it as a model for ‘less successful lines’.[[279]](#footnote-279) In July of 1845, as the Mania was reaching full speed, Hudson was being both attacked and defended for his defensive commercial tactic of blocking rival companies. The *Derby Mercury* – likely partisan given that the Midland Railway was itself based in Derby – rebuffed attacks that called Hudson ‘not only very arrogant, but also very unjust’ as being ‘puerile and contemptible… he only did his duty as chairman of the Midland, and no more’.[[280]](#footnote-280) News media were fighting the same battles on ink and paper as company directors were fighting in Parliament and across the countryside.

As the Mania grew, so did both Hudson’s influence in railway investment and his prominence in news media as ‘the Railway King’. His celebrity was only heightened when he successfully stood for Parliament as the Tory candidate for Sunderland in the summer of 1845. Hudson had been a Liberal early in his career, but had changed his allegiance while still in York. The *Leicester Mercury* noted how the Sunderland by-election was ‘one of the engrossing topics of the political world’, but attacked Hudson, calling his address ‘a choice specimen of the mean-nothing school… distinguished by an abnegation of all principle… We, however, hope that Mr Hudson will be left to his railway speculations’, indicating that Hudson’s career as a railway director was seen as his defining feature as a public figure and was also perceived as distinct from his political career.[[281]](#footnote-281) The attack from the *Leicester Mercury* was perhaps unsurprising given that the Leicester-based Midland Counties Railway had been taken over by Hudson’s own, Derby-based Midland Railway the year before; there were, however, other signs that Hudson’s popularity was not universal. At one meeting, the *York Herald* reported the negative reaction to a Hudson speech as well as its content; Hudson was quoted as saying that ‘two charges had been brought against him – the first, that he was a railway speculator; and the second that he was in favour of the Corn Laws. (Hisses and groans.) To both of these charges he pleaded guilty. (Great uproar)’.[[282]](#footnote-282) The fact that Hudson accepted the labels which caused this disapprobation indicates his combative approach in public life; he changed his political allegiance frequently while in York, and had much the same approach when negotiating with other railway companies. As well as reporting on Hudson’s actions in great volume, news media also elected to represent every aspect of them in minute detail; news media characterisation of railway financial developments may have been selective, but not when it came to George Hudson.

Of all the events that fed the narrative around Hudson, however, the Railway Mania was undoubtedly the most critical. The Mania saw 1,400 railway companies registered in the first ten months of 1845, attracting vast investment, before the market disastrously collapsed.[[283]](#footnote-283) As it became clearer and clearer in 1846 and 1847 that many would not recoup their investments while Hudson went from success to success, so coverage that was critical of him, which had been a strain for several years, started to dominate the tone of reporting. Already defined as the most prominent railway speculator, Hudson became a target for the backlash against the Mania as it happened, for the confusion and misery that followed its collapse, and for the lingering anger resulting from the lack of a widely intelligible or acceptable resolution to the turmoil. One letter by ‘A London Tradesman’ printed in the *Times* on October 24th 1845 following ‘the explosion of the railway volcano’, voiced many of these concerns. It stated that:

Every other journal is egging on the public to increased transactions… leading journals are receiving £800 to £1000 per day for railway advertisements… we shall find our ledgers full of bad debts… though we ourselves may not have held a railway share, yet we run the risk of being ruined by the misdeeds of others…the great abettor of this system is Mr George Hudson, whose name has been considered a guarantee for everything good.[[284]](#footnote-284)

There were still some articles published during the Mania that defended Hudson, many of which were from local papers based in towns and cities with strong political or business associations with him. When a *Derby Mercury* report implied that attacks on Hudson were written by those who had suffered from unlucky speculation themselves,[[285]](#footnote-285) it is likely that it was driven at least in part by partisan support of the city’s dominant company. Similarly, Hudson’s connections to Robert Peel and the Anti-Corn Law wing of the Tories – though he later changed sides on the issue – are likely the reason for a *Cork Examiner* article proclaiming him ‘THE FRIEND OF THE POOR’ as well as ‘The Railway King’, rather than charitable works undertaken in York,[[286]](#footnote-286) since late 1845 saw widespread Irish support for the repeal of the Corn Laws during the Famine. The *Illustrated London News* published an illustrated profile of ‘The Railway King’ [fig. 2.11] containing such praise as ‘people of all ranks would be glad to confide any sum of money to his discretion and speculative enterlprise’, and that ‘his sudden rise has not blunted his naturally kind disposition’;[[287]](#footnote-287) such praise could, of course, be read as ironic rather than fawning, and thus to appeal to readers who were either for or against Hudson, ensuring maximum sales.

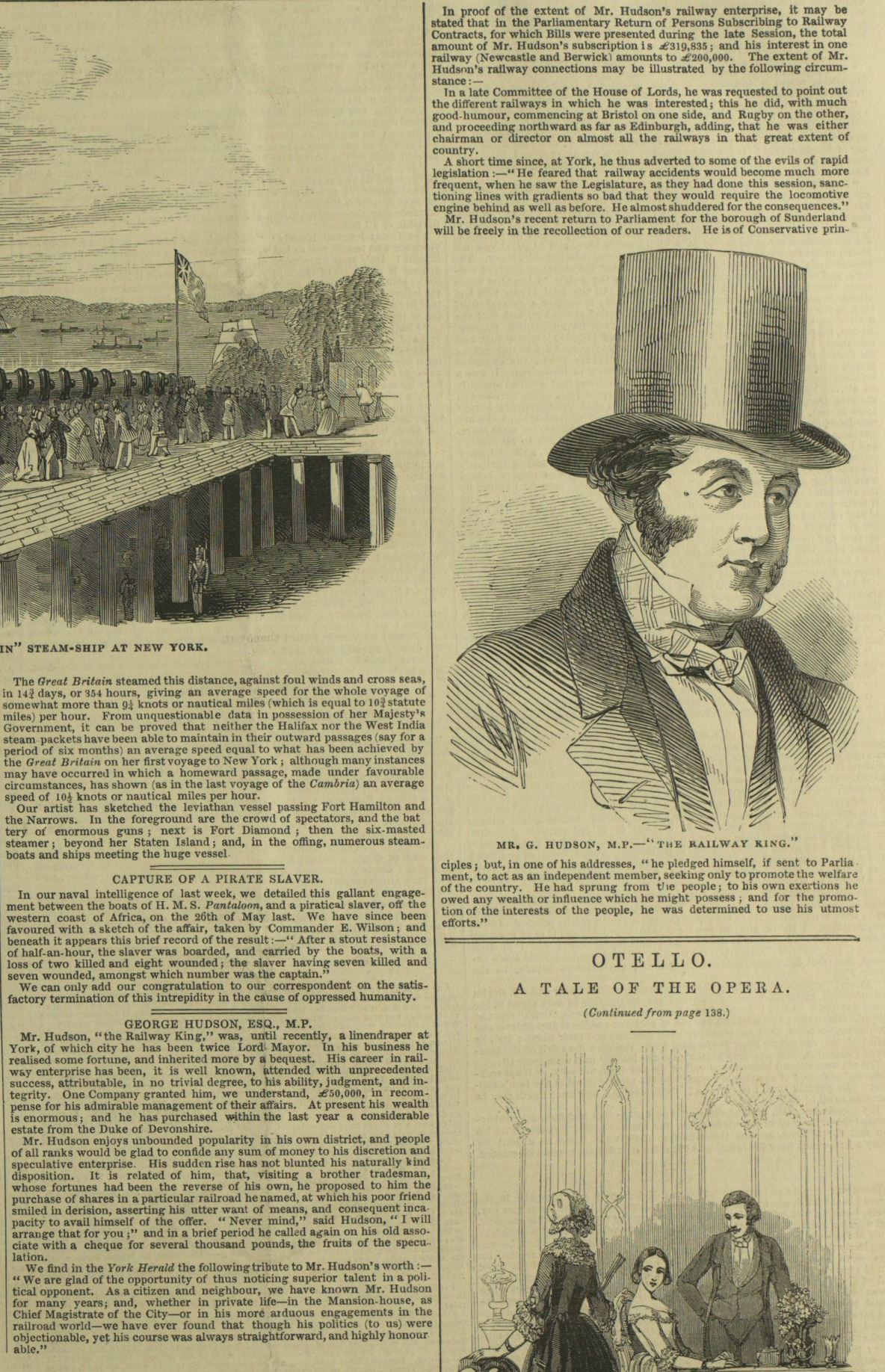


Fig. 2.11 – ‘Mr George Hudson, M.P. – “The Railway King”’,

*Illustrated London News*, 6 September 1845, p. 157

<http://link.gale.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/HN3100012635/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=694e698b>.

Articles either defending Hudson or seeking to strike a balance often characterised those attacking him as motivated by their own financial interest rather than genuine concern; one riff on the metaphor of ‘Railway King’ proclaimed that ‘when the “king” is abroad, subjects are on the gaze”.[[288]](#footnote-288) Opponents of Hudson portrayed a railway court populated by sycophants, as in the response to Hudson being voted an £18,000 testimonial by Midland shareholders in October 1845, only days before the Mania collapsed.[[289]](#footnote-289) Others were more direct in their approach. One letter in the Tory *Morning Post* mocked Hudson as a ‘then humble tradesman’ who had become ‘the Colossus of the sharemarket’, going on to ask: ‘what… does anyone believe to have been the main objective and motive of Mr Hudson’s exertions in the cause of railways… self-aggrandisement or self-devotion?’.[[290]](#footnote-290) The demand for railway news meant that often several separate items on a single page, even out of sequence, would be railway-related, and this brought about further opportunities to attack or praise Hudson by associating him with other stories through proximity. Subscriptions to Hudson’s testimonial were described in the *Illustrated London News* as amounting ‘to the enormous sum of upwards of £10,000’ only a few inches away from an article stating breathlessly that ‘the Railway excitement continues. There is no diminution in the number of new companies. Such was the alarm created by the report about the Order in Council, that, on one day last week, no fewer than forty new companies were registered’.[[291]](#footnote-291) By October 1845 – at which point the railway investment bubble had very clearly collapsed – articles directly comparing railway speculation with property theft on the railways were appearing next to articles about Hudson’s wealth. The article in question, also printed in the *Illustrated London News*, stated that ‘Iron Railroads are eating their way into the public vitals’, and that railways were ‘another mode, besides staging, of coming at net… profits.’ It went on to ‘allude to the practice by expert thieves of sharing among themselves the luggage of the passengers’, before then stating below that‘Mr George Hudson has completed the purchase of another large estate in Yorkshire… at a price little short of half a million’.[[292]](#footnote-292) The proximity of articles and reports on speculation, which caused the crash, to those about Hudson, whose operational – albeit illegally accounted – railways did not, was laying the groundwork for the two to become thoroughly associated.

Hudson’s wealth, connections and importance made him powerful friends and enemies, and his association with them proved irresistible to reporters at the height of the Mania, particularly given the political nature of the approval of prospective lines. Adrian Vaughan describes how although Hudson was ‘a nouveau riche potentate… [ill] regarded by resentful aristocrats’, he was still widely connected with the establishment, attended on by society and asked for advice by the Duke of Wellington on a way to double an investment.[[293]](#footnote-293) It was Hudson’s connections to the then Prime Minster Robert Peel which attracted most comment, however. Peel was under attack in the Tory press for his support of Corn Law reform in late 1845; however, his connection to Hudson led to both being attacked in the Tory press. Both the *Morning Post* and the *Illustrated London News* attacked Hudson, with the former stating that ‘the Government delude themselves with the hope that no serious mischief will result from the speculative excitement’… ‘the Prime Minister, in his mixed private and official character, [is] doing all he can… to fan the flame of railway speculation’, before reporting on how Peel had raised the first sod of Hudson’s Trent Valley Railway, and how Hudson had been invited to Peel’s estate at Drayton Manor.[[294]](#footnote-294) A short item in the *Era* in May 1846 reporting on Hudson’s purchase of Newby Park had an editorial comment added to it: ‘We hope that… a stag or two are kept on the grounds. It will be a great curiosity nowadays to see a Railway Stag living in clover’;[[295]](#footnote-295) the fact that this was the only article of several dozen in the issue to receive such comment demonstrates the keen awareness of the currents of opinion around both railway speculation and Hudson in the period. In response to the shifting climate of opinion, railway advertising revenue drying up, and Hudson becoming a political as well as a railway target, the balance of news media articles and reports had decisively shifted against Hudson by the end of 1845. In December, *John Bull* attacked Hudson’s plan for the York to London line as ‘the pride and hunger of a colossal projector’,[[296]](#footnote-296) and the *Manchester Times* cast Hudson as Mammon and investors in his companies as ‘unblushing worshippers’.[[297]](#footnote-297) When any comment was made about Hudson’s activities, it was now far more likely to be negative than it had been in previous years.

This shift against Hudson is seen in a series of letters from ‘Cato’ to the *Times* published in late 1846, which attacked Hudson’s role in making English railways inefficient. ‘Cato’ is identified by Andrew Odlyzko as John Black, who until 1843 had edited the *Morning Chronicle*, employing a young Charles Dickens, and who had attacked Peel repeatedly[[298]](#footnote-298). Odlzyko writes that the publications of Black’s letters ‘were arranged for by James Morrison’[[299]](#footnote-299), who was ‘one of the most prominent, and most feared (by the railway interest) opponents of the Railway Mania’.[[300]](#footnote-300) Black’s choice of pseudonym brought to mind the senatorial opponent to Julius Caesar, mirroring contemporary characterisations of Hudson as ‘Napoleon’ and ‘the Railway King’.

Cato attacked Hudson as the epicentre of railway racketeering by means of controlling Parliament through MPs being either investors in or directors of the same railway companies they were making decisions about. Cato states that the reason that estimates for the cost of the new Belgian railway were low was because ‘they have not there a *railway House of Commons* to deal with’, before quoting Hudson as saying in evidence to a Parliamentary Committee that ‘if there is only a command of “*a large sum of money,”* a measure can always be carried, “*even against the power of the Government”*’. Cato described railway profits in moral and criminal terms, stating that ‘we have allowed robberies on the public’, ‘the plunder which has been obtained will, no doubt, be retained’, and ‘[we should] let no such men be trusted’, before again attacking Hudson personally, complaining that ‘George Hudson by one or two jobs [pockets] as much as all the Belgian lines’. This letter built to a crescendo with a damning indictment of railway capital, as:

A system which reflects the utmost disgrace on the public men of this country, which has absolutely brought our institutions into discredit, and which the people of every part of the civilized world point to with reprobation. With every increase of the means of corruption the corruption has fearfully extended. There really is nothing in the whole history of the world approaching to many degrees by it. No rank, no station has escaped the contaminating influence of railway jobbing.

The letter closes pessimistically by stating that ‘with such immense funds at their disposal… these railway potentates are truly omnipotent, and this will continue to be the case as long as Parliament shall be suffered to be merely an instrument in their hands’.[[301]](#footnote-301)

Three days later, a second letter from Cato was also printed, further criticising Hudson. It noted the preponderance of news media attacks on him, remarking that ‘I do not think I ever see a number of *The Times*, or of any newspaper published in his own neighbourhood, in which his conduct is not the subject of loud complaint’. Frustration over the legal confusion around railway management was also evident, with Cato stating ‘whether [Hudson’s] concealment [of fares] be or be not *illegal*, it is, at all events, tricky and disreputable’, before attacking Hudson’s ‘assurance to tell us the people have not suffered… Do they not suffer by the exaction of fares from them so much higher than the cost of the line justifies?’[[302]](#footnote-302) The letters also caused furious debate in themselves; the *Era* attacked the *Times* for publishing them, alleging that its opposition to Hudson was partisan:‘How the *Times* can admit “such sound and fury, signifying nothing”, to encumber its columns, save to gratify some private pique against Mr Hudson, we are at a loss to discover’.[[303]](#footnote-303)

Despite the amount of criticism in the press, which was overwhelmingly negative outside certain likely partisan titles like the *Derby Mercury* or the *Era*, Hudson continued in his position as director of railway companies, supported by minority opinion in supportive articles. As the immediate aftermath of the Mania faded, news media focus moved away from railway speculation. This was also caused by increasing focus on the wider political unrest throughout Europe spread through 1847 and 1848 coming to a head, including in England, where the possibilities of rebellion or revolution were often reported upon even though they never materialised to the same scale as abroad. Hudson was never out of the public eye entirely, however; minutes of the meetings of his companies continued to be published, and his public life scrutinised. One *Morning Post* report from May 1848 notes how Hudson’s was the first name on a long list of almost all the most notable railway magnates – including Samuel Morton Peto (discussed below) – who ‘had an interview with Lord John Russell…at [his] official residence… in Downing-Street’. The subject of their visit to the Prime Minister would prove prophetic in hindsight, since they formed ‘a deputation on the subject of the Audit of Railway Accounts Bill’.[[304]](#footnote-304) The bill had been described in the House of Lords as a necessity, due to the total investment in railways rising to £324m in the previous twenty years, and ‘the complication of these accounts… [making] it a difficult thing for shareholders to unravel and understand them’.[[305]](#footnote-305) The consequences of an increased desire for transparency would lead to Hudson’s downfall several months later.

By 1849 Hudson’s Midland Railway and Eastern Counties Railway had, crucially, become less profitable. Not only had the collapse of the Mania gutted investment, the enormous amount of effort and legal outlay expended by Hudson and his allies to prevent the expansion of Edmund Denison’s Great Northern Railway and Mark Huish’s London and North-Western Railway had failed, allowing Hudson’s rivals more direct and therefore more profitable access to London. While Hudson’s underhand financial methods had been rumoured for many years – Odlyzko calls them ‘an open secret’[[306]](#footnote-306) – Hudson, as M.P. for Sunderland, was exempt from being arrested for civil offences, which removed any prospect of being imprisoned for debt or being required to hand over property.[[307]](#footnote-307) As an MP, the burden of proof needed to make a successful criminal charge against him would have made such charges unlikely in the extreme, given the pro-director results in many of the comparatively transparent legal cases which followed the Mania,[[308]](#footnote-308) as well as Hudson’s enormous economic, social and political resources.

Those same resources, however, depended upon Hudson’s chairmanship of his companies and his status as the ‘Railway King’, and in February 1849 this began to crumble, and combined with the cumulative weight of prior criticisms in news media, ultimately caused his downfall. Some of the first rumblings against Hudson came when he and the other directors of the Midland Railway were asked directly during company proceedings about the state of their personal affairs, as well as the company’s itself. Practically every newspaper carried these proceedings verbatim,[[309]](#footnote-309) while perennially pro-Hudson titles such as the *Derby Mercury* published letters defended him, with one such stating that opponents were ‘putting questions and proposing amendments got up solely with a view to excite alarm, to act upon the fear of the ignorant’.[[310]](#footnote-310) It was only at the beginning of March, after two calamitous meetings of the Midland Railway and Eastern Counties Railway, that it was apparent that the Railway King had paid shareholders out of the company’s own capital and indulged in what would now be termed insider-trading. The *Times* broke its usual habit of not passing comment on breaking stories by reporting ‘a very strange statement with regard to Mr Hudson’ and ‘the charge publicly made [that he] coolly pocketed at one swoop £14,000 at the cost of those whose interests he was… bound to protect’. It noted that ‘such barefaced swindling has occurred ere now, although… the instances are rare’, and took a dim view of Hudson’s assertion that he would ‘make good’, comparing it to ‘many such offers [heard] at the bars of police-courts… magistrates are slow to admit them as a palliation of crime’. The editorial concluded in grandiose, historically-minded and humiliating terms, stating that the shareholders of Hudson’s companies were ‘a good deal deeper in the mud now than when first presided over by the Railway King. That is all the benefit they have taken by his reign’, that ‘all things would seem to portend that [Hudson’s] reign is over. The bladder shows symptoms of collapse. The clay feet tremble beneath the image of brass, and all men foretell an impending ruin’;[[311]](#footnote-311) the biblical tone of the language used to attack Hudson was similar to the comparison of the earlier collapse of the Mania to a natural disaster. As well as the language and tone of the many reports of the proceedings, and the reactions to them, the reported speech of shareholders at the meetings reveals the depth of negative feeling and frustration about Hudson. The *Illustrated London News* report of the meeting of the Eastern Counties Railway – which Hudson did not attend – described ‘a scene of indescribable confusion, and cries of “Where’s Hudson?”, “Off, off!” and “Turn them out!”. When Hudson was condemned in his absence, one shareholder was reported as shouting: “That’s it Sergeant, kick him well while he’s down!, while the meeting closed with ‘three cheers given for Mr Waddington [Eastern Counties vice-chairman], and three groans for Mr Hudson’.[[312]](#footnote-312)

Pro-Hudson newspapers could do little to dam the tide. The usually deferential *Hull Packet* reported that ‘for the first time in the career of the Railway King he was seriously at issue with his subjects’, and that ‘during the past week the subject of dispute has formed fruitful matter for discussion both privately and by the press’. While it argued that ‘Mr Hudson was unfairly dealt with in not being apprised before the meeting’, and condemned attacks on him ‘pursued by a portion of the press, and by others’ as ‘unmanly and un-English’, it still acknowledged that Hudson had a case to answer. Its tub-thumping reminder that ‘the common law of England deems every man innocent until found guilty’[[313]](#footnote-313) was at odds with both public opinion and Hudson’s exemption from prosecution under common law as an M.P.; other papers did not make such provocative statements, but still made their feelings plain. The sense that Hudson’s narrative was at an end can be seen in fig. 2.12, a cartoon published in *Punch* in March 1849. Entitled ‘The Vanity of Greatness’, the image depicts Hudson as a waxwork about to placed in the ‘Chamber of Horrors’ exhibit in Madame Tussaud’s alongside famous criminals:

Text

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Fig. 2.12: ‘The Vanity of Greatness’.

Punch, 31 March 1849, p. 133.

URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8Cbh69>.

The fall of the Railway King resulted in Hudson being removed from his companies, and the developments which followed drew media attention throughout 1849. In lieu of any criminal or court proceedings, one of the many long, detailed analyses of the scandal was a letter published in the *Times* from a committee of one of Hudson’s own companies investigating allegations that Hudson had dealt in illegal trading of shares in the rival Great Northern Railway. It refers to Hudson very impersonally throughout, as though he were a witness in court and avoiding any association with him. The committeemen’s presentation of the evidence was damning, with the letter stating that ‘the impropriety of such a transaction… cannot be doubted’, while using carefully non-libellous terms such as ‘remissness’ to describe Hudson’s behaviour.[[314]](#footnote-314) Hudson had to return £30,000 following the inquiry, but as the year went on, further inquiries found Hudson liable for up to £750,000, and a settlement of £200,000 was reached.[[315]](#footnote-315) Throughout the year, Hudson was a figure of ridicule; in August, a cartoon appeared in *Punch* depicting him as a clown confronted by a shareholder [fig. 2.8], while in November, another *Punch* cartoon showed how Hudson’s downfall had become one of the stories of the year describing him as ‘The Great Railway Guy for 1849’ and depicting him as an effigy to be burnt on bonfire night:

A cartoon of a person on a cart

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Fig. 2.13: ‘Celebrated Comic Scene between the Fig. 2.14: ‘The Great Railway Guy for 1849’,

Railway Clown (Hudson) and the Indignant *Punch*, 10 November 1849, p. 187.

Shareholders’, *Punch*, 4 August 1849, p.50. <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85fb3X>.

URL:<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/ES700207384/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=466adcb8>.

Hudson was wholly deprived of his directorships of railways in 1849 as his companies’ boards voted him out, as well his as status as ‘the Railway King’, and he was obliged to pay settlements for debts rather than being taken to court. Because of his status as M.P. and the degree of protection under Parliamentary privilege, Hudson’s narrative was denied any climactic trial or imprisonment. Because Hudson had been heavily involved in Sunderland’s growth through his involvement in the Sunderland Dock Company, he was re-elected in 1852 and 1857 in spite of his reputation, although by this time the media narrative around railways – and indeed around financial crime – had moved on. When Hudson finally lost his seat at the 1859 general election he fled to France for several years rather than face debtors’ prison. When he returned in 1865 and was imprisoned following another election defeat at Whitby. His inability to pay his debts led to some of them being settled rather than paid in full, but he was pursued by the North Eastern Railway until his death in 1871.[[316]](#footnote-316)

In spite of never being convicted or standing trial, Hudson’s legacy would be to set the depiction of railway directors as venal and criminally-inclined in stone. News media reporting on railways in the years following Hudson’s downfall was most often in response to events involving railway travel, in particular the accidents discussed in Chapter 1 and the assaults and murders discussed in Chapter 3, rather than shifts in the financial market. The power of Hudson’s narrative, however, meant that all these events were viewed through the prism of perceived railway financial crime and the responsibility of directors. In fact, Hudson’s false accounting had far less influence over the criminal behaviours which most contributed to the 1845 Mania – or the wider economic crash of two years later – than was attached to him in news media both in 1849 and afterward.[[317]](#footnote-317) However, Hudson’s visibility and persona resulted in him and directors in general being blamed for practically everything that went wrong with railways, both before and after the Mania. Hudson became ‘a convenient Aunt Sally at whom the press could throw its abuse’.[[318]](#footnote-318) No other individual director or railwayman received nearly as much blame. This was recognised in a *Times* leader of August 1849, which stated:

Neither the other officials nor the shareholders must hope to escape censure under the cover of a personal onslaught upon Mr. Hudson. The system is to blame. It was a system without rule, without order, without even a definite morality. In 1845 respectable men did monstrous things, and were thought very clever. Thousands rejoiced in premiums which they believed to have been puffed up by mere trickery, collusion, and imposture.[[319]](#footnote-319)

While identifying Hudson, this draws readers’ attention to blame the railway system as a whole for the aftermath of the Mania. As Odlyzko suggests, the *Times* also indicates that it was the direct result of financial crime rather than of market inequality, inadequate legal provision, and broader economic and political volatility.[[320]](#footnote-320) In much the same way as often occurs with politicians today, it was rather that directors and committees of railway companies were blamed collectively as a category for the financial misery caused by the Mania, and the profession became suspect at best and maligned at worst. For decades after the mania, railway directors and railway investment continued to be described in terms that either related directly to criminality, or else were generally negative. Articles often conflated Hudson with other directors. Before attacking his actions, the *Newcastle Guardian* wrote in 1849 that ‘Mr. Hudson’s advocates were right when they pleaded the corrupt moral sentiments of associates and the depraved tone and spirit of some railway boards as some extenuation of his conduct.’[[321]](#footnote-321) A *Sunday Times* article of 1853 stated that ‘it is tolerably safe to assume that Mr. HUDSON, during the railway mania, did what was done by a goodly proportion of other railway directors’.[[322]](#footnote-322) The enduring media hostility to directors as a goup is best illustrated by Fig. 2.15, an 1852 *Punch* cartoon which called for railway directors to be tied to locomotives ‘to insure against railway accidents’:

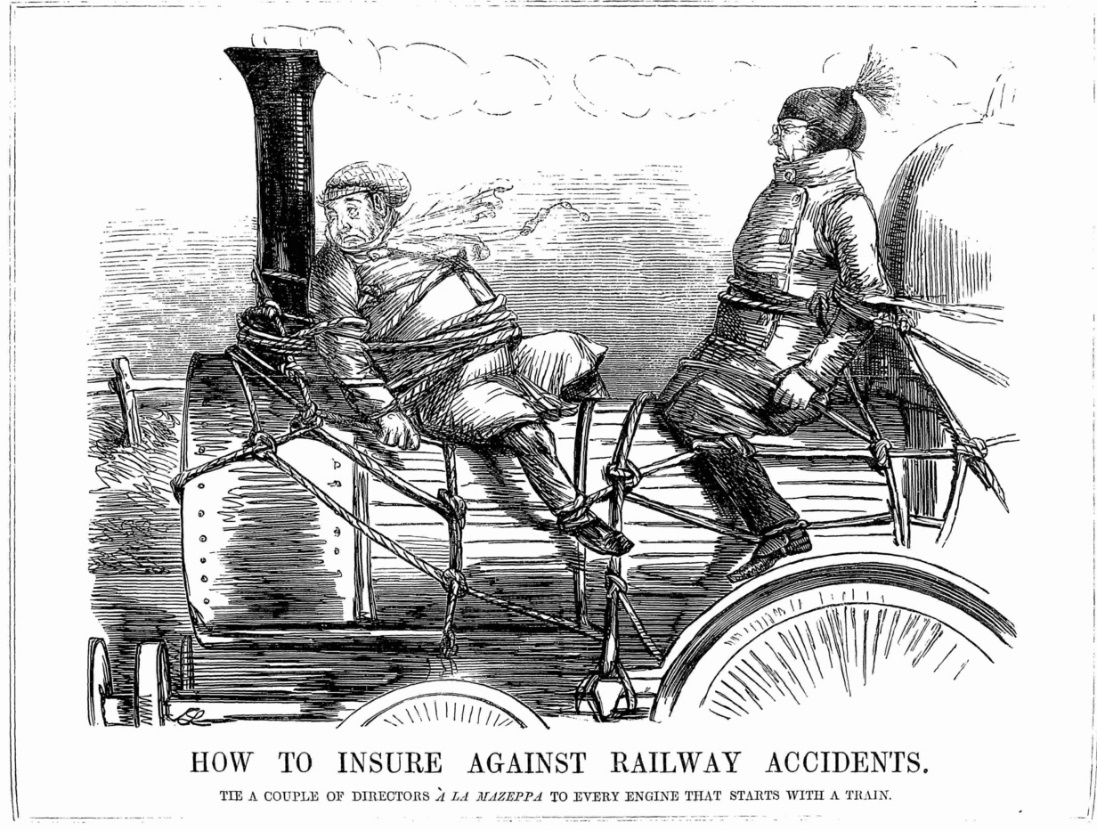


Fig. 2.15: ‘How to Insure against Railway Accidents’,

*Punch*, 26th March 1852. URL:

<http://link.gale.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/ES700211282/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=76aa768c>

Such images demonstrated how railway management remained on the minds of journalists and readers. Even when a case did not involve railway management directly, it generally became a forum for discussion of their perceived failings.

