MARKED MEN: SPORT AND MASCULINITY IN VICTORIAN
POPULAR CULTURE, 1866-1904

by

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Abstract

In *Marked Men: Sport and Masculinity in Victorian Popular Culture, 1866-1904* I examine the representation of the figure of the Victorian sportsman in different areas of nineteenth-century popular culture – newspapers, spectacular melodrama, and series detective fiction – and how these depictions register diverse incarnations of this figure, demonstrating a discomfort with, and anxiety about, the way in which the sporting experience after the Industrial Revolution influenced gender ideology, specifically that related to ideas of manliness. Far from simply celebrating the modern experience of sport as one that works to produce manly men, coverage in the Victorian press of sporting events such as the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, spectacular melodramas by Dion Boucicault, and series detective fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Morrison, all recognize that the relationship between men and modern sport is a complex, if fraught one; it produces men who are “marked” in a variety of ways by their sporting experience. This recognition is at the heart of our own understandings of this relationship in the twenty-first century.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... iii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................................... viii

Preface .............................................................................................................................................. xi

Chapter 1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1

  The Development of Sport in the Nineteenth Century: A Short History .............................. 15

  Nineteenth-Century Manliness ............................................................................................... 20

Chapter 2 Situating the Sportsman: A Review of Scholarly Literature ............................... 33

  The Value of Popular Culture Artifacts in Determining the Meaning of the Sportsman.......................... 37

  Literary Critical Understandings of Sport .................................................................................. 43

  Literary Representations of the Sportsman .............................................................................. 47

  Manliness and Muscular Christianity ....................................................................................... 51

  The Cultural History of Nineteenth-Century Masculinity ...................................................... 54

Chapter 3 The Healthy, Heroic Sportsman, the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, and the Victorian Press ................................................................................................................................. 56

  “A seed sown”: F. C. Skey and the Boat Race Controversy ................................................. 65

  Classical and English Heroes ...................................................................................................... 69

  Individual Examples of Heroic, Healthy Sportsmen ................................................................. 75

  Work, Family, and the Sportsman ............................................................................................. 85

  The Boat Race in the English Landscape .................................................................................. 95
Chapter 4 The Urban Sportsman: Victorian Spectacular Melodrama and the Representation of Modern Sport Culture ......................................................... 108

Mediating Modernity: The Cultural Work of Melodrama ........................................ 114

Dion Boucicault, Not Just Your Stage Irishman ..................................................... 118

Flying Scud; or a Four-Legged Fortune (1866) ..................................................... 122

Formosa, the Most Beautiful; or The Railroad to Ruin (1869) .............................. 148

Chapter 5 The Pastoral Sportsman: Series Detective Fiction and the Sacred Space of Athletics .......................................................................................... 175

Solving the Crime: The Cultural Work of the Detective Story ............................... 177

The Sporting Pastoral ............................................................................................. 181

Arthur Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” .............................................. 183

Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students” ......................... 211

Chapter 6 The Speedy Sportsman: Series Detective Fiction and the Mystery of Sporting Technology ......................................................................... 229

Men on Bikes ........................................................................................................ 232

Arthur Morrison’s “The Case of Mr. Foggatt” ..................................................... 236

Arthur Morrison’s “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’” .. 250

Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” ......................... 262

Chapter 7 Conclusion: The Sportsman in the Twenty-First Century .................. 282


Works Cited .......................................................................................................... 294
List of Figures

Figure 1: "Plate I: Extension Motions" from *Walker's Manly Exercises* (1855), between pages 20-21 .................................................................................................................................................. 3

Figure 2: "Plate XVII: Throwing the Discus" from *Walker's Manly Exercises* (1855), between pages 62-63 .................................................................................................................................................. 4

Figure 3: "Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: The Start from Putney" from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 1 ........................................................................................................ 97

Figure 4: "Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: View of the Race from Barnes Railway-Bridge" from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 308 .......... 99

Figure 5: "Exhibition of the Oxford and Cambridge University Boats at the Crystal Palace" from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 308 ................. 100

Figure 6: William Powell Frith's *The Derby Day* (1856-1858) ©Tate Images .......... 110

