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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

The Devil's Daughters: Criminology and The Female
Offender in Historical Crime Fiction

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THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

English

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THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTERS: CRIMINOLOGY AND THE FEMALE OFFENDER IN
HISTORICAL CRIME FICTION

by Diana Bretherick

This PhD thesis consists of two sections, each supported by a bibliography. The critical commentary reflects on the research and writing process I embarked upon for my doctoral novel and how I drew upon criminological theory and research to inform it. Also examined is how contemporary writers of crime fiction might best use the resources offered by criminological research.

I chose to write a historical rather than contemporary novel about criminology to explore the influence that historical ideas about crime might have on the way we perceive it today; to examine, challenge and critique dominant nineteenth-century theories about the female offender and their present day legacy, specifically by creating strong female characters including plausible female villains and basing my characterization on the history and theory of criminology; and to look at the beginnings of the modern 'scientific' approach to crime, as typified by one of my central real life characters, the 'father' of modern criminology, Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909). My intention was to use Lombroso's second major study, *La Donna Delinquente* (or *Criminal Woman*) with a view to considering how criminology can be used in writing crime fiction.

Drawing on relevant examples from both criminological literature and fiction, the critical commentary begins by discussing Lombroso's ideas together with the scientific and cultural context of those ideas and their legacy and their influence on my writing of the novel. Lombroso's work and that of his contemporaries is then further explored through the representations of the female offender in nineteenth-century fiction and historical crime fiction set in the period that I drew on when researching the novel. The writing of *The Devil's Daughters* is then examined, focusing on the roles of its female characters and how criminological theories informed my own creative process. I conclude by discussing examples of criminological theories that have featured in contemporary crime fiction and making suggestions of how they might be drawn on in the future, thus enriching both forms.

The Devil's Daughters, my doctoral novel, set in Turin in 1888, is a historical crime thriller that describes an investigation into a series of murders of young women. I introduce the work of Cesare Lombroso and his assistant Salvatore Ottolenghi (also a character in the novel), and make extensive use of Lombroso's work in framing the story including quotations at the beginning of each chapter. As well as a young Scottish hero, there are several strong female characters who play dominant roles in the narrative, either as detectives or perpetrators thus challenging late nineteenth century attitudes towards female offenders.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Diana Bretherick,

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The Devil's Daughters: Criminology and The Female Offender in Historical Crime Fiction

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as *The Devil's Daughters*¹.

Date: 25/1/17

¹ Diana Bretherick, *The Devil's Daughters*. (London: Orion, 2015)

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I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to my wonderful husband David for encouraging and supporting me, talking through what must have seemed like endless plot details and discussing Victorian literature and the nature of female villains into the small hours.

THE DEVIL’S DAUGHTERS: CRIMINOLOGY AND THE FEMALE OFFENDER IN HISTORICAL CRIME FICTION

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THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTERS: CRIMINOLOGY AND THE FEMALE OFFENDER IN CRIME FICTION

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

My aim in writing my doctoral novel, *The Devil's Daughters*, was to bring my criminological knowledge to bear on the writing of a crime novel. This knowledge is based on my own experiences not only as a criminologist teaching, writing and researching in the field but also as a criminal barrister and counsellor working with offenders in HMP Brixton. Criminological theory and research explores the causes and consequences of criminal behaviour from cultural, psychological, biological, sociological, legal and philosophical perspectives, and it is therefore a useful and largely untapped resource for writers of crime fiction who, I shall suggest, explore similar themes. Criminologists have grappled with all aspects of crime: offending behaviour itself; the punishment and treatment of offenders; the position and treatment of the victim; the causes of crime; the sociological, psychological and cultural aspects of crime. What follows is a discussion of how I have used aspects of this now vast discipline in the writing of my novel and explored questions of motive and agency in relation to the female offender both in the nineteenth century and today. Underlying this is the debate which still exists in criminology. Are criminals born or made?

I chose to write a historical rather than contemporary novel about criminology for three reasons - firstly to explore the influence that historical ideas about crime might have on the way we perceive it today; secondly to examine, challenge and critique dominant nineteenth-century theories about the female offender and their present day legacy, specifically by creating strong female characters including plausible female villains and basing my characterization on the history and theory of criminology; thirdly to look at the work of Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909). Lombroso was the first person to examine crime as a discrete subject for scientific study and, despite his theories being discredited over time he is still acknowledged as a major influence on modern criminological thinking, which is why I chose to use him as my 'detective'.

Despite this choice of a historical setting for my novel, the criminological aspect is, I would argue, in one sense, timeless. We may use the relatively modern label of criminology but fundamentally what that discipline examines is an age-old question: why do people commit wrongful acts (whether we call these things crimes, or sins, or even deviant behaviour)? The early ideas of thinkers such as Lombroso helped me to 'site' the novel culturally and historically, giving me a valuable insight into the psychology of my characters and allowing me an

opportunity to critique those attitudes. Lombroso's theories do not help to find the killer and he is an unusually inept detective. It is the female characters who, for the most part, solve the crime. My two female villains are also far from being what Lombroso would expect, despite his attempts in the novel to argue otherwise.

I had already written a historical crime novel when I began planning my doctoral research. *City of Devils* was set in nineteenth-century Turin and featured Lombroso as one of my protagonists. He was born in Verona in 1835 and received his degree in medicine from the University of Pavia in 1858 and in surgery from the University of Genoa in 1859, serving as an army physician until 1864. During his studies, he developed an interest in psychiatry which he pursued later when working on a clinical study of mental patients in St Euphemia, as referenced in *The Devil's Daughters* (p. 321). Later he ran asylums in Pavia, Pesaro and Reggio Emilia. In 1876 he received his first appointment in legal medicine and public hygiene at the University of Turin where he was later made Professor of Clinical Psychiatry (1896) and Criminal Anthropology (1906).²

In 1871, on examining the skull of an elderly Calabrian peasant who had been imprisoned for theft and arson, Lombroso wrote:

'At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see, all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle shaped ears found in criminals, savages and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh and drink its blood.'³

This Lombroso claimed, was a turning point for him and inspired his life's work in criminology. Lombroso's flamboyant use of language tells us something about the man - his theatricality and enthusiasm for his subject. In 1876 he wrote the first of five editions of *L'Uomo Delinquente (Criminal Man)* and in 1893 with his son-in-law Guglielmo Ferrero he wrote *La Donna Delinquente, La Prostituta e La Donna Normale (Criminal Woman, The Prostitute and the Normal Woman)* a pioneering work being the first to examine the female offender in any detail, remaining so until the 1950s.⁴

² Marvin E Wolfgang, 'Cesare Lombroso', in Hermann Mannheim (ed.), *Pioneers of Criminology*. (London: Stevens & Sons Limited 1960), pp.168-227.

³ Cesare Lombroso, trans. by Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson, *L'Uomo Delinquente (Criminal Man)*, (London: Duke University Press, 1909/2006) pp xxiv-xxv. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁴ Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, trans. by Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute and the Normal Woman* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

I drew on *L'Uomo Delinquente* when researching *City of Devils* and explored issues about the beginnings of modern criminology and forensics. In my doctoral novel, my intention was to use Cesare Lombroso's second major study, *La Donna Delinquente* (or *Criminal Woman*) with a view to considering in more depth how criminology can be used in writing crime fiction. The critical commentary looks at this relationship and the research and writing process I embarked upon for the novel with a focus on how I used my knowledge of criminology to inform it. Also discussed is how contemporary writers of crime fiction might best use the resources offered by criminological research.

Drawing on relevant examples from both criminological literature and fiction, Section 2 will discuss Lombroso's ideas in more detail together with the scientific and cultural context of those ideas and their legacy. Section 3 will examine the influence of Lombroso's work and that of his contemporaries through representations of the female offender in nineteenth-century fiction and historical crime fiction set in the period. Section 4 will examine in more detail the writing of *The Devil's Daughters*, focusing on the roles of its female characters and how criminological views of women informed my own creative process. Finally, in section 5, I will discuss my conclusions.

SECTION 2: LOMBROSO, CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIME FICTION

This section will discuss the scholarly and other resources that I used to research the emergence of criminology in the nineteenth century, with special attention to Lombroso, setting out the cultural, social, medical, and legal context in which the early criminologists, including Lombroso, framed their theories. As historian and criminologist David Garland argues, to fully understand criminology we need to examine the historical processes which led to its constitution.⁵ I therefore began my research by looking at the scientific and cultural developments which influenced both Lombroso and other characters in the novel.

Although the discipline of criminology did not begin to develop as a distinct science until the late nineteenth century, as Rafter acknowledges, ‘every science has its predecessors’⁶ and the eighteenth century saw the beginnings of discussions about the nature of both criminality and science. The backdrop to this was the Enlightenment, a period which saw the abandonment of ‘supernatural’ explanations for natural phenomena that had dominated the medieval world view. It began with a scientific revolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which changed how the cosmos was viewed. The objective of Enlightenment thinkers was to define and describe humankind in the same way that the natural sciences had sought to define and describe the natural world - a science of man.⁷ This approach was underpinned by key doctrines of rationalism, free will and the social contract, an approach epitomised by the eighteenth-century penologist, Cesare Beccaria, and the utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham⁸.

Lombroso’s work was a response to these ideas of rationalism and free will. His central idea was that some individuals were born with the propensity to crime, and that those individuals could be identified by their physical and psychological anomalies, indicative of an evolutionary throwback to a more primitive species of human being. Thus, the criminal is not making a rational choice but is the victim of his own physiology: he is born not made, a product of his nature not his nurture. The psychological and physical anomalies which marked out the criminal could, Lombroso asserted, be counted and classified, thus turning the study of crime into an

⁵ David Garland, ‘Of Crimes and Criminals: The Development of Criminology in Britain’, Ch 1 pp. 17-68 in Mike Maguire, Rod Morgan and Robert Reiner (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 17.

⁶ Nicole Rafter (ed), *The Origins of Criminology: A Reader*. (London:Routledge, 2009), p. 3.

⁷ Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 17-26.

⁸ Beccaria’s work, *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764) proposed reform that would put law and due process at the heart of social order rather than religion and superstition. Certainty and consistency should be preferred over barbarism, irregularity and delay and the criminal should be treated as a rational human being who had chosen his destiny. These ideas were also espoused by Bentham (1748-1832) in response to the harsh and chaotic criminal justice system in operation at Britain at the time, known as the ‘Bloody Code’.

empirical science. I therefore began my research into Lombroso by examining his influences. Particularly helpful in this was Antorini's review of the body of knowledge which provided the cultural base upon which Lombroso built his own ideas, including works by Joseph Lavater, Franz Josef Gall, Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, Benedict-August Morel and Charles Darwin.⁹

Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, first published in 1789,¹⁰ did not focus on crime specifically, but his analysis of facial features did make the connection between an individual's appearance and deviance. At around the same time, Gall developed the idea of phrenology - the first systematic explanation for human behaviour. Essentially, the theory proposed that the brain is divided into various mental 'faculties' or organs such as Combativeness and Destructiveness, each of which had their own distinct functions.¹¹ Gall's ideas were popularised by his student, Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, and became the basis for a theory of criminal behaviour, punishment and reformation. Lombroso acknowledged in his own work his debt to both physiognomy and phrenology. He referred specifically to Lavater's work in the first edition of *L'Uomo Delinquente*¹²; and whilst he rejected the phrenological map of the brain, the assumptions about the relationship between brain formation and behaviour underlay his own ideas.

The later influences on Lombroso - Benedict-August Morel, author of the 1857 work *Treatise on the Physical, Intellectual and Moral Degenerations of the Human Species*, and Charles Darwin - reflect three major concerns in criminology's nineteenth-century development: degeneration and its causal relationship with moral insanity (known today as psychopathy), the implications of evolution and the desire to study crime as a social phenomenon. The study of the morally insane (also known as moral imbeciles, incorrigibles and degenerates) involved attempts to identify and understand the condition. Lombroso himself devoted a considerable amount of time and study to this; although mentioned only briefly in the first edition of *L'Uomo Delinquente*, by the time of the third edition in 1884 the idea of moral insanity had become a key component of Lombroso's ideas.

Darwin's ideas of evolution, when related to the study of crime, led to the theory of degeneration, in which some people evolve, but others 'devolve', or go backwards, towards a condition of lesser complexity or savagery. This could be inherited and although at first it was thought to be a curable condition if the right life was lived, later in the century, as crime and

⁹ G. Antorini, *I Precursori di Lombroso*, Torino 1900 cited by Marvin E Wolfgang, 'Cesare Lombroso', in Hermann Mannheim (ed.), *Pioneers of Criminology*. (London: Stevens & Sons Limited 1960), p. 177.

¹⁰ Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*. (London: Printed for G.G.J and J. Robinson, 1789).

¹¹ Nicole Rafter (ed) *The Origins of Criminology: A Reader*. (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 20-1.

¹² In a chapter headed 'Anthropometry and Physiognomy of 832 Criminals': see Gibson and Rafter (trans.), *Criminal Man*, pp 50-57.

poverty grew, this view hardened and the notion that it could be reversed was rejected. Underpinning this was the view held by most of the educated that the white race was the most evolved and that criminals were essentially savages with more primitive brains. Lombroso was heavily influenced by Darwin's work, claiming in the first edition of *L'Uomo Delinquente* (1876) that there was a similarity between 'criminals and savages or the coloured races' (p 91), and arguing in the third edition (1886) that 'atavism' (or the criminal as evolutionary throwback) was 'one of the most constant characteristics of the born criminal' (p 222).