Aside from its narrative quality, representations of Hudson’s career were so impactful simply because it was reported for so long and so fully. His public activities and persona were more of a fixture in mid-century news media than any single crime committed in the period, railway-related or otherwise. The extent to which public opinion about railways and railway directors was bound up in Hudson’s reputation can be gauged from the fact that there were at the very least 500 articles about Hudson every year from 1844 until his death, and almost always far more, peaking at almost 2000 in 1849. News media became steadily more anti-Hudson from 1846 onwards; more damagingly, influential papers such as *The Times* and *Punch* became steadily more caustic in their output. The amount written about Hudson in regional titles reflects the nature of Hudson’s profile as a director of railways constructed outside London, as well as of the state of news media at and around mid-century, which was a particular highpoint for local titles. Of the 19 titles which published over 500 articles concerning Hudson, 14 were regional, many based in towns and cities where Hudson’s railways operated. Many of these papers, such as the *Leeds Mercury* and *Hull Packet*, were essentially cheerleaders for Hudson, even up to the point where many others had turned against him, while others such as the *Leicester Mercury* were bitterly opposed to Hudson from the beginning of his career, due to rivalry between towns and proprietors played out through railway development. That development continued into the 1850s, albeit without the same level of mass investment and without such fevered speculation. Nearly 600 new railway companies were able to secure Railway Acts between 1846 and 1850; the construction those acts enabled in the early 1850s led to the amount of railway mileage open to traffic increasing fivefold as a result, although overall profits remained negligible until well after this date.[[323]](#footnote-323) The negative publicity of news media reporting contributed to Hudson’s downfall, but whether it would have occurred without such coverage is ultimately unknowable. However, the wider impact of such reporting is somewhat easier to make out. Although the Mania for which Hudson was blamed did significant damage to railway development, and led to directors becoming hated figures, the railways weathered both it – and him – to the point that when the next crisis concerning railway financial crime arose, it did not threaten their existence.

## **Leopold Redpath, ‘The King’s Cross Fraudster’**

For decades after the mania, both railway officials and railway investment continued to be described in news media in terms related that either related directly to criminality, or were generally negative. Phrases printed in an edition of *Punch* in 1876 such as ‘Let Railway Shareholders adopt the adage… “a rolling stock gathers no moss”’,[[324]](#footnote-324) and suggestions of 1890 – however satirical – that ‘Chairmen [be] put in irons’ and ‘Directors sentenced to penal servitude’[[325]](#footnote-325) demonstrated how railway management and financial dealings remained on the minds of journalists and readers. Despite the increase in railway mileage, low profits well into the 1850s[[326]](#footnote-326) meant that directors and committees of railway companies continued to be blamed for the financial misery the Mania caused for shareholders. Even when a controversial incident did not involve railway management directly, as occurred around the crime assessed in this second case study, it generally became a forum for discussion of their failings.

After George Hudson’s downfall in 1849, the railway establishment entered the 1850s with confidence both in it and in its promoters and directors at an all-time low. Yet the single most well-known, widely-discussed railway financial crime of the 1850s came in the form of Leopold Redpath, who was not a director or a committeeman at all, but a clerk. Late in 1856, Redpath was discovered to have abused his position as registrar of the Great Northern Railway company to commit fraud. He was charged with ‘feloniously forging and uttering a certain deed of transfer of a certain share and interest in the capital stock of the Great Northern Railway Company… with intent to defraud’ – Redpath had in essence used his position to transfer stock to his own name before selling it via his stockbroker. Redpath fled to Paris when his crimes were discovered, but was arrested soon after returning to England. Redpath was convicted of deception and forgery in 1857 at the Old Bailey,[[327]](#footnote-327) with the total sum he defrauded the Great Northern estimated to be £250,000, a vast sum.[[328]](#footnote-328) His conviction and punishment of transportation did not provoke the same level of invective as had the (unpunished) crimes and perceived wrongdoings of company directors. One broadside ballad, published when Redpath was sentenced, imagines Redpath lamenting: ‘All the days of my life I ne’er injured the poor / I procured for the widow and orphan their bread’.[[329]](#footnote-329) This suggests that Redpath’s crimes were perceived as essentially victimless, as they had only injured the (widely-despised) railway company, and Redpath’s personal charitable work is highlighted as a counterpoint to it. Although they both committed railway financial crimes, the contrast between Redpath and Hudson is particularly striking. Hudson was a director who was never tried in a criminal court, but was attacked unrestrainedly in the press, and who was largely portrayed as a villain, while Redpath was tried, found guilty, and punished, and yet was viewed very much more ambiguously throughout his crime narrative. The following section assesses Redpath’s case, as well as events that had taken place since Hudson’s case which are likely to have influenced the character of its reception.

Leopold Redpath was viewed as a respectable – albeit not prominent – member of society in the years before his offences were discovered. He was elected a member of the Royal Institution, the prominent scientific society, in 1855,[[330]](#footnote-330) and had membership in several others. Despite Redpath’s comparatively low profile, there are almost 1,000 articles available through GALE about him in the final three months of 1856, when his crimes were discovered.[[331]](#footnote-331) The case was well-known enough for editorial and comment pieces to assume knowledge of its particulars on the part of the reader when they began to appear. Many focused on the sensational aspects of the case, such as the amount of money that had been defrauded, as well breathless bulletins describing ‘the flight of Redpath’ to Paris on being discovered.[[332]](#footnote-332) Others focused on the sensational aspect of a man previously thought respectable who proved to be a criminal. One article in the *Leader* wrote that ‘Redpath must have been carrying on his frauds for a considerable time, as his style of living for some years past has excited the attention of the tradesmen… in addition to an establishment of five or six domestic servants, he kept a coachman, a groom, a butler, and a footman’, as well as noting that … ‘he gave parties and dinners of the most expensive character, [and] it may be mentioned that it was his practice… every morning to have his hair dressed by a perruqier’,[[333]](#footnote-333) focusing on Redpath’s lifestyle as a cool swell as much as his crimes. One *Times* letter from several months after the case referred to it alongside other high-profile trials involving complex robberies and frauds perpetrated by individuals or small gangs. It wrote that ‘the trials of Robson, Redpath, and Agar have revealed’ how in each case their guilt was in part linked to ‘the singing, supper, and smoking rooms, at which young men congregate’. [[334]](#footnote-334) Edward Agar had been the leader of the gang of criminals who had perpetrated the complex and notorious ‘Great Gold Robbery’ of 1855, while William Robson had worked for the Great Northern alongside Redpath, and was subsequently convicted of defrauding the Crystal Palace Company of £30,000.[[335]](#footnote-335) While the letter itself reflected one individual’s opposition to Redpath, it also reflected that many of the notorious criminals of the period were, or were perceived, as committed by flash, fashionable young men attempting to ape a caricatured upper-class lifestyle, characteristics which were often played up in news media accounts as much as they were derided. Equally well-documented – and further muddying the waters – were Redpath’s patronage and membership of charitable institutions. The same article in the *Leader* mentioned that Redpath ‘fraudulently trafficked in the votes of some of the charitable institutions with which he was connected as governor’ by soliciting money for his vote on matters decided by their boards[[336]](#footnote-336), mentioning in particular his association with Christ’s Hospital. The article appeared just above another entitled ‘Another Fraud on the Great Northern Railway’, and describes the fraudulent activities of Thomas Snell, another GNR official, giving the likely impression that the country was suddenly awash with railway fraudsters. The *Morning Chronicle* referred to an ‘embezzlement mania’ and the *Times* pondered whether a potential investor was better placed ‘to tie up his earnings in a stocking and hide it in his bed’.[[337]](#footnote-337)

While Redpath’s case prompted widespread strength of feeling, it was not directed at Redpath personally in the same way as much of the invective which had been levelled at Hudson. The sense is that of discussions taking place *around* Redpath, rather than necessarily about him, making the primary villain of the piece the broken railway system rather than the crooked railway employee. This was in stark contrast to how railway directors and committeemen of the period were generally characterised, particularly those who were associated with crime or deviant financial activity. The fact that editorial and comment pieces assumed knowledge of its particulars on the part of the reader demonstrated that the case was extremely well-known. The predominant word used to describe events throughout news media of the day was ‘fraud’; the directness of news media in article titles referring to the case stems from the fact that Redpath actually stood trial on criminal charges; George Hudson and Samuel Morton Peto, who were directors rather than employees of railway companies, never did. It was those directors, in fact, who were often more attacked in media accounts and reports than Redpath himself. One editorial in the *Times* after Redpath’s trial criticised ‘the defects of the system by which [Redpath’s actions] were rendered profitable, [and] it has been observed… that the style of living maintained by Redpath was such as should have suggested some suspicion’[[338]](#footnote-338) on the part of the Great Northern’s board of directors. While Redpath’s ‘hypocritical assumption of moral worth’ was attacked, the article also detailed how he was ‘a courtly gentleman who dispensed his charities with munificent liberality’ and that he was ‘one of those men whom the world thought well of’; by contrast, it was asked: ‘what were the Great Northern directors about, while REDPATH was robbing them at this transcendent rate? We fear the answer must be, nothing at all’.[[339]](#footnote-339)

This article was one of a long-running series of articles, editorials, and letters in the *Times* in which the Great Northern was attacked for its culpability; through this output Redpath emerged as more of an amoral natural disaster than a villainous criminal. An editorial on January 19th 1857 argued that Redpath’s case was not evidence that moral standards had lapsed in recent decades, since ‘the difference… lies not so much in the intensity of crime as in the extent of its opportunities. Such great robberies as we now hear of did not occur in former days, because there was no such plunder to be obtained. There were then no joint-stock companies’, going on to say that:

No comrade of Jonathan Wild ever carried off £12,000 worth of gold, but that was not because thieves were more scrupulous, but because no such prize was to be had…. Robbers now have their firms, their capital, their division of labour, and their distribution of profits, like honest traders… already we have our detector locks and our fire-proof safes, and we should think that a machinery of corresponding excellence might be devised for the protection of property on the side from which Redpath attacked it.[[340]](#footnote-340)

The historical nature of the comparisons made in the passage indicate the importance which was attached to the case, an understanding of the extent and the character of how railway companies had changed the Victorian world and created opportunities for financial crime, and an incentive to broaden the criticism from Redpath to more general targets.

It took more specific allegations, however, to elicit a reaction from the Great Northern. One letter in March 1857 alleged that Edmund Denison, director of the Great Northern Railway, had mismanaged the company to such an extent that Redpath was able to stifle a prior investigation into him. The letter referred to ‘the complaints of Mr. Clark [against Denison], whom he dismissed at the very time he was about to render so great a service to the company’.[[341]](#footnote-341) The *Times* also printed letters from solicitors representing shareholders hostile to Denison, which attacked him for allegedly attempting to use the Redpath case to pass bills hostile to their interests through Parliament.[[342]](#footnote-342) However, the *Times* also published letters which defended the directors, one of which blamed the internal auditors of the Great Northern rather than the company’s directors. It stated that ‘in [August] 1854… the accountant called the circumstance of the discrepancy of the accounts to the notice of the auditors. Still the reply is “all serene”, and Redpath, if suspected, must be handled… “tenderly, as though they loved him”’.[[343]](#footnote-343) Redpath’s case, in short, was no longer about Redpath.

These changed dynamics can be understood in the context of developments in news media representations of financial crimes and scandals which took place between Hudson’s downfall in 1849 and Redpath’s trial in 1856. James Taylor identifies ‘a succession of banking failures which scandalised the nation in the mid-1850s’, leading banking and bankers to be perceived, alongside railway companies and railway directors, as being inherently connected with financial crime and scandal.[[344]](#footnote-344) These were the fall of Strahan, Paul & Bates, in June 1855, and the disgrace and suicide of the financier John Sadleir in 1856. Both cases involved risky speculation by individuals becoming overexposed by swings in the market. The *Times* editorial of January 19th 1857 mentioned Redpath’s case in conjunction with that of the banking fraud of Strahan, Paul and Bates, stating that ‘the interest attaching to [Redpath’s] case has naturally been very great, but it is comprised itself within a small compass, while the purely technical character of its details deprives it of those features which gave so impressive an effect to the trials [of Strahan, Paul and Bates]’.[[345]](#footnote-345) While the *Times* underestimated the degree of enduring interest in the case – there over 1,100 articles about Redpath in 1857 – the general tone reflected how its particulars did not fit with the narratives which dominated news media representations of financial crime in the 1850s, in particular the sense, which had continued from George Hudson’s downfall, that the general moral malaise stemmed from the criminal nature of the individuals who were in charge of financial institutions such as banks and railways. The tendency to blame railway management in general appears in Redpath’s case to have led to him being attacked far less personally in reporting, with the result being a far broader introspection of the effect of railway crime upon society than had been the case with Hudson. In part this reflected the far more stable economic and social background to Redpath’s offences and trial, but also reflected the papers’ focus on directors of railways as those that ought to be blamed for their ills.

In the immediate aftermath of the Redpath case, scrutiny was still very much on railway management. One letter, critiquing the state of fraud and the existing measures to prevent it, thundered that ‘the railway property of the kingdom now approaches to half the value of the national debt… [and as such needs] the exercise of as much vigilance and care, and regulations as sound, as those adopted for the safety of the public debt.’ It noted how banking frauds had come to be viewed in the same category as railway financial crime, stating that ‘the recent frauds have not, unhappily, been confined to railways; the same temptations to the easy commission of fraud will produce the same results under one name as another’. Finally, it attacked companies’ management structures, asking rhetorically: ‘What do [the auditors] do? Nothing until the end of the half-year, when all the money has been borrowed and spent, and the mischief done’.[[346]](#footnote-346) This letter reflects the overall evolution of perceptions of financial crime, in particular how banking-related scandals and offences had become grouped with railway financial crime in news media and the public consciousness. Although representations of railway financial crime had come before banking-related narratives, the effect the Mania had on them was to dilute the extent to which financial crime was seen as being inherently connected to the railways, with such representations instead becoming a smaller part of a larger picture around financial crime and deviancy.

The ambiguity in attitudes towards Redpath is also likely to have been aided by his case occurring at a time when particularly strong alternative crime narratives resulted in the emergence of other notorious public figures in Victorian news media. Since many of these were murder cases, they contrasted sharply with the bloodless nature of Redpath’s crimes. The murder by Marie Manning, a domestic servant, of her lover in 1849 became known as ‘the Bermondsey Horror’; Emmanuel Barthelemy, who had been a French revolutionary, spy, and winner of the last fatal duel in England, was hanged for murder in 1855; and William Palmer, a doctor labelled ‘The Prince of Poisoners’ was hanged in 1856, a few months before Redpath’s frauds were discovered.[[347]](#footnote-347) This was the news media environment for crime at the time of Redpath’s discovery and trial; while it could not depict him in the same way as violent criminals, the long-running nature of the case, together with the interest provided by railways and Redpath’s narrative, meant that it nonetheless had to be reported. While Redpath’s ‘hypocritical assumption of moral worth’ was attacked, the same article also detailed how he was ‘one of those men whom the world thought well of’. As was seen in the broadside ballad produced for his trial, which began ‘Alas I am convicted there’s no one to blam [*sic*]’[[348]](#footnote-348), he continued to be so even after his crimes came to light. Ultimately, Redpath’s depiction in news media serves best to highlight the difference between the perception of railway directors and their employees who committed frauds or embezzlement. His case contrasted with Hudson and Peto (discussed below), reflecting not only the difference in his status, but also, crucially, in the identities of the direct victims of his crimes. Hudson was seen to have directly defrauded the many investors of railway companies; Redpath, by contrast, made away with company money. While Redpath’s frauds will undoubtedly have affected shares in both the Great Northern and other railway companies, the fact that investors had made their decisions based on George Hudson – and not on Leopold Redpath – goes some way towards explaining how Redpath’s case was received, as does the fact that perceived directorial fraud had for years been decried in news media.

The *Leader*’s 1859 review of D. Morier Evans’ *Facts, Figures and Frauds*, which documented financial scandals of recent years, demonstrated the extent to which the stereotypical view of the railway director endured. The review stated that it was ‘no revelation to trot out the threadbare, well-used and perhaps ill-used figure of George Hudson, M.P.… There is no mystery about… the seemingly permanent membership of Parliament to which [Hudson’s activities] have given rise. There is no mystery about the disastrous chairmanship of the Eastern Counties Railway’, and although ‘mystery there may have been in Mr. George Hudson’s great influence with members of Parliament and others’[[349]](#footnote-349), Evans was unable to provide new information about it or Redpath’s case. The review demonstrates that not only was there continuing familiarity with Hudson and Redpath’s cases, but that the assumption of criminal activity on a massive scale in Hudson’s case was widely assumed, while Redpath’s was underplayed, and mirrors the attitudes towards directors in general.

## **Samuel Morton Peto – ‘The End of the Line’**

The railways underwent a further investment boom in the 1860s, although they did not attract anything like the same raw numbers of investors as the 1845 Mania. Whether the boom of the 1860s was a mania or not, the events that brought it to a close are the topic the chapter’s final case study, on Samuel Morton Peto. In his career as director of Peto and Betts, a civil construction firm, Sir Samuel Morton Peto had become an MP and an influential figure in both commerce and politics. His companies were involved in constructing many of the period’s foremost civil engineering projects, including the Houses of Parliament, the Reform Club, the London sewer system and the Grand Trunk Canadian railway, as well as widely-lauded work during the Crimean War. However, the wealth and respect Peto had accrued was destroyed in an instant following his involvement with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway during the Overend Gurney crisis. As was the case in the analysis of Hudson, this section is not primarily concerned with either the events of the Overend Gurney crisis, or the question of whether Peto was culpable for it. Rather, it concerns what his representation in news media during and after the crisis means for the overall dynamics of how railway financial crime was viewed in news media. Reports on Peto’s downfall reflect how the negative image of the railway establishment persisted in the 1850s and 1860s. Although the character of how they were depicted had changed and to a certain extent mellowed since the white heat of the 1845 Railway Mania and Hudson’s downfall in 1849, the wrongdoing of railway directors and promoters remained widely assumed. Peto’s case was also the first financial scandal which was genuinely a joint railway and banking crisis, and the fact that railway enterprise was viewed as equally responsible reflects how the industry was likely viewed as equally as suspect and criminal in nature as banking.

In the wake of the Redpath case, as well as the others which had preceded it, Palmerston’s Whig government passed the *Punishment of Frauds Act* *1857*.[[350]](#footnote-350) The law made it a misdemeanour for any director or manager to "fraudulently take or apply, for his own use, any of the money or other property" of the company for anything other than payment of a just debt, and with "intent to defraud" omit to record this in the company's books. It was later redrafted to prevent the misappropriation of company funds by company officials, which previously had legally been deemed debts. The law also criminalised the falsification of company books, eight years after Hudson’s falsification had come to light, and legislated against the publication of false statements.[[351]](#footnote-351) The mileage of British railways increased by almost half between 1860 and 1866, a phenomenon which prompted Adrian Vaughan to comment that, as with ‘the previous credit booms, sober observers of the financial world took a dim view of the "overtrading" … the fantastic borrowing for railways was, as usual, singled out for particular criticism’.[[352]](#footnote-352) Whether Vaughan is right to argue that the early-to-mid-1860s constituted an investment bubble comparable to the 1845 Mania, sentiment in the financial world had turned against railway construction as a potentially good investment. Allied to the existing popular image of railway management as likely to be criminal, this created an atmosphere in which railways were likely to be blamed for any economic predicament.

The storm broke in the form of the 1866 financial crisis. The crisis involved the investment bank Overend Gurney attempting to set itself up as a potential rival in issuing debentures to the Bank of England. When Overend Gurney collapsed, Peto’s London, Chatham and Dover Railway was the hardest-hit company. However, the amount of focus on Peto as a prominent railwayman in the aftermath of the collapse made both him and the railways appear to be far more directly involved the crisis than they were. Although the response to the crisis involved sharp criticism of railways and the negative characterisation of the railway establishment, Peto himself was treated much less harshly than Hudson had been in the 1840s. This was for several reasons. There was no potential social revolution in 1866, and there were not as many people – or newspaper readers – investing in railway companies, and the fact that the crisis only affected one company directly meant less of a sense of chaos, particularly given that the company survived. Lastly, there was considerable confusion over whether Peto was a director of the LCDR, or merely a contractor. However, Peto and other railway influencers were attacked in news media, in spite of their relative lack of culpability for the crisis, which was precipitated by Overend Gurney’s aggressive speculation, which led to them become unacceptably overextended in 1866. Normal procedure would have been for the Bank of England to lend Overend Gurney aid; however, this did not take place. Michie writes that since Overend Gurney ‘appeared to be a direct threat to the Bank of England… this rivalry explains the Bank of England's reluctance to provide [them] with emergency support in the crisis of 1866. Conversely, the collapse of Overend & Gurney in that year removed it as a threat.[[353]](#footnote-353) Peto’s LCDR were particularly badly hit by Overend Gurney’s collapse, since much of their capital was housed there; the company required a prolonged period of administration and was close to being abandoned altogether.

Yet the prominence of both Peto and of railways meant that he accrued the notoriety associated with the crisis. Jack Simmons writes that Peto – as a result of newspaper coverage of his business activities – ‘was in the public eye and the public perceived, rightly or wrongly, that it was he who had brought down Overend Gurney, which in turn had panicked the City.[[354]](#footnote-354) Many of Peto’s actions as director of the LCDR were viewed as unethical, and some were in fact illegal. Peto had funded a LCDR debt of £1.25 million in 1863, which enabled the company to issue more stock, which Peto then in turn bought himself, at a heavy discount. Furthermore, the company stated on its official certification for the stock that the majority of it had been subscribed for, allowing the company to raise cash against debentures, an illegal manoeuvre.[[355]](#footnote-355) In 1865, when rumblings about the financial situation began to be published, there were well over twice the number of total articles about Peto than there had been in 1864 (936 as opposed to 367). Even though the scandal peaked in the middle months of 1866 and reports became far less numerous, there were still nearly double the amount of articles concerning Peto in that year than before the crisis came to a head (645).[[356]](#footnote-356) Many of these reports and articles – as well as those produced during the trial of Overend and Gurney in 1868 – condemned Peto, particularly after the crisis became public knowledge. One conflated Peto with Overend and Gurney itself, writing that ‘the depression of trade [is] much owing to the Overend and Gurney and Peto sorts of manipulations in money matters, which have wounded public confidence terribly’,[[357]](#footnote-357) while another suggested that the complexity of the accounts Peto provided during his bankruptcy hearings was because ‘creditors are more easily bamboozled and seduced into compromises because they can form just no notion of how estates will turn out’.[[358]](#footnote-358) Some queried what his example might lead to. The *Sunday Times*’ premier columnist, William Howard Russell, is likely to have known Peto in the Crimean War, when Russell was a reporter and Peto’s company was contracted to construct a railway for military use, in part as a response to Russell’s expose on cholera outbreaks. Stressing the extent of the crisis and Peto’s role in it, Russell wrote in his 13th May 1866 column that ‘the Panic which prevailed in the City on Friday appears to have exceeded in magnitude anything remembered by the oldest *habitues* of the Stock Exchange’, and identified ‘the most important of the temporary suspensions [as] that of Messrs. Peto and Betts’, the name of Peto’s construction company, which was in turn affected by the failure of Peto’s complicated financing schemes for his overextended, debt-ridden railway companies.[[359]](#footnote-359) An editorial in the *Economist* wrote ‘The inference as to the late Act of Parliament is very plain. If such things can be done by Sir Morton Peto, what will not others do? What may not happen, in petty railways, where the directors are needy… who can *now*, in such a case, place reliance on the signature of a secretary and the endorsement of a director?’,[[360]](#footnote-360) demonstrating both Peto’s prominence and the sense that all railway directors were concerned with money and profits more than they were lawful behaviour.

However, although Peto was always named in articles concerning the crisis, the extent to which he was actually shamed – beyond the stigma caused by the mere fact of being identified in news media as a bankrupt – is much less clear-cut. In the same *Economist* editorial, its author regretted that ‘the directors [of Overend Gurney] shifted the blame…on Sir Morton Peto… we much regret to find his name involved in such proceedings’, concluding that ‘we cannot allow the directors to shift the whole censure to any agent’, but that ultimately Peto and the other directors had shown that ‘they cannot be trusted in a day of difficulty under the present law’.[[361]](#footnote-361) The sense that Peto was not wholly culpable was common, with blame also being attached to the railway directorial boards as a whole as well as Peto. *The Watchman* wrote that‘The London, Chatham and Dover had great need of a scapegoat, and finding one at hand in [Peto and engineer Thomas Crampton], they profited by the opportunity’, and ‘we believe…that [Peto and Crampton] did not injure the railway, but that the railway ruined them’,[[362]](#footnote-362) distinguishing between Peto’s personal prominence as a figurehead and the culpability of railway management in general and the LCDR in particular. Peto’s personal reception in news media was as a result more mixed than Hudson’s, and the character of the response to him as an individual markedly different from responses to Redpath. The *Telegraph* reported a supportive vote of thanks to Peto by his constituents in Bristol when he visited during the crisis.[[363]](#footnote-363) However, *Punch* railed against how ‘Peto, Crampton and Betts in the Bankruptcy Court means reckless financing, contractors’ lies, gulled shareholders, and general disgust with railway investments’, stating that ‘the bad character of England is demonstrated by, among others, the rascality which goes unpunished in our retail trade, and expands into colossal proportions in our larger enterprise, our worship of successful humbug’.[[364]](#footnote-364) As such, nuances did not prevent some elements of news media from expressing the general sense of distrust and blame of railway management. The *Economist* wrote that ‘the relations between the company and its contractors are become such as years of litigation will hardly unravel’, and sympathised with Peto without excusing him, stating:

The name of Sir Morton Peto has long stood very high for integrity. Perhaps he did not himself know, at least not in full and exactly how his name was being used, though he was bound to know. But the result is the same. By virtue of Peto’s name, the public have been robbed.[[365]](#footnote-365)

The article reflects how news media were more balanced in their reporting than in previous railway-related crises; given that this was a much smaller bubble than the 1845 Mania, and that it was not a new phenomenon, this could perhaps be expected. However, newspapers and periodicals still aired generally negative opinions about railway management and capital when reporting on the case, shifting attention away from any particular focus on Overend and Gurney. Much of the sympathy for Peto was based upon his personal character. The ‘embarrassment of Sir Morton Peto’s house’ was discussed in a *Daily News* article – titled ‘The Effects of the Financial Panic in the Provinces’ – in terms of how ‘Sir Morton Peto has established many personal friendships here, whereby the sympathy felt with him is greatly intensified’.[[366]](#footnote-366) The sympathy for Peto individually and the hostility to railway management in general contrasts with the example of how George Hudson was treated in news media. However, the collapse of Overend Gurney and the LCDR was viewed as much less of a wholesale disaster than the 1845 Mania. Combined with the far lower numbers of individual investors in railways in the 1860s than the 1840s, this meant that news media were more able to treat Peto and railway management as distinct from each other. Equally, although articles and reports may have shown sympathy for Peto, the social stigma attached to being a bankrupt would have been viewed as punishment in and of itself.

However, this sympathy for Peto’s character quickly faded from view as time passed, leaving only a sense that suspicion of railway management had been vindicated. Writing several years later, Charles Dickens described the events of 1862-6 as "a muddle of railways, in all directions possible, and impossible, with no general, public scheme, no general public supervision, enormous waste of money, no fixable responsibility’.[[367]](#footnote-367) When Peto was referenced in the coming months and years, mentions of him were more negative. For example, when Peto and other board members faced bankruptcy hearings in 1868, *Lloyds’ Illustrated Newspaper* pulled no punches in pejorativelyreferring to Peto and his colleagues as ‘these bankrupts, [who] were the well-known leviathan railway contractors’.[[368]](#footnote-368) The example of Samuel Morton Peto illustrates how the image of railway management in news media had become a fixed trope. While personal support for Peto muddies the issue, the fact that his management of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway was fixed upon as the reason for the Overend Gurney crisis indicates how railway management was still perceived as both newsworthy and suspect. While the public familiarity with the image of Sir Samuel Morton Peto – eminent Victorian and builder of great buildings – helped to shield him from the incandescent anger which accompanied George Hudson’s career and downfall, the public familiarity with the image of railway enterprise and management ensured that Peto would never recover his position, attempting to canvas for railways in Europe with limited success, before dying penniless in 1889. The perception of the ‘railway director’ in general had overpowered the perception of a railway director as an individual.

## **Conclusion**

As shown by the reaction to the collapse of Peto’s companies following the Overend Gurney crisis, cases involving railway financial crime – and cases that were perceived to involve it – retained the power both to shock and to command media attention well after the outrage that had followed the Railway Mania twenty-five years earlier, albeit to a lesser extent. That power was directly connected to the continuing depiction of the railway director as willing to act unethically and potentially criminally, which had become more and more toxic over time. The diminishing number of reports about railway-related financial crime in the 1860s should not necessarily be taken as an indication that any appetite for such stories had abated, but rather be viewed in the context of the general – and natural – decrease in railway investment. The boom in construction which took place in the 1860s was the last evidence of this, and it was during this investment bubble that the last instance of newsworthy railway financial deviant behaviour occurred in the nineteenth century. Throughout this narrative we have seen how investment in railways provoked changes in conceptions of financial crime, as well as conceptions of the railways themselves. Against a backdrop of growing public familiarity with railway investment and management, the fear of the physical aspects of the railways assessed in Chapter One was replaced first by a rush to invest in the exciting new railways, still only slightly familiar; then, bitten by experience, the familiarity with railway finance led to the characterisation of railway directors as villains, while also codifying the ways in which financial crime would be conceived and represented more broadly.