Figure 7: The Gent from Albert Smith's *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847), page 4 .................................................................................................................................................. 137

Figure 8: "Sidney Paget's "In the Tap-Room" from "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," page 362 .................................................................................................................................................. 189

Figure 9: Sidney Paget's "Steggles and the young lady in earnest confabulation" from "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," page 372 ........................................................................................................................................ 190

Figure 10: Sidney Paget's "The Prisoner -- Trussed and Helpless" from "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," page 370 ........................................................................................................................................ 196

Figure 11: Myron's *Discobolus* ©Trustees of the British Museum .......................... 198

Figure 12: Sidney Paget's "Martin Hewitt" from "The Lenton Croft Robberies," page 309
Figure 13: Sidney Paget's "He insisted on drawing it in his notebook" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 309 ................................................................. 206

Figure 14: Sidney Paget's "An instant later the tutor returned, bringing with him the student" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 611 ........................................... 220

Figure 15: Sidney Paget's "How could you possibly know that?" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 604 ........................................................................................... 224

Figure 16: "Sidney Paget's "'Come, come,' said Holmes ..." from "The Adventure of the Three Students," frontispiece ........................................................................................................... 227

Figure 17: The first advertisement for Starley and Sutton's Rover Safety Bicycle in The Graphic, 31 January, 1885 ................................................................................................. 231

Figure 18: Sidney Paget's "Hewitt reached swiftly across the table" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 531 ................................................................................................................... 241

Figure 19: Sidney Paget's "You see I am prepared" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 535 ................................................................................................................................. 243

Figure 20: Sidney Paget's "I stood erect before him" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 536 ................................................................................................................................. 244

Figure 21: Sidney Paget's "As we approached ..." from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 11 .................................................................................................................... 269

Figure 22: Sidney Paget's "A straight left against a slogging ruffian" from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 9 .............................................................................................. 273

Figure 23: Sidney Paget's "'Too late, Watson; too late!' cried Holmes" from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 10 ............................................................................................. 276
Figure 24: Sidney Paget's "He spun around with a scream ..." from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," frontispiece ................................................................. 278
Preface

Many times during this process, many people have asked why I became interested in investigating the nineteenth-century attitude towards the figure of the sportsman in Victorian popular culture. Often, in answering, I would return one question for another; I was fond of directly, and sometimes sharply, querying “Are you asking me that because I’m a girl?” That a woman’s curiosity about the history of the relationship between men and sport should be viewed as so strange bothered me, for I understood my research to be not just about better ascertaining how previous centuries responded to men who played sport, but also about better understanding my own individual and active involvement in the sporting sphere. Indeed, it was my own involvement in the amateur sporting world that introduced me to different models of participation – the dominant one being that of the hyper-masculine, aggressive, and militaristic participant, discussed in depth by Varda Burstyn in The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport (1999) – and motivated me to articulate my own. In defining my own feminist sporting practice, I became aware of alternative models of participation that differed from the dominant mode; in many ways these helped me to shape my own.

One of the most frequently recurring alternative models of sporting participation, often held up as a counter-example to that of the twenty-first-century sporting male, is

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1 In “‘Messing about in boats’: Rowing as l’écriture feminine,” part of the essay collection My Life at the Gym: Feminist Perspectives on Community Through the Body, ed. Jo Malin (2009), I use Hélène Cixious’s formulation of a female-centered theory of language to explain my understanding of a model of participation in rowing that differs from the standard narratives of militaristic strength, aggressive competition, and bodily punishment.
that perhaps best represented by the figure of Charles Burgess Fry. In his obituary of Fry in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1956, cricket writer Neville Cardus eulogizes him as exemplary in many respects:

Charles Burgess Fry . . . was known first as an England cricketer and footballer, also as a great all-round athlete who for a while held the long-jump record, a hunter and a fisher, and as an inexhaustible virtuoso at the best of all indoor games, conversation . . . Fry must be counted among the most fully developed and representative Englishmen of the period . . . he was one of the last of the English tradition of the amateur, the connoisseur, and, in the most delightful sense of the word, the dilettante . . . He would stand classically poised after making an on-drive, contemplating the direction and grandeur of it. The cricket field has seen no sight more Grecian than the one presented by C. B. Fry in the pride and handsomeness of his young manhood. (3)