Having established the main influences on Lombroso as a criminologist, I had begun the process of understanding him as a character in my novel, but more focused research was needed. As I was writing specifically about his work on the female offender it was important to place his life and work into its proper historical and cultural context in relation to the position of women.

La Donna Delinquente offered the first theory of female crime and it became, as Gibson puts it, 'an instant classic' and 'a touchstone for future works on female crime'. It is worthy of note that these future works were not to appear for at least another seventy years. One of the reasons for the success of Lombroso's work is that, unlike *L'Uomo Delinquente*, *La Donna Delinquente* was widely available, having been translated almost immediately into German and French, and soon afterwards into English for both British and American audiences. The basis of Lombroso's theory was that women of all kinds, including the 'normal', were inferior, barred from creating great things by their lack of genius and originality, and had no particular talent for any art, science or profession. 'They can write, paint, embroider, sing; they move from dressmaking to millinery to being florists, good at everything and at nothing... This is the effect of a lesser differentiation in their brain functioning' (pp. 83-5). Lombroso remarks that the brain of a woman weighs less than that of a man, the clear implication being that the differential in weight was responsible, in part at least, for what he saw as the inferior intellectual functioning of the female. Indeed, post-mortem examinations of female brains, and the questionable extrapolations drawn therefrom, produced in this period what Lisa Appignanesi describes as a 'medical consensus about women's inferior intelligence and nervous frailty', which in turn led to an 'over-diagnosis' of nervous disorders in women¹³.

Chief of these diagnoses was hysteria. Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-93), 'the first of the great European theorists of hysteria'¹⁴ based at La Salpetriere, displayed his female hysteric patients to a fascinated Parisian public. The hysteric typified the tension between the Victorian

¹³ Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present* (London: Virago 2009), p. 125.

¹⁴ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 147.

ideal of the feminine - a woman who may be sexually desirable, but had no sexual desires herself - and the secret yearning for sexual freedom, in both women and men¹⁵. In *La Donna Delinquente*, Lombroso drew on Charcot's work, writing a chapter on 'Hysterical Criminals' in which he claimed that it 'is the disorder that most differentiates insane women from insane men' and 'the impulses of hysterical women are like those of big children and can surpass other women, becoming terrible, worse than men' (pp. 234-240). Lombroso also demonstrated a curiosity – one might even say a prurient fascination – about sexual practices, with discussions in the original Italian version of *La Donna Delinquente* of adultery, frigidity, lesbianism, masturbation and pre-marital sex as well as prostitution (discussions which were omitted from the original English translation of the work). Gibson and Rafter argue that these discussions mark an important link with the pioneers of sexology in the early twentieth century, describing Lombroso as a 'transitional figure between Victorian prudery and the celebrations of sexual freedom' (p.21).

From my point of view as a novelist, this reflects an interesting paradox, or tension between Lombroso's views on the female offender and his personal circumstances. In his private life, he was surrounded by strong women. Both of his daughters, Paola and Gina, were academically gifted and it is likely that they were influenced by Anna Kuliscioff, a socialist feminist and physician, friend to Lombroso and a regular visitor to his home. Russian physician, Pauline Tarnovsky, was a fellow criminal anthropologist, on whose work with Moscow prostitutes Lombroso drew heavily. In *The Devil's Daughters* Anna Tarnovsky is loosely based on an amalgam of these women.

Lombroso then was a man of contradictions. Despite his political liberalism, he found the development in the 1880s and 1890s of women's movements in Italy troubling. Perhaps that is why, as his translators Rafter and Gibson suggest in *La Donna Delinquente*, he was so dismissive of clever women and insisted that maternity was their proper aspiration (p.16). However, they also point out that he apologises for his harsh words about women: perhaps because, as they say, he was mindful of arguments at the family dinner table about the roles and status of women and wished to keep the peace. Both of his daughters became, as Pick puts it, 'directly involved in the Lombroso 'industry', researching, publishing, and furthering the topic of criminal anthropology.¹⁶ Paola did not attend university but wrote a series of children's books and established a weekly children's newspaper, *Corriere dei Piccoli*, thus buttressing the family's finances. In her early twenties, she published articles and short stories, much to the chagrin of her father, who viewed women as lacking creative power. However, her later work in the field of

¹⁵ Appignanesi, pp. 143-44.

¹⁶ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989/96), p. 152.

child psychology was apparently more acceptable, perhaps because Lombroso did not feel that it challenged his ideas about the intellectual inferiority of women.¹⁷ Gina, following her qualification as a doctor, became her father's secretary and later a faithful custodian of her father's work after his death, editing a compendium and writing some additional material herself, as well as issuing an English language version of *Criminal Man*, and writing an intellectual biography of her father in 1915.¹⁸

These contradictions and tensions in both Lombroso's domestic and professional life became a theme that underpinned my writing of Lombroso as a character in the novel. For example, he offers Lucy the opportunity to look at his work, but suggests that its complexity may mean that she will require her brother to explain it (p.166). He also patronises Anna Tarnovsky, 'undermining her at every opportunity' despite having previously been 'charming, almost deferential' at a symposium the previous year (p.71). This mirrored what I saw to be a tension between Lombroso's apparent dismissiveness of intellectual women and his reliance on the work of Pauline Tarnovsky (thereby implicitly acknowledging, I would suggest, her own academic worth).

LOMBROSO'S LEGACY

Although there is a traditional view that Lombroso's ideas have been discredited, they are still influential. His work was at the heart of the creation of the new discipline of criminology, offering an alternative approach to Beccaria and Bentham's ideas about free will. His translators, Nicole Rafter and Mary Gibson maintain that he has remained central to criminological debates. This may be overstating things. There has always been substantial critique of the concept of the born criminal and although there was still allegiance to Lombroso in Italy for some years after his death in 1909, elsewhere, particularly in America, sociological explanations of crime were given far more attention throughout the twentieth century.

In recent years, there has been something of a resurgence of interest in his work with an acceptance that crime may be rooted, at least in part, in biological factors. But even Lombroso's translators accept that these are not a simple reflection of his ideas. As they point out, he and his contemporaries often spoke in terms of a nature-nurture dichotomy, whereas it is now more common to hear today's criminologists speak of interactions between heredity and environment. The born criminal was viewed by Lombroso as more of a certainty; but now the biological connection is seen in terms of probabilities, risk factors and anti-social predispositions.

¹⁷ Sylvana Patriarca 'Journalists and Essayists, 1850-1915', in Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (eds.), *A History of Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 160-161.

¹⁸ Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. (2002, US: Praeger Publishers), p.89.

Causational factors in Lombroso's work were atavism, degeneration, epilepsy and moral insanity. Modern criminology, by contrast, looks at evolution of anti-social personality traits, behavioural genetics, hormonal imbalances and neuro-cognitive deficits. Evolutionary psychology and behavioural genetics draw on Lombroso's ideas: the former through the ideas of Darwinism, whilst the latter draws on developments in genetics, an area of science little known in Lombroso's day.¹⁹ We are talking here of echoes, rather than a return to criminal anthropology but the influences are still clear. This is noticeable in relation to the female offender where Lombrosian ideas have been particularly durable. As one of the pioneers of twentieth-century feminist criminology Carol Smart noted, the theories espoused in *La Donna Delinquente* could be linked to confusions between sex and gender and the attribution of masculine traits to female offenders which recurred in the work of the few criminologists who examined the topic throughout the twentieth century²⁰ until a feminist critique of this view began to emerge in the 1970's.²¹

It is not merely a case of Lombroso being a distant part of criminological history. As we have seen his ideas continue to have relevance, have led to more theoretically sophisticated forms of positivism and are still taught as part of all university courses in the discipline, albeit from a critical perspective. His crude approach to biological criminology is still in evidence today, particularly in popular media discourses about women committing serious violent crime.²² It was this reduction of female offenders to distorted stereotypical representations that influenced both my decision to use fiction to critique his theories and their legacy and my choice of Lombroso as a central character in the novel. In addition, as I discovered from further research, his theories had been drawn on by novelists before.

LOMBROSO AND CRIME FICTION

Jonathan R Hiller notes that by the end of the nineteenth century, Lombroso's theories had circulated widely among Italian writers, and that a 'remarkably diverse group of literary figures'

¹⁹ Cesare Lombroso, *L'Uomo Delinquente*, (London: Duke University Press, 1909/2006) pp 28-32.

²⁰ These include writers such as Oskar Pollak who in *The Criminality of Women* (1950) claimed that rates of female crime are the same as male but appear far lower due to female cunning, deviousness and deceit as demonstrated in their ability to fake sexual arousal. W.I.Thomas who in his 1923 study of female delinquency, *The Unadjusted Girl*, claimed that the source of female criminality was mainly sexual and increasing due to the breaking down of traditional restraints on women and Cowie, Cowie and Slater whose 1968 study, *Delinquency in Girls*, examined a small institutionalised sample of girls and suggested they were representative, took sex roles to be constitutionally predetermined and reduced social and cultural factors to 'channels' for abnormal biological states.

²¹ Carol Smart, *Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique*, (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1976) pp.32-3.

²² Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 4th ed (London: Sage, 2015) p.15.

had taken inspiration from the works of criminal anthropology²³. Writers such as Emile Zola, Bram Stoker and Joseph Conrad all drew on Lombroso's theories, although as Stephen Kern notes, they may not always have been entirely convinced by them²⁴. Zola was clearly influenced by the ideas of the born criminal and atavism in his representation in a series of novels of the Rougon-Maquart family and their criminal propensities. In *La Bete Humaine*, for example, signs of degeneration can be seen in the physical descriptions of many of his criminal characters. One, Roubaud, is described by Kern as 'a walking checklist of Lombrosian criminal stigmata with a flat head, low forehead and eyebrows that meet over his nose'. Stoker famously uses Lombroso's criminal characteristics to describe Dracula's physical appearance with its aquiline nose (like that of a bird of prey), bushy eyebrows that meet over the nose and pointed ears. As the character, Mina Harker, notes, Count Dracula is 'a criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind.' Even Dracula's main characteristic comes directly from Lombroso's own description of his examination of a criminal's skull and how it demonstrated the murderer's destiny to 'mutilate the corpse...and drink its blood'²⁵.

Conrad, by contrast, uses Lombroso's ideas in his novel *The Secret Agent*, but makes it clear that he has no enthusiasm for them. On one level, his novel operates as an 'explosion', as Ronald R Thomas puts it, of the 'scientific fictions' embodied in the ideas of criminal anthropology²⁶. This is clearly seen in the debate between the anarchists, Ossipon and Yundt. Ossipon is a fake doctor who quotes Lombroso to persuade himself and his followers of his authenticity. His fellow anarchist, Yundt, dismisses Lombroso as an 'ass who made his way in this world of gorged fools by looking at the ears and teeth of a lot of poor luckless devils'²⁷. These doubts perhaps reflect the challenges made to Lombrosian positivist ideas in criminology by those who were still influenced by utilitarian philosophy. French criminologists such as Alexandre Lacassagne, Léonce Manoevriér, Paul Topinard and Gabriel Tarde were extremely critical of Lombroso's theories, offering alternative social explanations for crime. But it would be wrong to see these two schools of thought as distinct from each other. There was still a mix of ideas throughout Europe, representing both biological determinism as mooted by Lombroso, and

²³ Jonathan R Hiller, 'Lombroso and the Science of Literature and Opera' in Paul Knapper and P J Ystehede (eds.), *The Cesare Lombroso Handbook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 235-42. Hiller cites examples, including *Heart* by Edmondo De Amicis (1886); the work of Giovanni Verga, particularly his 1878 short story 'Rosso Malpello' ('Red Bad-Hair'); the short stories of Luigi Capuana (who became a friend of Lombroso); and *Giovanni Episcopo* (1892) by Gabriele D'Annunzio.

²⁴ Stephen Kern, *A Cultural History of Causality: Science, Murder Novels and Systems of Thought* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 233-35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁶ Ronald R Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 276.

²⁷ Kern, p. 234.

social causes for crime. Even Lombroso and his followers included education, poverty and other environmental factors in their analysis²⁸. The important consequence was that crime and criminality were being discussed as a discrete discipline. The existence of this debate, as well as the popularity in fiction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes, confirms that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the role of science in society, including the study of crime, had been widely accepted.

This section has discussed my research relating to Lombroso's ideas and their scientific and cultural context, research that led me to consider Lombroso's legacy not only in fields such as neuro-criminology and evolutionary psychology but also in the distorted portrayal in popular culture of the female offender both during the fin de siècle and today. Having reflected on this my next task was to examine his theories about the female offender through such representations in nineteenth-century fiction and historical crime fiction set in the period, drawing on contemporary criminological critiques of biological theories and their reflection in popular portrayals of criminal women. What follows considers these perspectives and how they assisted me in the drawing of my own characters, Concetta Panatti and Bianca Rambaudi.

²⁸ Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p. 248.