The foundation of the mistrust surrounding railway management was the Railway Mania of 1845. The complex nature of events magnified the differences between railway financial crime in reality and railway financial crime as represented in news media. The wholesale attribution of blame to directors for the Mania and its consequences led to representations of the railway director as criminal in intent, which originated as a news media trope, founded upon a simple narrative of betrayal and greed. When George Hudson was ousted from his companies, the anger with which he was represented had more to do with the anger over the collapse which followed the 1845 Mania which had subsequently found a target in Hudson, rather than Hudson’s individual crimes as a director. Leopold Redpath’s conviction provided a counterpoint to the narrative framing the director as villain, while at the same time confirming it; the focus on directorial mismanagement in the Great Northern in the aftermath of the case indicates that he was the exception that proved the rule. Lastly, Samuel Morton Peto’s involvement with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway during the 1866 Overend Gurney crisis may have provoked more sympathy than had been the case for Hudson in the 1840s. Opinion remained double-edged, however, and the fact that the volume of news media reporting outweighed Peto and the LCDR’s actual influence on events indicates how railway management continued to be seen as a primary cause of economic disruption, most often through individual acts of crime or financial deviancy.

The relative lack of new railway building and new railway investment may have diminished the visibility of railway financial crime after 1860. This did not, however, lead to any degree of quietude concerning the railways and crime in news media; if anything, accounts linking the two grew more numerous and more intense during the 1860s and 1870s. Victorian England had grown used to railway construction, railway investment, and crime associated with them. Its opinions about what ‘the railways’ constituted changed in accordance with acts of crime relating to both areas. The last aspect of this normalisation process around railways would involve passenger travel itself, and the intense scrutiny on whether railway carriages were safe spaces, for which directors would also be held responsible.

# **Chapter III**

# **‘Atrocities which terrify whole millions of people’[[369]](#footnote-369) – Violent Railway Crime**

This chapter engages with the representation of violent railway crime between 1830 and 1900, primarily through reports of railway murders, sexual offences, and violent assaults in contemporary news media. These crimes, already highly newsworthy, took place in surroundings often new and unfamiliar both to the individual passenger and to wider society, and this unknown helped drive demand for narratives of these offences. Railway sexual offences and murders corresponded to the ‘news values’ identified by Rowbotham, Stevenson and Pegg as drivers of newspaper sales in a time of rapid expansion across the industry.[[370]](#footnote-370) Media and public engagement with violent railway crime both led to and reflected official responses and debates. Offences were debated in parliament and the wider government, as were the more general deficiencies of railway travel identified in accounts of such offences. In effect, violent railway crimes, and reports of them, were the nexus of debates about personal safety and criminal activity relating to the railways in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, as well as a reflection of discomfort with the new world created by the railways.

Reports of violent railway crime and reactions to them followed distinct patterns. In the first decades of railway expansion and construction, there were comparatively very few reports of such offences in news media. However, coverage increased substantially from the late 1850s onwards, and at its peak these crimes were a hugely influential ‘crime theme’[[371]](#footnote-371) in the press, before declining from the late 1870s onwards. This pattern was a result of ongoing changes to both railways and news media, as well as broader shifts in the society and culture in which they operated. The chart below demonstrates the changes in news media reporting of railway sexual offences in the period:

Fig. 3.1 – Total number of GALE Primary Sources documents on individual railway sexual offences, 1838-1900. Note that while the figures in Chapters I and II are line graphs, in this Chapter bar charts are more common, as it deals with lower numbers of offences and articles, although proportions of overall coverage are still considered. These and other issues around visualisation of data are discussed in more detail in the chapter’s methodology below.

The pattern above shows the increased volume of reporting in the early 1860s and the late 1870s, followed by a substantial decrease (the years 1838-55 are treated as one period due to the low numbers of articles). The brief increase in the early 1890s stems from a case brought by a male goods clerk against Charles Allan Fyffe, the Liberal candidate MP for Devizes.[[372]](#footnote-372) Fyffe died following a suicide attempt made soon after the case was thrown out of court, but despite the case’s alignment with contemporary news values, the changing nature of crime coverage, coupled with the male-on-male nature of the offence – likely to have curtailed wider coverage – led to a much smaller number of articles on the case than the more prominent offences in the 1860s and 1870s. While the above chart shows reporting for sexual offences, evidence suggests that levels of such reporting were heavily affected by reporting of railway murders. The four most-heavily reported cases in this period – the Muller murder of 1864; the Henry Nash indecent assault of the same year; the Colonel Baker indecent assault of 1875; and the ‘Lefroy’ murder of 1881 – are therefore analysed in detail in this chapter. The first three provoked moral panic, while the fourth came close, but did not.

This overall pattern of reporting reflects the progression of the railways towards becoming a ‘technology in use’.[[373]](#footnote-373) While conditions in news media, technology and print culture all created an environment more conducive to increased reporting of violent railway crime from the 1860s to the 1880s, the actual incentive to consume these reports reflected the level to which the nineteenth-century public were engaged with debates over the new technology and the institutions that came to define it. Because they resulted in important legislative changes, crimes such as ‘garotting’, and responses to such offences, have had a great deal of critical attention from historians.[[374]](#footnote-374) The insatiable contemporary interest in narratives of violent railway crime requires that they be treated likewise, and assessed for their impact on the wider history of crime and perceptions of crime.

The following analysis focuses on how reporting of violent railway crime emerged and the influence of the railways upon that process, while also aiming to improve our understanding of how Victorian news media and their audiences reacted to crime. Our knowledge of individual acts of historical crime is by necessity uncertain. However, while second-, third-, or fourth-hand information distances the historian from the original offence, the multi-layered nature of accounts aids assessment of the news media that reported on them. This is aided by the sheer quantity of reporting, of both railway crime and crime in general. Richard Ward identifies ‘the sheer ubiquity of crime in eighteenth-century print culture’;[[375]](#footnote-375) that ubiquity, if possible, only grew during the century that followed. Both among the reading public and among lawyers, journalists and politicians, the reaction provoked by the media focus on violent railway crime was profoundly influential. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the railways were perceived both as reflecting and defining contemporary Britain, making doubt and debate about the safety of rail travel fundamentally important to the development of nineteenth-century society.

It is impossible to approach violent railway crime – whether murder, sexual offences, or assault – without an awareness of how historians have approached the topic, or, as is more often the case, one of the aspects of it assessed in histories of sexual assault, railways, law, news media, and technology. Violent railway crime informs sociological theories, crime history and gender history. While a root-and-branch analysis of how it relates to all these subjects would be impossible here, works that relate specifically to violent railway crime in the period are assessed below.

## **Histories of Sexual Offences**

This study differs from most histories of sexual offences against women in several ways.[[376]](#footnote-376) Studies of nineteenth-century sexual offences, such as those by Kim Stevenson and Judith Rowbotham, often focus on rape, arguing that many of the offences charged as lesser crimes, such as indecent assault, actually constituted rape.[[377]](#footnote-377) They assert that the gender biases in nineteenth-century law and news media meant that charges and verdicts seldom reflected reality,[[378]](#footnote-378) and that the difficulties faced by women complainants were integral to nineteenth-century gender inequality,[[379]](#footnote-379) while they aim to restore the prominence of female victims of sexual offences by uncovering prejudices in the judiciary and in government. But in the case of railway crimes, the more abstract social threat of the liminality of the carriage space was prioritised in court and in news media reporting, rather than the explicit threat to individual women’s safety. While Rowbotham and Stevenson do not discuss the carriage space in detail, there is a wider parallel here in that the harm to the female victim is underplayed. However, many of these studies discuss the charges brought in sexual offence cases – as well as changes in how the law defined them – on a offence by individual offence basis. Such an approach would not be at all feasible in the context of the large-scale analysis undertaken in this chapter; moreover, it would not be directly relevant. The degree to which news media reported on railway-related sexual offences corresponded only very roughly to the severity of the charge. Since it is responses to sexual offences, rather than the offences themselves, that are the subject of this chapter, debates concerning deficiencies in the law are not the primary focus. This chapter will assess sexual offences whose charges varied widely in their severity, but it will not assess the accuracy of those charges.

The second issue found in histories of sexual offences concerns their treatment of historical news media. Many studies are happy to use news media sources in their analysis, yet do not consider the nature of those same news media in their arguments, which instead are usually grounded in overly legalist and sociological debates.[[380]](#footnote-380) This often results in news media being conflated into ‘the media’, implying that ‘it’ was homogenous and easy to exploit. Historical news media seldom functioned as a printed megaphone. Newspapers and periodicals were complex and pluralistic in their motives for publication, with many individuals and groups determining the nature of their output at any given time, with writers, editors, printers and readers all capable of generating opinion rather than being a vehicle for the opinion of others. In histories of sexual assault and murder, this oversight comes despite the growing consensus that histories of crime have overprivileged legal sources,[[381]](#footnote-381) and that news media sources may constitute ‘best evidence’.[[382]](#footnote-382) Moreover, while the case-by-case approach used in histories of sexual crime often succeeds in highlighting the plight of the individual female complainant faced with an unjust legal process, it is not a good model for assessing railway sexual offences in the press, particularly if, as is the case in this chapter, the offences are examined together as a whole. By necessity, this chapter cannot assess all cases to such a level of detail, let alone attempt to assess the truth of each of them. Rather, it seeks to inform our understanding of the nuances of nineteenth-century news media –in doing so, it shows how limited an understanding of the actual nature of historical sexual offences can be achieved. However, it also shows that the understanding that it is possible to achieve – an understanding of historical news media themselves – is in fact more valuable.

## **Histories of Murder and Violent Crime**

While considerably fewer in number than railway-related sexual offences, railway murders – as might be expected – provoked far greater press, public, and official attention than sexual offences over the period. All these cases, as well as the media interest around them, have been analysed in modern research; however, no analysis has been comprehensive. All previous work that encompasses railway-related murder cases in the period is descriptive rather than analytical, confined to detailed accounts of the generally sensational narratives involved, without drawing wider conclusions.[[383]](#footnote-383) By contrast, academic works engaging with murder seldom make points about railway travel. Railway cases are instead most often used to illustrate arguments concerning other areas of interest. These works still provide valuable insight, however, both in their analysis of individual cases and in their approach to murder and violent crime as a wider phenomenon. Ros Crone’s *Violent Victorians* approaches the shifting consumption of crime news to question the widely-discussed idea of a ‘civilising process’ in Victorian society.[[384]](#footnote-384) Crone’s work involves detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of the kind attempted here. She asserts that the narratives of violent crime were ‘too random to create specific panics or to fan fears of specialised crimes among readers’, and that reporting was ‘too contradictory to suggest set patterns of criminal behaviour’.[[385]](#footnote-385) However, while this argument may be applicable more generally, it is less so for violent railway crime narratives. The theme of carriage travel was a narratively unifying factor in media reports, resulting in little of the haziness around policing tactics which Crone identifies as having splintered media reaction to other crime themes. Furthermore, the most heavily-reported railway offences of the period were generally in the press for long periods, allowing for new narrative aspects to develop while maintaining the possibility for moral panic.

When examining arguments rather than approaches, however, perhaps the most useful works for this thesis are those which examine male violence, and particularly male violence against women. Louise Jackson’s *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (2013), although focused on offences against children, which make up a small minority of the cases assessed here, identifies many of the traits in the treatment of women in the justice system that are common to accounts of violent railway crime, particularly around constructions of respectability determining outcomes of cases. Jackson notes that ‘a woman’s character, unlike a man’s, was judged in relation to her sexual reputation. Girls and women could ‘fall’, but boys could not, according to the Victorian sexual schema’.[[386]](#footnote-386) Her contention that the relative class and reputation of [complainant and defendant], interpreted with regard to age and gender, ‘were significant factors that influenced the decisions of magistrates, judges and juries’[[387]](#footnote-387) is strongly corroborated by this chapter with respect to how cases were reported in the press. The same is true for her assertion that representations of high-profile trials of sexual offences drove pressure for legislative reform, which was seen after the 1875 trial of Colonel Valentine Baker. Martin J. Wiener’s *Men of Blood: Violence Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (2010) identifies ongoing changes in constructions of masculinity and femininity as key to changes in responses to violence, with more pressure being put on men over time to show their dignity, and on women to prove they were examples of ‘true womanhood’ worthy of care and protection, [[388]](#footnote-388) which are again strongly confirmed in railway cases. Finally, John Carter Wood’s *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement* (2015) identifies how ‘production and construction of violence were mutually influencing and located within a particular set of spatial contexts relating to “built” space, “imagined” space, and the ways that knowledge about violence was formed’,[[389]](#footnote-389) which relates squarely to the carriage space, which was at various times in the period unknown, novel, dangerous, and finally familiar to nineteenth-century reading publics. However, growth in the levels of intolerance towards male violence over the 19th century – which led to increased focus on efforts to curtail it, particularly in law – is only dealt with cursorily by Wood, in the increased prosecution of sexual offences by Jackson, and more thoroughly by Wiener.[[390]](#footnote-390) However, all of these factors would have increased interest in railway violence, but while these three works provide strong insights into wider treatment of violence, they do not mention railways directly, and also, more significantly, do not make any sustained use of news media in their analysis.

Works that focus specifically on the relationships between news media, murder and reading publics often gravitate towards the case of Jack the Ripper. While these works have made strides in the analysis of newspaper content, the dominance of ‘Ripper’ narratives, like a lead weight on a sheet, has meant that while studies of individual murder cases make good and frequent analysis of news media, their analysis is often grounded against the geographical location or locale of a crime and its perceived class status, such as Whitechapel’s Commercial Road, rather than a particular category of space such as railway carriages.[[391]](#footnote-391) While this study does examine the differences between different carriage classes when it came to reporting violent railway crime, railway offences are nevertheless not particularly well-suited to approaches which examine how nineteenth-century reporting labelled certain specific streets and areas as inherently dangerous and criminal spaces; as discussed above, there was a widespread presumption that passengers ought to be safe in railway carriages throughout the period. Other works that are not centred around the Whitechapel murders, such as Judith Flanders’ *The Invention of Murder*, seldom mention railway crime,[[392]](#footnote-392) in spite of the immense interest in railway murders and sexual offences. This chapter aims to redress that balance.

## **Histories of Sensation**

The impact of high-profile murders extended far beyond crime reporting in the nineteenth century. Fictional depictions of crime and deviancy – particularly the popular ‘sensation’ fiction of the period, whose appeal relied on them heavily – appeared ‘as if from nowhere in the early 1860s… to contemporary reviewers the sensation novel seemed set to take over the novel genre itself’.[[393]](#footnote-393) While elaborately-plotted, highly dramatic works were popular well before this point, the works which emerged around and after 1860 innovated on established formulas, replacing older Gothic settings with contemporary plotlines, which often placed the train and the railway front and centre.[[394]](#footnote-394) Historians and literary scholars have analysed the links between railways and ‘sensation’ literature and theatre in detail, noting that ‘due in part to a series of notorious railway accidents and sex scandals’, works such as Wilkie Collins’ *Armadale* (1866) and Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* (1861) ‘frequently turned to the culture shock of the railway disaster or the unsettling proximity of male and female bodies involved in railway sex scandals’.[[395]](#footnote-395) In the 1868 play *After Dark*, the climactic ‘sensation scene’, upon which a sensation play’s merits wholly rested, depicted a character being rescued from an oncoming underground train,[[396]](#footnote-396) a replica of which chugged its way across the stage. However, despite the high impact of railways in sensation literature and drama when they appear, scholars have also noted that Victorian literature did not engage directly with the railways to the extent that their importance to society perhaps demanded. The lack of direct engagement with railway travel as a theme is reflected by the fact that Dickens’ *Dombey and Son* is widely considered to be the foremost ‘railway’ novel of the period, despite railways only appearing in any detail for eight pages.[[397]](#footnote-397) However, the fact that railways were not always integral to the plots of sensation fiction does not preclude railway influence upon it. Indeed, railway travel was often instrumental to these works, rather than integral to its plots; instead of being part of the narrative itself, railway travel became part of the structure of these works, with events governed by railway timetables and denouements occurring only once characters had been delivered by railway carriage to where they needed to be.

The form in which sensation fiction was published also invites comparison between it and narratives of railway crime. Some critics referred to the new form as ‘the Newspaper novel’,[[398]](#footnote-398) with works often, like a reports of a court case, taking the form of several distinct narrative voices presenting the plot as if to a jury, as was the case in *The Woman in White* (1861). While news media ‘often liked to critique sensation novelists, by the 1860s the narrative style of many papers echoed the best sensation thrillers.’[[399]](#footnote-399) Given Judith Walkowitz’s assertion that ‘melodramatic plots overwhelmingly reinforced the sense of destiny out of control’,[[400]](#footnote-400) the fact that both crime reporting and the railways had strong links to sensation literature suggests that the genre had a strong influence on how violent railway crimes were reported.

There are, however, several aspects of the relationship between Victorian railway crime and sensation culture that have not been properly explored or defined. Ian Carter’s *Railways and Culture in Britain* attempts to address the gap in scholarly assessment of cultural responses to railways, but it undertakes little analysis of works between the era of financial scandal and 1900, the period in which violent railway crime was most written about.[[401]](#footnote-401) The work shows the general lack of reflection of historians on the individual experience of railway travel when compared to the economic and social significance of railway construction and financial operation. This is illustrated by the fact that, while the relationship between the railways and madness has attracted attention, no work links the popularity of the threat of the asylum and the madhouse in sensation fiction with the enforced confinement of the railway carriage. Such an analysis lies outside this chapter’s purview, but the growing normality of railway travel would allow for readers to be more readily able to identify with sensational narratives of confinement.

One last issue with critical approaches to the railways’ relationship with sensation fiction is that many such approaches often do not mention even the most sensational real cases that are related to the topic. Moreover, when works do engage with railway crime, analysis is at best patchy and at worst demonstrably false, as in Michael Diamond’s *Victorian Sensation!*. While its overview of the sensational events and literature of the period is comprehensive, Diamond only refers to the moral panic caused by the 1875 Baker case in any detail, only mentioning the Muller murder very briefly, and the Nash, Lefroy and Camp cases not at all. Diamond writes that ‘the indignation at Baker's behaviour was all the greater [than in Muller’s case] because he had been travelling first class’.[[402]](#footnote-402) But Muller’s case also occurred in first class, and Diamond’s suggestion that he had ‘obtruded’ there is not present in accounts of the time, and it also accrued over five times as much attention in news media. Another instance of inaccuracy relates to a case that Diamond contrasts it with, the 1861 case of John Moriarty.Diamond compares the lack of engagement with the case with the deluge of reports of Baker’s assault in first class by stating that because Moriarty had “assaulted a Miss Miller in a third class carriage… the case was hardly noticed".[[403]](#footnote-403) Moriarty’s offence in fact took place in a first-class carriage, and attracted more media interest than the single *Telegraph* article Diamond references.[[404]](#footnote-404) The example illustrates the need to approach all railway crimes of the period with the same eye for detail as larger offences, something which is not often attempted or achieved when the railway is not in itself the primary subject of analysis.

## **Histories of Moral Panic**

The last field of research relevant to this chapter is that of moral panic; it is referred to here because the level of reaction to the two most newsworthy railway sexual crimes of the period was so pronounced that each constituted a separate moral panic. Moral panic as a concept originated with Stanley Cohen’s 1972 work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*,[[405]](#footnote-405) and the subject has been passionately debated ever since. Despite the limitations of the concept, the term is particularly useful for understanding reporting of violent railway crime as a phenomenon, as there are clear instances where reporting led to high levels of debate and discussion in news media, including recommendations for legal change, opinions that such offences stemmed from a contemporary lack of morals, and increased levels reporting of subsequent offences; all of these are characteristic of other moral panics as defined in theory. However, theories of moral panic are often so prescriptive about the conditions required to classify an event as ‘a moral panic’ that they end up hindering analysis. This is largely a result of the consensus that the term ‘moral panic’ has – both inside and outside academia – become overused to such an extent that many have felt the need to try and control its use.[[406]](#footnote-406) However, scholars of moral panic often define various stages of it as necessary or unnecessary according to their political beliefs; works by sociologists are the most prominent examples of this. Some define moral panic from an overly dogmatic Marxist viewpoint, simplifying the inherent complexity of nineteenth-century news media, denying its ability to influence opinion beyond being a mouthpiece for their owners. However, writers who have condemned this school of moral panic analysis are rarely able to suggest credible alternatives.[[407]](#footnote-407)

Notwithstanding arguments on categorisation, works on moral panic have still established many important themes and approaches to the subject. This is particularly true when historians have approached the topic, in part because they derive theoretical models from data rather than vice versa. Jennifer Davis and Rob Sindall’s work on the ‘garrotting panics’ of 1858 and 1862 assesses how press coverage of violent crime rose in these years, how it was treated it as a single, related phenomenon, and how reporting had direct and ineffective influence on policy enacted by Parliament.[[408]](#footnote-408) Subsequent research by Peter King assesses four historical moral panics to identify the role of the media in moral panics, while simultaneously promoting a general system of classification and analysis. King defines violent street crime as something which ‘very easily raises great anxiety among almost all sections of the population’[[409]](#footnote-409) and as something that ‘almost everyone feels vulnerable to’; both these traits are applicable to the crimes discussed in this chapter. As with this thesis, King’s study cannot take every potential factor thought to characterise moral panics into account: he makes no firm commitments about whether concerted action from groups to gain wider influence, or ‘moral entrepreneurship’, was necessary to create the conditions for a moral panic,[[410]](#footnote-410) nor does he go into as much detail into the historical background of the moral panics he discusses, focusing more squarely on reporting trends rather than the events reported upon than is the case here. Nonetheless, it is King’s approach which I shall attempt to emulate in this chapter, which identifies two moral panics centred on railway crime in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Historians have raised the idea of specifically railway-related moral panics in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Amy Milne-Smith’s article ‘Shattered Minds’ grounds the sense of panic around railway travel in the period against fears over madness, particularly male madness. This, however, is a misdiagnosis. From contemporary titles of newspaper articles such as ‘A Madman in a Railway Carriage’, Milne-Smith extrapolates that media response to sensational railway crime, and the subsequent moral panics that followed, were primarily based upon fears that connected railways with insanity.[[411]](#footnote-411) While there are examples of such cases, they received nothing like as much attention as those cases that did not imply madness in any way. Milne-Smith’s article does not consider whether the use of 'madman' specifically connotes insanity in railway crime reports, or else is used as a more generic pejorative concerning deviant and criminal behaviour. Milne-Smith also states that fears about railway travel and crime often took the form of people being afraid of becoming criminals as well as being the victims of crime;[[412]](#footnote-412) however, others have placed the conflation of these two fears at much earlier dates.[[413]](#footnote-413) While there was concern in the period over the railways’ effect upon health, these fears were not visible in articles and letters about violent railway crime printed in news media, which were far more concerned with unknown assailants, technologically-focused safety concerns, and wider social anxieties associated with the unpredictable nature of railway travel. Furthermore, statistical analysis of that data indicates that it was the ‘railway’ nature of violent crimes that provoked outbreaks of moral panic in the 1860s and 1870s, rather than connections between those crimes and madness.

In conclusion, existing histories which focus on moral panic are useful in foregrounding the importance of news media reporting to wider perceptions of violent railway crime. General works such as those of Cohen and Critcher assess recognisable stages in the way moral panics develop, which can in turn be identified in nineteenth-century coverage, both in the most impactful cases and also in the uptick in reporting of lower-impact incidents that immediately followed them. While nineteenth-century historians such as Milne-Smith have identified violence in railway carriages as provoking moral panic in news media coverage, the evidence for this is limited. The next section discusses the methods used here to achieve a more comprehensive analysis of such coverage, outlining how it offsets the commonalities of existing scholarship through long-form quantitative assessment of crime reporting.

## **Methodology**

This section outlines the methods used to generate and inform the analysis of violent railway crime undertaken in this chapter. I begin by discussing how the terms such as ‘railway murder’ and ‘railway sexual offences’ are used in my analysis. There is much less debate over the extent of railway murder and associated reporting in the period than there is for railway sexual offences; the murder cases examined below represent the full extent of those which the press associated with the railways. The four murders analysed below have been categorised as ‘railway’ murders because the railway, in one way or another, was a highly visible element in news media, official and public reaction to them. The three most widely reported in the period occurred in railway carriages, while the fourth and earliest involved the flight and pursuit by train of a murderer. Determining the scope of ‘railway sexual offences’, which make up the large majority of the quantitative analysis in this chapter, is more complicated. I have chosen to include only cases depicted in news media as having occurred – wholly or partly – in railway spaces such as the carriage or the station, and depicted, primarily, in relation to ‘indecent’ acts. The nature of those acts went beyond language considered acceptable in Victorian media and Victorian law; attempting to break down and identify cases based upon the charge brought in court would be naïve. Victorian unwillingness to discuss sexual offences in detail, both in court and in newsprint, entailed the use of coded or simply vague language. As such – particularly given the inconsistencies in Victorian law concerning indecent assault – the charge brought in a case often bears little relevance to how it was reported, with as little relation to the specifics of the actual offence. Furthermore, prosecutors would often bring lesser charges in the hope of securing a conviction, as well as accepting plea bargains for common assault,[[414]](#footnote-414) resulting in a multitude of different charges brought in this small dataset. Nineteenth-century categorisation and historical censorship around crime continue to affect modern resources, such as the *Old Bailey Online*, because these categories are used by necessity to provide faithful classifications of data.

The issue is compounded by the heavy use of euphemism in media reporting of sexual offences.[[415]](#footnote-415) The language of Victorian news narratives often ran counter to the specifics of cases. Sometimes this was by necessity, sometimes not; phrases such as “the details of the case… are entirely unfit for publication”[[416]](#footnote-416) were used to draw a veil over the description of an assault or rape in court, while words such as ‘outrage’ and ‘assault’ appeared in article titles irrespective of the charge. As such, the approach below relies on the historian simply interpreting an article as to whether it presents its subject matter as ‘indecent’. I use the term ‘railway sexual offences’ rather than any other, therefore, because the subjective and historical nature of available data necessitates a broad definition. As a consequence, the reporting examined here covers a wide spectrum of sexual offences ranging from indecent assault to rape. The news articles assessed in this chapter were obtained from *GALE* Primary Sources and collated in an Excel database. The *BNA*’s search platform is unsuited for much of the detailed analysis undertaken in this chapter, as it does not support scrolling through results or refining searches by category of article, which would result in an exponentially longer process of research. To account for the various strengths of each platform, the *BNA* is used below to estimate of the total number of articles and reports about an individual case, while *GALE* is used to identify cases, determine details of them such as the time, date, location and trial of an offence, and to refer to the text of specific articles.

Because the offences in this chapter involved comparatively lower levels of reporting, it can examine them in much greater detail than the broader phenomena looked at in Chapters I and II. Reporting on the sexual offences and murders examined below almost always mention times, dates, and locations of incidents, and more often than not also provided details of trials. Through keyword searching in *GALE* Primary Sources, 154 railway sexual offences were identified by their descriptions in news media between 1830 and 1900, with relevant details available for each case recorded in Excel analysis, creating a database of variables, derived statistics, and data visualisations. Articles and reports were found using initial keyword searches such as ‘railway AND assault’, ‘railway AND outrage’, ‘railway AND indecent’, ‘railway AND lady AND carriage’, ‘railway AND woman AND carriage’, and other variations on the theme, both as complete phrases and separate combined search terms where appropriate. This approach also enables the elimination of false positive results, as opposed to the more limited approaches made necessary by the wider scope of the preceding two chapters. Once a case was identified, searches related to the names of either the defendant or the complainant proved capable of identifying a larger amount of relevant reports than the initial method of searching, supplemented by those discovered through searches involving locations. This approach ensures as accurate a picture as possible about how much a case was discussed in news media. Functions which allow for variations in spelling were also used, mitigating some of *GALE*’s deficiencies in optical character recognition. Every article from the period which satisfied these search terms was examined. This iterative process of searching and cross-checking is therefore able to overcome the limitations of the OCR to a significant extent, although not completely.

There are six cases – three of them murders – that were so heavily reported in the period that it is necessary to estimate the total numbers of articles about them. The high proportion of cases beyond these six allows for more confidence in any statistical analysis involving case numbers or dynamics of reporting in news media over time and in conclusions drawn from them. Roughly 20,000-25,000 news articles were individually read and examined in total; when estimates for the most heavily-reported cases are included, the total of articles about railway sexual offences is estimated at close to 3,900. This number excludes articles and news items that do not pertain to specific cases but refer to railway sexual offences and murders in general, although these are analysed and referred to individually. It is important to note that not all variables – such as time, location, date etc. – are known for each offence – particularly for those cases reported very little in news media – and this necessarily limits analysis to some degree. Conversely, certain cases – such as the Nash case of 1864 and the Baker case of 1875 – were reported so heavily that any figure for the number of reports is by necessity an approximation.[[417]](#footnote-417) Regardless of such issues, digitally available news articles have proved rich in data to analyse.

Most of the variables in the database were taken directly from the text of the articles concerned,[[418]](#footnote-418) and are straightforward representations of the primary material. In the rare cases of conflicting information – names of defendants and complainants being the most common – I have generally taken a common-sense approach rather than taking down all variations in all cases. There is almost always a clear indication of the correct detail, with any confusion being clarified over time; in cases of genuine ambiguity, I have noted all descriptions. From these primary variables come the database’s various secondary variables. Some are easy to express numerically, such as the length of time a case was reported on in news media. Others combine qualitative assessments with scalar numerical variables; these include the social classes of defendants and complainants, and the severity of media reaction. The collection of all of these variables is aided by the fact that the vast majority of articles on railway sexual offences are detailed reports of court proceedings. Ros Crone writes that newspapers and journals of the period sought to reproduce as much information of court proceedings in their articles as possible,[[419]](#footnote-419) and many court reports are so detailed as to be almost certainly verbatim. Statistics such as mean averages and standard deviations were produced for relevant numerical variables, which are used below to aid analysis.