It is this image of the late-Victorian sportsman embodied by Fry – an active, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class, amateur – that is returned to us as an alternative to the more aggressive practice of sporting participation commonly associated with the twenty-first-century sporting sphere; in those moments of return, such a figure performs various kinds of cultural work. Though often invoked in contemporary popular culture as the origin of today’s sporting endeavour, this Victorian sportsman is sometimes offered as an alternative, less testosterone-fueled, less money-grubbing model of involvement in sport, often conveniently erasing his class- and gender-specific nature.

At the moment, the Victorian sportsman appears to be everywhere, with the last decade in particular being marked by his return in a variety of cultural forms; from public festivals celebrating “gentlemanly sport,” to magazines devoted to reviving early twentieth-century male fashions, tastes, and social graces, to advertisements for the London 2012 Olympic Games, to boy band music videos, the Victorian sportsman seems almost ubiquitous. Since 2005, the monthly publication, *The Chap: A Journal for the*
Modern Gentleman, has sponsored a “Chap Olympiad” in Central London, a series of events that playfully reinvents the tastes and behaviours of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heternormative masculinity. The 2011 Olympiad featured such events as “The Pipeathlon,” “Butler Baiting,” “Not Playing Tennis,” and “Umbrella Jousting” (Full Timetable). In the months prior to the London 2012 Olympics, The Chap also published an issue (no. 63) devoted to men and sport focusing on such topics as the 1908 Olympics, the inclusion of cricket at the 1900 Paris Olympics, and Arthur Craven, the poet and pugilist who took on the then world heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson, in 1916. Both the Chap Olympiad, and the magazine that sponsors it, invoke the Victorian sportsman as part of a Situationist response to a globalized, homogenous, capitalist culture.

Along with these “chappish” revivals of the Victorian sportsman, homages to the model of sporting practice represented by men such as C. B. Fry have also appeared in advertising and music videos. EDF, the energy company acting as a corporate sponsor for the 2012 London Olympics, released an advertisement in May 2011 using British Pathé footage of various events from 1908 London Olympics (“EDF Campaign”; “Olympic Games in London”). The advertisement, created by London agency AMV BBDO, relays to the viewer images of worthy Olympic amateurs participating in cycling, athletic events, and the infamous 1908 marathon. Over this footage, English actor Michael Gambon reminds viewers that “a lot of things have changed since the Olympic Games began over 100 years ago” (ssuk2011; Macleod). Like the “chappish” reinventions discussed in the previous paragraph, EDF’s invocation of the Victorian sportsman functions to remind viewers of the difference between early twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture.
century sporting practice; however, with Gambon’s reminder that the “one thing that will never change is the pride in being part of [the Games]” (ssuk2011) viewers are also asked to recognize the links between this older, and seemingly foreign model of sporting practice and the contemporary sportsman. A similar link back to the Victorian sportsman is made in the 2010 music video for the hit single “The Flood,” released by reunited British boy band, Take That. This video, and its use of the Victorian sportsman figure, will be discussed in greater length in the concluding chapter.

It was in order to better understand such recurrences of this figure that I undertook this project. If we are to tease out the varying kinds of cultural work performed by the continued presence of the Victorian sportsman in contemporary cultural discourse – including critique of dominant modes of male sporting participation, celebration of “manly” sporting endeavour, and as an alternative against which (and sometimes in collusion with) marginal groups in sport work to articulate their own models of sporting practice – then an awareness of the way in which elements of Victorian print culture worked to craft and comment on the relationship between men and sport is essential. Such an examination – of the different and divergent ways that Victorian print culture invested the sportsman figure with a multiplicity of meanings – better equips us to understand the reappearance of the sportsman in our own cultural milieu and to appreciate the complexity and the challenges of our appropriation of this Victorian figure.
Chapter 1

Introduction

In the mid to late nineteenth century Victorians were attempting to codify and prescribe the involvement of middle-class men in the burgeoning world of modern sport. The development of the sporting sphere, the nature of which had moved away from older, pre-industrial modes of leisure and towards activities defined by the rhythms of urban life, pushed writers such as John George Wood, Anthony Trollope, and Donald Walker to produce manuals outlining acceptable sports and approved means of involvement for their middle-class, male audience. Such books directed their readers in the cultivation and crafting of physical bodies marked out by their adherence to classical models of male beauty and proportion.