SECTION 3: THE VIOLENT FEMALE OFFENDER IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRIME FICTION

In her discussion of high profile nineteenth-century middle class female murderers, Mary S Hartman reveals a complex picture. She speaks of a code of manners which defined the proper young woman as a frail, appealing, intellectually inferior but morally superior being, whose duty it was to be passive, decorative and sexually pure - a fantasy image that has been slow to fade. Her subjects, she argues, were not the freaks, victims or rebels that they were portrayed to be, but women who were especially vulnerable to pressures experienced by their peers - the changes that were transforming society throughout the century and the public efforts to interpret these changes.²⁹

As discussed in the previous section, the traditional view of 'freaks and victims' is ingrained and explains the persistence of Lombrosian biological ideas about female offenders in modern popular cultural representations. In the criminal justice system and the media, for example, the prevailing images of such women are often said by contemporary cultural criminologists to derive from historical representations in pagan mythology, Judaeo-Christian theology and classical art and literature. Witches, vampires, harpies, evil temptresses, 'fallen women' and Christian notions of Original Sin are all used to convey female wickedness.³⁰ As well as Jewkes, Belinda Morrissey, for example, discusses how the morality play structure, with its dominant discourse of good versus evil, is particularly evident in reports of murder cases. She suggests that stock narratives of both male and female figures from popular stories or myths such as Dracula, Bluebeard, Lady Macbeth or Medea are used to describe transgressors. This, she argues, allows for an easy mapping of this narrative structure on to the contemporary event of the killing. The reality is then buried underneath a tide of sensationalism and hysteria, with murderers being transformed into monsters and therefore disconnected from the rest of the human race. This does away with any need for consideration of societal culpability or responsibility for such deeds.³¹ This is arguably exaggerated in relation to women. Male deviance is seen to exist on a continuum, but female deviance is polarized into good versus evil much more readily – the gentler sex or the deadlier of the species, Madonna or whore and so on. Male violence is therefore constructed by degrees whereas women transgressors are either good or bad

²⁹ Mary S Hartman, *Victorian Murderesses: A True History of Thirteen Respectable French and English Women Accused of Unspeakable Crimes* (London: Robson Books, 1985).

³⁰ Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and Crime* (London: Sage, 2014) pp. 133-146.

³¹ Belinda Morrissey, *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 16.

with nothing in between. A violent man is normal but commits abnormal acts – a violent woman, however, is just abnormal, being either mad or bad.³² The former denies her agency, the latter her humanity.

The question for me as a novelist was how to portray my own female offenders. To what extent would it be possible and/or necessary to move away from these constructions? To assist me in answering these questions I examined such portrayals in both nineteenth-century fiction and work by contemporary authors depicting the period. I focused on two constructed narratives: sexuality and sexual deviance in the form of the ‘femme fatale’ (the bad) and madness and agency in a stereotype described by Jewkes as the ‘mad cow’.³³

THE ‘FEMME FATALE’

My aim was to create two female criminals with very different motives. The first was Concetta Panatti who runs legitimate businesses as a cover for others which are not so legal, including an unregistered brothel catering for ‘special tastes’. I had in my mind a female version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s villain, Moriarty – the ‘Napoleon of crime’. I wanted her to be a highly intelligent woman who was capable of being single minded and utterly ruthless. Unlike Moriarty, however, she would use her sexuality as a weapon, like the dangerous women of ‘film noir’ who knew exactly how to manipulate a man to get they wanted from him.

According to Morris, femmes fatales were under-represented in earlier Victorian fiction even though there was a ‘near obsession’ with such characters in other media such as poetry, opera and the visual arts, as well as in European novels and plays. This, she suggests, is explained by the reluctance of Victorian novelists to be sexually explicit.³⁴ It has been argued that during the *fin de siècle*, the literary femme fatale became more prominent and that this was due to profound material, social and cultural changes. Earlier in sensation fiction authors such as Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon created murderous female characters whose sexuality and criminality are, as Morris concedes, inextricably intertwined.³⁵ This seems to be something of a contradiction although perhaps such characters only became clear and recognisable types in the late nineteenth century when sexual discourses were more readily produced as the result of developments in medicine, criminology and psychiatry, amongst other disciplines.³⁶ This reflects

³² Bronwen Naylor, ‘Media Images of Women Who Kill’, *Legal Services Bulletin*, 15/1 (1990), pp. 4-8.

³³ Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and Crime* (London: Sage, 2015), pp. 148-50.

³⁴ Virginia B. Morris, *Double Jeopardy: Women Who Kill in Victorian Fiction* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), p. 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁶ Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Limited, 1996), pp. ix-xi.

my own research relating to the context in which Lombroso and his fellow early criminologists were working. The greater prominence of the femme fatale may also be related to the particular concerns of the fin de siècle, an age of cultural insecurity where change was feared, particularly in relation to the changing role of women. As noted by Gilbert and Gubar, to men of the period, 'women seemed to be agents of an alien world that evoked anger and anguish...'³⁷ It is likely then that the popularity of Lombroso's work was connected to these fears. What better way was there to 'manage' the 'new woman' than to dismiss her as inferior? Fear is also argued by feminist criminologists to be at the heart of contemporary representations of violent women who were no longer nurturers but murderers. Biological theories are crudely drawn upon when portraying them as mad or bad, abnormal and therefore different.

Before going further, it is important to be clear about our terms. In her recent discussion of the femme fatale in 'hardboiled' crime fiction, Maysaa Husam Jaber describes her as an archetypal character from folklore, myths and literature who is sexually voracious, irresistible and dangerous, leading men to their ruination. Jaber uses several examples: the spider woman, the evil seductress, the sexual predator, vampire, temptress, wild woman, prostitute and female murderer. She argues that, although literary and cinematic scholarship tends to see the criminal femme fatale as a misogynistic construction, in crime fiction they can be described as containing a space for female empowerment and female agency even if the novels and films themselves are not feminist. The femme fatale has power in that she uses her wiles to achieve her ambitions of success and social and economic mobility and disrupts the detective's investigation by undermining his attempts to solve the mystery and establish order.³⁸ However, I would suggest that, notwithstanding Jaber's argument, the femme fatale is still a male construct. She is the reason why the man does what he does; he is powerless to resist her and he blames her for his downfall, a theme that stretches back to the Bible, with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Even if the femme fatale is 'empowered', as Jaber suggests, she does not necessarily triumph as that 'power' does not bring about success. In two classics of the film noir genre, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Double Indemnity* (1944), the femmes fatales are punished for their crimes, by imprisonment and death.

When creating the character of Concetta Panatti, it was my intention to portray her as being someone who owned her innate badness and considered herself to be empowered by it, rather than blaming it on others. She is a powerful and influential businesswoman and is clearly intelligent. When challenged about this apparent anomaly in a criminal woman, Lombroso the

³⁷ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p.4.

³⁸ Maysaa Husam Jaber, *Criminal Femmes Fatales in American Hardboiled Crime Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.1-3.

criminologist, whose general view, as we have seen, is that women, including female offenders, are inferior, says in *The Devil's Daughters*:

She is of course physically incapable of satisfying her perverse instincts. However, superior intelligence in a criminal woman can be explained by two things – the fact that she is a born criminal and the originality of her crimes. She has combined prostitution, pandering and blackmail with legitimate business interests – a lethal mix that makes her almost invincible (p.320).

This idea is taken directly from Lombroso's own words in *La Donna Delinquente* (p.189).

Lombroso's central theme was that women were inferior, less criminal and less susceptible to mental diseases than men because they had simpler brains. Women who were 'morally insane' (i.e. emotionally disinhibited) were thought to be so because of sexual deviance.³⁹ In Italy, prostitution was not a crime if the women worked in a state registered brothel and complied with prescriptive regulations regarding health checks, curfews, and so forth.⁴⁰ Lombroso's view of prostitutes was confused. He sometimes referred to them as the real 'degenerates' among women, treating them as almost a distinct species. He also occasionally groups them together with female criminals, and then makes a comparison with what he terms as 'normal' women. At other times, however, he refers to them as non-criminals, saying at one point that 'women's natural form of retrogression is prostitution, not crime.' (p. 185). The term 'prostitute' is used imprecisely and becomes a rhetorical device, invoked and applied to confirm a point or to help Lombroso escape from a tight logical corner (pp. 10-11).

Panatti states that her father was right to describe her as being 'born bad' after she killed one of his employees who attacked her and describes how she embraced this idea:

He was certainly right. In fact, I have spent the rest of my life proving him so. (p.193)

Panatti is as much a victim of her circumstances as Bianca Rambaudi, but prefers to believe otherwise. She is empowered, or at least thinks she is, by seeing herself as being born bad rather than as someone who was shaped by her environment and upbringing. However, she was told this by her father at an age when it would no doubt have had a profound psychological effect and thus have formed her reasoning as she grew up.

When preparing to write the Panatti character, I began by examining other portrayals of female offenders in both Victorian and contemporary fiction. One of the first I looked at was Lucy Audley from Mary Anne Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, a prime example of sensation

³⁹ Nicole Rafter (ed.), *The Origins of Criminology: A Reader*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp.x-xiii.

⁴⁰ Mary Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy 1860-1915* (2nd ed.) (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2.

fiction.⁴¹ Elaine Showalter describes the female authors of such works as inverting the stereotypes of the domestic novel, and parodying the conventions of their male contemporaries. They were successful, she argues, because they displayed female anger, frustration and sexual energy, showing women in self-assertive roles where they escaped from their families through illness, madness, divorce, flight and ultimately murder.⁴²

Lucy Audley abandons her child, finds employment and marries bigamously after her husband George Talboys deserts her. She then attempts murder and commits arson when he returns, after faking her own obituary and staging her funeral fails to shake him off. Both the ruthlessness of her actions and her strident use of her sexual allure to get what she wants make her a femme fatale, dangerous as she is to both her bigamous husband Sir Michael's reputation and his nephew Robert Audley's health. For example, she is manipulative when she persuades Sir Michael to remove the suspicious Robert from his household by hinting at his alleged attraction to her and using it as a weapon:

She came skipping through the hall to meet him, and, shaking her golden ringlets, buried her bright head on her husband's breast.

‘So the last of our visitors is gone, dear, and we're all alone,’ she said. ‘Isn't that nice?’

‘Yes, darling,’ he answered fondly, stroking her bright hair.

‘Except Mr. Robert Audley. How long is he going to stay here?’

‘As long as he likes, my pet; he's always welcome,’ said the baronet; and then, as if remembering himself, he added tenderly: ‘But not unless his visit is agreeable to you, darling.’

Lady Audley pursed up her rosy lips and looked thoughtfully at the ground.

‘It isn't that,’ she said, hesitatingly. ‘Mr Audley is a very agreeable young man, and a very honourable young man; but you know, Sir Michael, I'm rather a young aunt for such a nephew, and -’

‘And what, Lucy?’ asked the baronet, fiercely.

‘Poor Alicia is rather jealous of any attention Mr Audley pays me, and - and - I think it would be better for her happiness if your nephew were to bring his visit to a close.’⁴³

⁴¹ Mary Anne Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2012).

⁴² Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 182-3

⁴³ Braddon, p. 114.

As Morris notes⁴⁴, Braddon emphasizes Lucy's guilt by describing her portrait and referring to the strange, almost demonic beauty using the colour red and its variants to push the message of sexual availability home:

Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of colour as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed the crimson dress, the sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colours of each accessory of the minutely painted background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one.⁴⁵

Lucy Audley crosses boundaries with bigamy and attempted murder. Her lack of remorse also makes her a femme fatale. She commits her criminal acts in her own defence, protecting the life she has made for herself even though it is based on deceit. With the exception of the attempted murder of Talboys, her acts are pre-meditated. Robert is both attracted and repelled by her and is almost her victim when she tries to set fire to the hotel where he is staying.

The men in *Lady Audley's Secret* are uniformly unimpressive. Talboys, Lucy's first and only legitimate husband is unrepentant about abandoning her, expecting her to wait for him with no means of supporting herself or their child. Sir Michael suddenly finds all his love has 'gone' when her bigamy is revealed. Robert Audley is so annoying in his meddling and righteous indignation that the modern reader is almost bound to side with the villainess, despite her crimes. I found the ending, whereby Lucy is declared insane and locked up in an asylum, to be deeply unsatisfactory. Audley, realising that Talboys survived Lucy's attempt to kill him, leaves her to languish in the asylum. In a 2000 television adaptation, the writer Donald Hounam made changes, allowing Lucy to escape, having been rescued by Sir Michael's daughter. The final scene has Robert Audley see her across the platform at a railway station in the company of an older, clearly besotted man, presumably about to embark on another bigamous marriage. This seemed much more satisfying than Braddon's ending, although that should be seen in the context of the time in which it was written. In the nineteenth century, a woman's choices were limited, which is arguably the point that Braddon wanted to make. As Showalter says, in marrying Sir Michael Audley, Lucy does not mean to commit bigamy but to free herself from the confinement of drudgery, maternity and poverty, although she later maintains this freedom through violent attacks on men.⁴⁶

Lady Audley's Secret helped me with forming the character of Concetta Panatti with one

⁴⁴ Morris, 1990, pp. 92-3.

⁴⁵ Braddon, p. 65.

⁴⁶ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 2014)

important distinction. Lucy Audley uses her sexuality to get what she wants, as does Panatti, but the former is more coquettish and ultimately weak enough to allow Robert Audley to succeed. As my aim was to create strong female characters to challenge and critique Lombroso's ideas and their modern-day legacy, I did not want there to be such weakness apparent in Panatti. Even though she does not ultimately win, as she is thwarted in bringing about James's downfall, she still triumphs in retaining her freedom and continuing her life of both legitimate business and crime.