## **Reporting Dynamics of Violent Railway Crime**

Both railways and the news media changed a great deal over the nineteenth century. In contrast to the heavy media interest in railway sexual offences later in the period, relatively few railway sexual offences were reported in news media in the years of railway construction after 1830:

Fig. 3.2 – Total number of railway sexual offences identified through GALE Primary Sources documents and mean number of articles per offence, 1838-1900.

While they could result from fewer offences occurring or lower numbers of travellers, the small number of reported offences and articles in early decades seems to indicate that the period between 1860 and 1875 is much more important to the development of reporting dynamics, and the changes which brought about this increased media interest are indeed the central focus of this chapter. However, several characteristics in circumstances and reports of railway sexual offences were present from the earliest years of reporting and remained relatively consistent over time; such factors help to contextualise those elements which did change over time. While visualisations of all offences and reports only allow for a rough examination of their characteristics, separating them into 5-year periods allows us to track the ways in which offences and reports either changed or remained constant over time. While there is not complete data for every case – inevitable given the lack of column inches devoted to some offences – all the statistics analysed in this chapter are well over the threshold accepted for statistical significance.

Most cases reported between 1830 and 1860 occurred in London and Southern England. The proportion of the number of offences by location and the equivalent proportion of articles were similar, as shown below: Fig. 3.3: Proportion of the number of offences identified through GALE by offence location, 1838-1900.

Fig. 3.4 – Proportion of total articles about railway sexual offences identified through GALE by offence location, 1838-1900.

Since there were more railway journeys made in the south of the country in the first half of the century – in particular around London –[[420]](#footnote-420) there may actually have been proportionally more crimes committed in the region than in the rest of the country. However, the real figures are unlikely to be imbalanced to the same degree as seen in the reporting. This imbalance is instead far more likely due to London’s role as a centre for law and journalism in this early period, factors which made it a centre for fears about crime in later decades. Crimes which were tried in London courts were far more likely to be reported by lawyer-reporters with links to newspapers, and since articles about railway sexual assaults almost always took the form of court reports, London offences were far more likely to be reported. I will address the rise in offences and reports occurring outside London later in the chapter; however, it is equally unlikely that the change is related to the true number of offences that took place.

Since the times offences occurred were also widely reported, they can be analysed in conjunction with locations, as in the following chart, which demonstrates how offences disproportionately took place in hours of darkness:

Fig. 3.5: Times of day identified in GALE articles at which offences took place (n=88), plotted against times of sunrise and sunset for the dates of the specific offences in question.[[421]](#footnote-421)

Of the 88 offences over the whole period with a reported time, 65 offences took place after sunset or before sunrise (73.9%), as opposed to 23 happening during daylight hours (26.1%). The average offence occurred almost two hours out of daylight hours, and when those that happened in ‘broad daylight’ are removed, that average rises to closer to three hours. The fact that cases tended to happen after dark corresponds with the attention given to artificial carriage lighting in news articles and in parliament.

The final characteristic likely to have affected reporting on cases throughout the period was the verdict delivered. Table 3.6 shows that the proportion of railway-related offences that resulted in a guilty verdict was similar to that for indecent assault cases tried at the Old Bailey over the period:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Old Bailey Cases** | **Percentage of total** | **Railway cases** | **Percentage of total** |
| **Total** | 429 | 100% | 154 | 100% |
| **Guilty** | 251 | 58.51% | 95 | 61.68% |
| **Not Guilty** | 175 | 40.79% | 35 | 22.72% |
| **Miscellaneous** | 3 | 0.7% | 4 | 2.6% |
| **Unknown** | 0 | 0% | 19 | 12.33% |

Table 3.6: Breakdown of verdicts of indecent assault cases tried at the Old Bailey, 1838-1900, compared with railway cases in the same period. [[422]](#footnote-422)

While the proportion of not guilty verdicts is significantly lower for railway-related cases, the similar proportion of guilty verdicts suggests that many of the cases with unknown outcomes are likely to have been predominantly not guilty verdicts, particularly given that cases resulting in guilty verdicts were both more likely to be reported and resulted in more articles. When these breakdowns of verdicts are approached longitudinally for railway-related cases over five-year intervals, definite trends begin to appear, showing that guilty verdicts were linked to higher levels of reporting. Fig. 3.7 shows the changing rates of guilty and not guilty verdicts over time, while Fig. 3.8 shows the proportion of articles in each period associated with a particular type of verdict:

Fig. 3.7: Proportional breakdown of verdicts in reported railway sexual offence cases, 1838-1900. Figures in brackets on x-axis denote number of cases identified through GALE Primary Sources for each period; note that not all known cases have known verdicts.

Fig. 3.8: Proportional breakdown of news media reporting by verdict in railway sexual offence cases, 1838-1900 Figures in brackets on x-axis denote number of articles identified through GALE Primary Sources for cases with verdicts in each period.

The periods which saw the highest rate of guilty verdicts – 1860-64, 1875-70, and 1880-84 – were also the periods when the three most-heavily reported railway crimes took place, and the relationship between high-impact cases and overall case outcomes is examined in more detail below. However, the style of reports and articles from before 1860 resembled the reports of later periods in many ways.

The first railway sexual offence to be reported took place in 1838, eight years after the opening of the first fully mechanised railway line, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. The offence did not take place in a railway carriage, but on a railway line. The fact that the defendant, Henry Passingham, was an engineer – the contemporary term for train driver – and that the attempted rape took place on a railway line marks the case for inclusion here. Many of the standard modes of reporting used throughout the period are in evidence in the reporting of this case. The complainant, Caroline Sant, was young, ‘apparently between 14 and 15 years old’, and the build-up to the crime was described extensively in the press, perhaps because the details of the crime itself were described as ‘unfit for publication.’[[423]](#footnote-423) The discrepancies between the tone of magistrates and judges and the sentences they passed seen throughout the period can be seen here. The sentencing judge spoke very strongly about how ‘women and girls [were] entitled to protection from such gross conduct as pursued…by the prisoner’; however, the £5 fine ultimately imposed on Passingham did not carry the weight and stigma of a custodial sentence.

Many other common characteristics of railway sexual offence reporting throughout the period can be seen in this early case, or from other similarly early cases. For example, the dynamics in which railway employees committed offences against passengers in their care were present in the 1841 case of John Beadle, a guard on the new Brighton line convicted of aggravated assault on a young woman, described as ‘most indecent’.[[424]](#footnote-424) The magistrates sentencing Beadle stated that ‘if any other railway servant was brought before them in similar circumstances, the highest penalty would certainly be inflicted’,[[425]](#footnote-425) indicating an awareness of the need to be seen to be coming down hard on such offenders, although the reason they did not impose such a penalty on Beadle himself is not clear. Beadle was fined 40 s. rather than imprisoned, and railway workers were found guilty at roughly the same rate (61%) as other defendants in the period. Unlike Beadle, however, they were sentenced much more severely when found guilty. 78.6% of railway servants received prison sentences after a guilty verdict, with 64.3% receiving hard labour, whereas when individuals who did not work for the railways were found guilty, 56.8% received prison sentences and 40% received hard labour.[[426]](#footnote-426) The accounts of prosecutions, defences, and summations from such cases throughout the period make frequent mention of the trust placed in ‘railway servants’. The titles of reports – although not in Beadle’s example – often refer to the ‘gross outrage by a railway guard’ or ‘disgraceful conduct of a railway servant’,[[427]](#footnote-427) indicating that a harsher viewpoint was common in both news media and in court.

The 1851 case of William Griffith, a railway employee, and Maria Palmer was the first instance of prosecution being undertaken by a railway company, in this case the South Eastern Railway Company. The company stated that ‘a person in humble circumstances… was entitled to receive protection from every description of assault and annoyance’. However, the standard of their prosecution was weak, and this seems to have played a part in Griffith being found not guilty.[[428]](#footnote-428) The case reflects the general tendency for prosecutions brought by railway companies to be less specific than those brought by private individuals, with the addition of lesser charges such as ‘interfering with the comfort of passengers’ creating the sense that some cases were being brought more out of procedural duty than otherwise. Serjeant Ballantine, Griffith’s barrister, stated in his defence that ‘he thought that the company had done no more than their duty in bringing the prosecution’,[[429]](#footnote-429) indicating that the railways may well have been bringing these prosecutions for the sake of being seen to do so.

Finally, the scrutiny of the respectability of defendants and complainants, both in court and in news media, was in evidence in this period just as much as it was in the decades that followed. The ambiguous nature of what constituted ‘respectability’ in the period meant that the cases printed in most articles and reports focused just as much on the complainant’s respectability as on the defendant, in effect adding a second burden of proof on complainants common to almost all sexual assaults reported in the period, and indeed since. The dynamic also reflects the heavily euphemistic tone of public discourse in the period, which stifled accurate discussion of sexual encounters of all kinds; this was viewed as promoting a desirable innocence among ‘respectable’ women.[[430]](#footnote-430) Therefore, women were required to demonstrate their respectable character in court for their case to be taken seriously. This can be seen in this early period in the description of Sarah Cullum as ‘a respectable female’[[431]](#footnote-431) and of Jane Baker as ‘a respectable young woman.”[[432]](#footnote-432) Such language normalised the sense that justice could only be obtained if a victim was respectable; the later case of Riger vs. Luke – discussed below – is a counterexample in which the case fell apart over questions of the complainant’s respectability.

Despite the rich details provided in these early reports, however, only 11 sexual offences taking place on railways were reported by news media between 1830 and 1860, and articles in these years only constituted 3% of the total number before 1900. The most heavily reported case in the period that involved railways to some degree – the murder of Sarah Hart by John Tawell on New Year’s Day in 1845 – did not generate nearly as much as the murders that took place on railways after 1860. [[433]](#footnote-433) Tawell, a Quaker, poisoned Hart, his mistress, at Slough before immediately taking the train to Paddington, aiming to create some sense of deniability. The police, having found Hart’s body before Tawell’s train arrived, telegraphed a message with Tawell’s description to Paddington. He was followed by Sergeant Williams of the railway police, who could not himself make an arrest before other officers were present, because railway policemen did not have the same powers as normal officers; Tawell was arrested, eventually being tried, and hanged for murder. Whether the lack of abiding interest in the crime compared to later railway murders was because it did not take place in a railway carriage, because railway violence was not yet a focus for news media attention, or because news media did not operate on remotely the same scale as in later years is difficult to determine. Moreover, the murder has primarily been understood in its relation to the telegraph, [[434]](#footnote-434) since the telegraph and railways were strongly related technologies, with telegraph lines almost always running along railway lines. However, it was the sergeant’s evidence, in which he described how Tawell mistook him for a bus conductor, as well as the police use of the telegraph to send Tawell’s description, that combined to form what is remembered – albeit somewhat inaccurately – as the first arrest made using communications technology.

Another case in which reports made much of railway-related circumstances was the 1849 case of Marie and Frederick Manning, mentioned above in the section on Leopold Redpath. When they had fled to Edinburgh after carrying out the poisoning of Patrick O’Connor in London, the Mannings were discovered when Marie attempted to sell some of O’Connor’s shares in the Huntingdon, Wisbech and St. Ives Railway, with the evidence of O’Connor’s stockbroker reported verbatim in news media.[[435]](#footnote-435) However, it was Marie Manning’s relationship with O’Connor, and the fact that husband and wife perpetrated and were hanged for the crime, that generated the most press attention. While the railway connection was not the dominant theme in the narrative of either Tawell or the Mannings’ actual crimes, the case itself was treated in news media as railway-related to enough of an extent to be discussed here. In this early period, if an offence could be connected with railways, reporters and editors seldom passed up the opportunity to do so; however, they also did not make as much of it as they would in later years.

## **1860-1880: Peak Reporting**

The changes to news media and increasing railway use led to a rapid increase in reports of railway sexual offences after 1860. The offences which were reported in this period continued many of the tendencies present in the reports analysed above. For example, the 1862 case involving Charlotte Gascott and James Nunn, a railway porter, illustrates the long-term focus on levels of lighting in carriages assessed in Fig. 3.5, as well as evidence that Nunn had directed Gascott to a carriage ‘in which there was no other passenger or light’ before assaulting her.[[436]](#footnote-436) Particularly when viewed alongside a statistical assessment, news media accounts of individual cases indicate the importance of carriage lighting to narratives concerning railway sexual offences, both in creating opportunities for them and in affecting how cases were tried and reported. The fact that natural and artificial lighting so greatly affected the opportunity to offend underpins the debates about the need for the ‘technological solutions’ that were implemented in response to these offences.

The disparity in reporting offences which occurred in London and the South was still present, but lower, with 53% of reported offences in the period occurring there. The disparity can also be gauged through reports of a case which occurred near Londonderry in 1861. John Morris’ assault on Jane Hasley most probably reached the London news media because Morris was a railway guard, Hasley’s young age (sixteen), and the fact that Hasley’s father was forester to the Marquess of Abercorn,[[437]](#footnote-437) Tory peer and future Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The offence was described in more detail than was usual for the time, and the sentence, at 18 months, more severe, particularly given that the charge was commuted to common assault midway through the trial. Morris is described as having directed Hasley into a first-class carriage for which she did not have a ticket, ‘entered while the train was in motion, put his arms around her neck, kissed her several times, threw her down on the seat of the carriage, and took indecent liberties with her’.[[438]](#footnote-438) The fact that the next sentence begins ‘He promised her marriage’ leaves far less doubt over the nature of what had occurred than almost all other cases that were reported. Despite all these newsworthy traits, however, only ten reports of the case are available. Although this is slightly more than average, such a case would undoubtedly have been reported much more heavily had it taken place in England – particularly the South – and much more quickly than the three months that elapsed between the offence and reports.[[439]](#footnote-439)

Despite this, offences were reported much more frequently after 1860; 97% of all reporting before 1900 took place after 1860, which is heavily disproportionate even when accounting for the continual growth of the nineteenth-century press. Individual offences were also reported more heavily, with an average of 9.27 articles per case before 1860 and 20.78 articles per case from 1860-1900. One element of reports more visible from this time was the extent to which defendants and complainants were assessed and judged using language that referred to their presumed moral status; while this was the case for such cases before 1860, the rising number of reported cases brought it far more into view. The 1864 case of John Tickner and Harriet Newman – which took place several months before the hugely influential Nash case – saw Tickner’s position as clerk to John Tidd Pratt[[440]](#footnote-440) noted, as was Newman’s status as ‘a very respectable female’[[441]](#footnote-441) and married woman. When a Captain Dokeyne was brought to trial by Susan Doubleday in 1865, news media were quick to point out Dokeyne’s connections; his brother was a magistrate in the court, withdrawing from the bench for Dokeyne’s trial. Doubleday’s description as being ‘a modest-looking woman of prepossessing appearance’[[442]](#footnote-442) was also widely commented upon. Articles were equally quick to highlight a lack of respectability, particularly in female complainants. In cases where it was deemed to have been proven that the complainant was not respectable, the defendant was far less likely to be convicted, and if they were, their sentences were likely to be light.[[443]](#footnote-443) When Helena Luke accused George Riger of assault in 1866, she was described as ‘showily attired, and… known to belong to that class of gay women who frequent public gardens in the skirts of the town’[[444]](#footnote-444), heavily implying that she was a prostitute. Luke gave a false address and did not attend the case’s second hearing, and allegations that she had attempted to blackmail Riger led to a verdict of not guilty. However, the articles hinting at Luke’s lack of respectability were written after the first hearing and not the second, suggesting that the writers of these reports had been prejudiced against the prosecution from the outset. The 1867 case of Thomas Higginbottom and Rachel Kirwin was similar, with most of the prosecution’s case hinging on whether Kirwin was either a ‘prostitute [or] kept a house of ill repute’; the bench baldly stated that ‘if the complainant had been a person of respectability they should have committed the defendant to gaol for six months without giving him the option of paying a fine.’[[445]](#footnote-445) The cases of Kirwin, Luke, Tickner and Dokeyne highlight the attention both the courts and news media paid to the respectability of both complainant and defendant; they also corroborate the likely bias seen in long-term data towards cases involving complainants from first-class carriages being more likely to result in guilty verdicts than second- or third-class carriages.

Several cases in this period achieved a general familiarity among reading publics. James Finigan’s assault on Mary Turner in 1863 was well-known enough to be referred to simply as ‘the Brighton case’, primarily due to the hostile reaction against the presiding magistrate who treated Finigan’s drunkenness as having mitigated his crime rather than aggravated it.[[446]](#footnote-446) The assault by William Whitehead on Mrs. Charlotte Wilson, also in 1863, attracted a great deal of media interest – much of which took the form of opinion pieces and letters, as well as court reports –because Whitehead had been so drunk at the time of the assault that he had crawled into the carriage on his hands and knees past a guard before committing the offence. Although Serjeant Ballantine, unusually prosecuting a sexual case rather than defending, stated in his opening speech that such offences ‘had, of late, become frequent on several lines’,[[447]](#footnote-447) the focus in the reports mainly centred on Whitehead’s drunkenness and his status as a gentleman. An article in one weekly wrote that Whitehead’s ‘*besotted condition appears to have entirely escaped the attention of the guard of the train, and the porters at Langley station’* [italics in original], before naming the guard at fault and excoriating the ‘parsimony of [GWR in choosing] to exercise economy in the employment of officials, that their dividends may be increased’.[[448]](#footnote-448) While the article dismisses Whitehead as ‘an enemy to society at large’, the company was attacked far more virulently. In reports of Charles Sissimore’s assault on Hester Field later in 1864, Whitehead’s case was referred to alongside the Muller murder as a point of comparison, in an article stating that ‘the execration generally lavished upon a certain **Mr. Whitehead**’ [emphasis in original] had not prevented Sissimore from committing an assault. The connection between cases here indicates that reports had started to comment on a wider phenomenon of assaults being common, and not just the individual case in question.

The last of the more densely-reported cases in this period was that of the Rev. George Capel. Heavily reported because of Capel’s position as a clergyman, the case centred around whether Capel had indecently assaulted Mary Ann Fraser while getting out of a carriage or simply moved her overlarge crinoline.[[449]](#footnote-449) A similar case from 1859 in which the defendant – also a priest – was found not guilty, was reported under headlines such as ‘The Crinoline Nuisance’;[[450]](#footnote-450) the arguments for clerical innocence had the same result in Capel’s case. However, it was much more feverishly examined both in and out of court, with the magistrate stating that ‘the case had assumed such importance that a thorough investigation into all the circumstances must take place, for the sake of the young woman as well as the defendant and public at large’.[[451]](#footnote-451) As a measure of that complexity, the case prompted more letters to be written to and printed in newspapers than any other case of equivalent reporting levels. Earls Albemarle and Essex, named George Keppel and Arthur Cappell respectively, each wrote to *The Times* to assert that they were not connected with Capel.[[452]](#footnote-452) James Maitland, master at the London docks, was named in evidence by one of the witnesses, and his objections to this were also outlined in a letter to *The Times*.[[453]](#footnote-453) Lastly, the Rev. Capel himself wrote to the editor of the *Morning Post* from his club – the Athenaeum – after the trial’s conclusion; as well as thanking him for his article on the trial, Capel wrote that ‘the evidence of Richards and the deserter Seymour’[[454]](#footnote-454) had been introduced against his own wishes. For Capel to continue to defend himself even after the case had ended indicates its importance. Had a guilty verdict been returned – or likely – then it is possible that his case might have resulted in a similar level of interest as the cases we turn to now.

## **Muller and Nash: the 1864 Moral Panic**

In July of 1864, two of the most impactful crimes in railway carriages took place. On the evening of July the 9th, Franz Muller murdered Thomas Briggs, the first murder to occur on the railways in Britain. On the afternoon of the 11th, Henry Nash assaulted Mary Ann Moody, who clung onto the outside of her carriage for several miles to evade him. Both cases caused panic about the safety of railway travel, and concern about what the occurrence of such crimes signified. The dominant mode of discussion for each case was the newspaper article, but the cases also prompted a vast amount of letters to editors, one of which stated: ‘We could fill our whole space with this manuscript outcry.’[[455]](#footnote-455) Many were printed in newspapers and journals, offering suggestions, comments and points of view, often clashing with those of other letter-writers, other newspapers, and sometimes the newspaper in question. The cases were debated in Parliament, and in discussions between the Board of Trade and railway companies. Ros Crone, in her analysis of murder coverage in *The Times* and *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (*LWN*), notes that coverage of the murder accounted for 7.37% of all *LWN* articles in September 1864, and between a fifth and a quarter of all its 'sensational news' coverage. [[456]](#footnote-456) The case attracted vast amounts of media attention, with Crone showing that *LWN* devoted nearly 20% of its coverage to 'violent content' in September 1864; before the Whitechapel Murders of 1888, the only month with a figure higher than 11% relates to the Manning murder of September 1849.[[457]](#footnote-457)

Briggs’ murder generated more than 8,000 reports, well over ten times as many as the assault on Moody;[[458]](#footnote-458) moreover, a large proportion of the coverage of Nash’s case was almost certainly the result of the interest in Muller’s. There are, however, several factors which merit simultaneous analysis of the two cases. Firstly, the timing of Nash’s assault, days after the murder, affected the demand for reports about Muller as well as vice versa. Secondly, Nash’s case was resolved far more quickly than Muller’s, with Nash being convicted in August and Muller’s case not resolved until late November; this meant that for as long as the Nash case was going on, reporting levels were at least close to equal distribution between the two cases. The combination of the two offences led to railway crime becoming a consistent and prominent fixture in newspapers for several months. As would be the case in 1875 and 1881, the narratives surrounding Muller and Nash’s cases were sensational and, in Muller’s case, continued to develop for far longer and with more stages of interest than any other considered here, allowing for sustained media interest that resurfaced as new developments in each case came about.

Across news media, initial reporting spared readers no detail of the “horrible” murder, with one paper stating that ‘of late we have supped full of horrors’ through reports of how Thomas Briggs, a banker, had been thrown out of the window of a first-class carriage on the North London Railway.[[459]](#footnote-459) After Briggs’ murder, *The Telegraph* described how the carriage’s cushion was ‘saturated with blood’, that ‘some ladies in the adjoining carriage had had their dresses stained with the gore, which spurted in the window’, and that Briggs’ body was ‘fearfully mangled, the skull battered in, an ear torn off’. It also passed comment on how the case had caught the public’s imagination, stating that ‘no event has excited such intense interest among the public, for years past, as the murder on the North London Railway.’[[460]](#footnote-460) Crone notes how, unless the case had a sexual dimension, no paper considered details of violent crime unfit for publication.[[461]](#footnote-461) Since there was no clue as to the murderer’s identity in the immediate aftermath, this interest was expressed melodramatically in phrases such as ‘the very air is dark with the shadow of crime.’[[462]](#footnote-462) The theft of Briggs’ gold watch – the chain of which remained in the carriage – was also obsessively scrutinised, as was the disappearance of Briggs’ hat and the presence of another, presumably abandoned by the murderer, in its place.

Henry Nash’s assault on Mary Moody, described as ‘a respectable young lady, aged twenty’,[[463]](#footnote-463) fuelled the panic and attracted substantial comment of its own. The assault was discussed in narratives similar to the sensation fiction of the time:

To get rid of his importunities, the young lady went to the window of the carriage, and stood looking out of it, as she passed along. Suddenly, she found her companion's hands upon her, and, in a spasm of terror, she opened the carriage door, by the handle of which she held herself up, standing on the step of the carriage, the train meanwhile going at the rate of forty miles an hour.[[464]](#footnote-464)

Breathless, comma-laden passages like the one above were compounded by Nash’s sensational discharge at the first hearing of the case. This was because he had been arrested in one county, but had committed the offence in another,[[465]](#footnote-465) an example of the law being unable to keep pace with developments in railway technology. Despite the dramatic offence itself and the two subsequent hearings and trial – at Aldershot and Kingston Petty Sessions, then at Surrey Sessions – Nash’s case still had far fewer twists and turns than Briggs’ murder, which developed into an unprecedented manhunt.

The intense initial response to the two cases was proclaimed as ‘the sudden consciousness that the fate of poor Mr Briggs may, literally, be the fate of any.’[[466]](#footnote-466) One factor demonstrating the extent to which accounts of the two crimes were consumed is the many letters sent by members of the public, throughout the two cases, that were printed in various newspapers. As might be expected, murder attracted more attention from members of the public, although the Nash case was often also referred to. As well as condemning Muller and Nash, many letters from the public in the days following the murder demanded improved communication[[467]](#footnote-467) between passenger and guard, or open carriages.[[468]](#footnote-468) Perhaps unsurprisingly given the editorial power to choose which letters to print, almost all displayed an intense familiarity with practically every detail of the case. Of the letters which dealt specifically with Nash’s assault, one tore into ‘a sleepy government and an indifferent railway administration’, before asking whether the public were ‘to be subjected to exquisite “sensations” of the chance of being murdered on a trip, and defenceless females to be compelled to encounter the chances of death in preference to indignity, and all this from the sheer wilful obstinacy of railway companies.’[[469]](#footnote-469) Although the word ‘exquisite’ is ironic here, its use implies both familiarity with the crime, as well as the assumption that many people thought of railway travel as having a frisson of danger that was pleasurable as well as frightening. Other letters placed the blame squarely on the guard,[[470]](#footnote-470) others on the company for employing him.

One other reason for the continued engagement of media and public with the murder was that new sensational details were always forthcoming. After Muller was identified as a suspect, one article wrote that ‘it seemed but too likely that the shock would pass away’, and that ‘the hideous riddle of the recent murder… would lapse into comparative oblivion, and that the murderer would escape’.[[471]](#footnote-471) However, an increase in the sum of rewards led to a tip-off from a cabman, Matthews, who had to “describe Muller's hat to the police to prove that he knew him. Matthews informed the police that Muller had mentioned taking a ship to America, so he, together with Inspector Tanner of Scotland-Yard, set sail on a faster ship than the *Victoria*, which Muller had taken. They were accompanied by the jeweller to whom Muller had pawned a watch, a Mr Death – a name which newspapers never failed to mention as often as possible, in sombre black capitals.

The combination of circumstances and details ensured that engagement with the case remained sky-high, to the point that several men were mistakenly arrested for the murder before Muller’s whereabouts were identified. One report of an arrest following a tip-off in Stafford wrote that ‘the chief constable of Staffordshire, has now in custody in this town a foreigner whose appearance corresponds with the description given of the murderer of Mr Briggs…. He also wears an English-made white hat’,[[472]](#footnote-472) demonstrating both that the narrative was familiar far beyond London, and also that the reading public were actively seeking a resolution to it. However, the initial alarm about the potential threat to the public receded sufficiently in the weeks immediately after the murder for *The Times* to take stock, stating:

There can be little doubt that something unpleasantly resembling a panic had been caused… a general sense of insecurity spread itself abroad. The truth was, however, that although the panic was exaggerated… a real danger existed, which it was high time to remove… [but] it by no means followed, because one elderly gentleman had been killed in a railway carriage, that this form of assassination was likely to become fashionable, and in some of the charges of assault upon ladies there were rather grave doubts about the accuracy of the accusation.[[473]](#footnote-473)

While there were two further sexual offences reported on during and in the immediate weeks after the Nash case, the last point raised does not reflect reality, since these, as well as the others in 1864 that came after the article above was published in September, all resulted in guilty verdicts. When Nash’s own case was heard, the prosecution’s evidence was reported in more narrative, sensationalised detail than was usual, particularly the descriptions of the offence. Phrases such as ‘she felt that her clothes were being lifted up in front, and with a view to prevent this and any further molestation she opened the door of the compartment and got outside, standing on the step of the carriage, the train at the time going at a rapid pace’[[474]](#footnote-474) were almost literary in their effect compared to other trial reports, in keeping with the dramatic nature of Moody’s narrative. As was common in all reporting, the prosecution’s case was reported in detail at the Kingston trial, but the cross-examination of Moody and other witnesses was glossed over,[[475]](#footnote-475) indicating that the press believed their readers were more interested, in this case, about hearing Moody’s tale of peril and bravery, and not having it called into question through cross-examination, or diluted by the testimony of other witnesses. Another factor shared with previous cases can be seen in the description of Moody as having ‘the appearance of being a respectable and intelligent person’,[[476]](#footnote-476) demonstrating that the trope of female respectability requiring tacit confirmation was present in cases under intense public scrutiny. However, in the context of sexual offence reporting, ‘respectability’ was not solely bound up in the complainant’s class status, but was also affected by the circumstances of the offence. Remarks such as ‘the spirit of the young lady… invests her with a deeper interest than could possibly be felt in any heroine of romance’[[477]](#footnote-477) reflect another characteristic of moral panic – life reflecting and outdoing fiction. Robin Barrow refers to Moody’s status as a young, good-looking potential heroine enabling her to fulfil her role in the dramatic narrative reported on in court;[[478]](#footnote-478) those whose appearance or assumed reputation did not align with the presumptive narrative of a case had far less chance of gaining justice or even being taken seriously. A cartoon published in *Punch* soon after the case reflected how respectability did not guarantee that a woman would be taken seriously, lampooning the situation in a cartoon:

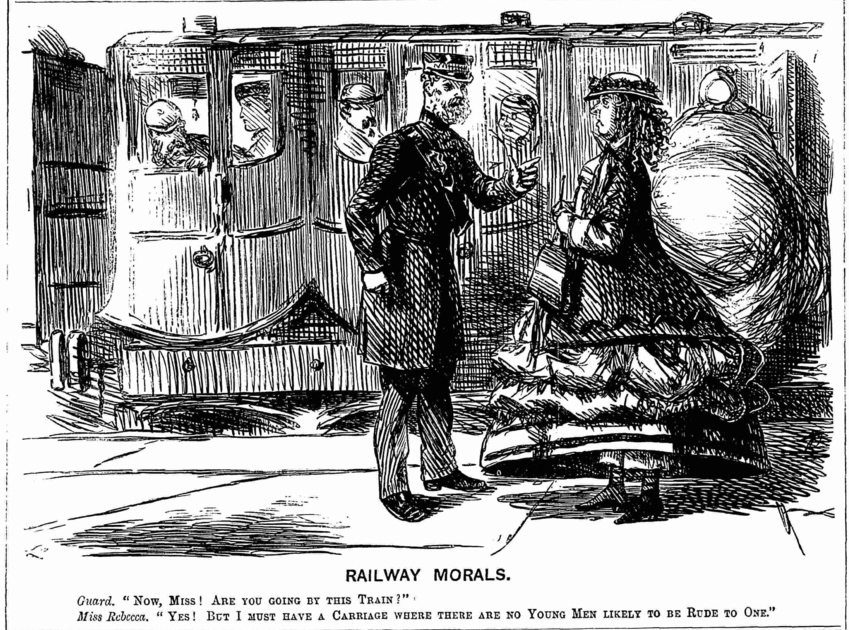


Fig. 3.9: ‘Railway Morals’, *Punch*, 17 September 1864, *Punch Historical Archive.*

Once Nash had been convicted in 1864, however, media attention on violent railway crime was wholly focused on Muller, specifically ‘all those speculations which the delay was beginning to excite…. Will MULLER be convicted, then?’[[479]](#footnote-479) Many newspapers and journals were unrestrained in proclaiming that Muller was guilty; others, however, twisted themselves in knots to report on the case while being seen to respect due process. One editorial attacked ‘a considerable portion of the press’ for proclaiming Muller’s guilt, despite having, in the same breath written that ‘the mere intelligence that he had the articles [of watch and hat] with him sounds like his death warrant.’[[480]](#footnote-480) There had been rumours that the chilly relationship between the Britain and the Civil War-era Union would hamper the extradition process;[[481]](#footnote-481) Anglo-Prussian relations over the invasion of Schleswig-Holstein were also the cause for ‘fears that something might baulk the officers of the English law at the moment of their success’, on account of New York being ‘full of Germans, who have great influence there.’[[482]](#footnote-482) However, ‘all the proceedings of the American authorities appear to have been perfectly fair and impartial’,[[483]](#footnote-483) giving the sense that, while news media were glad of tensions to report upon, they were also glad of progress towards a profitable resolution of the narrative in the form of a trial.

As Muller travelled to Liverpool by ship and London by train, interest in the case continued to be vast, evident from the ‘score of reporters… alongside the *Etna*, seeking for the slightest scrap of information’ and the ‘little knots of spectators collected on the platform, whose only ambition was a passing sight of the train in which MULLER travelled.’[[484]](#footnote-484) Muller attracted crowds while being held as well as in transit; hundreds are related to have ‘thronged Euston-Square and Bow-Street for a chance at catching a glimpse of the prisoner.’[[485]](#footnote-485) Interest also continued to be expressed in letters from members of the public on the need for improvements to carriages, the potential innocence of Muller or the impossibility of a fair trial, or the intransigence of railway companies, also mentioned in reports.[[486]](#footnote-486)

The crescendo peaked at Muller’s trial, described as ‘the question which has so long agitated the public mind’.[[487]](#footnote-487) Newspaper output also peaked; the day beforehand, the *Daily Telegraph* advertised that a second edition would be published ‘in the early forenoon of the day, and an hour later a THIRD EDITION will appear, giving Full and Special Reports of the proceedings up to the time of going to press’,[[488]](#footnote-488) indicating the extent of demand for reporting. Muller was found guilty at the trial and sentenced to death; it was commented that ‘no real defence was possible’.[[489]](#footnote-489) The two hats, Briggs’ watch, and its chain were all religiously mentioned throughout the exhaustive coverage of the testimony, as was the ever-topical ‘MR DEATH’. While the verdict and impending execution represented a resolution of sorts, the fact that judgement was based upon circumstantial evidence left a sense of incompleteness. Perhaps mindful of a potential slump in sales following his three editions, the editor of *The Telegraph* roared that ‘with nothing less [than the whole truth] will the public mind rest absolutely contented.’[[490]](#footnote-490) *The Times*, meanwhile, began to pass a more historically comparative judgement on the case: ‘since the poisonings of PALMER [in 1855] no occurrence of the kind has received such attention.’[[491]](#footnote-491) Although a late effort was made on the part of Muller’s lawyers to apply for a retrial, the execution went ahead as planned. The railway nature of the case was still very much present in news media, albeit indirectly, as seen in a *Punch* cartoon two days before the execution:



Fig. 3.10: "Railway Pleasantries—Second Class." *Punch*, 12/11/1864, p. 202. *Punch Historical Archive.* URL: http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85bCZ2.

This approach could be seen more directly in the editorials published on the morning of Muller’s execution, which sought to underline the railway origins of the long and complex narrative. *The Telegraph* wrote that ‘when these columns are first read in morning trains... [Muller] pays the earthly penalty of his crime’, and asserted that the prolonged interest in the murder was because:

‘Respectability', which is at once the philosophy, religion, and morals of a large section of our people, was outraged in the person of Mr BRIGGS, and all that wears broadcloth and guinea hats gathered together to seek and doom the audacious assassin of the quiet and reputable victim…. Respectability demanded not a victim, but the victim, for this violation of its safety.[[492]](#footnote-492)

The behaviour of the 50,000-strong crowd at Newgate for Muller’s execution was not, however, deemed to be respectable. A German minister wrote to *The* *Times* condemning the ‘savage yells of the multitude assembled to witness the execution’,[[493]](#footnote-493) while the *Times*’ own full-page account was extensive in criticising both the crowd and the organisation of the execution. Done ‘before such a concourse as we hope may never again be assembled… for the gratification of lawless ruffianism’, the *Times* reported the crowd as mostly young men, but containing young, old, and the well- and the badly-dressed, with half of them drinking or smoking, and attacked their bloodthirsty attitude and ‘open robbery and violence’, both before and after the execution took place.[[494]](#footnote-494) However, although news media accounts condemned disorder, they had also encouraged ‘sensational’ ways for the public to relate to the case. Throughout Muller’s pursuit and trial, *Lloyd’s* *Weekly Newspapers* printed ‘small advertisements for Muller “carte-de-visite”’,[[495]](#footnote-495) while the more conspicuously virtuous were served by a recommendation in *John Bull* for ‘a little pamphlet…entitled ‘Prayers in Behalf of the Condemned to Death.’[[496]](#footnote-496)The scenes provided much of the impetus for the abolition of public hangings in 1868, the same year in which communication cords began to hang in railway carriages.[[497]](#footnote-497)

As well as drawing conclusions about the social factors of those involved in the case to drive interest in reporting, editors were keen to assess the impact of railways and other technologies upon crime and policing in their columns. *The Times* stated that Muller would probably have escaped justice thirty or forty years beforehand, and that although ‘a robber must then have chosen some other scene for his attack than a railway carriage… steam and the telegraph have done more to facilitate the detection than the commission of crime. They have armed the police with the means of following up a clue in a way that was before impossible’,[[498]](#footnote-498) before arguing that ‘the conspicuous success of these defensive weapons’ ensured the continued supremacy of the law as civilization advanced. There were also plaudits for the ‘new and untiring allies of justice in the steamship, the electric telegraph, and the newspaper’,[[499]](#footnote-499) for how ‘Photography [had] lent its aid’, and for media publicity, described as ‘the immediate agency by which suspicion was brought home.’[[500]](#footnote-500) The impression was that, to go with ‘a new experiment in crime’[[501]](#footnote-501) afforded by railway travel, the public were also keenly aware of corresponding experimentation and progress in policing and justice.

With regard to Nash’s case, one view, voiced in a widely-reprinted editorial from the *Saturday Review,* was more concerned with the case leading to false allegations than improving railway safety, demonstrating how moral panic could come in many different guises over the same case. While the article remarked upon the general ‘frenzy of the public mind about the dangers of railway travelling’ and stated that ‘everybody feels that no man’s life and no woman’s honour is safe inside a railway carriage’, the article’s primary concern was the ‘special evil which railway travelling has aggravated [the] danger to… the unprotected male passenger.’[[502]](#footnote-502) The verdicts in cases which followed showed that this did not reflect reality. From the data available on railway sexual offences, accusations that complainants were attempting to extort defendants are rare – indeed, allegations of bribery on the part of defendants were more common.

As well as the response to the case in news media, another feature which characterises the response to Nash and Muller as a moral panic was the marked increase in the number of sexual offences reported in the aftermath of the case. All but one of the other reported offences in 1864 came after the Muller murder and the Nash assault case. Both of these took place in July, and the subsequent cases were reported to an extent that those of similar severity would not have been had they happened beforehand. Reports of offences that followed the Nash and Muller cases frequently referred to them, often to suggest that railway sexual offences had become so widespread as to constitute a dire threat to national law and order. We have seen how 1864 reports of Charles Sissimore’s case referred to William Whitehead’s case of the previous year, but Muller and Nash’s cases were far more instrumental to the arguments made in these reports. Statements such as ‘travellers are no longer alarmed about the velocity of the train, or the state of the engine or engineer, but they are terribly frightened about their fellow-passengers’, or ‘the lady who has travelled many miles alone with a male fellow-passenger… chiefly has in her mind the terrible unknown’[[503]](#footnote-503) demonstrate how the how the carriage was coming to be more widely viewed as a potentially threatening space for women and girls.

Muller and Nash had led to a paradigm shift in railway crime. Although the poised news media were not furnished with any further murders in the aftermath of the cases, the atmosphere of heightened awareness made railway sexual assault cases far more likely to be reported upon, one of the key features in identifying these two cases as constituting a moral panic, demonstrated below:

Fig. 3.11: Average number of railway sexual offences per year reported in GALE Primary Sources reports, 1838-1878. Dates for categories are taken immediately after the case mentioned; before and after 13 July 1864 for Nash, before and after 19 June 1875 for Baker.

However, the relatively high rate of offences reported in 1864 and the years that followed began to decline after 1867, culminating in a sluggish period between 1870-75, before rising again in the wake of the Baker case, which is discussed below. Despite the debate generated by the Baker case, the installation of communication cords was only mandated in law by a frustrated government four years after 1875.[[504]](#footnote-504) The railway companies had dug in their heels over negotiations, instead introducing the stopgap measure of makeshift windows between compartments – termed ‘Muller’s lights’[[505]](#footnote-505) – before being forced to introduce communication cords. While the cord may well have contributed to the decline in cases after its introduction, it is difficult to say with any certainty to what degree this was the case, given that moral panics generally tend to have a short lifespan, as well as the growing normality of railway travel. The next railway case to catch the public imagination was notable, moreover, for the failure of the communication cord.

## **The 1875 moral panic: Colonel Baker**

Of all the railway sexual offences in this period, the 1875 assault committed by Colonel Valentine Baker was most heavily reported. On the 17th of June at around 3 pm, the middle-aged Baker attempted to assault Kate Dickinson, a well-educated and well-off young woman, in a first-class carriage near Guildford. Dickinson resisted, and refused Baker’s subsequent entreaties not to report him, leading to his arrest. Although Dickinson was of a higher class than most complainants in railway sexual offence cases of the period, Colonel Baker represented the upper echelons of the establishment. His regiment was the very fashionable 10th Hussars, and his commanding officer was the Prince of Wales, himself attached to scandal on a regular basis. A sexual offence committed in a first-class carriage, in broad daylight, by an aristocrat with royal connections was a narrative that would sell newspapers. There were at least a thousand reports written about the case.[[506]](#footnote-506) Like Nash, Baker was heard at Guildford Magistrates’ Court and Guildford Petty Sessions before being tried at Croydon Assizes; each airing of the details of the case only served to increase the public’s interest. Baker was found guilty, imprisoned for twelve months, fined £500, cashiered from the army, and ostracised from society. The assertions that Baker was the victim of deceit on Dickinson’s part have led some historians to identify the case as the starting point for ‘a 30-year media panic about “Potiphar’s wives”, women who falsely accused men of rape and thereby hurt the reputation of unsuspecting gentlemen.’[[507]](#footnote-507) Although the case did indeed prompt a rise in articles concerning such fears, a thirty-year period of moral panic is unsustainable given their inherent volatility;[[508]](#footnote-508) therefore it is only as part of the reaction to the Baker case that such articles should be seen as contributing to a shorter-term moral panic.

Although the case provoked a distinctive frenzy of reporting, many elements common to other reported trials were visible in Baker’s. Kate Dickinson’s respectability was as apparent in trial reports as Mary Moody’s had been in 1864. The fact that Dickinson was referred to in reports throughout the case as ‘the young lady’,[[509]](#footnote-509) at a time in which reports of other cases referred to ‘women’ and ‘girls’, demonstrates her social standing, as do references to her servants. However the lack of any real defence made by Baker or his counsel ensured that, although Dickinson was identified and described according to how respectable she seemed, the case did not depend upon a test of her respectability under cross-examination. The impact of the case on the public consciousness can be seen through reports of how, in the morning of the trial, ‘a large and noisy crowd had collected in front of the court-house at Croydon, thus rendering it extremely difficult to obtain an entrance to the court’;[[510]](#footnote-510) the crowd would become so loud at certain points in the trial that the case was briefly stopped. There was ‘a large attendance of the Bar, and every part of the court, including the Bench, was crowded’, and for over three hours after ‘the verdict and sentence [were] pronounced, the excitement in the High Street was intense’. As a final measure as to how much Baker’s trial was a major public event, the proceedings of this crowded courtroom, complete with a deafening anti-Baker mob outside, lasted from 10 am to 7.15 pm.[[511]](#footnote-511)

Much of the moral panic provoked by Baker’s case related to the issue of class; the trials and punishments of Nash and Baker, as with many other cases in the period, were interpreted by how they related to the social standing of those involved. A widely-argued complaint in the period was that defendants of higher social class were more lightly punished for offences, or else acquitted wholesale regardless of the evidence. An article commenting upon the 1864 Whitehead case – which took place several months before Nash’s trial – stated that Whitehead’s actions, ‘had he been a poor man, and unable to give a genteel address, would have consigned him to the stone-yard, but being a *gentleman* he is remanded.’[[512]](#footnote-512) Nash’s case shows little evidence of having changed this view; although he was, as a yeoman, more well-connected than most other offenders, he was not of a high enough class for class tensions to become truly significant.

However, Colonel Baker was by some distance the most upper-class of all railway sexual offenders; as such, his class identity was a far more integral element in reports of his case. If we accept the prevailing view outlined above, we might expect Baker to be treated relatively leniently. The fact that his punishment was so severe led many to argue Baker had been made an example of, and punished disproportionately to protect the reputation of the Prince of Wales. In a widely-reprinted letter originally published in the *Morning Post*, Edward Sullivan argued that Baker’s sentencing had resulted in ‘class bitterness.’ From the exclusive surroundings of Grosvenor Place, Sullivan argued that the ‘permanent ruin’ faced by Baker was exceedingly harsh when compared to the 40s. fine imposed on James McPherson two weeks later for a similar offence, and that class bias in the courts was ‘not invariably on the side the agitators would have us believe’;[[513]](#footnote-513) tellingly, Sullivan had nothing to say about either the verdict or the potential ruin faced by Dickinson. Moreover, the fact that Baker’s sentence came without hard labour – a rarity for a long sentence – attracted comments that Baker had unjustly avoided a normal sentence; such articles, one purporting to be related by a police official, continued to appear well into Baker’s prison term.[[514]](#footnote-514) The case retained its power after Baker had served his sentence, with controversy over how he was almost readmitted into society before his death.[[515]](#footnote-515) The subsequent, temporary increase in the number of accusations reported following his conviction shown in Fig. 3.11 demonstrated how reports about high-profile cases impacted wider public awareness of such crimes, and are likely to have gone hand in hand with decisions to run more stories than would otherwise have been the case.

## **1881: the ‘Lefroy’ murder**

The last violent railway crime to truly dominate news media in the period was the murder of Isaac Gold by Percy ‘Lefroy’ Mapleton on the 27th of June, 1881. The amount of media interest generated by the murder, around 6,000 articles,[[516]](#footnote-516) was on a similar scale to the Muller case, and *The Telegraph* noted ‘a thrill of alarm and horror throughout the length and breadth of the land.’[[517]](#footnote-517) Again, the details of the murder itself were described minutely; the narrative of the journey before the incident even took place read like a sensational novel: ‘on Monday afternoon the Brighton express train steamed slowly out of Croydon Station, and in a first-class carriage were seated two persons, one an elderly gentleman, a London stockbroker, travelling back to his home at Preston - the other a murderer’[[518]](#footnote-518) Although – unlike with most violent railway crimes – no immediate prosecution could be brought in the initial absence of a suspect, *The Telegraph*’s leader did not hesitate to make assumptions about what had occurred. It described how Gold was ‘repeatedly stabbed, and that two shots were fired at him as well, this did not prevent him from making a determined struggle for his life… probably his assailant sprang upon him suddenly.’ It also, inevitably, compared to the crime to Muller’s, even deeming it to be more alarming, as ‘it was at night when Mr THOMAS BRIGGS was foully done to death’;[[519]](#footnote-519) Gold, in 1881, was murdered in broad daylight.

Unlike the Muller case, however, there was to be no panic about the danger of unknown killers in railway carriages, since a suspect was identified – though not apprehended – from the first. This was because, on the train in question, ‘a man was found in a first-class carriage apparently wounded and covered with blood. He gave his name as LEFROY.’[[520]](#footnote-520) Lefroy, whose real name was Percy Mapleton, was interviewed by a Sergeant Holmes before the body was found. Having given an account of being attacked by two men, ‘Lefroy’ was allowed to leave by the inauspiciously named Holmes, who was pilloried to varying degrees in the press after Lefroy vanished. Despite his real name being revealed to be Percy Mapleton, the press continued to refer to him as ‘Lefroy’, his middle name, which he had given as part of the false alias ‘Arthur Lefroy’ when first under suspicion. Imagining his thoughts as a stock character, desperate and on the run from the law:

What his feelings and thoughts may have been during the terrible interval since Monday week no human tongue could record. The pen of the novelist would fail adequately to depict the awful imaginings, the terror, the weakness, and, above all, the haunting sense of remorse to which a hunted assassin must always be subject.[[521]](#footnote-521)

At least one novelist’s pen had attempted something similar, albeit concerning a woman with a secret rather than a hunted killer. Mary Elizabeth Braddon, in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) wrote, ‘how many minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad to-day and sane to-morrow, mad yesterday and sane to-day’;[[522]](#footnote-522) such works influenced the approach writers took to narratives of violent railway crime, particularly Lefroy’s. The article also compared Lefroy’s presumed sense of guilt to ‘DICKENS'S ghastly account of the horror-haunted murder of NANCY in “Oliver Twist”.’[[523]](#footnote-523) Lefroy had become the main character of a powerful drama, more familiar than the 1864 murder.

While the Lefroy case was not regarded, as Muller’s had been, as ‘an experiment in crime’, counter-experiments in policing were common to both cases. The *Daily Telegraph* published the first composite picture ever seen in print,[[524]](#footnote-524) alongside one of its articles about the case, to aid police investigations [below, left]:

Fig. 3.12: ‘The Railway Tragedy’. *The Daily Telegraph*, 1/7/1881.

*The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL:

<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85hAM4>..

Fig. 3.13: ‘A New Hunting Game’. *Punch*, 16/7/1881*Punch Historical Archive*, URL:

<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85h490>.

The image was described as having ‘been attested as an excellent likeness by several persons with whom Lefroy came into close contact.’[[525]](#footnote-525) However, just below the same image in question three letters were also published purporting to be from Lefroy himself. The *Telegraph* appears to have been willing to help in the search by publishing the composite picture, but also willing to publish what could only be false accounts. The composite picture – likely aided by the letters – led to many men being mistaken for Lefroy and attacked. An image that appeared in *Punch* two weeks later [above, right] sniped that ‘the fancy portrait’ would result in innocents being ‘chevied for several days.’[[526]](#footnote-526) After Lefroy was tried, one editorial noted how unlikely his capture had seemed when ‘wrong LEFROYs were being arrested all over the country.’[[527]](#footnote-527)

More conventional public engagement with narratives of the case came in the form of letters. When they did not purport to be from Lefroy, however, they took a much calmer tone than the ink-and-paper storm of 1864. Many laid the responsibility at the doors of government and railway companies; however, dissenting opinions also saw print. Some remarked that there was no need for alarm, or indeed for saloon carriages. One letter from ‘A Traveller’ to *The Times* stated that these were ‘not as snug as the closed compartment’, and that ‘for night travelling there would not be the same convenience and seclusion, the latter quality being very dear to Britons’, also questioning whether there was ‘sufficient cause for alarm to bring about the alteration of a system where a murder occurs on a line perhaps once in ten years, or one in 100,000 travellers meets with death through accident?’[[528]](#footnote-528) Sentiments of this kind were not visible either in 1864 or in 1875, and spoke of a public that was both used enough to railway carriages to have developed customary habits using them, as well as guarding those habits jealously and having developed a certain level of confidence about their safety. This is supported by the relative lack of attention paid to the 1897 murder of Elizabeth Camp in the press, which is assessed below, and is likely – at least in part – to have been caused by increased familiarity with railway travel.

Before Lefroy was found after ten days, *The Times* had made the outlandish suggestion that, as ‘a Bohemian frequenter of stage purlieus… [Lefroy] would be likely to adopt female disguise.’[[529]](#footnote-529) While he evaded capture, attention also focused on clues and items of interest involved with the crime, just as it had with the two hats and the watch in the absence of Muller. The samearticle asked ‘whence came the pistol which was apparently the weapon of attack? What became of the bullets - for there were four or five shots in all - other than the two accounted for...? What was done with the pistol and the knife?’[[530]](#footnote-530) These unresolved questions were a way for articles to air both known and unknown details about the case, both of which continued to appear in great detail in almost every account. Lefroy was captured after the reward for information leading to his capture was raised to two hundred pounds, and ‘the walls of every town-hall and police-station in the country [bore] placards with descriptions and portraits of the murderer’.[[531]](#footnote-531) When arrested, Lefroy ‘admitted his identity… [which had been] established independently of his admission, but denied that he was guilty of the crime imputed to him.’[[532]](#footnote-532)

Editors took pains to note that ‘neither money nor Mr Gold's watch was found upon him’, that Lefroy was ‘perhaps the most notorious Englishman existing today’, and that ‘no murder which has occurred in [the previous few years] has produced such widespread consternation and such a deep feeling of abhorrence.’[[533]](#footnote-533) All of these mechanisms through which the news media reported the case had been seen in reports of Muller’s, as was the same sense of taking stock. *The* *Times* described how ‘men were comparing every stranger they met with the description circulated of LEFROY’, commenting how ‘his semi-gentlemanly appearance would make him more conspicuous in any low hiding-place.’[[534]](#footnote-534) A *Telegraph* editorial was keen to assess the historical significance of the case stating that ‘a murder case… in which a whole people is for ten days exclusively bent on hunting down the suspected man, is a thrilling public event which happens only about once in a century.’[[535]](#footnote-535) This sort of assessment was naturally aided by comparisons to Muller, ‘the case closest to the present’,[[536]](#footnote-536) as well as the parallels in the importance of circumstantial evidence to the two cases stating that ‘where passions and prejudice play a part, this class of evidence is the best’[[537]](#footnote-537) Interest in the case remained immense. A full-page article in *The Telegraph* recounted Lefroy’s train journey after his capture to East Grinstead Petty Sessions, condemning the fact that ‘so many persons along the line should have made a holiday of the procession’, and recounting how ‘no sooner did the train draw up to the platform [at Keymer Junction] than they clamoured around the carriage door, with imprecations and shouts of "Hang him!" "Tear him to pieces!"’[[538]](#footnote-538) Lefroy was examined and his case referred to the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey, with the following image depicting the East Grinstead Sessions:

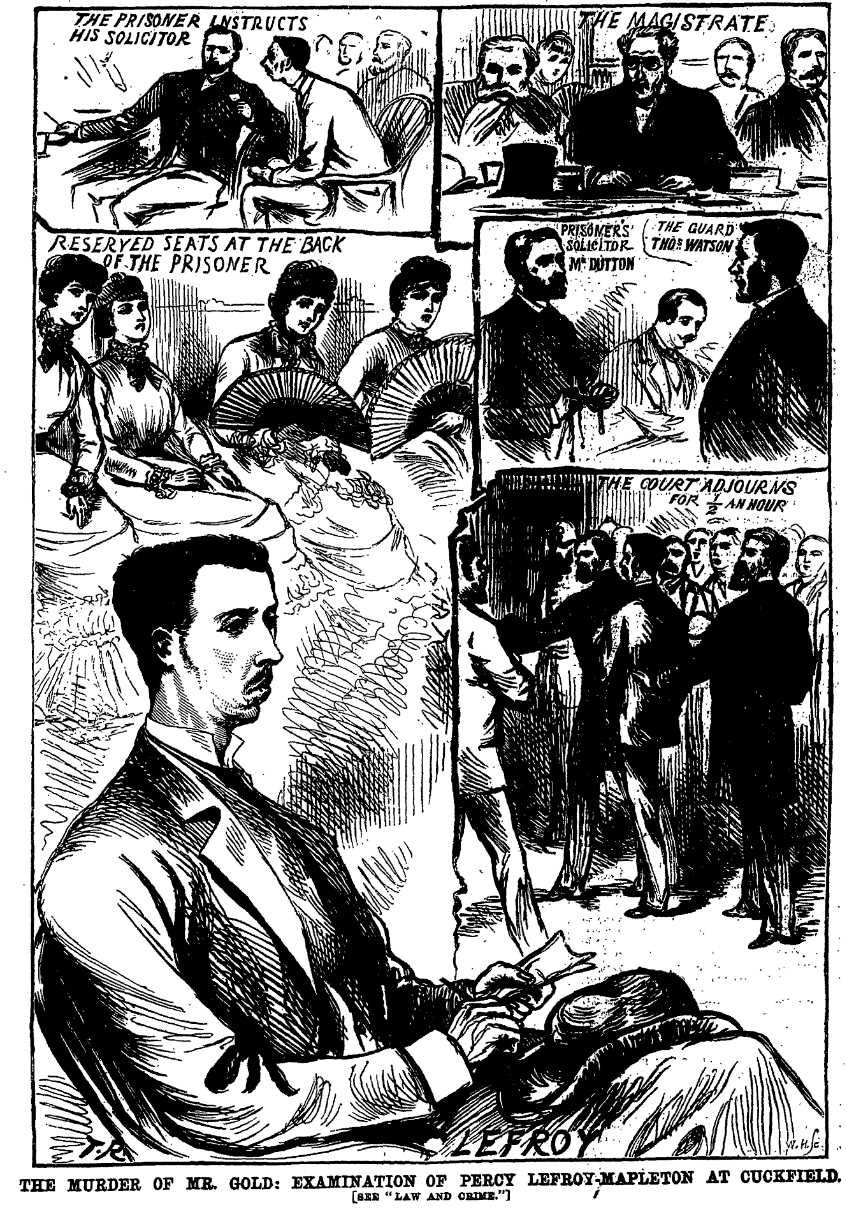


Fig. 3.14 ‘Law and Crime’, *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, 23/7/1881.

*British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/86Bot2.>

In the two months between the first and second hearings, attention began to focus on Lefroy’s character and behaviour. In an article containing the capitalised sub-heading of ‘EXISTENCE OF INSANITY IN THE PRISONER'S FAMILY’, an account of a man imprisoned with Lefroy for a time was recounted. *The Penny Illustrated Paper* revelled in the details the man supplied: of how comfortable the prison was, how ‘Lefroy was kept well supplied with hampers, and all sorts of luxuries’, and how “Cricket was our chief fun every day.’[[539]](#footnote-539) Lefroy had also expressed ‘a desire that the charge against him should be tried at the Old Bailey… the prisoner seems anxious to see the newspapers, which are supplied to him.’ When he was tried – at the Old Bailey – he was found guilty, with the trial receiving coverage just as voluminous as Muller’s. Shortly after the trial he confessed to having murdered Gold, but also made a false confession to the (non-railway) murder of a Lieutenant Roper the year before. This unexpected turn of events led to massive reporting as was seen in the *Telegraph*, which devoted six columns of densely packed print to the events, under the cascade of titles:

**LEFROY CONFESSES**

**THE MURDERS OF LIEUTENANT ROPER AT CHATHAM, AND MR GOLD**

**EXTRAORDINARY DETAILS**

**HOMICIDAL MANIA**

**REPRIEVE REFUSED**

**ANOTHER PETITION YESTERDAY**[[540]](#footnote-540)

This second confession soon transpired to be false, with Lefroy retracting it before his execution on the 2nd of November. While sensation still abounded in reports of the trial and execution, assessments of its significance were more circumspect. One editorial considered that two railway murders in seventeen years was enough to ‘comfort ourselves with the thought that such a character only appears once or twice in a generation, and is altogether abnormal’, and that ‘there need be no public panic about our railway carriages becoming the lurking-places of the secret assassin.’[[541]](#footnote-541) While certain subsequent cases did lead to heavy reporting, average numbers of reported offences – and average articles per offence – fell in the years and decades after the case.