The femme fatale is dangerous at least in part because she is prepared to lie to achieve her ends, as Lucy Audley does. It is only when these lies are about to be uncovered that she turns to violence. But it is this ability to lie that strikes her nemesis Robert Audley. He makes comparisons throughout between Lucy and other 'wicked' women, from Eve to Lucrezia Borgia, Catherine de Médici and the Marquise de Pompadour, as well as the then contemporary case of Maria Manning, who shot her lover and was seen by Victorian society as the personification of feminine deceit.⁴⁷ According to Morris, Audley is echoing the general Victorian dread of female demonic powers as well as her seductive appeal.⁴⁸ Alternatively, it may simply be a response to a woman strong enough to attempt murder and bigamy to achieve the security she craves and would otherwise be denied.

Maria Manning was a real example of such a woman, both dangerous and non-conformist, who drew in a man to help her kill her lover. Manning was described by *The Times* as 'Lady Macbeth on the Bermondsey Stage', 'Jezebel to the life' and 'the ready arguer, the greedy aggrandizer, the forger, the intriguer, the resolute, the painted and the attired.'⁴⁹ Various authors drew on her case for inspiration.⁵⁰ Dickens is said to have drawn heavily on Manning when writing the character of Lady Dedlock's maid Hortense in *Bleak House*, giving her similar features:

She is dark, 'handsome', with 'good taste' in her dress, and she abuses the detective, Inspector Bucket, at the end in a similar manner to the abuse Maria hurled in court, 'With a stamp of her foot, and a menace', and a tigerish expression ... her black eyes darting fire.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1862/2012) pp 252 and 124.

⁴⁸ Morris, 1990, p. 95.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture*. (2007, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 8.

⁵⁰ As well as Dickens, these included Emma Robinson (*The Gold Worshippers or The Days We Live In. A Future Historical Novel*), George Eliot (*The Lifted Veil*), Mary Anne Braddon (*The Black Band, or the Mysteries of Midnight*) and Wilkie Collins (*The Woman in White*). See Judith Flanders, *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime* (2011, London: Harper Press), pp. 180-1.

⁵¹ Flanders, pp. 176-7.

Like Lucy Audley, the character of Lydia Gwilt, in Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* uses her sexuality to gain power over her own destiny.⁵² The question that Collins raises in the novel is whether she should be condemned for her actions. To what extent is she a victim of the society in which a single woman had few choices? Collins clearly did not share Lombroso's later views about criminals being born not made. Gwilt's character is clearly fashioned from her circumstances, and her violence is her response to this. But Gwilt, for all her cunning, does not prevail. Worn down by her lack of success, the prospect of arrest and perhaps also by guilt and shame, she commits suicide. Another criminal woman is punished. Both novels were written in the 1860s when, as Morris argues (see above), the convention was for such transgressors to come to a bad end. However, modern authors writing historical fiction have no such societal constraints. The criminal femme fatale can survive and even triumph, as Panatti does to an extent in *The Devil's Daughters*.

THE 'MAD COW' AND 'THE EVIL MANIPULATOR'

The fictional Victorian femme fatale, although permitted to fight for survival in a male dominated world was still seen as a dangerous threat that necessitated appropriate disposal. Lydia Gwilt commits suicide. Lucy Audley is incarcerated in an asylum having been described as dangerous rather than mad by a doctor engaged by Robert Audley. He arranges this to ensure that she is punished, unconvinced that justice will be served. He has her labelled as mad and therefore manages to remove any power she might otherwise have had or regained. She does confess however and explains in doing so how her violent nature was inherited from her mother:

My mother was a madwoman... Her madness was a hereditary disease transmitted to her by her mother, who had died mad. She, my mother, had been, or had appeared sane up to the hour of my birth; but from that hour her intellect had decayed. The only inheritance I had to expect from my mother was insanity.⁵³

This and other similar references throughout the book draw on nineteenth century notions of heredity in the development of insane violence.⁵⁴ Elaine Showalter, cited by Morris, argues that this was Braddon's way of ensuring that her readers would be spared the guilt of identifying with a coldblooded killer. Morris challenges this view, arguing that it does not take sufficient account of the fact that Lucy Audley would probably not have been convicted of any crime, firstly because of the lack of any solid evidence, and secondly because of her class.⁵⁵

⁵² Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1866/2008)

⁵³ Braddon, pp. 343-5.

⁵⁴ Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and sensation Fiction: Crime medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 103.

⁵⁵ Morris, p. 97.

Interestingly, Showalter argues elsewhere that the novel is a subversive feminine account of puerperal mania and its murderous results and that Lady Audley's true secret might be that the label the society of the time attached to female assertion, ambition, self-interest and outrage was insanity.⁵⁶

The removal of agency from violent criminal women reflects media stereotypes (as discussed earlier), this time informed by medical science, and drawn upon in early Lombrosian criminology. As Jewkes writes, even today most women accused of serious violent offences are advised to rely on psychiatric explanations for their behaviour. These explanations originate in notions of female pathology influenced by prominent nineteenth-century male pioneers such as Sigmund Freud and Lombroso.⁵⁷

In *The Devil's Daughters*, Bianca Rambaudi murders her mother, a number of women and finally commits suicide after killing her brother Francesco. Bianca's actions stem from her childhood experiences within her dysfunctional family. Bianca's mother Sylvana, neglected by her husband, embarks on an incestuous relationship with her son Francesco. Initially Bianca can only watch. Her way of regaining power is by murdering her mother and, having embalmed/mummified her body, then putting it on display in a bizarre ritual. The young women she abducts, with Francesco's help, are then subjected to an ordeal, by which if they react to the corpse they are then murdered. As Lombroso describes it in *The Devil's Daughters*:

This led to the forming of a pattern of behaviour. A girl would be abducted, an experiment conducted, and then she would be kept at the summerhouse as an exhibit before being disposed of. Moral insanity at its most extreme. (p. 318)

Bianca has two male accomplices in Francesco and Bruno, so does she fit the stereotype of female offender described by Jewkes as an 'evil manipulator'? This is a woman who kills with a man and has the guilt placed by the media squarely upon her shoulders, as in the case of Rose and Fred West, and the 'Moors Murderers', Myra Hindley and Ian Brady. The somewhat simplistic argument is that evil men capable of extreme cruelty would not act without a submissive woman. Between them, they become a 'lethal pair'. The woman is therefore instrumental in unleashing the violence and depravity that has thus far been contained.⁵⁸ This viewpoint suggests that the woman is responsible for the man's actions. I would argue that is unlikely to be the case, and is, as Jewkes suggests, a solution constructed by the media, to the 'problem' of heterosexual women who appear to be equal partners, or at least to unquestioningly

⁵⁶ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p 72.

⁵⁷ Yvonne Jewkes, *Media and Crime*, 3rd edn (London: Sage, 2015) p. 148.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

co-operate with their male partners in a serious violent crime. There are conflicting views among criminologists. Some (Joan Smith, 1997; Wykes, 1998) argue that for the most part they are ordinary women who have fallen under the influence of a controlling man and have been manipulated into cooperation. Others claim that this denies agency and free will and that they seek out such men because they have similar desires, going along with their partners' murderous activities to achieve empowerment.⁵⁹ In generalising such cases the criminologists have fallen into the same trap as the media they so often critique. In truth, each of these cases is different, and each is far more complex than either the media or criminological construction implies.

Examples of killer couples in Victorian literature are few and far between, and those that exist do not feature a submissive woman. Lucy Westenra in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* becomes a submissive woman, but she is more of a victim than a perpetrator, being under the Count's power.⁶⁰ Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett kill together in the 'penny dreadful' tale, *The String of Pearls*, but Mrs Lovett could hardly be described as submissive. The same could be said of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* who, although she does not take part physically in her husband's murder does nothing to discourage her lover from either talking about it or committing it, merely saying when it is first suggested:

People do sometimes die ... only it's dangerous for the survivors ... You see, none of the known ways are any good.⁶¹

Bianca Rambaudi commits her crimes with the willing collusion of her brother Francesco and the servant Bruno. She is in full control. Although she began her crimes to please Francesco she starts to enjoy what she does, even exhibiting the corpses to show it off. Submissiveness does not come into it.

Although the texts discussed above were major influences I did read closely and draw on others. I found some works by Wilkie Collins informative in their portrayal of women who transgressed.⁶² In these novels the antagonists were not motivated by sexual immorality or desire although they were sometimes willing to use their femininity to seduce or persuade men into helping them to achieve their goals. Collins did not shy away from portraying female strength, even though it was often channelled into criminal activity. As Morris points out, he stressed their

⁵⁹ Jewkes, p. 152.

⁶⁰ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

⁶¹ Emile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin* (London: Penguin Classics 1962), p. 80.

⁶² Wilkie Collins, *Jezebel's Daughter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1880/2016), *The Legacy of Cain* (Stroud: Sutton Publishers, 1888/1995), *Man and Wife*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1880/2016).

normality and carefully defined their motivations with the desire for financial independence or to live free from abuse, both being dominant themes in his work.⁶³

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* the eponymous heroine is portrayed as a righteous, and as the subtitle indicates, pure female murderer driven to her actions by two feckless men.⁶⁴ Panatti is shown as considering herself as righteous when she killed her abuser but she preferring to agree with her father's view of her as being born bad, thus rejecting the status of victim. The character of Tess, by contrast, is represented as believing herself born good but ruined by men and poverty, and simply gives up at the end rather than fighting on after the murder. She seems to have no remorse for her actions and accepts her fate as her due. Panatti and Bianca Rambaudi do fight on, however, the latter until the very end, when she decides that there is no alternative but to kill both herself and her brother. They have suffered at the hands of others, but the power ultimately is theirs.

In *She*, H Rider Haggard creates what might be regarded as the epitome of the femme fatale, in the eponymous character of Ayesha ('She-who-must-be-obeyed'), the mysterious queen of a central African tribe. Although she possesses the secret of eternal youth, it is her physical appearance, rather than any supernatural agency, that is key. She is the combination of beauty and evil; as the narrator of the novel puts it:

... her face was what caught my eye, and held me as in a vice, not ... by the force of its beauty, but by the power of fascinated terror. The beauty was still there ... but the agony, the blind passion, and the awful vindictiveness displayed upon those quivering features, and in the tortured look of the upturned eyes, were such as surpass my powers of description.⁶⁵

Again, Panatti reflects this in the fascination she exerts over the male characters (especially James) in my novel. Panatti and Ayesha are demonic in their ruthlessness, and both attract as well as repel the men who become involved with them. Ultimately, however, both are in the position they are because of a man: Ayesha is seeking the reincarnation of the man she loved, and killed when that love was not reciprocated, and Panatti embarked upon her criminal life after killing her abuser.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL FICTION

Prior to and during the writing process I read widely in the genre of historical fiction focussing on those with central characters who were female transgressors. I was influenced by

⁶³ Morris, p. 107.

⁶⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1891/2000)

⁶⁵ H Rider Haggard, *She* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 150.

three that shared themes concerning perceptions of female insanity: *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood (1997)⁶⁶, *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters (2002)⁶⁷ and *The Crimson Petal and the White* by Michel Faber (2002).⁶⁸

Alias Grace is based on the true story of a 16-year old Canadian girl Grace Marks who was convicted with another male servant of murdering their employer Thomas Kinnear. His housekeeper and mistress Nancy Montgomery was also killed. As Atwood said shortly after the novel came out, one of the reasons that she wrote it was her interest in the division of opinion about Grace and how these received perceptions about aspects such as her criminality, servants, insanity and sexuality were projected onto her. Atwood wanted to explore public opinion and how it was formed when people read their own concerns into situations and create their own versions. As Atwood states:

When there are crimes of violence, involving both a man and a woman, it usually goes as follows: nobody ever says the man is a nice guy, but opinion often splits about the woman. Either she is the villainous instigator of it all, or else she's a terrified victim and she only did it because she was frightened for her life.⁶⁹

This suggests that Atwood's novel is a postmodern critique of scientific positivism in both the past and the present. The villain or victim aspect she speaks of is a media construct, a simplification and a distortion of something that is far more diverse and, as I have argued earlier, part of Lombroso's legacy. It was something that I wanted to avoid in *The Devil's Daughters*. Real women who kill with male partners are either portrayed as being submissive victims under their partner's influence or, more often, so monstrous as to be easily dehumanised. Either way they are denied agency.⁷⁰ In Atwood's novel, the character of Grace is far from being simplified. Atwood draws her as both complex and contradictory and, as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that she is essentially unknowable. I wanted to draw on this for Bianca. She is a victim of her mother's crimes, as is Francesco, but she is a strong character who took control of the family business when her mother died and is forceful in her dealings with people. She is both the instigator and victim, so can be pitied and feared at the same time. There is, by the end, little ambiguity about her actions, but she is still something of an enigma, and the reader is left to

⁶⁶ Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace* (London: Virago, 1996).

⁶⁷ Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith* (London: Virago, 2002).

⁶⁸ Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002)

⁶⁹ Mark Abley, interview with Margaret Atwood, *Guardian*, 5 September 1996, <http://www.theguardian.com>. [Accessed 25 October 2016.]