Why did the cases of Muller, Nash, Baker and Lefroy have such a profound effect? To begin with, all four cases not only involved very serious offences, but, in the words of one article, were ‘surrounded by circumstances that seem more like the invention of a novelist than an actual occurrence.’[[542]](#footnote-542) In 1864 one commentator noted that:

from the eight or nine days after Mr BRIGGS was found dying on the railroad track, the accidental discovery of the clue to the supposed perpetrator of the deed, the long pursuit, and the final capture, the unusual interest shown in the case by the public is very intelligible.[[543]](#footnote-543)

The fact that all these cases took place in railway carriages was a large part of their ‘newsworthiness’. But while both Muller and Lefroy’s crimes resulted in similar amounts of media engagement, it was clear from reports that by the end of Lefroy’s case both press and public were in a different state of mind about violent railway crime in 1881 than in 1864. In the first days after Briggs was murdered, the *Telegraph* roared that ‘the inoffensive citizen is as exposed to the brigand and the assassin as he would be in Naples, Algiers, or South America’;[[544]](#footnote-544) at the conclusion of the Lefroy case, by contrast, it suggested that ‘it is at least a matter on which the public can congratulate themselves that the only two railway murderers of our time, FRANZ MULLER and PERCY MAPLETON LEFROY, have both been successfully hunted down and adjudged the due reward for their atrocious acts of blood.’[[545]](#footnote-545) The change in tone is palpable, and reflects a public that kept its appetite for narratives of violent railway crime, but lost the terror of the unknown that was characteristic of the first decades of railway use. Before Muller was identified, *The Telegraph* wrote that ‘there must be an end put to the absolute imprisonment, be it for a brief or a long period, which railway travellers endure. This is what everybody utters as he criticises the murder’,[[546]](#footnote-546) while *The Times* billed Muller’s capture and trial as a resolution to ‘the apprehension, which at one period had almost deepened into terror, lest society had no efficient protection against new forms of crime.’[[547]](#footnote-547)

By contrast, Lefroy’s case prompted morbid interest rather than outright panic. While the fact that the case took place in a railway carriage held a strong pull over reports of the Muller case throughout its twists and turns, the news media of 1881 sought a more complicated narrative than the dangers of railway travel. One article ground the murder in the middle of a presumed narrative that needed to be fleshed out, writing that ‘the mere narrative of how LEFROY murdered Mr GOLD... is subordinated in thought to the long mental process of corruption and the course of circumstances and events which led up to the final deed’, and that facts and details ‘are only in so far interesting as they explain the sin and the passion, the dark necessity and the nefarious desire.’[[548]](#footnote-548) While Muller’s case, with its hats, watches, pursuits and extraditions, was undoubtedly sensational, this approach rendered Lefroy a character in a psychological drama far more than the coverage in 1864 of Muller. As such, articles were keen to assess the growth in Lefroy’s moral deficiencies that had led to the murder, blaming ‘a perpetual, diseased love of self [for leading] his footsteps by slow degree toward the gallows’, and state how the crime had been ‘begotten of an insatiable egotism, as uncontrollable as the hunger of a wild beast.’[[549]](#footnote-549) Such statements, compounded by the reports questioning Lefroy’s sanity,[[550]](#footnote-550) reflect the growing fascination with secrecy, itself fuelled by the railway-supported boom in sensation fiction in earlier decades,[[551]](#footnote-551) and supports the shift in consumption of crime narratives labelled by Crone as going ‘From scaffold culture to the cult of the murderer.’[[552]](#footnote-552) The impression is that readers had grown used to reading about violent railway crime in the newspapers in much the same way that they had become used to travelling in railway carriages; although Lefroy’s case was shocking, it was shocking in way that had in 1881 become narratively familiar.

**Decline in Reporting**

We cannot, however, only take these four cases into account – no matter how long their shadow – when considering media focus on violent railway crime as a whole. In terms of the relationship between violent railway crime and the ‘news values’ discussed above, there are enough accounts of individual railway sexual assaults between 1830 and 1900 for us to employ more quantitative methods than much of the analysis above, and to attempt to identify the changing influences exerted on public opinions about crime, as well as the persistent ‘crime theme’ of violent railway offences. Although members of the public writing to newspaper editors are a good indicator of how influential a crime was, influence itself cannot be quantified as a matter of course. We can, however, assert that the more articles about a case, the more likely it was to be influential. The following chart shows the distribution of article numbers by ranking cases from left to right by the number of reports, illustrating the stark degree of interest in a small number of case cases in comparison to the interest in the majority:

Fig. 3.15: Distribution of 165 individual cases (161 sexual offences, 4 murder) in descending order (x-axis) from most-reported to least-reported by the number of published articles (y-axis). The solid line plots data from each case, dotted line denotes the trendline of that data. Legend on graph shows the value of the trendline and the R2 value (goodness of fit of data).

The overwhelmingly skewed nature of the data prompts several conclusions. Of the 20,036 available articles written about violent railway crime in the period, the four murders account for 81% (16,510), and the 161 sexual offences 19% (3,886). Of those sexual offence articles, the six most-reported cases garnered 67% of the total (2,585), with the 155 other offences accounting for 33% (1,301). The ten most-reported violent railway crimes in the period therefore accounted for 93.5% of all articles on the subject (18,735). Such a profoundly skewed distribution implies that only a few offences are likely to be reported upon to the extent required to bring about enough pressure to effect permanent change, in part to railway legislation and company practice, but most of all to cultural attitudes around railway travel.

However, it was only following the 1864 and 1875 moral panics that significant legislative and technological change to the railways came about, indicating that press attention about noteworthy cases was necessary for such change. Ultimately, this suggests that readers – although responsive to individual murder cases – became sufficiently used to railway travel over time to make news media reporting of later cases on railways less impactful. The second conclusion (which follows) is illustrated by the fact that murder reporting aligns with the patterns of sexual offence reporting; the goodness of fit for the data (the R2-value) is at a statistically significant level of 0.9501, and a p-value of 0.499. This indicates, if we consider the data in terms of King’s concept of a ‘crime theme’, that violent railway crime can be considered as a single category, rather than as two related but separate themes. The effect of murder trials on reports of sexual offences, such as the five sexual offence charges in 1881 following Gold’s murder, also support this conclusion.

Technological improvements in passenger safety on the railways were a direct consequence of news media reports in the period. There had already been some debate over locked doors before the 1860s (discussed below); Bradley notes that ‘Lockable doors also helped the railways to address the concerns of female passengers.’[[553]](#footnote-553) However, the level of reaction to the Nash case and the Muller murder led directly to the implementation of communication cords. When these devices were undergoing internal testing within railway companies, the government and the Board of Trade had to force the issue through a bill compelling railway companies to provide adequate means of communication between passenger and guard. The 1864 bill states that ‘great Evils have resulted, and the Safety of the whole Train and the Lives of the Passengers have been frequently imperilled’[[554]](#footnote-554) for the lack of communication. Such systems were only made compulsory by the Railways Regulation Act of 1868, and took decades to be implemented across even a majority of trains; however, the lines where they were first implemented were by far the most heavily used by passengers.[[555]](#footnote-555) Similarly, Baker’s conviction led to carriages being linked by corridor, allowing guards to access compartments more easily.[[556]](#footnote-556) Although there had been a long-running debate in the early years of the railways about the merits of locking carriage doors – the locked door was assumed to be safer by prevent passengers accidentally falling out of the new technology – the image of being locked in a compartment with a potential attacker changed public opinion over time; the Baker case was the catalyst for making the implementation of such a measure necessary, although many companies and lines still took decades to do so. Although historians of technology are keen to analyse new technologies for their effect on society, there have been no detailed studies of the effects of changes to technologies already in general use; technological changes to railway carriages were both the result of – and resulted in – profound change, since it is likely that such improvements played a part in reducing the number of violent crimes that took place.

There is considerable evidence to show that the improvements which were made following the Nash case were successful in reducing crime, and that the Baker case was a one-off in an overall downturn in reporting. To begin with, the Nash and Muller cases were crimes that railway companies were not prepared for, whereas in 1875 Dickinson ‘went to the bell to warn the guard, but found that it was broken’;[[557]](#footnote-557) although the technology did not work as intended, countermeasures against crimes were now in place. Moreover, the Muller and Nash cases took place in a reporting environment in which very few cases either happened, or else were reported on. The following graphs illustrates how railway sexual assault reporting had been dropping since well before 1875:

Fig. 3.16: Average monthly amount of railway sexual offence reports in news media, 1860-1880, **excluding** figures for Nash case (1864) and Baker case (1875), removed to account for skew of data.

The graph shows that even the biggest cases had a profound effect on reporting numbers even when articles specifically about them are excluded from analysis, with the averages of over 100 articles/month coming in the years they took place. It also shows that, although there were natural peaks and troughs in reporting, there was more railway sexual offence reporting in the 1860s (an average of 36 articles per month for the decade) than the 1870s (an average of 31 articles per month for the decade), despite the overall amount of articles produced rising. In this context Baker’s case seems an outlier, a throwback to the attitudes of the 1860s rather than a continuation. This assessment is supported by several aspects of the case. Baker was the individual of the highest social class to be tried for railway sexual offences, and the newsworthiness of his social position was only enhanced by his royal connections. The fact that the communication cord in Baker and Dickinson’s compartment did not work also suggests that the case was an outlier. Although Dickinson ringing the bell successfully would not have changed the fact that the assault took place, it demonstrates an increased awareness of communication technology on the railways, as well as an assumption that it would work. This in turn is likely to have discouraged the men who might have committed these offences, since they were primarily opportunistic crimes; the increase in offences taking place on the newly-developing London Underground during this period, which at the time did not have the safeguards present on the railways, supports this conclusion. This, and other factors, will be discussed in the following section, which examines the potential reasons for the downturn in railway sexual offence reporting.

After 1881, reports of violent railway crime continued the decline which the interest caused by the Baker and Lefroy cases had belied, shown in Fig. 3.2 and reproduced here:

Fig. 3.2 – Total number of railway sexual offences identified through GALE Primary Sources documents and mean number of articles per offence, 1838-1900.

The continuing normalisation of railway travel was the foremost reason for such a decline, combined with movement away from the court-reporting approach to crime news towards what was termed the ‘New Journalism’, associated with W.T. Stead’s editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 1880 and which was widely imitated in news media. The densely packed columns of verbatim court reports on railway offences did not sit well in the new print culture that tended larger headlines, more subheadings and increasing numbers of interviews.[[558]](#footnote-558) Even though titles such as the *Times* retained more established approaches, their ability to frame the topics of discussion in news media as a whole was affected by other papers doing things differently. Crime news often focused more on proactive, investigative reporting of criminality as a phenomenon rather than reactive reporting to offences tried in court. Nicholas Daly notes that both journalism and literature grew ‘more voluminous, diverse, and fragmented in [their] audiences’ in the later decades of the century,[[559]](#footnote-559) and that sensational railway journeys were profoundly encouraged and promoted by this shift, stating that by the 1890s ‘the railway/sensation connection had become familiar enough to be available for debunking’.[[560]](#footnote-560) Daly cites how Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Ernest* ‘fixes on the sensation novel and the railway as emblems of the mid-Victorianism to which he firmly waves goodbye from the platform, with tears of mirth rolling down his cheeks’.[[561]](#footnote-561)

The rapid expansion of news media in the 1850s had created a news environment that was perfect for reporting violent railway crime; however, it also kick-started the development of a popular press whose influence on reporting practices would ultimately exclude such reports. The *Illustrated Police News,* the *Penny Illustrated Paper* and *Illustrated Crime News* depicted crimes in a radically different way from the legal reports that had dominated the press. The *Illustrated Police News’* depictions of two railway sexual assaults – Alexander MacGregor’s 1870 assault on a nun, Sister Francis Colls (or Coles), and George Grice’s 1887 assault on Catherine Scragg – demonstrated the change in reporting modes by this time:

A picture containing text, person, outdoor, book

Description automatically generated

Fig. 3.17: ‘Aggravated assault on a Sister of Mercy’, *Illustrated Police News*, 19/3/1870. British Library Newspapers. URL:

<https://link-gale.com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/BA3200781724/GDCS?u=livuni&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=2ee7a502>

Fig. 3.18:‘The Savage Assault in a Railway Carriage’, *Illustrated Police News*, 3 Sept. 1887. British Library Newspapers, URL:

<https://link-gale-com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/BA3200805049/GDCS?u=livuni&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=68f6be68>

Graphic and dramatic images of assaults such as these were not printed in reports of earlier offences, reflecting changes in what was deemed acceptable for print. They also reflect a shift in focus, away from the judicial process and its accounts of events, and towards the moment of the offence itself. This shift was reflected, although less dramatically, in the accounts published in titles which were well-established and had written more euphemistically in prior decades. The *Morning Post’s* account of the ‘indecent assault’ – rather than the once-ubiquitous ‘outrage’ – on Sister Francis Colls mentioned how ‘her screams attracted the attention of the guard’, that ‘MacGregor had endeavoured to stifle her cries, by thrusting his hand into and putting his arm over her mouth’, and that ‘she tried to throw herself out of the train, but could not get the carriage door open’,[[562]](#footnote-562) all of which created a breathless narrative which had more in common with the *Illustrated Police News’* account rather than the reporting of years past.

However, although individual offences were reported more sensationally, the shift in the narrative focus of crime reporting that took place from the 1870s onwards led to fewer being reported overall, with fewer articles about those that were. Crime news came to take the form of articles by journalists rather than reports by lawyers, turning attention towards the scene of the crime and away from the courtroom. Moreover, sensationalist modes of reporting became more widespread over time, becoming adopted by ‘quality’ newspapers. W.T. Stead’s 1885 editorial campaign in the *Pall Mall Gazette* against child prostitution entitled ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon – in which Stead described the ease with which he had purchased a thirteen-year-old girl – is seen as the most prominent example of a change news media reporting. Crime news became proactive rather than reactive, with newspapers looking to lead moral crusades about issues which had escaped the gaze of the law. Railway sexual offences could not be reported on in this way; a journalist could only feasibly learn of a railway sexual offence after the perpetrator had been apprehended, and more often they were only reported on when tried in court. Moreover, while trials of railway sexual offences had been reliably newsworthy stories in the new press environment that followed the advances of the 1850s and 1860s, investigative journalism offered news media more control over the direction of their content, and over longer periods. Therefore, while previous changes in news media preferences had led to a rise in reporting of violent railway crime, subsequent changes led to its decline; although new reporting styles could be adapted to railway offences, they were much less good a fit for the new breed of more proactive, investigative journalists that superseded court reporters. Railway sexual assaults continued to happen, and continued to be reported to a lesser extent, but not with anything like the same interest as they had been before 1880.

These shifts must also be considered alongside the improvements in technology made on the railways in response to the Nash and Baker cases which made it likely that at least a certain amount of cases were prevented. News media also began to produce more foreign news from the 1880s onwards; crime reports faced more competition for column inches, not only due to an increased focus on foreign news, but more importantly from other domestic crime news, in particularly the Whitechapel murders. We might expect the Ripper murders to have provoked increased reporting of railway sexual offences, since they were both violent crimes with a sexual element committed against women in public spaces. However, given the degree to which the murders dominated the press, it is likely that there was simply no demand among news editors for similar crimes to murder when they could report on murders themselves. This was now a news climate which could no longer support a high reporting level for railway offences. While increased familiarity with railway travel had resulted in more reporting, the continuation of that normalising process inevitably engendered less of it, particularly when considered alongside the coalescing of several other factors such as changes in print cultures and technology, railway safety measures, and heightened competition for space in print, all of which led to reductions in reporting.

Although there were fewer reports of railway sexual assault after Baker, offences were still reported in the press. Occasional peaks in reporting of railway sexual offences also took place; however, these peaks came in the wake of other, non-railway events that dominated the press at one time or another and dragged coverage of similar crime types with it; crime news, in effect, had moved on. This can be seen in a rise in reported cases following W.T. Stead’s publication of ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ in July 1885, as well as that caused by the last violent railway crime we consider in the period, the unsolved murder of Elizabeth Camp on a train in 1897. The 1885 reporting was a result of Stead’s editorials in *The Pall Mall Gazette* in July creating a small moral panic, during which five railway sexual offences were reported in the few months that followed, more than we would expect given overall trends for the period. One of these, the case of James Hewitson and Mary Ellen Finigan, was compared directly to Stead’s articles on account of the complainant being 11 years old; the Bench stated that it was ‘a very imprudent thing of [Finigan’s mother] to allow such young children to travel alone by themselves in an excursion train, and especially when so much had been heard of late about outrages of the kind that had been attempted.’[[563]](#footnote-563)

## **1897: the Murder of Elizabeth Camp**

The last crime considered in this analysis illustrates how much reporting changed over the second half of the century. The murder of Elizabeth Camp attracted significantly less attention in news media than other murders in the period[[564]](#footnote-564) – particularly given the continued expansion of the press towards the end of the century – with less attention given to it than the Baker case of 1875. Reports of the case appeared in newspapers for just under three months –around half the time of the Muller and Lefroy cases – because it remained unsolved, with no new narrative emerging. However, this does not entirely explain the decreased interest in the case, since even month for month the murder of Camp attracted less attention than the cases examined above.

Furthermore, coverage of the murder demonstrated the changes that reporting had undergone in the period, managing to be more sensational whilst simultaneously much less anxious; any feelings of fear it spawned were limited to “’the rapidity with which the deed was done’[[565]](#footnote-565) – the train had not travelled for more than five minutes on the journey – rather than any concern about the safety of railway travel in general. The details of the crime were described in the same amount of detail as the offences of previous decades; Camp’s body was found stuck under a seat at Waterloo in a second-class carriage, having been violently attacked. The media focus on the probable narrative of the offence was evident: ‘the deceased apparently sat with her back to the engine. Her assailant probably first hit her a blow on the forehead, partially stunning her.’[[566]](#footnote-566) The articles outlining the murder often appeared under an array of bold titles, such as in one paper:

**BARMAID MURDERED**

**IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE**

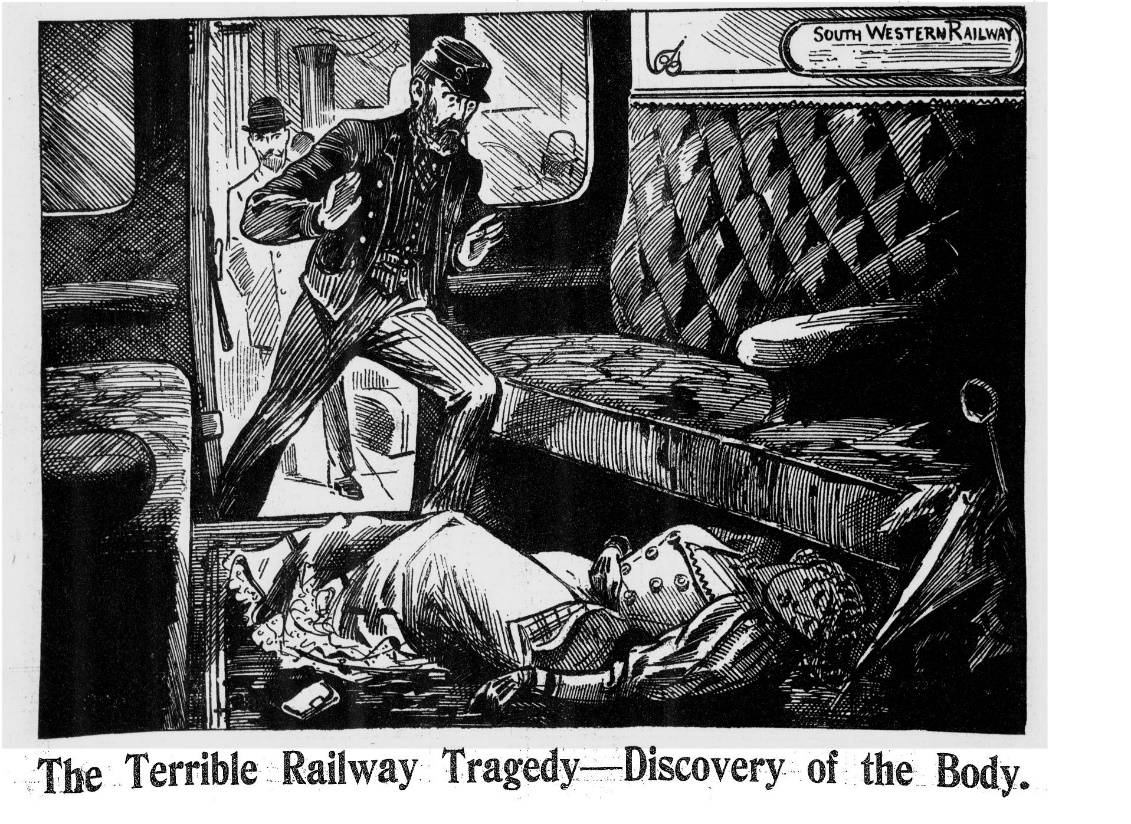
**HORRIBLE DISCOVERY AT WATERLOO**

**THE MURDERER MISSING**

**WHAT THE VICTIM'S LOVER SAYS**

**YESTERDAY'S DETAILS**[[567]](#footnote-567)

Highly dramatized artistic representations of the murder were also published, which demonstrated Camp’s ‘victim capital’ as young, beautiful and thus susceptible to assault, heightened by the dramatic nature of her discovery:



‘The Terrible Railway Tragedy-Discovery of the Body’,

*Illustrated Police News*, 20 Feb. 1897.

*British Library Newspapers*, URL:

http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/86NTJ6.

Although Camp’s murder generated less interest than the killings of Briggs and Gold, it was still responsible for an upsurge in reports of sexual offences, in part because the murder had been of a woman. Eight cases were reported in the six months after Camp’s murder, the same total as the previous four years combined. Reports on these offences often referred to the murder case. In the trial of Joseph Nolan for assaulting Amy Guard, Guard stated that ‘she had discussed the murder on the S.W.R with the defendant’;[[568]](#footnote-568) in a case a few weeks later, Thomas Horrigan was alleged by Elsie Morgan to have said ‘I will not serve you the same as Miss Camp, the barmaid, but I will throw you onto the metals.’[[569]](#footnote-569) when she resisted him. One commentator described

something like a panic among lady travellers on the line identified with the murder of Miss Camp… a number of cases [occurred] in which females have hastily left the carriages upon the entrance of a male passenger… in one carriage no fewer than eleven ladies were crowded together, while in the next compartment sat a solitary male, and he only a lad of about sixteen.[[570]](#footnote-570)

However, the article described the incident as ‘a sight which would have been wholly humourous had it not been partly pathetic’,[[571]](#footnote-571) an indication of how, while there was still fear about railway travelling in the wake of violent railway crime, there was no longer the prospect of a media-fuelled moral panic.

The Camp case also prompted significantly fewer letters than for previous offences, with many of those that were printed re-airing previously heard arguments on saloon carriages, rather than seeing the case as requiring new innovations. The new development in public engagement with the issue was, perversely, *lack* of public engagement with the issue. One letter argued that ‘public opinion - mistaken opinion - compels the continuance of small and completely inclosed compartments’,[[572]](#footnote-572) before concluding that because of the lack of any changes, better communication between guard and passenger was the solution. Blomfield Jackson, chaplain at King’s College London, wrote to *The Times* about how ‘variations on the theme of Muller, Lefroy, Baker, this last horror on the South-Western’ were simply viewed as ‘another railway outrage.’ Blaming a forgetful public, Jackson wrote:

When Muller stood under the beam he whispered, as I remember myself hearing the German Chaplain narrate, "*Ich habe es gethan*" [“I have done this”]. The confession might be more truly couched in a wide plural…"*Wir haben es gethan*" [“We have done this”]. Where are the comparative statistics of railway crime on lines at home and abroad where there are large open carriages and a means of passage for a guard from end to end of the train?[[573]](#footnote-573)

Such comparisons notwithstanding, the sentiment of these letters – while faulting both government and railway officials – laid ultimate responsibility for railway safety in the hands of a public ‘so contented with things as they are’.[[574]](#footnote-574) One of the last letters on the subject was a reprint of a communication between a Board of Trade official and a railway official, stating that ‘the Board have been in communication with the leading railway companies on the matter [and that] some of the companies are bringing corridor trains into use... others are building saloon carriages in the place of the old pattern. The question is one of much difficulty.’[[575]](#footnote-575) This attitude was resented but ultimately understood by a more railway-conscious and more economically conscious public than could have been the case in previous decades.

As referred to above, part of the lack of interest in Camp’s case was because it remained unsolved, with news media starved of new developments. As again had been the case in previous narratives of railway murder, interest soon focused on unusual clues that surfaced during the case. In this instance, there was only one clue – the murder weapon, a large chemist’s pestle, thrown out of the carriage window. Its discovery was described as a result of police having moved up the line [and] finding… a chemist's pestle with blood and hair on it.’[[576]](#footnote-576) While many news media articles and letters were devoted to the unusual murder weapon, the find was not able to move the case forward; neither was the find of a blood-stained ticket, sent to London for analysis.[[577]](#footnote-577) For a time, the lack of progress in the case was itself newsworthy; writers stated that “the pestle is not turning out so good a clue as was first supposed [because] Mortars wear out more quickly than pestles",[[578]](#footnote-578) and that, much like the mistaken arrests in the Muller and Lefroy cases twenty instances of pestles having been sold to suspicious-looking people have been investigated by the detectives, but the weapon on the railway still remains unrecognised.’[[579]](#footnote-579) In much the same way that mortars wear out more quickly than pestles, interest in the Camp murder wore out more quickly than that in previous cases. After four days, one editorial gloomily noted that ‘the assassin would appear to have a good chance of permanently cheating the gallows’;[[580]](#footnote-580) another wrote that ‘the dread now rapidly gains ground that the murder... will remain for all time yet another of London's unsolved mysteries.’[[581]](#footnote-581) The indications are that the police were of the same opinion. After the coroner’s inquest, the railway companies decided, on consideration, against offering a substantial reward for information, stating that such approaches had been counter-productive in the past.[[582]](#footnote-582) This contrasted with both the Muller and Lefroy cases, in which a reward was offered almost immediately, and had in both cases resulted in the culprit being identified or captured.

To sustain flagging interest in the case, articles and editorials often suggested, both subtly and overtly, that the murder had a sexual element. Although it was reported soon after the murder that there was ‘not the slightest indication that she had been indecently assaulted or outraged’,[[583]](#footnote-583) the implication of a widely-reproduced interview with Camp’s sister, Mrs. Haines, as well as many comments and asides, was that the crime had not been motivated by material gain. Articles suggesting either a sexual motive, or indeed a possible suspect, are those which comment most favourably and at most length on Camp's appearance. *The* *Times*, which never suggested a sexual motive, reported that Camp was ‘33 years of age… strong and well-built, and weighed 13 st.’,[[584]](#footnote-584) while others reported her as ‘having an extremely good figure, and… very good looking’ and ‘a fine young woman, of dark complexion.’[[585]](#footnote-585) The former made no allusion to a potential suspect, but the latter referred, without naming him, to a former admirer of Camp, Mr. Browne, who would later sue several less cautious newspapers for libel. The way the press reported on the case gives the impression that editors were trying to drum up demand with less than adequate supply of sensation; as such, much of it feels manufactured, as was the case in the account describing how the “police [were], Mrs Haines says, **looking for her husband**’; this last phrase was written in bold and placed as a sub-heading in-text to catch the eye. The article, however, immediately went on to say that ‘this should not be understood to mean that they have any intention of arresting Mr Haines when they find him.’[[586]](#footnote-586) After the coroner’s inquest finally declared the case closed, the only other press interest in the case, besides a smattering of reports in October in which stories of a potential ‘Madman from Penzance’[[587]](#footnote-587) quickly proved unfounded, were the two successful libel suits brought by Browne and another witness, Thomas Stone, against, variously, *The People*, *The Sun*, *The News of the World*, the Press Association, and sixteen regional newspapers.[[588]](#footnote-588) Commenting on the case, the bench stated, in much the same way as court officials had talked about railways in past cases, that ‘newspapers had ample protection for themselves, and they ought not to publish injurious statements without adequate inquiry.’[[589]](#footnote-589) The article printed immediately below it, without referring to the murder, nonetheless indicates how the world had moved on. It described a phenomenon ‘gradually and quietly making itself an accustomed sight in the streets of London.’ The title of the article was ‘MOTOR DUST CARTS’.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has approached violent railway crime at a scale not previously attempted. Sexual offences and murders that took place on railways were heavily reported and provided a vehicle for public fears about railway travel to be expressed in news media, and this was particularly true for offences in carriages. As usage of and familiarity with railways increased, news media coverage of railway sexual offences and murders came to dominate representations of railways which connected them to crime, with articles reflecting the presumption that members of the public ought to feel safe when travelling on railways. Both railway travel and reports of violent railway crime became more and more normalised over time; each process was in turn integral to the relationship between conceptions of crime and the railways at different stages of their existence as a technology. When the experience of passengers was an unfamiliar component of railway travel, reporting levels were negligible. As that experience became more familiar, the threat of crime piqued both media and public interest, but as the process of normalisation continued, that interest died down. The detailed nature of reporting has meant that the long-term dynamics of reporting violent railway offences over time can be laid bare. Reports and articles reveal the geographical bias towards reporting cases in London and the South, and biases towards reporting on offences taking place in first-class carriages rather than second- or third-class. They also show how offences reported took place predominantly in hours of darkness, corroborating contemporary outcries about the lack of lighting in carriages.

The chapter’s case studies show that the few cases which were most heavily reported had a much larger impact than all the other cases combined. The Muller murder and Nash sexual assault of 1864 provoked such strong reactions that reporting caused a moral panic, as did the case of Colonel Baker in 1875, which ultimately led to safety regulations being enacted in law. The 1881 ‘Lefroy’ murder was also heavily reported, but while it garnered strong media interest, it also reflected more general changes in news media that meant violent railway crimes were less likely to be reported. From the 1860s onwards we have seen how editorial shifts away from cases heard in court towards more investigative reporting took place alongside the implementation of safety measures in carriages. While papers and readers would continue to respond to more dramatic incidents, reporting of violent railway offences fell consistently towards the end of the century, reflecting how the ongoing process of normalisation around railways extended both to railway travel and to railway crime news.

# **Conclusion**

The changes and instabilities that railways brought to life and society in nineteenth-century Britain inevitably made readers receptive to negative characterisations of them in news media. This thesis has shown how influential news media narratives about crime were in shaping perceptions of the railways, having assessed news media crime reporting on nineteenth-century railway construction, companies, and travel. Many accounts of Victorian railways, and Victorian Britain in general, have represented them as avatars of the progress made by Victorian society, without properly engaging with the changes and trends in contemporary representations and perceptions of them as a changing institution. This thesis shows that attitudes to railways changed to the greatest degree at times when news media coverage linking them to crime, immorality, or scandal. When seen in this context, the normalisation process of how people became used to railways in the period had to contend with, and overcome, their connections with crime.

The thesis has examined the changing news media representations of railways and crime, with emphasis on how news media were selective in their focus, and upon how the newsworthy themes which determined that selectiveness change over time. While the contents of the thesis’ chapters overlap, they nonetheless present a chronological thread about how the railways developed over time, both as an industry and as a perceived phenomenon. The use of recently-available digital resources is integral to each chapter. The millions of news media articles and sources digitised and available in databases such as GALE Primary Sources can be assessed in numbers not feasible via traditional archival research; moreover, they can be coded, captured in databases and their patterns assessed to understand long-term dynamics of change that are impossible to perceive without such methods. However, quantitative research has its limitations when assessing an inherently subjective phenomenon such as news media interest and perception. Moreover, however large the GALE database is, it still represents only a fraction of surviving newspaper editions. As such, this thesis has had to dig into the sheer mass of data to pull out key patterns and examples. By using quantitative analysis to identify key patterns and representative examples which have then undergone qualitative analysis, it takes a comprehensive view of public debates, perceptions, and representations of railway-related crime.

The earliest connections between the railways and crime in news media tended to focus on the perceived threats to land and communities which accompanied the years of heaviest railway construction, particularly new railway construction (discussed in Chapter One). The lack of experience and understanding of railways and their effect on society in this early period meant that opposition to them was broader in focus than in later years, as were depictions of railways which linked them with criminality or immorality. However, while there were many articles, letters and reports focusing on the railways’ potential effect on the physical, moral, or spiritual health of the nation in general, most opposition to railway construction came in the form of reactions either to railway accidents or to violence committed by railway construction workers. Other histories have represented these workers and coverage of them through the prism of generalised, largely anti-Irish stereotyping. Such stereotypes were most common in accounts which dealt not with specific individuals but with a generalised view of ‘the navvy’, with accounts of specific offences which took place at the time of railway construction being more likely to treat railway workers even-handedly. Railway accidents, however, were treated somewhat more consistently over time, remaining extremely newsworthy and serving as a consistent method of attacking the presumed greed of railway directors; the overarching theme of apportioning responsibility to railway directors would continue.

After large-scale investment in the newly-constructed and projected railways in the 1840s led to subsequent market crashes, attacks upon directors became far more explicit, characterising railway management and finance as criminal and unethical (Chapter Two). In particular, the 1845 Railway Mania and national economic crisis that followed led investors and papers to suspect railway directors as perpetrators of fraudulent behaviour. Often this behaviour was definitively criminal, such as in the cases of the most famous railway magnates of the period. Coverage of railway impresarios such as George Hudson and Samuel Morton Peto turned them into public figures whose initial celebrity and subsequent ignominy far outstripped what had been normal for men in their position. However, while coverage of celebrity directors was the most visible aspect of the reporting dynamic around railway financial crime, many other factors contributed to the reporting environment in which it evolved. Legal decisions in favour of directors following the Railway Mania – some of which, such as *Walstab vs Spottiswoode*,[[590]](#footnote-590) had reversed prior decisions– aided the amalgamation process towards large companies led by impresarios who accumulated smaller, local companies to survive. This not only accelerated the transformation of directors such as ‘The Railway King’, George Hudson, into national figures, but also drove the growing anti-director focus of media representation. Influenced by this and other factors, representations and perceptions of railway finance, ownership and management saw the entire profession being tainted by association with financial crime and immoral greed in subsequent decades. Owing to the unprecedented levels of investment, railways were more crucial to the specifics of financial crime, and to how it was carried out, than they were to all the other types of crime examined in this thesis. Often hindered by their complexity and legal novelty, representations of financial crime in news media often focused on supposed motives rather than the mechanics of offences. In practice, this meant the demonisation of railway directors, particularly those such as Hudson and Peto.

The study’s last chapter examined perceptions of violent crimes committed against railway travellers. As railway travel became more common and more familiar, violent incidents in railway carriages started to garner more attention in news media. While violent incidents were in themselves highly newsworthy, they also led to articles, reports and letters blaming the greed of directors for such incidents, in the same way as seen in the previous two chapters. Of all violent crimes, murder and sexual offences attracted by far the most attention in news media, and more than any other individual offence type examined in this thesis, although the Railway Mania as a single phenomenon attracted more still. Sexual offences were more frequent, and murders were more impactful on public debate. Sexual offences in railway carriages consistently attracted attention, particularly those involving railway workers or attackers in positions of authority. The image of the unknown attacker in a carriage with no escape possible meant that sexual offences – whether they followed this pattern or not – were extremely newsworthy, particularly to a public which had begun to treat railway travel as routine rather than novel. However, the coverage of the first railway murder in 1864 dwarfed prior news media attention, and the patterns of reporting of violent interpersonal offences in the period indicate that six incidents – the four confirmed railway murders and the Nash and Baker sexual offence cases – accounted for most of news media coverage of all violent railway crime in the period, with the murder of Elizabeth Camp being reported upon the least by a significant margin.

Each chapter deals, in different ways, with a different threat that ‘the railways’ presented to a presumed right to safety; even when dealing with the newsworthy threat of the unknown assailants of Chapter III, blame was still laid at the door of railway directors, just as it had in the reporting described in Chapters I and II. As railways became more established entities over the course of the century, the normalisation process around them diminished their news value. This also combined with the shift in print culture – identified by Aled Jones and Joel Wiener – towards more diverse titles, and therefore newer modes of crime reporting.[[591]](#footnote-591) this marked a turning point for reporting of railway crime from around 1870, with a news environment much more focused on investigative approaches than trial reporting. There were also many different individual ways that such reporting and reception of it over the period could change; even considering the constant state of flux and development that news media itself was undergoing in this period, letters and reports suggest that the sensitivity of readers to coverage of violent railway crime changed over time. The normalisation process around railway travel rendered audiences sensitive to violent offences, but as the shock of such offences diminished, and experiences of safe travel increased, coverage also died down, likely aided by falls in offence numbers following tardily implemented improvements to carriage security.

This thesis also argues that changes in how railway crime was reported upon and perceived could often have as much to do with factors beyond the offences and types of crime being reported upon, the largest of which were changes in news media and to railways themselves. As a developing technology, railways were constantly subject to change, which often took place very quickly: as businesses they were constantly raising capital and constructing or applying to construct lines, purchasing other companies or opposing their rivals; railway legislation and Parliamentary Railway Committees came to be a permanent fixture of official business; and technological development and iteration continued apace, although not always accompanied by implementation of what had been developed. The news media industry saw similarly dramatic reforms and changes, particularly in the middle decades of the century, with the repeal of stamp and advertising duty and falling printing costs contributing to increased amounts of newsprint that grew at a similar pace to railway lines. This led to news media reporting reflecting the new landscape, with ‘news values’ changing as a result. The developing ideas of ‘the criminal’ and ‘the criminal classes’ as identified by Victor Bailey and Martin Wiener meant that the upsurge crime reporting which railway crime contributed to was likely to be a victim of its own success.[[592]](#footnote-592) The demand for investigative and ‘New Journalism’ trends in crime reporting during the second half of the century were underpinned by how constructions of crime, criminality and criminals that derived from the trial-based crime reporting that they replaced, leaving even fewer avenues for railway crime to appear in print.

Chapter III’s examination of changes in crime reporting shows how reports of offences tried in court dominated in early decades, before later titles moved towards sensationalism and ‘New Journalism’, with the sense of what and how things could or could not be reported was always shifting. These wider influences all fed into each other, together with broader dynamics originating beyond railways, news media or crime. The economic booms and busts that drove the railways in the 1830s and 1840s, assessed in Chapter II, reflected both the sense of possibility of the age but also its sense of inherent instability, with attacks on individuals and directors following the fallout of the Railway Mania becoming a fixed trope. All this took place against a background already established by the events examined in Chapter I, which shows how representations of railway workers and railway accidents mirrored the changing interactions between, and attitudes towards, different groups in society. While complex, this thesis shows that public and media responses to railways depended upon far more factors than typically acknowledged in prior research, and that those responses became a nexus for debates about both railways and crime.

The wider implications of the findings of this study impact on several different fields. Its most significant impact is on our understanding of railways, showing how their development was heavily bound up both in general reporting, such as reports on company activity or advertisements selling shares, and that which specifically connected them with crime. The news media contribution to the developments of Railway Mania and to George Hudson’s career played a large part in shaping how railways would develop. While directors and boards of railway companies were still attacked in the press, the Hudson model of the publicity-seeking impresario financier gave way to more faceless public personas in the years of amalgamation following 1846. Lastly, reporting on violent crimes in carriages led to the introduction of safety systems whose implementation had been resisted for many years.

This also impacts our understanding of news media in the period; with railways being mentioned in almost a quarter of all articles, and railway crime in a substantial proportion of those, the events and offences assessed here were one of the ongoing themes which helped drive the growth and practices of news media in the century. Most of all, such reporting laid the foundations for news media relationships with directors of large and powerful corporate entities. Reactions against railway directors and management is the central thread runs through this study. The normalisation process around railways led to the newsworthiness of each type of offence or offender lessening over time. Railway accident reporting is an exception to this – its news value did not change, but the news media outlook on accident reporting did. Initially accidents were greeted primarily with shock, then, in the 1840s and onwards, anger at those perceived as responsible came to dominate, before then shifting back again to one of shock at the disaster. Yet news media coverage of railway offences and events was consistent in its constant references to railway directors’ greed. However often or not this was the case, this marked tendency indicates that power over the railways was viewed as belonging solely to directors, rather than the government or any other authority; when the government was blamed in such coverage, it was either for its inaction in legislating against directors, or else for being overly comprised of railway directors itself.

Railways occupied a unique position by being massive, highly visible ventures undertaken wholly with and for the acquisition of private capital – indeed, the society that produced them could not have done otherwise. Yet they quickly came to be viewed – to a greater or lesser extent – as something which contributed to the public good, with the rights of the wider public of travellers taken as read, at least to some degree. Corporate greed would consequently always be a potential motive around which news media representations of railway-related offences could be framed. For accounts relating railway construction to crime, companies and by extension directors were depicted as endangering the nation by digging it up to build lines, endangering its health by facilitating the rapid travel of large, noisy engines, often resulting in accidents, and disrupting its communities by deploying supposedly criminal railway workers up and down the country. Accounts of financial crime, particularly around the Railway Mania, focused on what was felt to be immoral and illogical greed that drove railway investment, and the duplicity of the railway elite in accruing that investment. When the railway bubble burst, coverage attacked individual directors such as Hudson and Peto, but just as often focused on ‘the director’ as a stock figure of criminality. Lastly, the surging number of reports on violent railway crimes turned to the same trope of directorial greed as the cause of highly emotive murders and sexual offences, arguing that these could have been prevented had innovations in safety been implemented, and blaming cost-cutting as the predominant reason that they were not. Reactions to railway crime in the nineteenth century are the first real example in British history of truly widespread public anger over what would today be termed corporate greed. This is supported by Sarah Wilson, who identifies the 1840s railway boom and the perceived failure to hold anyone accountable for it as ‘The Victorian Discovery of Financial Crime’.[[593]](#footnote-593) She identifies works written by D. M. Evans and others in the 1850s in response to railway company investment as the crucial formative experience for Victorian conceptions of fraud, leading to three major (non-railway) prosecutions for fraud between 1850 and 1880. Although financial malpractice existed well before the railways, the investment structures made possible after the deregulatory Acts of the 1820s led to financial crime becoming associated with directors of companies in general in news media, rather than specific individuals.

Drawing these conclusions has required new methods of locating and examining contemporary sources. Heavy use has been made of the GALE and British Newspaper Archive collections, and of methodological approaches involving quantitative methods for identifying long-term trends in reporting on themes for which there are large volumes of data. The more manageable amounts of data involved in Chapter III’s analysis of violent railway crime build even further on this. By collating many highly granular variables about individual offences from individual articles for database analysis, its analysis allows for insights about reporting phenomena in the long-term that cannot be studied – or even detected – through traditional qualitative methods. When used in conjunction with them, the quantitative approach adopted here should be able to provide insights into any crime (or other event) that was consistently reported upon in historical news media, particularly in the middle period of the century when court reporting dominated crime news.

While this is an advance over previous research, subsequent research will advance further. If this study had begun rather than finished in 2023, even more methods and resources would be available. The advances in digitisation of news media that made this study possible at all has continued apace, both for existing datasets such as GALE Primary Sources and the British Newspaper Archive, and with newer databases such as the recent work undertaken by FindMyPast working in tandem with the British Library. The sheer quantity of digitised papers, and coverage of what was originally published, has increased dramatically. Moreover, the possibilities offered by new methods are also expanding. Future research will be able to use approaches and techniques involving data mining, machine learning and topic modelling both to understand larger-scale topics, such as those covered in the more general quantitative analysis in Chapters I and II, to a similar, in all probability greater degree of accuracy as carried out in Chapter III, and to more fine-tuned linguistic analysis of newspaper reports, although this would require either better quality OCR or new ways of addressing OCR errors.

Many works have been quick to reclaim technology for cultural history by highlighting how the ‘story’ of a technology can be viewed through the prism of contemporary culture.[[594]](#footnote-594) These works seldom acknowledge that representations of technology do not just reflect its story, but *become* that story. I would therefore suggest that historical studies of railways, and of other emerging technologies, should always consider representations and perceptions of those technologies as an integral part of the process of their innovation and use. It is a common historical phenomenon: new things are invented and many people feel threatened by the unfamiliar development. Over time they become used to technology and its benefits through by using it or being exposed to it via media representations, but that sense of threat returns when things go wrong. The magnification of that threat in the press shapes changes in the technology itself, as with the adoption of communication cords later in the century. Crime has and will always exist, and narratives connecting crime with new technologies – as they did with nineteenth-century railways – will always be able to bring audiences back to the sense that something has gone deeply wrong and shape future developments.

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# **Appendix: List of search terms**

This appendix consists of a list of search terms used in the thesis, with synonyms grouped together. All search terms made use of options for Boolean searching, variant spellings, and fuzzy searching as far as was able on GALE Primary Sources, to most accurately assess or estimate article numbers for specific terms or incidents for given time periods. The terms below are generally combined with Boolean commands such as AND or OR for analysis and visualisation.

**General**

Railway/railroad/rail

Crime/criminal

Outrage

Director/board/owner

Ireland

War

Reform

Parliament

**Chapter I**

Railway/railroad/rail

Crime/criminal

Worker/work

Labour/labourer

Navvy/Navigator

Irish

Drink/alcohol/spirits

Violent/violence/assault/affray

Director/board/owner

Accident/disaster/smash

Huskisson/William Huskisson

Negligent/negligence

Fatal/death/dead

Theft/thief

**Chapter II**

Railway/railroad/rail

Crime/criminal

Fraud/embezzlement

Scandal/outrage

Mania

Stock/scrip/share

Investor/investment

Director/board/owner

Hudson/George Hudson/Railway King

Denison/Edmund Denison

Huish/Mark Huish

Redpath/Leopold Redpath

Peto/Morton Peto/Samuel Morton Peto

Overend/Gurney/Overend Gurney

**Chapter III**

Note: All of the 170+ offences collated into this chapter’s database and assessed in quantitative analysis involved specific searching once an offence had been identified. As such, in addition to the broader search terms below, specific searches involving the names of complainants, defendants and places of reported offences were used to gauge the numbers of articles as much as possible.

Railway/railroad/rail

Crime/criminal

Carriage

Murder

Outrage/Indecent/Violation

Rape

Violent/Violence

Assault/attack/attacker

Lady/woman

Scandal

1. K. T. Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?: England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. D. Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906* (London, 2018), p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid*., p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Works include: D. Brandon, *London and the Victorian railway* (Stroud, 2010); J. Cattell and K. Falconer, *Swindon: the legacy of a railway town* (Swindon, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Works on specific companies are vast in number. Many address the biggest companies, such as C.G. Maggs, *A History of the Great Western Railway* (Stroud, 2015) and P. Atterbury, *LNER: The London and North Eastern Railway* (London, 2018), but many more focus on smaller lines, either individually [M. Bairstow, *The 'Little' North Western Railway* (Leeds, 2000)] or divided by company over many volumes [D. Thomas, H.P. White et. al., *A Regional History of The Railways of Great Britain* (16 volumes, Newton Abbot, 1960-1996)]. By contrast, research on railway police forces is curiously lacking, with titles such as Nigel Wier, *The Railway Police* (Indiana, 2011) and R. Stacpoole-Ryding, *The Railway Policeman’s Casebook* (Stroud, 2016) being almost wholly uncritical and badly dated. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Railway construction workers were and are often described as ‘navvies’, although technically ‘navvy’ referred only to the navigators who built the railway line itself. For more discussion see Chapter I. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Anthony Burton, *Navvies* (Stroud, 2012); Ultan Cowley, *The men who built Britain: the history of the Irish navvy* (Dublin, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. S. Bradley, *Railways: Network, Nation, People* (London, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London, 2009), p. 371-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. J. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (London 2015; 1st edn London, 1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. M. Esbester, K. Baker et. al., <https://www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/>; and M. Esbester,, ‘Digital Disasters: Crowdsourcing the railway accident’, in D. Turner (ed.), *Transport and its Place in History:* *Making the Connections* (London, 2020), pp. 207-228. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Such as J. Gardner, *The First British Railway Murder* (Brighton, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Works include: D. Brandon, *Blood on the Tracks: A History of Railway Crime in Britain* (2017); M. Holgate, *Murder & Mystery on the Great Western Railway* (Wellington, 2011); A.V. Sellwood and M. Sellwood, *Death ride to Fenchurch Street and other Victorian railway murders* (Stroud, 2009); J. Oates*, Great train crimes - murder and robbery on the railways* (Barnsley, 2010); D. Hanrahan, *The first great train robbery* (London, 2011), and other similar titles. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The term Railway Mania, in this thesis, generally refers to the period of vast speculation in shares and scrip in railway companies – mostly prospective – which took place in 1845-6, and the subsequent market crash. There were other periods of heavy investment and frenzied construction, most notably in the mid-1830s and mid-1860s (discussed in more detail in Chapter II). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. R.W. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 24-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. D. Brandon, *London and the Victorian Railway* (Stroud, 2000), p.91. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Less critical, almost celebratory approaches are most often found in empirical works, but can also be seen in works with a wider approach and more academic style, such as Bradley’s *Nation, Network and People*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. M. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (Connecticut, 1999); I. Carter, *Railways and culture in Britain: the epitome of modernity* (Manchester, 2009), The lost idea of a train”: looking for Britain's railway novel’, *Journal of Transport History* 21.2, (2000). Simmons’ *The Victorian Railway* also examines railway effects on culture from similar perspectives. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Carter, *'The lost idea of a train’*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. While Zola and other French authors published in an environment almost as hungry for serial fiction as in Britain, the first significant railway construction in France took place twenty years after Britain’s, lagging behind at a similar pace for several decades, meaning that writers would have been more accustomed to the idea of railways by the time of French construction, and less likely to have been ‘shocked by the modern’ as a result. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. L. Brake and M. Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (Online edition, 2009), p. 24 (<https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/255338>). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. D. Edgerton, ‘From innovation to use: Ten eclectic theses on the historiography of technology’, *History and Technology*, 16.2 (1999), pp.111-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York, 2017), p. 245-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. M. Deegan and S. Tanner, *Digital Futures Strategies for the Information Age* (London, 2013), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. W. Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: the industrialization of time and space in the nineteenth century* (California, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. M. Beaumont and M. Freeman (eds.), *The railway and modernity: time, space and the machine ensemble* (Oxford, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. C. Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900* (London, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Among others, Emsley refers to: P. King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England 1740-1820* (2000); G. Mars, *Cheats at Work: An anthropology of workplace crime* (London, 2018); and G. Robb, *White-Collar Crime in Modern England: Financial fraud and business morality 1845-1929* (Cambridge, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. P. Knepper, *Writing the History of Crime* (London, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. P. King, ‘Making Crime News: Newspapers, Violent Crime and the Selective Reporting of Old Bailey Trials in the late Eighteenth Century’, *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés* */Crime, History & Societies*, 13.1 (2009), pp. 91-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. P. King, ‘Newspaper reporting, prosecution practice and perceptions of urban crime: the Colchester crime wave of 1765’, *Continuity and Change*. 2.3 (1998), pp. 423-454. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. E. Snell, ‘Discourses of criminality in the eighteenth-century press: the presentation of crime in The Kentish Post, 1717-1768’. *Continuity and Change,*22*.*1 (2007), pp. 13-47; R. Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. By comparison, there are far more works on eighteenth-century crime and news media, including King and Snell *op. cit*., as well as R Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. J. Rowbotham, K. Stevenson, S Pegg, *Crime news in Modern Britain press reporting and responsibility, 1820-2010* (Basingstoke, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. R Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid.*, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. R. Shoemaker, ‘Print Culture and the Creation of Public Knowledge about Crime in 18th-Century London’, in P. Knepper, J. Doak, J. Shapland (eds.), *Urban Crime Prevention, Surveillance and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Technologies* (Boca Raton, 2009), p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. R. Shoemaker, ‘Worrying about crime: Experience, moral panics and public opinion in London, 1660-1800’. *Past and Present* 234.1 (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. J. Carter Wood, ‘Crime news and the press’, in P. Knepper and A. Johansen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice* (New York, 2019), pp. 301-319. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A. Smalley, *Representations of Crime, Justice, and Punishment in the Popular Press: A Study of*