⁷⁰ Jewkes, p. 151.

speculate as to why she responded as she did to Sylvana's actions and Francesco's perceived needs.

The characters of Sue and Maud in *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters are both manipulative and manipulated, as well as being equally prepared to deceive the other. Sue is persuaded to take part in a plot, which will end in Maud being incarcerated in an asylum and her legacy stolen. Maud is part of a parallel plot to swap places with Sue at the last minute, and it is therefore Sue who ends up in the asylum. The instigator and persuader of both women is Richard Rivers or 'Gentleman' (who is, of course, nothing of the kind). The novel is reminiscent of both Dickens and Wilkie Collins, except for the fact that Maud and Sue fall in love with each other. Waters intended it as a pastiche of the sensation/gothic melodrama novel, as she describes them, 'fantastic novels that spiral out of control and are often quite transgressive, if only in the way they destabilise the reader.'⁷¹

Concetta Panatti is similar, in that she seems to be the instigator of her various criminal deeds and plots and yet is manipulated by men. Her self-diagnosed 'badness' is a response to both an attack by a man and her father's reaction to it whereby he blamed her. Her efforts to destroy James are an attempt to hide the secret unregistered brothel in the abbey, but she is also driven by Sir Henry Gadd, who holds James responsible for the death of his son. Ultimately, she escapes justice and I hope to return to develop her character further in future novels.

The characters of Sugar and Agnes in *The Crimson Petal and the White*, set in the 1870s, are not violent criminals, although Sugar was sold into prostitution at thirteen by her own mother, Mrs Castaway. Sugar is writing her own novel, a story of a prostitute murderer who attacks her male clients with a knife. Both Sugar and Agnes are victims of their backgrounds and both have turned to writing (Agnes keeps a journal, as Lucy does in *The Devil's Daughters*) as a way of expressing their feelings about the strictures of their lives. Other than that, however, their responses are very different. Agnes descends into insanity, having never come to terms with her sexuality, and narrowly avoids incarceration in an asylum. Sugar becomes the mistress and business advisor to Agnes's feckless husband, William. Eventually, both escape him. Agnes disappears and is believed drowned, although whether this is truly what happened is ambiguous. Sugar becomes pregnant, is thrown out by her lover, and takes Sophie, his daughter, with her.

This novel influenced my shaping of the characters who were involved in prostitution in *The Devil's Daughters*, particularly in their responses to questions when they are being interviewed by James, Ottolenghi and Lombroso. One, Nora, who was forced into the profession

⁷¹ Interview with Sarah Waters, *The Guardian*, 26 September 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com>. [Accessed 20 October 2016.]

by a branch of the *carabinieri* known as the 'Morals Squad', is asked if her work makes her happy:

'Make me happy? You would like to believe that, I think. All my clients would, too. But you want the truth, don't you? Now let me see ... do I enjoy lying on my back for any man who wants to buy the privilege, however old or dirty, allowing him to grope and grunt, to hold me down until I bruise, to salivate over me before he mounts me or to make me kneel before him for his pleasure ...' She stopped and shrugged. 'And that is a good customer on a good day. Enjoy? What do you think?' (p. 202)

Faber's descriptions of squalor are more graphic, but what is conveyed is the same. Prostitution in the nineteenth century was a dangerous and unpleasant profession that many women found themselves forced into and were unable to escape.

In her essay 'Introduction: Speculations in and on the Neo-Victorian Encounter' Marie-Luise Kohlke suggests that 'much as we read Victorian texts as highly revealing cultural products of their age, neo-Victorian texts will one day be read for the insights they afford into twentieth- and twenty-first cultural history and socio-political concerns' (p 13).⁷² The historical novels I have examined take a critical stance on the position of women and indeed I drew upon all three of these novels to inform me not only about the role of women in nineteenth-century society, but also how this might be conveyed in historical fiction. It seemed to me that there would be substantial differences between these modern works and those of nineteenth-century writers. I assumed that attitudes would be different and that this would influence the portrayal of women. However, I would now argue that, although these differences exist, they are subtler than one might expect. The trope whereby female transgressors still suffer is still there but ultimately these characters have a better outcome than their nineteenth century counterparts.

The skill of the contemporary writer in representing the period is paramount. All three examples have well-drawn characters and successfully evoke the period but in different ways. Atwood's novel is a realistic portrayal perhaps helped by being a representation of a real case. Faber and Waters are drawing on nineteenth-century writing to inform their style, which is more knowing. Faber addresses his reader directly, even at one point taking them into the bed of a prostitute. No detail is spared. Waters's work is more of a pastiche of the sensation novel, particularly the work of Wilkie Collins, with aspects such as mistaken identity, long kept secrets and gothic settings all present. It also highlights nineteenth-century social injustice, as Collins and Dickens (both of whom possessed strong social consciences) did in their time. The women portrayed in all the novels examined suffer from male oppression and are disempowered, fighting

⁷² Marie-Luise Kohlke. 'Introduction: Speculations in and on the Neo-Victorian Encounter' *Neo-Victorian Studies* 1.1 (2008): 1-18. <http://www.neovictorian-studies.com/> [Accessed October 30th 2016]

back with various levels of success. The difference is that in novels written in the period the women ultimately lose their battle and suffer the consequences, whereas in the contemporary stories they are often permitted to prevail. This reflects the views of Morris expressed earlier in the section. Women who transgress and move away from the nineteenth century vision of the feminine (described by Appignanesi as passive, angelic, malleable and utterly desirable⁷³) are punished with death by suicide or other means or incarceration. That transgression may be criminal but is also social and cannot be allowed to pass without consequence. Modern attitudes to women in fiction are not governed by the same vision even if the historical setting is the same. The relevant tropes in detective and sensation fiction may well be reflected in the contemporary genre of the historical crime thriller in that the need to punish the transgressor is often still there. But that need is for different reasons. The criminal woman may face the consequences of her criminality but not necessarily of her gender.

De Groot argues that historical fiction has an innate subversive potential due to the alien nature of the world it seeks to describe, a world with which the reader is unfamiliar. It is something other than the reader's contemporary experience and as such destabilises their view of the world.⁷⁴ He also suggests that historical fiction can be used to bring the marginalised, including women, into fuller focus, citing examples such as Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, Emma Donoghue's *Slammerkin* (2001) and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997). These he describes as 'anti-romantic' in that they focus on 'the grim lives of women' and the limited choices available to them in their respective eras.⁷⁵ I would agree that historical fiction can certainly provide implicit social critique of the past and present. I wanted to be explicit in my critique by going further than a focus on women's experiences and the limitations placed upon them. Indeed the potential for this in the genre was one of the main reasons for my choice when planning my novel. As I stated earlier, my aim in writing *The Devil's Daughters* was to draw on my criminological knowledge to examine and challenge dominant nineteenth-century theories about the female offender. In the novel Lombroso draws on his own criminological theories to investigate a series of crimes and fails, confounded in different ways by Panatti and Rambaudi. But it is not just historical attitudes I wanted to confront and critique. Lombroso's legacy of biological determinism remains in the distorted portrayal of real female offenders in the contemporary media. In representing his negative views towards women, the novel can also be read as a subversion of his ideas and a challenge to that legacy.

⁷³ Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present* (London: Virago 2009), p.143.

⁷⁴ Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel*. (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.156-8

The examples in nineteenth-century literature and contemporary historical fiction did not directly reflect Lombroso's views. None of the women portrayed were too inferior, weak or stupid to be bad and none were born criminals. They were not stereotypes but carefully drawn characters - strong women fighting for survival in a world where their options were limited. Their fates rather than their characters were more reflective of the age in which they were created. When creating my own characters, I chose two very different women who represented the mad and the bad. Both reflected the examples I found in my research. Like Lucy Audley and Lydia Gwilt, neither Panatti nor Rambaudi were born bad but were made so by their respective upbringings and experiences. Panatti's crimes stemmed from her response to a sexual assault when she was a teenager. Although she successfully pleaded self-defence she refused to become a victim, preferring to see herself as 'born bad. Rambaudi's crimes are also the result of childhood experiences relating to the abuse of her mother Sylvana. Panatti committed her crimes to survive. Rambaudi killed out of a twisted love for her brother. Panatti survives unscathed but does not achieve her aims. Rambaudi kills herself after murdering the only person she has ever loved.

This section has discussed the fictional representations that formed part of my research and reflections in the writing of *The Devil's Daughters*. The writing process will now be examined in more detail.

SECTION 4: WRITING ‘THE DEVIL’S DAUGHTERS’

This section will focus on the dominant motivations in the writing of the novel and the challenges and issues that emerged. It will examine how criminological theories informed me in creating my plot and characters, particularly strong female characters, both good and bad. It will also discuss examples of contemporary crime novels that feature aspects of criminological theory.

From my research I had learned much about Lombroso’s character, his ideas and those of his contemporaries as well as their cultural context. Despite my aim to draw on criminology in the writing of *The Devil’s Daughters* I still had to keep in mind that, as a novelist, I needed to engage the reader. Rather than merely regurgitating Lombroso’s theories I had to bring them alive through my plot and characters.

The plot laid the ground for discussing Lombroso’s theories in the context of a puzzle to be solved. By using the serial killer sub-genre and a series of brutal crimes committed by women I explored his ideas about the female offender including his view that women who committed violent crimes were more ruthless than their male counterparts. I also used epigraphs from his work at the beginning of each chapter. This was done to give the reader a flavour of his somewhat eccentric ideas which in themselves acted as their own critique. I also wanted to accentuate my portrayal thus enabling the reader to hear his voice as clearly as possible.

The use of real people as characters is not straightforward. Legally, one cannot defame the dead, but an author still arguably has a responsibility to both them and their descendants. I have given Lombroso certain idiosyncrasies based on what I know of him from his writing and reported comments, as well as descriptions from those that knew him. An example is from his elder daughter Paola, who described a typical day in his life:

...composing on the typewriter, correcting proofs, running from Bocca (his publisher) to the typesetter, from the typesetter to the library and from the library to the laboratory in a frenzy of movement...; and in the evening, not tired and wanting to go to the theatre, to a peregrination of two or three of the city’s theatres, taking in the first act at one, paying a flying visit to another and finishing the evening at a third.⁷⁶

Rafter also cites the historian, Delfino Dolza, who in his biography of Lombroso’s daughters, *Essere Figlie di Lombroso: Due Donne Intellettuali Tra ‘800 e ‘900*, wrote of his ‘almost total inexperience with the practical aspects of existence, his childlike innocence and a

⁷⁶ Cited in Nicole Rafter, *The Criminal Brain: Understanding Biological Theories of Crime* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), p. 79.

gullibility so extreme that his children felt a need to protect him'.⁷⁷ Rafter's comment accompanying this is telling. She claims that this helps to explain Lombroso's willingness to include 'folklore, pictures of freaks, popular maxims, Shakespeare's characters and improbable anecdotes' as evidence for his theories. His naïveté, she argues, 'makes it a bit easier to understand Lombroso's readiness to incorporate evidence that others, including his contemporaries, sometimes found ludicrous'.⁷⁸ This would also explain his defensiveness in the face of criticism, as discussed above.

Material such as this helped me to create a picture in my mind of Lombroso's character and speech, as did his own written work. For example, his comments in the novel as he examines the remains of a woman are drawn from Lombroso's own words in *Criminal Man*, and convey his use of anecdotes:

'Physically you are seeking a fairly common criminal type - a voluminous jaw, jutting cheekbones and a propensity towards sexual perversion. I once heard of a very intelligent example who ate excrement as he fitted and also orally masturbated his own penis. Extraordinary!' (pp.67-8)

In *Criminal Man*, Lombroso wrote:

A very intelligent epileptic observed by Da Costa (author of an 1887 article in The Journal of Nervous Diseases) ate excrement during his fits, attempted sodomy and, with a maneuver [sic] that would be difficult for anyone else, orally masturbated his own penis.⁷⁹

In *The Criminal Woman, the Prostitute and the Normal Woman*, Lombroso refers to a Tuscan proverb, 'Women always tell the truth, but they don't tell all of it'.⁸⁰ I have him use this same proverb in the novel:

'Yes now how did it go...something to do with deception... Women always tell the truth, but they don't tell all of it.' (p. 24)

Lombroso's reaction to criticism is seen when Anna Tarnovsky challenges his ideas about women and crime, arguing that his hypothesis about female offenders being inferior to their male counterparts is flawed because there are so few examples. This view was advanced by many of his critics, amongst them French criminologists such as Alexandre Lacassagne and Leonce

⁷⁷ Rafter (2008), p. 80.

⁷⁸ Rafter (2008), p. 80.

⁷⁹ Cesare Lombroso, trans. by Nicole Rafter and Mary Gibson, *Criminal Man* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1889/2006), p. 255.

⁸⁰ Lombroso and Ferrero, trans. by Rafter and Gibson, p. 77.

Manouvrier. James suggests that they alter their pool of research subjects and Lombroso responds with exasperation: ‘Then we are bowing to the critique of the French before we have even got started!’ (p.40).

The fictional Lombroso has a sense of drama. He is easily flattered into doing things and is more than a little conceited. Although I cannot be sure that he was exactly as I have painted him, I have represented his voice as accurately as I could, given the resources available, using extracts from his writing and drawing on his research and experiments extensively in the story to add to this.

Salvatore Ottolenghi studied medicine under Lombroso at the University of Turin and is best known for applying Lombroso’s theory of the born criminal to police practice. He later founded a school to train all Italian police administrators in this new field of what was termed scientific policing. In 1896, he published *La sensibilita della donna* or *The Sensibility of Woman*, in which he confirmed Lombroso’s views on their ‘inferiority’ to men. He was Lombroso’s assistant from 1885 to 1893 and is described by Gibson as a ‘dedicated apostle of criminal anthropology’ but not a ‘particularly innovative thinker’ although he ‘deserves attention as an intermediate-level bureaucrat who successfully introduced positivist criminology into government administration.’⁸¹ Ottolenghi was a practical man who focused on the application of ideas to practical policing. He developed an interest in new technologies involved in the collection of evidence, as well as the more theoretical aspect of Lombroso’s views about the criminal and his or her environment.⁸² I reflected this by making him react to events in a practical way. For example, in *The Devil’s Daughters*, Ottolenghi has just returned to Turin having studied with Oskar Reiner in Vienna.⁸³ On encountering a possible example of ‘vampirism’, he tries to make sense of it, applying what he has learned to the investigation and describing it to James.

‘Reiner claims that a presumption of Lustmord – or murder out of lust- is always given when injuries to the genitals are found. The erotic attachment to dead flesh is, according to him, inextricably linked to such crimes.’ (p.181)

To ensure that this was as authentic an observation as possible, I drew on Krafft-Ebing’s work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (published in 1886), which was a series of case histories detailing

⁸¹ Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. (US: Praeger, 2002), p.135.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 136-67.

⁸³ Oskar Reiner was a character in the first Lombroso novel *City of Devils*. He was based loosely on the real-life Austro-German psychiatrist and sexologist Richard Krafft-Ebing.

human sexual behaviour.⁸⁴

Later in life, Ottolenghi joined the fascist party, relatively early in its establishment, although, as Gibson acknowledges, this may have been due to expediency rather than political commitment.⁸⁵ He did however write in praise of Mussolini, which is taking expediency too far. Like Lombroso, Ottolenghi was Jewish, but anti-semitism did not become prominent in Italian fascism until the 1930s and he died in 1934.

The fictional characters were as important as the real-life versions. I learned the importance of careful preparation when writing the first novel and was keen to develop these techniques in the second. In *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri classes physiology, sociology and psychology as the three dimensions which make a very effective way of creating characters.⁸⁶ Using the framework suggested by Egri and also James N Frey, who has built on the same techniques in several books about writing, I wrote backstories or biographies, dividing each into three sections: physiological (appearance), sociological (class, background, upbringing, education, politics) and psychological (the product of the physiological and sociological dimensions including aspects such as IQ, aptitudes, special abilities, soundness of reasoning, habits, irritability, sensibility, talents).⁸⁷ Frey suggests taking a step further by performing psychoanalysis of each one in your mind⁸⁸. I tried this but found it cumbersome and unrealistic. Instead, I wrote a journal entry from each character's point of view, with particular focus on their 'ruling passion', the character's central motivating force, which helped to make them come alive in my mind. For example, Panatti's ruling passion was her own survival which became an obsession following the assault on her, her response to it and that of her father. Sylvana Rambaudi's abusive behaviour towards her children was the source of Bianca's ruling passion - her love for Francesco which ultimately drove her to kill for him.

As well as Egri and Frey, I drew on Sol Stein's advice in Chapter 4 of his book, *Stein on Writing*, 'Competing with God: Making Fascinating People'. Stein recommends starting with character rather than a theme or a plot, and eliciting emotion from the reader by adding detail and depth using physical and psychological attributes and mannerisms, clothing or the manner of wearing clothing, actions and dialogue. He also suggests that what distinguishes the true villain is

⁸⁴Richard Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*. (US: Wet Angel Books, 1886/2006).

⁸⁵ Gibson (2002), p. 141.

⁸⁶ Lajos Egri, *The Art of Dramatic Writing* (New York: Touchstone, 1960), pp.51-61.

⁸⁷ See James N Frey, *How to Write a Damn Good Novel* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp.4-5.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.15-16.

not just the degree to which he hides under an attractive patina to snare his victims, but his contact with evil, an ineradicable part of his nature.⁸⁹ Panatti is certainly attractive and has an engaging personality but Bianca appears ordinary in both appearance and personality.

I also found helpful the exercises suggested by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter in *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*.⁹⁰ These included making a list of what I knew about my characters, such as what they wanted, their obsessions, beliefs, politics, fears, attitudes and strengths. The results were incorporated into each character's 'biography'. In addition, I looked for pictures that I felt reflected their appearance, using on-line image searches, and produced a storyboard with the picture, date of birth and main characteristics of each person, and eventually a bullet pointed list of plot developments.

THE FEMALE OFFENDER

Frey advises approaching the characterisation of a murderer by accepting that he or she is the author of the plot behind the plot or the killer's story. This tells why and whom they murder and how they intend to get away with it. They push the action, making happen things to which the remaining characters must react. They must therefore be fully rounded creations. They must be evil and act entirely out of their own interest, which Frey suggests, is vital, as the reader wants the satisfaction of seeing their transgressor punished. Obviously, they will not appear to be evil because, Frey argues, we have a greater fear of those who are pretending to be good. The final revelation is greater if the character's murderous nature has been concealed by the author. The killer will also be clever, resourceful, psychologically wounded and afraid.⁹¹

Bianca Rambaudi fits this framework, and, as discussed earlier, I used Frey's advice when creating her. She is killing for her own sake, although she claims it is for her brother Francesco. To the end, she claims that her acts are not selfish but that it is her own desire that motivates her. She has been psychologically wounded by her upbringing and is afraid of loneliness and rejection. Concetta Panatti, who has also killed, albeit in self-defence, is not pretending to be good, although she is clever and resourceful and arguably was also psychologically wounded when her father told her that she was born bad.

Both characters challenge Lombrosian ideas as does Sylvana, Bianca's abusive mother. At first glance they might be thought to reflect this criminal type, and yet none of them are intellectually inferior to any of the male characters. All three are businesswomen, Panatti running

⁸⁹ Sol Stein, *Stein on Writing*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 49-73.

⁹⁰ Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter, *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers* (US: Harper Collins, 1990/2005), pp. 35-38.

⁹¹ James N Frey, *How to Write a Damn Good Mystery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), pp. 30-33.

several enterprises both legal and illegal, and the Rambaudi women running the family's rice estate. I was interested in exploring the possibility of a female character doing bad things because she wanted to. It seemed to me, initially, that there are plenty of amoral male characters in fiction, particularly crime fiction, but female offenders almost always have a reason given for their offending. Concetta Panatti claimed to have no reason to commit her crimes other than that she was born bad. Whether she was born that way or not is ambiguous in the novel, as it is in life. Some neuro-criminologists have suggested that repeated violent offending is a clinical disorder and can develop early in life from a genetic base. However most agree that there is likely to be an external environmental trigger for such criminal behaviour. These theories, as discussed earlier, are part of Lombroso's biologically determinist legacy but are still something of a niche area of criminology.⁹² My own past experiences, as set out in the introduction, lead me to doubt whether anyone is a born criminal. In Panatti's case, as I mentioned earlier, to be told by a parent that you are bad and were born so, would surely have profound psychological effects; it is more likely that she would have created this persona to empower herself, as a response to what happened to her. Her refusal to remain a victim is her way of rebelling against both her father and her attacker:

'It happened when I was thirteen. I had an encounter with one of my father's employees. He thought that I was his for the taking. I was not, as he learned to his cost.'

'You hurt him?'

'I killed him.'

James had not been expecting that. She had spoken defiantly. It was clear that she felt no remorse. 'And were there consequences?' he asked.

'I told the truth – that it was self-defence – and no charges were brought. The man's family were paid off at my mother's insistence, but my father ...'

'What did he do?'

'He did nothing, but he made it clear that he did not believe me. He told me that I was born bad.' She hesitated, leaning back and closing her eyes.

'And?'

'He was certainly right. In fact I have spent the rest of my life proving him so.' (p. 193)

Bianca Rambaudi's background has made her into a killer. Her murders, committed for the incestuous love of her brother, are sexually motivated. They are, however, not for her own direct sexual gratification, but to please her brother, which is arguably in itself a sexual motive. For a

⁹² Adrian Raine. *The Anatomy of Violence: The Biological Roots of Crime*. (2013, US: Allen Lane), pp, 336-7.

woman to commit sexually motivated murder would be extremely rare.⁹³ I was, however, committed to the idea of a female killer, given the main theme of the female offender. I therefore created the character of a mother, Sylvana Rambaudi, who had abused her children in different ways, therefore causing them to go on to commit sexual and violent crimes.⁹⁴ Bianca has another motivation for the murders she commits. She wishes to share and exhibit her work. In the words of Lombroso in the novel:

‘Bianca had tired of keeping her experiments to herself... She needed to target a different set of victims and so took the opportunity to develop a new approach, which she wanted to show off.’ (p.318)

As I created my female killers blood and purity, and their corresponding colours, red and white, emerged as recurring oppositional themes. In the novel they symbolise good and evil, drawing on Bram Stoker’s novel, *Dracula*, as well as the real cases of serial murderers Countess Bathory and Eusebius Pieydagnelle.⁹⁵ Blood is drained from Bianca’s murder victims in the same way that Bathory bled her maids, although for different reasons. In *The Devil’s Daughters*, Ottolenghi acknowledges the Bathory case, and he and Murray discuss the similarities (pp. 203-4).

When we first encounter Panatti, I wanted to suggest vampirism to give a gothic feel to the narrative, to make her character seem dangerous, and to imply that she might be involved in the murders. To achieve this I described the room as having no visible light and Panatti herself as having an unusually pale complexion:

The room was dark, lit only by a small gas lamp. The heavy brocade curtains were closed so that not even a chink of natural light was visible. The door opened and a woman walked in. She was as elegant as her surroundings, and quite breathtakingly striking. Her long auburn hair was worn loose in Renaissance style, and her skin was pale, almost translucent – not made up like Valeria’s, but a purely natural beauty. (p. 123)

The theme of vampirism and the idea of the sexuality of the femme fatale are also seen to some extent in the character of Lucy in *Dracula* and my own character of Lucy Murray in *The*

⁹³ Heather Silvio, Kathy McCloskey, Julia Ramos-Grenier, ‘Exploring the Phenomenon of Female Sexual Predator Serial Killers in the United States’, in *Criminology Research Focus*, ed. by Karen T Froeling (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2007) pp 98-112 (p.101).

⁹⁴ I wanted to ensure that this was a plausible outcome, so I discussed it with a university colleague, a former police officer who was conducting research on female sex offenders. Drawing on both her considerable professional experience and her ongoing doctoral research, she advised me, telling me of a case that she had worked on enabling me to produce a profile for the character. My colleague agreed that this was a reasonable portrait of such an offender, an amoral sexual predator who was interested in young boys including her son.

⁹⁵ Elisabeth Bathory killed over a hundred young women, draining their blood to bathe in, convinced it would restore her youth. Eusebius Pieydagnelle murdered six women in Milan in the nineteenth century due to his sexual obsession with blood, having been overcome by the smell in a butcher’s shop.

Devil's Daughters. In *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra is transformed from being a pure woman into a fallen one, an insatiable lustful vampire and, as Stott points out, becomes what Lombroso and his co-writer Ferrero termed 'a shameless bacchante' transformed by nymphomania.⁹⁶ Lucy Murray in *The Devil's Daughters* travels a similar path, albeit without the vampire element, escaping the attentions of both the 'Morals Squad' and Francesco Rambaudi to remain pure but also achieving the independence that she yearns for.

As I discussed above, the use of vampirism in *The Devil's Daughters* was done for a specific purpose. I was aware of the media stereotype, so my use of it was an attempt to reclaim it to give an extra level of power to Panatti. Morrissey suggests that depicting female killers as vampires serves to make them 'less woman than monster'.⁹⁷ Panatti, however, is more woman than mythical creature as, although she performs monstrous deeds, she is no vampire. Neither is Bianca, who drains the blood from her victims but does not drink it. There is, however, an element of Julia Kristeva's 'abject' (as discussed in her essay, 'The Powers of Horror'⁹⁸) in Bianca's quest for purity through both the draining of the blood and her attempts to preserve the corpse. Abjection, 'the state of being cast off', is described by Kristeva as the subjective horror experienced when we are confronted by 'corporeal reality' or a breakdown between self and other.⁹⁹ Barbara Creed's study, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* points out that sexual immorality and perversion, corporeal alteration, decay and death, human sacrifice, murder, the corpse, bodily waste, the feminine body and incest are all abjections that concern and trouble ancient and western discourses. Our conception of the monstrous is based on our understanding of abject deeds and things. Female vampires, she argues, are abject creatures who do not respect or follow the rules. They cross boundaries between human and inhuman, good and evil and those who perform proper gender roles and those who do not.¹⁰⁰ Both Panatti and Bianca Rambaudi, although not vampires, are women who may be victims of their past, but embrace 'abjection' by ignoring boundaries, thus empowering themselves. Panatti sucks not blood but power from both her male and female victims. Bianca drains the blood and indulges in the corporeal alteration (preservation) of those whom she perceives as rivals for Francesco, including her own mother.