    *the Illustrated Police News, 1864-1938* (PhD thesis, Open University, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. C. Upchurch, *Before Wilde: Sex between Men in Britain’s Age of Reform* (California, 2013). Upchurch’s work builds on Judith Knelman’s research into the biases of individual newspapers: J. Knelman, ‘Class and Gender Bias in Victorian Newspapers’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 26.1 (1993), pp. 29-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Brake & Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (2009), hereafter referred to as *DNCJ*; A. King, A. Easley, & J. Morton (eds.), *The Routledge handbook to nineteenth-century British periodicals and newspapers* (London, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. A. Bingham & M. Conboy*, Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the Present* (Oxford, 2015); A. Bingham, ‘The Times Historical Archive, 1785–2006’. *The English Historical Review* 128 (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. J. Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (New York, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. H. Barker, *Newspapers and English Society 1695-1855* (Hoboken, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. J. Wiener, ‘The Nineteenth Century and the emergence of a mass circulation press’, in M. Conboy and J. Steel (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to British Media History* (London, 2018); J. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press 1830s-1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Basingstoke, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. A. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England.* (Aldershot, 2016). Further discussion of New Journalism can be found in Chapter III. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Ibid.*, p.186. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. R. Altick and J. Mussell, ‘Publishing’, in H.F. Tucker (ed), *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Chichester, 2014), pp. 312-330. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. V. Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. V. Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* Oxford, 2014); D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Deegan & Tanner, *Digital Futures Strategies for the Information Age*, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Shoemaker, ‘Worrying About Crime’ (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. R. Crone, *Violent Victorians; Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century London* (Manchester, 2012), p. 77-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. J. Wiener, ‘The Nineteenth Century and the emergence of a mass circulation press’, in M. Conboy & J. Steel (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to British Media History* (London: 2018), p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. L. Brake & M. Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 501. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Ibid.*, p. 527. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. S. Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1870* (New York, 2007), p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
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68. A. Hobbs, ‘Provincial Periodicals’, in *The Routledge handbook to nineteenth-century British periodicals and newspapers* (2019), pp. 221-235. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. D. Gray, *London’s Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City* (London, 2013), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice*, p.14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. *Ibid.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *FindMyPast British Newspapers* is the new proprietor of the *BNA* as of 2023, and barring differences stemming from ongoing digitisation, the two almost entirely overlap; its search functions are, however, less suited than the *BNA* or *GALE* for the keyword searching and analysis undertaken here. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Full list of relevant *GALE* databases*: 19th Century UK Periodicals; Archives Unbound; British Library Newspapers; Daily Mail Historical Archive, 1896-2004; The Economist Historical Archive 1843-2014; The Financial Times Historical Archive; The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003; The Making of the Modern World; Nineteenth Century Collections Online; Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992; The Sunday Times Digital Archive; The Times Digital Archive.* [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Breakdown by individual archive: *British Library Newspapers* (20,331,726); *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals* (1,959,473); *The Times Digital Archive* (1,848,019); *The Telegraph Historical Archive* (972,025); *Nineteenth Century Collections Online* (395,478); *Sunday Times Historical Archive* (339,569); *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive* (212,632); *Daily Mail Historical Archive* (200,683); *Punch Historical Archive* (93,830); only newspaper material is included, with manuscripts and non-newspaper sources excluded. Data correct as of 12/8/23. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Data correct as of 12/8/23. The *BNA’s* rate of digitisation relative to *GALE* has meant that at various times during this thesis this number was lower. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *GALE* and the *BNA* divide or segment titles into articles and types of article – such as editorial or letter – differently by title and publication date, but both their platforms are extremely opaque on this. Although there remains the possibility for error, from the sources in this thesis, an ‘article’ that is produced by searching GALE almost always corresponds to a distinct piece of some length containing the terms searched. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. S. Tanner, T. Munoz, P. H. Ros, ‘Measuring Mass Text Digitization Quality and Usefulness’, *D-Lib Magazine* 15.7 (2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. R. Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice*, p. 29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. M. Deegan, S. Tanner, *Digital Futures Strategies for the Information Age* (London: 2013), 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Ibid*., 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *The Guardian*, *Observer* and their antecedents are available solely through ProQuest Historical Newspapers - https//:www.proquest.com/products-services/pq-hist-news.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. P. King, ‘Newspaper reporting and attitudes to crime and justice in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century London’, *Continuity and Change* 22.1 (2007), p. 73-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Crone, *Violent Victorians,* p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
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86. A. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*: *The Great Age of Railways in Britain* (London, 1999), p.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 13 Jan. 1825, referenced in A. Dow, *Dow’s Dictionary of Railway Quotations* (London, 2006), p.187. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
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89. J. Wiener, ‘The 19th century and the emergence of a mass circulation press’, p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. B. Lake, *British Newspapers: A History and Guide* (London, 1984), p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. J. Wiener, ‘The 19th century and the emergence of a mass circulation press’, p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, 501. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. “The Times”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (May 2022). URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Times>, and A. Odlyzko, ‘Collective Hallucinations and inefficient markets: The British Railway Mania of the 1840s’ (<http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/hallucinations.pdf>), in particular Appendix III’s analysis of how the *Times’* position constituted a hegemony over impact on public debate in the period. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. P. Brighton, *Original Spin: Downing Street and the Press in Victorian Britain* (London, 2016), p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. A. Odlyzko, *Collective Hallucinations*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. R. Matthews, *The history of the provincial press in England*, (New York, 2017), p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Ibid*, ‘Bradshaw’s Railway Guide’, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. M. Wiener, “The 19th century and the emergence of a mass circulation press”, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Criminologists assessing modern crime news reporting also note increases in this trend as new forms of media develop and grow; see for example C.T. Harris & J. Gruenewald, ‘News Media Trends in the Framing of Immigration and Crime, 1990–2013’, *Social Problems* 67.3 (2020), pp. 452–470. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. See Chapter III for a full breakdown of this data. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. H.G. Wells, *Anticipations of the Reactions of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, (London, 1902), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. W. Johnston, *England as it is: political, social and industrial, in the middle of the nineteenth century*, Vol I. (London, 1851), p. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Only the manual labourers who dug and constructed railway lines were given the official title ‘navigators’; the term had been in use for several decades before railway construction, referring to men similarly employed in constructing canals. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Suspicion and stereotyping of Irish migrants was by no means limited to the nineteenth century; in particular, Adam Crymble’s work on Irish migrants in eighteenth-century Britain shows how similar dynamics occurred in different settings, for example in A. Crymble, ‘How Criminal Were the Irish? Bias in the Detection of London Currency Crime, 1797-1821’, *The London Journal* 43.1 (2018), pp. 36-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. For the purposes of clarity, this chapter will use the term ‘railway construction worker(s)’ when referring to circumstances when a worker’s position was not clearly described, and the term ‘navvy(-ies)’ when the worker was in fact a employed as a ‘navigator’, or else when an article refers to ‘navvy(-ies)’, regardless of the worker or group’s employment status, as this chapter focuses on the history of perceptions rather than the reality of labour. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. T. Coleman, *The Railway Navvies: A History of the Men who Made the Railways* (London, 2018); D. Brooke, *The Railway Navvy: “That despicable race of men”* (Newton Abbot, 1983); R.S. Joby, *The Railway Builders: Lives and Works of the Railway Contractors* (Newton Abbot, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. N. Wier, *The Railway Police* (Bloomington, 2011), pp. 9-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Brooke, *The Railway Navvy*, p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. For example, resources available through the National Railway Museum (<https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/navvies-workers-who-built-railways>), and associated projects such as ‘Songs from the Age of Steam’ (<https://songsfromtheageofsteam.uk>). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. T. May, *The Victorian Railway Worker* (Oxford, 2008); U. Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain: the History of the Irish Navvy* (Dublin, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Bradley, *Railways: Network, Nation, and People* (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. *Ibid*, p.336*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Bradley, *Network, Nation, People*, pp.336-340. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. R. McGowen, ‘Getting to Know the Criminal Class in Nineteenth-Century England’, *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, 14.1 (1990), pp. 33-54, p.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. B. Godfrey, D. Cox, and S. Farrall, *Criminal Lives: Family Life, Employment, and Offending* (Oxford, 2007) p.166; D. Churchill, ‘Security and Visions of the Criminal: Technology, Professional Criminality and Social Change in Victorian and Edwardian Britain’, *The British Journal of Criminology,* 56.5 (2016), pp. 857–876. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. R. Crone, ‘Reappraising Victorian Literacy through Prison Records’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15.1 (2010), pp. 3–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. L. Pantzidou, ‘Jekyll, Hyde and the Victorian Construction of Criminal Working-Class Masculinities’, *Athens Journal of Law* 7.2 (2021), pp. 233-252. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. A.L. Beier, ‘Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian “Criminal Class”: Mayhew’s Convict Revisited’, *Journal of British Studies* 44.3 (2005), pp. 499-515. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
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123. There are a number of efforts to provide archival material on the large number of railway accidents in nineteenth century and Edwardian era; <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/> records 5,979 separate incidents before 1900, while the ‘Railway Work, Life, and Death’ project (<http://www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/>; University of Portsmouth, National Railway Museum and Modern Record Centre) collates large-scale detailed datasets on accidents between 1900-23. Neither project, however, examines wider perceptions of such incidents. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
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125. S. Bradley, *Railways: Network, Nation, People* (London, 2016), p. 141-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. B. Marsden and C. Smith, *Engineering Empires: A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2005), p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Report of the Commission ‘Influence of railway travelling on public health III.’, *Lancet*, 1.79-84 (1862), p.79. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
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137. ‘Charge of Murder at Wolverhampton’, *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 3/8/1851. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BC3206198307/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=b4e2a2af> [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
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169. ‘Accident At The Liverpool And Manchester Railway’, *The Times*, 4/9/1830. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS51272484/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=e35f7ef6> [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
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172. Other deaths took place before this and were reported in news media, but Huskisson’s death was the first to take place in the passenger sphere, as well as the first to reflect many lasting tropes of accident reporting. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
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197. A.B., ‘The Newcastle and Carlisle Railway’, *The Times*, 20/9/1851. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS134907188/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=06d05c0f> [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. BANBURIENSIS, ‘The Great Western Railway’, *The Times*, 3/12/1852. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS101615491/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=94bfd63c> [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
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200. ‘The Morning Chronicle’, *The Times*, 12/10/1840. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS67661644/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=d795d077> [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Editorial, *The Times*, 24/10/1840. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS67661656/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=602d306c> [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. George Waller, TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES, *The Times*, 9/3/1836. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS33973865/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=a51c6f1f> [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
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206. A CONSTANT RAILWAY TRAVELLER, ‘Railway Accidents’, *The Times*, 18/8/1852. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS52332306/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=4e9214e7> [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. A PASSENGER, ‘Railway Accident’, *The Times*, 14/9/1852. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS134514478/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=f8e51ff1> [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. The Tay Bridge Disaster of 1879 was covered at least as heavily as Staplehurst in news media; however, the weather conditions involved, together with the fact that the bridge had been constructed by non-railway contractors, made reports far less oriented around the train or the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company than was the case for comparable accidents in the period. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. "Dreadful Accident on the South-Eastern Railway, and Loss of Ten Lives." *Illustrated London News*, 17 June 1865, p. 571. URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HN3100067454/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=63fa86e9> [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. ‘The Fatal Accident On The Southeastern Line’, *The Times*, 12/6/1865, p. 5. URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS84058316/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=5a40621d> [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3 (London, 2006), p. 90; third volume published in 1895, seven years after Marx’s death, compiled by F. Engels from Marx’s notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. *Ibid*, p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Although there had been commercial and corporate enterprises roughly similar in scale prior to the railways, such as the East India Company and the South Sea Company, these were ventures whose focus was foreign rather than domestic. Formation of railway companies was aided by the repeal of the 1720 Bubble Act in 1824 (6 Geo. IV, c. 91) which had prevented the formation of joint-stock companies, although the Act was not repealed with railways in mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. To avoid confusion, any references to the word ‘mania’ (lowercase) in this chapter refer to the empirical phenomenon of heavy investment in railways, while ‘Mania’ (uppercase) refers to the broader significance and meanings that were attached to such investment in contemporary accounts, most often in the context of the Railway Mania of 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. S. Wilson, *The Origins of Modern Financial Crime: Historical Foundations and Current Problems in Britain*, (London, 2016), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. D.M. Evans, *Facts, Failures and Frauds: Revelations Financial*, *Mercantile, Criminal* (London, 1859), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. S. Wilson, ‘History, narrative and attacking chronocentricism in understanding the history of financial crime: the significance of microhistorical case study’, in A-M. Kilday and D. Nash (eds.), *Law, Crime and Deviance since 1700: Micro-studies in the History of Crime* (London, 2017), p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. S. Wilson, *The Origins of Modern Financial Crime: Historical Foundations and Current Problems in Britain*, (London, 2016); R.W. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism* (Oxford, 2004); A. Odlyzko ‘Collective Hallucinations and inefficient markets: The British Railway Mania of the 1840s’ (unpublished). URL: (<http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/hallucinations.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Wilson, *The Origins of Modern Financial Crime*, p. 1 and p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. *Ibid.*, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. *Ibid*, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. *Ibid*, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. *Ibid*, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. These works include T. L. Alborn’s *Conceiving Companies*: *Joint-stock politics in Victorian England* (London, 2014), and N. Dimsdale and A. Hotson (eds.), *British Financial Crises since 1825* (Oxford, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. R.W. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, *1825-1875* (Oxford, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. *Ibid*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. A. Odlyzko ‘Collective Hallucinations and inefficient markets: The British Railway Mania of the 1840s’ (unpublished). URL: (<http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/hallucinations.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. A.Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money* (London, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. A. J. Arnold and S. McCartney, *George Hudson: The Rise and Fall of the Railway King; a Study in Victorian Entrepreneurship* (London, 2004), p. xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. D.A. Hayes and M. Kamlish, *The King’s Cross Fraudster* (London, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. J. Cox and D. Brooke, *Samuel Morton Peto (1809-1889): The Achievements and Failings of a Great Railway Developer* (Oxford, 2008); R.S. Joby, *The Railway Builders: Lives and Works of the Victorian Railway Contractors*, (Newton Abbot, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. G. Robb, *White-collar crime in modern England*, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Wilson, in Kilday and Nash, *Law, crime and* deviance, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. R. Matthews, *The history of the provincial press in England*, (New York, 2017), p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. As discussed in the Introduction, this thesis includes English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish reporting where it discusses English railways or English-owned or -controlled railways; while the newspaper title can be controlled for location, there is no way to control or determine locations being reported upon in the content of news media across large ranges of data. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Odlyzko, ‘Collective Hallucinations’, p. 211-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics, and Money*, p. 26-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. *Ibid.,* p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. ‘Bill for Registration of Joint Stock Companies’, *House of Commons Sessional Papers*, (1844) VII, Q, p. 1527. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Odlyzko, ‘Collective Hallucinations’, pp. 211-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. D. M. Evans, *The Commercial Crisis, 1847-1848,*2nd ed. (New York, 1969; 1st ed. London 1849), p. 2. Previous accounts of the various manias suggest good harvests as the primary macroeconomic catalyst for investment; however, work by the Legacies of British Slave Ownership project (www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs) suggests that compensation after Abolition – to individuals of diverse social standing, much the same as the overall profile of railway investors – may account for a significant proportion of capital invested in railways in the period. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*, p. 113-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Gilbert A’Beckett, ‘The Rail-Road Mania’, *Punch*, 2 March 1844, p. 105. URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DX1901543445/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=6f9d1c0c>. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. *Ibid*, p. 28-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Although the figure of 30 million passengers/year in 1845 (quoted in J. Simmons and G. Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997)) may seem high, this is over 35 times fewer than the 1.1 billion passengers/year of 1900, set against a growth in overall UK population of roughly 25% in that time. House of Commons Papers state that the aggregate newspaper circulation figures for 1845 were 69.4m in England and Wales, 6.96m in Scotland, and 7.15m in Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Kostal, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. *Ibid*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. *Times*, 23 July 1845, 1 September 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. *Railway Record*, 25 October 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. ‘The Song of the Railway Mania’, *Punch*, vol.10 (1845), p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. *Ibid*; David Morier Evans, *The Commercial Crisis*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Ibid, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. *Ibid*., p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Odlyzko, ‘Collective Hallucinations’, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. *Spectator*, 18 October 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. *Bradshaw's Railway Gazette*, 13 December 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. *Times,*9 January 1846. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, 4, and Wilson, *The Origins of Modern Financial Crime*. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Fig. 2.7 reflects the percentage of all relevant documents within the GALE Primary Sources Collections that contain both the words ‘railway’ and ‘mania’, ‘railway’ and ‘fraud’, and ‘railway’ and ‘scandal’ between 1835 and 1870. Searches include all UK collections and exclude results from the *International Herald Tribune Historical Archive 1842-2003*, and *Nineteenth Century US Newspapers*. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*, p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. ‘North and Eastern Railway’, *Times*, 26 October 1835, p. 2. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS33973594/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=3b13efee>. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. R. Beaumont, *The Railway King* (London, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. ‘Multiple News Items’, *York Herald*, 16 September 1837. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3215225064/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=46eb2617>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. ‘Varieties’, *Preston Chronicle*, 15 March 1845. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/BsH9Q2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. ‘GRAND OPENING OF THE RAILWAYS’, *Hull Packet*, 19 June 1840. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BB3205922986/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=697689f4>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. ‘The Northern Railways’, *Times*, 19 June 1844, p. 5. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS85751507/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=0e61cd13>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. ‘A Seer’, ‘The Progress of Events’, *Herapath’s Railway Journal*, 7 October 1843, p.4. *FindmyPast British Newspapers*, URL: <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/ViewArticle?id=BL%2F0004384%2F18431007%2F015%2F0004&browse=true>. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. ‘New Railway Schemes —the Railway King’, *Leicestershire Mercury*, 14 October 1843, p. 4. British Library Newspapers, URL: <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/BsHTv3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. ‘Hudson, George [called the Railway King]’, *Oxford DNB*. URL: <https://www-oxforddnb-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-14029>. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. ‘Court Circular’, *Standard*, 5 March 1842. *British Library Newspapers*, <http://link.gale.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/R3213610218/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=057e2cf0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money,* (London, 1999), p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. ‘Railway Amalgamation’, *Era*, 5 November 1843. *British Library Newspapers*, URL:  <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3202402122/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=0edb52b4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. ‘THE REPORTERS’ ATTACK UPON MR HUDSON’, *Derby Mercury*, 23 July 1845. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3200000684/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=f085ed96>. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. ‘The Sunderland Election’, *Leicester Chronicle*, 2 August 1845. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3213081308/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=a2281ab8>. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. ‘Sunderland Election’, *York Herald*, 2 August 1845, p. 5. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3211055204/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=5a21c97b>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, pp. 28-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. ‘A London Tradesman’, ‘Railway Speculations’, *Times*, 24 October 1845, p. 6. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL:<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS102398296/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=620c0378>. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. ‘The Reporters’ Attack on Mr Hudson’, *Derby Mercury*, 23 July 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. "Sketches of Railway Potentates." *Cork Examiner*, 15 Oct. 1845, p. 4. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CB3kM1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. "George Hudson, Esq., M. P.", *Illustrated London News*, 6 Sept. 1845, p. 157. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003*, URL: <http://link.gale.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/HN3100012635/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=694e698b>. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. ‘The Reporters’ Attack on Mr Hudson’, *Derby Mercury*, 23 July 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. ‘The Testimonial to Mr Hudson’, *Morning Post*, 18 October 1845, p. 6. URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3213519572/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=6854bcf4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. ‘Summary of Railway Facts’, *Illustrated London News*, 4 October 1845, p. 211. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842- 2003,*URL:

     <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HN3100012769/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=104c529b>. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. ‘A Ramble in the Realms of Chat’, *Illustrated London News*, 4 October 1845, p. 218. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003*, URL:

     <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HN3100012791/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=44d64688>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. ‘Sir Robert Peel and the Speculation Mania’, *Morning Post*, 11 November 1845, p. 3. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3213233946/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=ef936a45>;

     *Illustrated London News*, 1 November 1845, p. 275. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HN3100012993/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=61e20667>. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
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     <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3202405493/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=7cbc9bdf>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. ‘The most important railroad question’, *John Bull*, 13 December 1845, p. 10. *19th Century UK Periodicals*, URL:

     <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CAzuw7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. ‘A contrast’, *Manchester Times*, 22 November 1845. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CB3Uf7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. R. Harrison and M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, ‘Black, John (1783–1855), journalist and newspaper editor’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. A. Odlyzko, ‘The forgotten discovery of gravity models and the inefficiency of early railway networks’ (2015, unpublished). URL: <http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/mania09.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. A. Odlyzko, ‘The early British railway system, the Casson counterfactual, and the effectiveness of central planning’ (2016, unpublished). URL: <http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/mania08.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. ‘CATO’, ‘To The Editor Of The Times’, *Times*, 6 October 1846, p. 5. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS84441926/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=a3b956f0>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. ‘CATO’, ‘To The Editor Of The Times’, *Times*, 9 October 1846, p. 5. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS84048713/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=04cbcdaf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. ‘The Railway ‘Cato’ of the Times’, *Era*, 11 October 1846. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3202406216/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=0bf34f0f>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. *Morning Post*, 17 May 1848, p. 5. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3213523309/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=4ae906cd>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. HL Deb, 11/2/1848, vol 96, cc. 454-8. URL: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1848/feb/11/audit-of-railway-accounts-bill>. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Odlyzko, ‘Collective Hallucinations and Inefficient Markets’. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. While not legal in statutory terms, it is a privilege of Members of Parliament to be free from arrest in civil matters while the Houses of Parliament are in session, so that they are able to attend Parliament. In the nineteenth century this had been – and still remains – enshrined in Parliamentary procedure and convention dating back to the 14th century (Parliamentary privilege CM 8318, p.78, URL: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/79390/consultation.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. ‘Railway Intelligence’, *Morning Post*, 16 February 1849, p. 2. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3210397779/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=98183c09>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. ‘To George Hudson, M.P.’, *Derby Mercury*, 14 Feb. 1849. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BA3200004186/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=256cf5f1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. ‘A very strange statement with regard to Mr. Hudson’, *Times*, 1 March 1849, p. 4. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS67928161/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=812dd039>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. ‘Railway Intelligence’, *Illustrated London News*, 3 March 1849, p. 138. *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003*, URL: <http://link.gale.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/HN3100021386/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=155e7002>. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. ‘George Hudson, Esq.’, *Hull Packet*, 2 Mar. 1849. *British Library Newspapers*, URL:

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314. ‘Mr. Hudson And The York, Newcastle, And Berwick Railway’, *Times*, 9 April 1849, p. 3. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL:

     <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS51150985/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=d06a20a9>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. R. Beaumont, *The Railway King*, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. R. Beaumont, *The Railway King*, pp. 192-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Odlyzko, ‘The Railway Mania: Fraud, disappointed expectations, and the modern economy’, (2013, unpublished), p. 1. URL: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/170f/cff7bf96293a7d8871345a14d10a6584452d.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Vaughan, *Railwaymen, Politics and Money*, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. *The Times*, 10/4/1849, pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
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321. ‘Railway Revelations’, *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 5/5/1849, p. 4. British Library Newspapers, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EN3216478421/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=8e511379>. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
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324. ‘Our Representative in the City’, *Punch*, 8 July 1876, p. 9. URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8D5DE9>.   [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
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326. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism*, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
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336. J. Taylor, ‘White-collar crime and the law in nineteenth-century Britain’, *Business History* 60.3, p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. *Morning Chronicle*, 24/11/1856; *Times*, 9/11/1856. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. *Times*, 19/1/1857, p. 6. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS101224499/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=9562e2be>. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
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351. J. Taylor, ‘Directors in the dock: joint-stock banks and the criminal law in nineteenth-century Britain’, in M. Hollow, F. Akinbami, and R. Michie (eds.), *Complexity and crisis in the financial system: Critical perspectives on the evolution of American and British banking* (Cheltenham, 2016), pp. 164-182, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
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353. R. Michie, 'Nature or Nurture: the British financial system since 1688’, in *Complexity and crisis in the financial system: Critical perspectives on the evolution of American and British banking*, pp. 60-84, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. J. Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. J. L. Chown, *Sir Samuel Morton Peto: the man who built the houses of parliament* (London, 1943). [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. GALE Basic Search, ‘Morton AND Peto’, 1860-1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. ‘The Budget’, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 25/4/1868, p. 3. *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*, URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/DX1900320436/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=eadcad1a>. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
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368. ‘’The Bankruptcy of Sir Morton Peto’, *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, 19/1/1868. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BC3206229168/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=04721ff9>. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
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371. P. King, ‘Moral Panics and Violent Street Crime, 1750-2000’, in B. Godfrey, C. Emsley, G. Dunstall (eds.) *Comparative Histories of Crime* (London, 2012), p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
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373. D. Edgerton, ‘From innovation to use: Ten eclectic theses on the historiography of technology’, *History and Technology*, 16.2 (1999), p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. J. Davis, ‘The London Garotting Panic of 1862: A Moral Panic and the Creation of a Criminal Class in mid-Victorian England’, in Gatrell, Lenman and Parker (eds.), *Crime and the law: the social history of crime in Western Europe since 1500*, (London, 1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. R. Ward, *Print Culture, Crime and Justice in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2014), p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. While violent and sexual offences against men have been examined in – among others – L. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2013), and J. Carter Wood, *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement* (London, 2015), no railway-related sexual offences could beidentified in the period through searches on GALE primary sources. This is perhaps due, at least in part, to the policing practices that resulted in prosecutions for sexual offences against men for long periods in the nineteenth century being based on searching known areas where consensual homosexual acts took place, outweighing responses to unwanted acts. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Kim Stevenson, ‘‘Most Intimate Violations’: Contextualising the Crime of Rape’, in A-M. Kilday & D. Nash (eds.), *Histories of Crime: Great Britain 1600-2000*; Robin J. Barrow, ‘Rape on the Railway: Women, Safety, and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 20.3 (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. K. Stevenson, ‘Most Intimate Violations’, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. S. D’Cruze and L.A. Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (Basingstoke, 2009); C. Conley, *The Unwritten Law* (New York, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. The misrepresentation and under-analysis of historical news media is common in almost all the fields of historical analysis referred to below. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
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382. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Such works include: A. & M. Sellwood, *Death ride to Fenchurch Street and other Victorian railway murders* (Stroud, 2009); M. Holgate, *Murder and Mystery on the Great Western Railway* (Wellington, 2011); D. Brandon, *Blood on the Tracks* (Stroud, 2017), and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
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385. *Ibid*, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
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387. *Ibid*., p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. M. J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 3-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. J.C. Wood, *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement* (London, 2015), p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
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392. J. Flanders, *The invention of murder: how the Victorians revelled in death and detection and created modern crime* (New York, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
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394. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. D. Martin, ‘Railway Fatigue and the Coming-of-Age Narrative in "Lady Audley's Secret"’, *Victorian Review* 34.1 (2008), p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. M. Diamond, *Victorian sensation!: amazing the people in Victorian Britain* (London, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. I. Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain*, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. J. E. Adams, *A History of Victorian Literature,* (Chichester, 2012) p. 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. D. Liddle*, The dynamics of genre: journalism and the practice of literature in mid-Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. J. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful delight.* [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. I. Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain*. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. M. Diamond, *Victorian Sensation!*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
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     <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8ESsK1>; ‘The Police Courts,’ *Daily News*, 12/12/1861. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8ESs58>; *Standard*, 12/12/1861, p. 7. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8ESsH5>. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
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410. *Ibid.,* 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. Amy Milne-Smith, ‘Shattered Minds: Madmen on the Railways, 1860-80’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 21.1 (2016), pp. 21-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
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414. K. Stevenson, ‘‘Most Intimate Violations’: Contextualising the Crime of Rape’, in A.-M. Kilday & D. Nash (eds.) *Histories of Crime: Great Britain 1600-2000* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. K. Stevenson, ‘Unequivocal Victims: the Historical Roots of the Mystification of the Female Complainant in Rape Cases’, *Feminist Legal Studies* 8.3 (2000), p. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. ‘Charge of Assault’, *Sunday Times*, 4 Mar. 1838, p. 3. *Sunday Times Digital Archive,* URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5vKRj1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. Estimates for the Nash case (1864) are 450+ reports, for the Baker case (1875) 1,200+; however, the continuing digitisation of news media – particularly local titles – on sites such as the *British Newspaper Archive* (*BNA*) mean that estimates for all cases, particularly larger cases, need to be periodically revised upwards. Improvements to OCR technology have the same effect. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Variables derived directly from news media reports are: time of day and dates of offences; dates of first and last media reports; names, ages and occupations of defendants and complainants; location of offence; the railway company concerned; locations of court/courts where cases were tried; charge/charges brought; and verdicts and punishments. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. Crone, *Violent Victorians*, p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. J. Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Local sunset times derived from <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/sunrise.html>. GIS coordinates derived from <https://maps.google.com> using the beginning and ends of journeys. Offence and sunset times accurate to within 5 minutes as reported in GALE articles. Many thanks to Eleanor Bland for her suggestions and help with displaying the data in this way. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Derived using <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/forms/formStats.jsp> (Offence = sexual offences:indecent assault, Row=Verdict Category, Time Period = 1838-1900). [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. ‘Charge of Assault’, *Sunday Times*, 4/3/1838, p. 3. *The Sunday Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5vKRj1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. ‘Croydon Police’, *The Times*, 21/10/1841, p. 7. *The Times Digital Archive,* URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wBA41>. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Percentages for verdicts do not total 100% for these data, as those who received hard labour had also received prison sentences. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. ‘Gross Outrage on a Young Girl by a Railway Guard’, *Morning Chronicle*, 30/10/1861. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wYd27>; ‘Disgraceful Conduct of a Railway Servant’, *Dundee Courier*, 10/4/1862. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/62PEd2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
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429. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Stevenson, ‘Most Intimate Violations’, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. ‘Police Intelligence’, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 8/12/1839. *19th Century UK Periodicals*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5vKcr6>. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. ‘Gross Conduct In A Railway Carriage’, *The* *Times*, 13/11/1856, p. 7. *The Times Digital Archive,* URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wWpk3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. The estimated number of articles on the Tawell case is 750+, lower than the four squarely railway-related murders in the period as well as the Baker case of 1875. The figure is based on *British Newspaper Archive* articles from January to June, 1875 (*BNA* figures: January 236; February 59; March 298; April 155; May 102). Estimates assume 90% of articles in period relate to cases. Search terms: “+railway +murder+ tawell”. Note that this case does not form part of the quantitative database analysis of this chapter, as it did not occur on the railway and was not represented in reporting as being as inherently related to railways. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Carol Baxter, *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable*, (London, 2013); ["John Tawell, The Man Hanged by the Electric Telegraph"](http://www.cntr.salford.ac.uk/comms/johntawell.php), University of Salford. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. ‘The Bermondsey Murder’, *Standard*. 28/8/1849, URL: *British Library Newspapers*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/3bc78764>. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. ‘Police Doings’, *Examiner*, 12/4/1862. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wYgT7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. ‘Outrage By A Railway Guard’, *The* *Times*, 31/10/1861, p. 9. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wYdUX>. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Nineteenth-century newspaper titles from across Ireland are available through GALE, but were fewer in number than English titles, and are likely to have been far removed from the networks through which newspapers became aware of and reprinted articles from other titles. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Registrar of Friendly Societies and lawyer. The fact that Pratt’s name was included without an explanation of his position indicates that he was well-known to readers, and equally that editors could generate interest by choosing to print Tickner’s association with him. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. ‘Police’, *Standard*, 30/3/1864, p. 7. *British Library Newspapers*. URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wh3Z7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. ‘Assault In A Railway Carriage’, *The Times*, 15/12/1865, p. 6. *The Times Digital Archive*. URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wrfk8>. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Similar conclusions are drawn in C. Conley, *The unwritten law: criminal justice in Victorian Kent* (New York, 2011), p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. ‘Another Charge of General Assault’, *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, 22/7/1866*. British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wsXr3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. ‘Local and General’, *Leeds Mercury*, 29/1/1867. *British Library Newspapers,* URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/62iao1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. ‘Benefit of Drunknenness’, *Dundee Courier*, 20/8/1863. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wZNX3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. ‘The Assault on Ladies in a Railway Carriage’, *The* *Times*, 6/1/1864, p. 4. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wZUj1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. ‘More Railway Outrages’, *The Sporting Gazette*, 9/1/1864, p. 23. *19th Century UK Periodicals*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wZUm8>. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. ‘Multiple News Items’, *Standard*, 25/4/1867, p. 2. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wspU4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. ‘Extraordinary Charge – The Crinoline Nuisance’, *Essex Standard*, 7/12/1859. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5wY2c0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
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455. *The Daily Telegraph*, 14/7/1864, p. 4. *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85HLp7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Crone, *Violent Victorians*, p. 241. The Muller murder accounted for 14.5 of 192 total pages in *LWN* in 1864 (7.5% of total for year); in *Times* 12.46 pages of 1408 pages (0.88%), although *The Times* was both a daily and had a much broader focus than *LWN*, a weekly. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. *Ibid.*, p. 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Estimated number of articles on Muller: 8,200+, based on *British Newspaper Archive* figures from July to December (July 1,121; Aug 797; Sept 2,361; Oct 1,385; Nov 2,536; Dec 910). Estimates for Nash case: 450+, based on figures in July and August (July 360, Aug 149). Both estimates assume 90% of articles in period relate to cases. Search terms “+railway +murder +Muller” & “+railway +Nash +Moody”. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. *The Daily Telegraph*, 12/7/1864, p. 4, *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85HEZ9>. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. Crone, *Violent Victorians,* p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. *Telegraph*, 12/7/1864, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. *The Sunday Times*, 17/7/1864, p. 4, *The Sunday Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85hZB9>. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
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474. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
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476. *Morning Post*, 12/7/1864, p. 5.  [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
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480. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. ‘Extradition’, *John Bull*, 30/7/1864, *19th Century UK Periodicals*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85hRr1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
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483. *The Times*, 9/9/1864, p. 6, *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85aYL0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
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485. *The Times*, 20/9/1864, p. 8, *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85hUB6>. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
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490. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. *The Times*, 31/10/1864, p. 6, *The Times Digital Archive,* URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/tinyurl/85abHX> [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
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536. *The Times*, 2/11/1881, p. 9. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85gzG4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
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540. *The Daily Telegraph*, 28/11/1881, p. 4. *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85gzq0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. *The Daily Telegraph*, 9/11/1881. *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85gzR3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. *Times*, 20/9/1864, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. *Telegraph*, 14/7/1864, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. *Telegraph*, 9/11/1881, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
546. *Telegraph*, 13/11/1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
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549. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
550. There was also a growing tendency to focus on links between insanity and crime, resulting in pardoning becoming more of an option for murder cases; see C. Cox and H. Marland, *Disorder Contained: Mental Breakdown and the Modern Prison in England and Ireland,1840-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2022); R. Chadwick, *Bureaucratic Mercy: The Home Office and the Treatment of Capital Cases in Victorian Britain* (New York: Garland, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
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552. R. Crone, *Violent Victorians,* p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
553. Bradley, *Network, Nation, People*, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
554. House of Commons Sessional Papers, *Bill to compel Railway Companies to provide efficient Means of Communication between Guards and Passengers of Railway Trains* (London, 1866). [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
555. K. Colquhoun, *Mr. Briggs’ Hat: The True Story of a Victorian Railway Murder* (London, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
556. Bradley, *Network, Nation, People,* p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
557. "Extraordinary Charge Of Assault" *The Times*, 19 June 1875, p. 7. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5xeoW2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
558. Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
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560. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
561. *Ibid*., p. 477. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
562. ‘Assault in a Railway Carriage’, *Morning Post*, 7/3/1870, p. 3. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/R3213148755/GDCS?u=su_uk&sid=zotero&xid=8564cbb5>. [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
563. "Indecent Assault in an Excursion Train." *Northern Echo*, 29/7/1885. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5xr3c5>. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
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565. *Morning Post*, 13/2/1897, p. 4. *British Library Newspapers*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85hJJ6>. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
566. ‘Murder In A Railway Carriage’. *The Times*, 13/2/1897, p. 12. *The Times Digital Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85hJU3>. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
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571. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
572. ‘A Constant Traveller’, *Daily Mail*, 16/2/1897, p. 4. *Daily Mail Historical Archive, 1896-2004*. URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85gmY7>. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
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582. ‘The Railway Murder’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17/2/1897. *The Telegraph Historical Archive*, URL: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/85hKS0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
583. ‘Barmaid Murdered’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 14/2/1897. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
584. ‘Murder In a Railway Carriage’. *The Times*, 13/2/1897, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
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592. V. Bailey, *Nineteenth-Century Crime and Punishment, Volume 1: Crime and Criminals* (London, 2021); M. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England 1830-1914* (Cambridge, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
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