⁹⁶ Cited in Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Limited, 1996), p. 72.

⁹⁷ Belinda Morrissey, *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.105.

⁹⁸ Kelly Oliver (ed.), *The Portable Kristeva* (US: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 230-4.

⁹⁹ J Childers and G Hentzi (eds.), *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* (US: Columbia University Press, 1995), p.1

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 9.

Panatti and Rambaudi undermine Lombroso's theories in different ways. Neither are inferior being intelligent and skilled in what they do, both legitimately and otherwise. Both retain agency throughout. Even in Rambaudi's madness she is in control of her destiny, choosing suicide to join Francesco in death. Panatti may not win the day but is still free to continue her wickedness unchecked.

Lombroso was critical of all women, not just female offenders. To challenge this view, I created other strong female characters – victims who fought back and detectives including a scientist who solved the crimes before the men, making them seem almost superfluous at times.

THE FEMALE VICTIM

As I was writing, I was very much aware of current debates in crime writing on the role of the female victim. All the victims in *The Devil's Daughters* are women. Although the murders themselves are for the most part not described and, when they are, the method is hinted at rather than portrayed in a graphic manner, nonetheless the images might be seen to reflect the modern obsession with women as sexual objects:

The arms that were holding her let go and she is left to swing. The shock jolts her awake. She is strung unlike a carcass - and now the pain, oh such pain, begins. (p. 80)

It was a girl, naked and pinned out as if she was a butterfly in a natural history museum, her skin peeled back in two neat flaps like one of the illustrations in her father's anatomy book. The girl's face was pale - translucent almost. Her mouth hung open as if in a silent scream and her lifeless eyes stared into the distance. Underneath the table was a bucket of blood, and a tray containing a pair of kidneys and a human heart. (p. 295)

As Peter Messent concedes, crime fiction, often focuses on harm done to the human body, and especially the female body, and much of this involves physical mutilation of a sexual nature. His explanation for this is in terms of standard gender stereotypes and the objectification of women that, although challenged and largely reconstructed by 1970s feminism, are still so deeply entrenched within popular culture that their influence persists, allowing male anger about the challenge to their power and control to find symbolic release in the disfigured female corpse.¹⁰¹ However, the murders in my first book, *City of Devils*, which has mostly male victims, are similarly described. From my point of view as a writer, it is not a question of gender so much as finding the best way to tell a story. The killings should fit the character of my chosen perpetrator or perpetrators. In *The Devil's Daughters* I was using the writing of *Criminal Woman* as a background. I therefore wanted a female central character as my killer. At the time of writing, I felt that male victims would not have been as realistic. I did subsequently reflect on this choice,

¹⁰¹ Peter Messent, *The Crime Fiction Handbook* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), pp. 75-8.

but concluded that the use of male victims would, in the circumstances, have produced a different and somewhat less plausible story for the reader.

Although there have been historical examples of women committing serial murder, serial killers are still predominantly male with only 5% being female.¹⁰² A recent study that looked at 64 female serial killers from 1821-2008 indicated that victims were of both sexes but disproportionately male although they tended to be vulnerable and known to the killer rather than strangers. The motive tended to be hedonistic, which included financial gain, lust or thrill, or power-seeking rather than, as in male serial killers, sex. A variety of murder methods were used including poisoning, smothering, burning, choking, shooting and bludgeoning.¹⁰³ Bianca's victims were strangers and fitted with her twisted motivation for murder. She would not, in the circumstances of the plot, have chosen male victims.

The murders in *The Devil's Daughters* were committed by three people acting together: Francesco and his sister Bianca, with the help of Bruno. Both men were responsible for the torture of the victims, but the dominant force was Bianca, who killed the girls. Bianca is not herself sexually motivated by the killings, or by the method of killing adopted; rather she is acting almost as a proxy for her brother. She wishes to purify the body as a gift to her brother Francesco, to make recompense for killing their mother Sylvana, with whom he had an incestuous relationship.

I had begun with a picture in my mind of a beautiful corpse and the idea of someone wishing to purify by draining the blood:

It was the body of a young girl, dressed in a white gown overlaid with gold lace. She was lying prostrate in the small shallow stream that circled the castle and served as a moat. Her long red hair was fanned out behind her and moved gently with the water. Her face was pale, almost as white as her gown. In one of her hands she clasped a few long-stemmed spring flowers of blue and red. More lay at her feet, caught up in the folds of the gown...She looked so peaceful, almost as if she was sleeping, just like the painting of Ophelia by Millais. (p.163)

However, we later learn from Bianca that the beauty of the corpse was only achieved by making the victim suffer:

'The Egyptians bled their dead and removed their organs to cleanse them for the afterlife. We learnt this from Francesco's tutor, Professor Donati. So I did the same, though of

¹⁰² Shani D'Cruze, Sandra Walklate and Samantha Pegg, *Murder: Social and Historical Approaches to Understanding Murder and Murderers* (Devon: Willan Publishing, 2006) p.32.

¹⁰³ M Harrison, E Murphy, L Ho, T Bowers, and C Flaherty, 'Female serial killers in the United States: means, motives, and makings', *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 1/24 (2015).

course I did not wait for death. To achieve real purity, one needs to conduct the process while the subject still lives. I hung her up, with the help of dear Bruno, then I bled her, removed her organs and embalmed her.’ (p. 313)

Messent suggests that the high level of bodily violence in crime fiction may be to some extent due to its increasing ‘gothicisation’.¹⁰⁴ Certainly, there are many examples of such graphic descriptions, in the work of best-selling authors in the genre, such as Val McDermid, Patricia Cornwell, Kathy Reichs and Thomas Harris. McDermid argues that crime writing is increasingly ‘sensationalist and gratuitous’, because of the demands of the market, and that there has been a general desensitisation among readers who demand such plot lines. However, she has also argued that, when women write about such violence, it is inevitably more terrifying because they know that to be female is to be at risk of attack. Women therefore write about this from the inside whereas men do so from the outside.¹⁰⁵ It is, as crime author M J McGrath suggests, a way of exploring such issues safely. She also argues that crime fiction allows women to acknowledge ‘indecorous feelings of rage, aggression and vengefulness’.¹⁰⁶

McGrath mentions that much of the contemporary crime fiction that is so popular with women readers features strong female protagonists, who in a symbolic sense avoid the fate of the female victim through skill and persistence. My female characters Lucy, Sofia, Anna Tarnovsky and Miss Trott all, I would argue, take this role in one way or another. Lucy defies convention, the law and her brother by escaping the confines of the home and investigating. When she is about to be arrested by the *carabinieri*, it is Sofia who rescues her and defies them, even if she has to use the threat of the influence of male characters to achieve it (pp. 105-6). Sofia discovers that the old man is the key to discovering who committed the murders (p. 316). As mentioned above, Anna Tarnovsky challenges Lombroso’s view, albeit unsuccessfully, that the killer cannot be a woman (p. 293). Miss Trott not only works out the identity of the killer, but also shoots Francesco to save Lucy (p. 341), and is the only professional detective among the men. The exception is Tullio, who is himself unable to do his job, having been threatened by Concetta Panatti. There may be female victims, but it is female characters who, for the most part, drive the action.

My use of strong female characters is of course hardly unique in either Victorian or contemporary crime fiction. Whether that makes the mutilation of female victims more acceptable is difficult to say. I suspect that it does not. However, it is the writing, rather than the

¹⁰⁴ Messent, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ Amelia Hill, *The Observer*, 25 October 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com>. [Accessed 30 September 2016.]

¹⁰⁶ M J McGrath, ‘Guardian Book Blog’, 30 June 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com>. [Accessed 30 September 2016.]

choice of victim, that is not palatable to some critics. Jessica Mann, crime fiction critic for the *Literary Review*, has refused to review some new crime novels because they are too violent. As she says, 'each psychopath is more sadistic than the last and his victims' sufferings are described in detail that becomes ever more explicit ... young women are imprisoned, bound, gagged, strung up or tied down, raped, sliced, burned, blinded, beaten, eaten, starved, suffocated, stabbed, boiled or buried alive.'¹⁰⁷ However, if the murders are not described, at least to some extent, I would argue that the reader would not invest as much in the story.

In crime writer Elizabeth-Anne Wheal's discussion of the BBC television drama *The Fall*, she is critical of the writer Alan Cubitt's fascination with his killer, Paul Spector, which, she argues, reduces all the female characters to 'objects, naked targets' because the viewer is seeing them through the lens of the killer predator's bloody project. His motives are buried in an unreachable psychopathology making his victims unreadable, powerless and objectified vessels for his abuse. Wheal's point is that those who produce such narratives must ask themselves if the depiction of sexual violence can be fully justified by its dramatic context and whether there should be limits on how explicit or sustained it can be. She also asks whether this is entertainment or exploitation.¹⁰⁸ Wheal is talking about television which as a medium is more immediate and visual than literature but the points she makes are still applicable for a crime novelist.

I considered questions such as these when writing *The Devil's Daughters*. The victims suffer confinement, rape and painful deaths. I had to convey a sense of depravity but made a conscious choice not to linger on such scenes. I did not, for example, directly portray rape or torture in detail but made it clear that it had happened.

'Bruno violated her. But we sorted it out,' she said casually, as if it was a trifling matter. 'We have to beat her now and then, sometimes put her in a pit for an hour or two. But she usually does what she's told.' (p. 308)

I conveyed the consequences of the Rambaudis' actions using graphic descriptions of the bodies such as those discussed above. I would argue that the reader needs to care about the consequences. A serial killer is on the loose. The reader needs to know what is at stake - the nature of the danger that characters such as Lucy Murray, Chiara Esposito and Fabia Carignano might face.

Having created my female offenders and victims I considered my detectives. Lombroso,

¹⁰⁷ Amelia Hill, *The Observer*, 25 October 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com>. [Accessed 30 September 2016.]

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth-Anne Wheal, 'Women in Jeopardy', *The Author: Journal of the Society of Authors*, Vol. CXXVII/ No. 4 (Winter 2016).

Ottolenghi and Murray were already in place but I wanted to make the female characters control the action. At first I wondered if women as detectives would be inauthentic but through my reading of nineteenth-century crime fiction I discovered that, although nineteenth-century women were unlikely to be involved in the investigation of crime themselves, there was a sub-genre of fiction featuring female detectives.

THE FEMALE DETECTIVE

This was an important theme for *The Devil's Daughters*. As discussed above I wanted strong female characters to counter Lombroso's theories but, given that my victims were female, I also wanted women to have an investigative role, thereby giving them a voice throughout the narrative and thus empowering them. Despite there being many fine female crime writers both now and historically, Lee Horsley argues that the 'maleness' of the genre is often seen as a defining characteristic. The detective is generally counted as a member of the male power structure, who restores order and acts to confirm the rightness and authority of the patriarchal stasis, the male dominated status quo.¹⁰⁹ Although female detectives are more common these days, in both reality and fiction, Horsley's argument still holds, because these detectives, notwithstanding their gender, operate within a male dominated structure. Jane Tennison, in Lynda La Plante's series of television dramas, *Prime Suspect*¹¹⁰, and, more recently, Stella Gibson in *The Fall*¹¹¹, are both strong women, but are surrounded by men, and, by their solving of the particular crimes, restore what is still a male dominated status quo.

In my story, the male characters take their dominance for granted. Even James Murray, the sole representative of a more modern way of thinking in relation to crime, despite Lombroso's claims about scientific policing, is still of the view that his sister Lucy should not do exactly as she pleases, although she disagrees. Lucy, Miss Trott, Sofia and Anna Tarnovsky are active rather than passive characters. Lucy writes her own stories featuring a female detective and conducts her own investigation, assisted by Gina and Paola Lombroso. When she is captured she escapes rather than accepting her fate. Miss Trott poses as a lady's companion but is a detective in a similar vein to Lydia Loveday, Lucy's fictional version. She not only tracks down Professor Donati, the thief, but also produces Baldovino at James's trial, just in time to save him from conviction. She is, in many ways, a role model for Lucy who admires her independence. Sofia is even, at one point, critical of James's investigative skills:

¹⁰⁹ Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 246.

¹¹⁰ *Prime Suspect*, Series 1-7 (Granada Television, 1991-2006).

¹¹¹ Allan Cubitt, *The Fall*, Series 1-3 (BBC Two, 2013-2016).

‘Like you did with the Pilgrim last year? He had to come to you before you found him!’

‘I would have found him given a little more time, I’m sure of it.’ (p. 57)

She also leads the questioning when she and James interview Teresa Marinari’s mother; he accepts that ‘this was more her world than his’ (p.139). Anna Tarnovsky recognises that a woman could be the perpetrator, but this is dismissed by Lombroso:

‘Could the killer be a woman?’ Anna asked, holding onto the carriage door as they went round a corner at speed.

‘No,’ Lombroso replied. ‘Not enough physical strength and besides, a woman would not be intelligent enough to do this.’

‘There are plenty of female killers,’ Anna said, clearly unwilling to let the possibility go. ‘You have seen my own photographs and read my research.’

‘No, I do not think the killer is a woman,’ Lombroso said firmly.

‘But my data reflects yours, Cesare!’ she protested. ‘I too found asymmetry of the face. Remember the women who killed their husbands? And the others...the demi types who did not fit the profile completely but still had big jaws, deep-set eyes and dark hair.’

Lombroso gave her a patronising smile, and she pursed her lips as if with the effort of not interrupting. ‘These are domestic murders, though, my dear Madame Tarnovsky, quite different from our man - and it is a man, I am sure of it.’ (pp. 265-6)

Lombroso of course, turns out to be wrong, though his view of women reflects the general perception of the time.

The fictional female detective first appeared in the 1860s with the publication of W S Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective*¹¹² and Andrew Forrester’s *The Female Detective*¹¹³. It is interesting to speculate as to why fiction was so far ahead of reality. The first professional female detective was Kate Warne, who worked for the famous Pinkerton’s Detective Agency in America from 1861, but she was a rare exception. As Laura Marcus suggests, the use of the female investigator provided narrative possibilities that were unavailable to their male counterparts, as well as possibly being indicative of the authors’ feminist sympathies.¹¹⁴ It was, as Michael Sims has pointed out, easy for a woman to merely remain silent and be ‘carried along by the authoritarian assumptions of the men in the case’, including their belief that she was unlikely to be intelligent or brave. She could also notice different clues and gain access to areas closed to

¹¹² William Stephens Hayward, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (London: The British Library, 1864/2013).

¹¹³ Andrew Forrester, *The Female Detective* (London: The British Library, 1864/2012).

¹¹⁴ Laura Marcus, ‘Introduction’, in Laura Marcus and Chris Willis (eds.), *12 Women Detective Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

her male counterparts.¹¹⁵ There is also the expectation of the reader to consider. In this era, the female detective would be unusual enough to surprise and, particularly if they were women, please an audience. She is far more common in contemporary crime literature but, given the period I was writing in, might still be unexpected and could challenge Lombroso's views about the inferiority of women. Lucy, for example, is interested in the study of crime but although she is curious and respectful, she is also sceptical right from the outset about Lombroso's ideas thinking, for example, that his proposed research project about women and crime was 'rather strange' (p. 22) and drawing on her own experiences when looking at exhibits in his museum. Unlike James, who assumes his father was a criminal and fears that he might have inherited these traits, Lucy rejects this thinking, preferring to remember her father as having eyes that were 'kind and gentle, not staring and full of hatred like these poor excuses for men' (p. 151). However, she is still keen to find out more, questions Lombroso about his work (pp. 166), and even challenges him about his view that women were incapable of crimes such as blackmail (p. 320). Miss Trott rejects Lombroso's methods and theories preferring, as she says, 'to use intelligence from fellow criminals, surveillance and naturally deduction' (p. 321). Anna Tarnovsky also challenges Lombroso. The policeman Tullio calls Lombroso in to examine the remains of the first victim and involves him in the investigation where he can.

This section has discussed process of writing *The Devil's Daughters* with a particular focus on the challenges and issues arising from the use of criminological theories. What follows are my concluding thoughts including consideration of examples where contemporary crime novelists have themselves featured criminological themes and suggestions of useful sources that could in the future be drawn on in the genre.

¹¹⁵ Michael Sims, 'Introduction', in Sims (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011), p. xiii.

SECTION 5: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The focus of this critical commentary has been to reflect on the writing of my doctoral novel and consider how I have drawn on criminological sources to inform it. I have also discussed contemporary crime fiction where themes from the discipline have appeared or even underpinned the narrative and considered examples of criminological research and literature that could inform writers of crime fiction. All of this suggests that the discipline of criminology may be a largely untapped resource for writers in the genre, although some contemporary crime writers have, perhaps unwittingly, drawn on this resource in their work, as the examples below illustrate.

In Stieg Larsson's novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2005/2008)¹¹⁶ feminist criminological perspectives on victimology are evident in the experiences of Larsson's unconventional heroine Lisbeth Salander who fights against the system that has victimized her. Other perspectives include a Marxist critique of the corrupt world of big business with Blomkvist eventually finding his own retribution for his time in jail over revelations he made about the crooked industrialist Wennerström. Blomkvist and Salander make a rational choice to reveal Wennerström's illegal practices for the greater good in full knowledge of the costs and benefits of their actions. There is a discussion towards the end of the novel between Salander and Blomkvist about the conflict between the concepts of nature and nurture. Blomkvist argues that Martin Vanger was also a victim to some extent and 'really didn't have a chance' (p 432) having been raped by his father Gottfried and made to watch him rape and murder his victims as a young man before joining in when he was only 16. Salander is unimpressed – 'Martin had exactly the same opportunity as anyone else to strike back. He killed and he raped because he liked doing it.' She is critical of the way in which the system allows such criminals to refute responsibility for their actions. 'I just think that it's pathetic that creeps always have somebody else to blame' (p 433). Salander and Blomkvist therefore represent two opposing views about the causes of crime.

Lionel Shriver's novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin*¹¹⁷ does not feature more established tropes of the crime fiction genre in that it doesn't ask who has committed the crime. It is still however a story with a violent crime at its heart. The mystery is not who has committed the crimes but rather why. This makes it, to some extent, a criminological novel as it discusses one of the central debates of the discipline, the causes of a crime and the extent to which a violent criminal is born or created by his or her environment. This is not the only aspect of criminological theory that appears. There are comments about media representation reflecting

¹¹⁶ Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (London: Quercus, 2008)

¹¹⁷ Lionel Shriver, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2005)

discussions about gendered stereotyping in the press coverage of women in court. This topic has been discussed by feminist criminologists such as Frances Heidensohn and Yvonne Jewkes who have noted that the apparent lack of emotional response is condemned just as harshly as the presence of one.

‘...I could feel my face set in the same ‘impassive mask’ the New York Times described from the trial. The Post, less kindly depicted my expression throughout as ‘defiant’ and our local Journal News went even further: ‘From Eva Khatchadourian’s stony implacability, her son might have done nothing more egregious than dip a pigtail in an inkwell.’ (p 9)

Val McDermid’s novel *Splinter the Silence* (2015)¹¹⁸ is at the time of writing the latest in her highly successful series of crime novels featuring criminal psychologist and profiler Tony Hill and now former DCI Carol Jordan. In it both are convinced that a cluster of suicides among women tormented by vicious online predators is in truth the work of a serial killer. The most prominent criminological theme in the book is that of psychological perspectives, which suggest that abnormal mental states cause crime either through heredity or social factors. The killer has a reason for committing his crimes and the novel begins from his point of view as he watches his prey and lays bare his personality. He is someone who weighs up the costs and benefits or ‘risks and the possibilities’ of a project, including murder before embarking upon it so rational choice theory is invoked. He is motivated by the death of his mother when he was a child so environmental factors are invoked rather than hereditary ones.

These examples demonstrate the relevance of criminological themes in contemporary crime fiction. I have consciously drawn on my knowledge of criminological theory to inform my writing including Lombrosian positivism and both feminist and cultural criminological perspectives. I would argue that there is a relatively untapped resource for writers in the research and writing generated by the field of criminology. It has developed over the last two centuries and so it is beyond the constraints of this commentary to give a detailed history of the discipline and potentially relevant texts. It is possible however, to give examples.

In *The Devil’s Daughters* I drew on cultural criminological perspectives to create the character of Bianca Rambaudi. She exhibits her victims so that what she perceives as her work can be admired.

‘Then once I had created my pieces, I wanted to share my first collection.’ (p. 313)

Cultural criminologists such as Mike Presdee have considered crime as theatre or carnival and

¹¹⁸ Val McDermid, *Splinter the Silence* (London: Little, Brown, 2015)

the motivation for perpetrators of combatting boredom and committing crimes for the thrill of the experience rather than gain.¹¹⁹ Another seminal text I often turn to when creating a fictitious criminal biography is *Seductions of Crime* by Jack Katz in which he discusses how violent offending is experienced by perpetrators by ‘approaching criminality from the inside’ and discovering ‘what it means, feels sounds, tastes or looks like to commit a particular crime.’¹²⁰ Reading the offender’s accounts in this and other texts gathered by researchers who have spent months and sometimes even years talking to them, gives an insider’s access to the reality of criminality. This technique, favoured by cultural criminologists is ethnography whereby criminal groups are studied, often covertly by a participating researcher. The papers, articles and books produced by such work would, I suggest, be extremely valuable for a writer who wanted to paint a picture of, for example, gang life or drugs culture.¹²¹ In life-course criminology biographical accounts are created. Here a researcher interviews an offender and produces a qualitative study of a criminal career, providing invaluable insight for a writer when creating criminal characters and plausible plots.¹²² Other texts examine prison life from the perspectives of both inmates and guards¹²³ and policing, focusing on aspects such as police culture, interrogation techniques and investigation.¹²⁴ Victimology research is another useful source. One of its central ideas, for example, is that of the ‘ideal’ victim where certain typologies are investigated and featured in media coverage due to aspects such as their class, age and physical attractiveness.¹²⁵ This influenced my plot in that the girls who go missing in Turin are dismissed as runaways because

¹¹⁹ Mike Presdee, *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, (London: Routledge, 2000), Jack Katz *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*. (New York, Basic Books Inc, 1988). Jeff Ferrell and Clinton R Sanders (eds) *Cultural Criminology*. USA, Northeastern University Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ Jack Katz, *Seductions of Crime*. (US: Basic Books, 1988)

¹²¹ Examples of this include Howard Becker’s essays on drug culture, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, (New York: The Free Press, 1963), Jeff Ferrell’s exploration of the urban trash scrounger in Fort Worth, Texas, *Empire of Scrounge: Inside the Urban Underground of Dumpster Diving, Trash Picking and Street Scavenging* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), Greg Martin’s ethnography of the ‘chav’ subculture in Britain and Dina Perrone’s account of a ‘club kid’ subculture in New York, *The High Life, Club Kids, Harm and Drug Policy* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010) and Dr Jonathan Ilan’s 2013 study of socioeconomically challenged young men from Ireland, *Street Social Capital in the Liquid City*, *Ethnography*, 14 (1), pp. 3-24.

¹²² Examples of life histories include Edwin Sutherland’s 1937 work, *The Professional Thief*, Chambliss’s *Box Man* (1975), Klockar’s *The Professional Fence* (1974), Shaw’s *The Jackroller* (1930). *Confessions of a Dying Thief: Understanding Criminal Careers and Illegal Enterprises*, Steffensmeier and Ulmer (2006).

¹²³ Such accounts include Diana Medicott’s research on prison suicide, *Don't Think This Stuff': An Analysis of Prisoners' Accounts of Being Suicidal in Prison* (The British Criminology Conference: Selected Proceedings. Volume 3. Papers from the British Society of Criminology Conference, Liverpool, July 1999.) Pat Carlen’s work on women in prison *Sledgehammer: Women’s Imprisonment at the Millennium* (London: MacMillan, 1998) and William S Tregoe’s *Prisoners on Criminology: Convict Life Stories and Crime Prevention*. (US: Lexington Books, 2014).

¹²⁴ Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police* (US: Oxford University Press, 2010), Tom Cockcroft, *Police Culture: Themes and Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2012) and Tim Newburn, *The Handbook of Policing* (2nd ed) (Devon: Willan, 2008).

¹²⁵ Nils Christie, *Ideal Victim in From Crime Policy to Victim Policy*, Ezzat A Fattah (ed) (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 17-30.

they are from the lower classes. It is only when Fabia, the Marchesa's niece is abducted that the police become interested.

These are just a few examples of criminological research and there are many more to discover. The data in research papers, journals and books is widely available and constantly updated with new projects. Criminologists, like other experts, are often more than willing to share their knowledge and expertise. Many of them, in my experience, enjoy crime fiction and would be only too happy to engage with authors in the genre.

The Devil's Daughters explores the notions of motive and agency in relation to the female offender and the debate that underpins them; are criminals born or made. My research examined the ideas of the novel's central character Cesare Lombroso, placing them in their scientific and cultural context by discussing the emergence of criminology in the nineteenth century, Lombroso's influences and his legacy in both criminology and more broadly the perpetuation of his biological deterministic views on female offenders were and still are perpetuated as distorted portrayals in popular culture. I then considered such representations in nineteenth-century crime fiction and historical crime fiction set in the period, drawing on them when writing about two female characters representing the mad (Rambaudi) and the bad (Panatti). Both are strong, intelligent women who commit violent crimes. Rambaudi is clearly deranged by her abusive upbringing, finally committing suicide as such a character might have done in nineteenth-century fiction. Panatti, by contrast, turns to criminality largely for survival and despite failing in her aim to destroy James, lives on.

Any writer is informed not just by their research but also by their experience and existing knowledge. I had been engaged in teaching and researching criminology for twenty years prior to writing both of my novels so it is unsurprising that the subject continued to dominate my creative as well as academic life. Initially I thought that it was just a question of writing from a personal perspective, drawing on what was familiar to me. But as the research and writing process went on, I realised just how much literature had been generated by the discipline of criminology over the past two hundred years that might inform authors. I cannot be sure that crime writers have never examined such material but I would suggest that most have not. Acknowledgements often mention police officers, forensic pathologists and other experts but criminologists seem to be absent. Their research has, both in the past and present, included interviews with offenders, victims and investigators, covert ethnological observations and life histories, all of which contain rich data about criminality, its causes and consequences. As mentioned in the introduction, criminologists and crime writers discuss similar themes, albeit from different perspectives. Conversation between the two would surely enrich both forms.

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