Donald Walker’s *British Manly Exercises*, first published in 1834 and later substantially revised and reissued by sporting columnist John William Carleton in 1855, is one such example, providing guidance to those men seeking to take part in this new, Victorian sporting sphere, as Jan Todd notes in her discussion of Walker in *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women 1800-1875* (1998). Though by the middle of the century the leisure sphere had expanded to include activities that appealed to the different strata of the Victorian class system, it is this model of sporting participation – that of the middle-class man turning to the world of sport in order to facilitate a healthy manly identity both physically and spiritually – that
assured the continued popularity of this library of sporting advice into the early years of the twentieth century.

Along with providing a list of acceptable sports including swimming, rowing, sailing, riding, driving, wrestling, and boxing coupled with instructions for their pursuit, Walker’s *British Manly Exercises*, later titled *Walker’s Manly Exercises* (1855), includes a detailed training plan that addresses diet, frequency of exercise, and proper attire for physical activity. This text is augmented by numerous plates, visually depicting the correct placement of the body for various activities (Figures 1 and 2). The body used in such illustrations is one that conforms to classical standards of male bodily proportion, emphasizing harmony and balance, which were, as Roberta Park notes, standards highly valued by the Victorians (1611). In working to put limits on the kind of relationship that a middle-class man might have with the Victorian sporting sphere, *Manly Exercises* constructed the physical body of the participant as remarkable for its adherence to such standards. Concomitant with this, it also marked out the sportsman as possessing manly qualities of character. In his 1835 preface, Walker discusses the way in which aspiring to a remarkable body will provide a man with the capacity for markedly manly action:

Exercises ensure, in particular, the development of all the locomotive organs, and they prevent or correct all the deformity to which these organs are liable. They are best calculated to produce strength and activity, and to bestow invaluable health. They, at the same time, confer beauty of form, and they contribute to impart an elegant air and graceful manners. They, moreover, inspire confidence in difficult situations, and suggest resources
Figure 1: "Plate I: Extension Motions" from *Walker's Manly Exercises* (1855), between pages 20-21
Figure 2: "Plate XVII: Throwing the Discus" from *Walker's Manly Exercises* (1855), between pages 62-63
in danger. Their consequent influence on the moral conduct of a man is such that, by a courage which is well founded, because it springs from a perfect knowledge of his own powers, he is often able to render the most important services to others. (Walker, “British” 2)

According to Walker, manly exercise will not only maintain the health and normativity of the body — “correct all the deformity” and “confer beauty of form” — but it will also imbue the individual with a physical strength that in turn supports a good “moral conduct” characterized by “courage” and a sense of duty to others. Participating in such physical activity marked the individual out as a man with a valued set of both physical and moral qualities.

At the same time, however, that Walker is working to attribute to the sportsman remarkable qualities such as strength, self-control, and stout-heartedness, other popular works in the period concerned with defining and understanding men’s relationship to leisure activities provide less favourable accounts and depict athletic men as marked by far more suspect characteristics. One such work, the motivation behind which is also the proscribing of men’s relationship to the ever-widening sphere of leisure, is Albert Smith’s The Natural History of the Gent (1847). Smith’s work anatomizes a well-known masculine type of the period who, in partaking of many other kinds of recreations, also frequented the diversions offered by the Victorian sporting sphere. While not solely concerned with exploring the relationship of the sportsman to the world of sport, Smith’s treatment pronounces a different kind of judgment and marks the sportsman out as a darker antithesis to Walker’s epitome of manly health. By appropriating the language of
the natural historian observing a new species of animal in its natural habitat, Smith chronicles the behaviour of a sportsman enjoying a day at the races:

   After the race (than which he sayeth he never saw better, albeit he hath seen but few) he thinketh it “nobby” to throw at the sticks, and insisteth that the merchant do set up a bell, a feathered cock, and a pear . . . He seeth Lord —, who he knoweth by sight, next to him, laden with crockery, dogs, and Napoleons . . . he striveth to knock down more things than the patrician . . . Next he hath more lunch, until his heart openeth wider than ever . . . He then challenges strange men on the roofs of distant vehicles to take wine, because he knoweth “they are the right sort,” and finisheth by trying a hornpipe on the roof of his own, in all the enthusiasm of ale, sun, lobster salad, dust, champagne, and a post horn. (46-48)

In Walker’s understanding of the effect of the sporting sphere on the sportsman he notes the way in which exercise helps to cultivate in a man qualities that connote manliness; however, in Smith’s account, the sportsman, in this case a spectator rather than an active participant, is not a manly man, but rather one remarkable only for overtly trying to satisfy his appetites: for gambling (“throw at the sticks”; “bell, a feathered cock, and a pear”), for recognition by both his social betters and his peers, for rich food, and, perhaps most problematically, for drink. Far from a manly paragon, the sportsman here is a much more problematic figure.

   As both Donald Walker’s Manly Exercises and Albert Smith’s The Natural History of the Gent demonstrate, the Victorian imagination contained conflicted ideas about the value of the sportsman figure and about the terms of middle-class men’s participation in the developing sporting sphere; on the one hand, the sportsman is a man possessed of remarkable physical and moral qualities and, on the other, he is someone marked off as
unable to control his appetites and urges. This lack of a unified cultural discourse about the sportsman is something Mike Huggins notes in his 2000 discussion of the Victorian involvement in sport. According to Huggins, while the figure of the sportsman may have been fairly commonplace by 1880,

it is much less clear what degree of \textit{consensus} it had overall, even in middle-class society itself. Was it as all pervasive as is sometimes inferred, especially beyond the public school? How effective were the efforts of propagandists, publicists and active proselytisers? How far was it a rhetorical strategy, like the condemnation of the working-class character, or the public espousal of evangelical attitudes? How far was it reality? These are important questions, yet they still have to be addressed. (Huggins, “Second-Class” 19; original italics)

This sentiment is echoed by Richard Holt in his assertion of the need for more work to be done on how the modern sporting sphere was experienced by Victorians. In a 2006 article in \textit{Sport History}, Holt points to the limitations of existing discussions of how Victorians responded to the sportsman figure. The interest in what Holt terms “amateurism” – the practice of sport with no intent for financial gain, often associated with the sportsman – reaches beyond the limits of those who had direct access to educational and religious discourses about sporting participation, such as those found in novels like Thomas Hughes’ \textit{Tom Brown’s Schooldays} (1857) and the religious writings of muscular Christian minister, Charles Kingsley:

\begin{quote}
Amateurism within Britain is inclined to be overlooked or subsumed under the general heading of ‘the spread of sport’ without much further explanation. Homilies by headmasters, imperial tracts, patriotic doggerel and boys’ adventure stories abound as sources for the \textit{intentions} of the few. But what about the \textit{motives} of the many? Why did amateurism get
\end{quote}
such an enthusiastic reception? Why was it embraced by so many of those who had never been to public school? To stick too rigidly to ‘Tom Brown’ restricts the scope of enquiry. (Holt, “Amateur” 353).

It is in response to queries such as those posited by Huggins and Holt – about the way in which the broader Victorian middle-class valued, emulated, imagined, and criticized the sportsman figure – that my project undertakes to catalogue the different representations of the sportsman in the Victorian popular imagination between the 1860s and the early years of the twentieth.

Through such an examination, I uncover the multiple meanings held by the sportsman figure – namely that of the active, athletic participant – to a middle-class population that had expanded greatly in size between 1851 and 1891. As K. Theodore Hopper points out in The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886 (1998), while this period saw an increase in the numbers of those making up the professional class (from 183,000 to 289,000), the larger increase came in terms of those whose job descriptions included clerks and other office workers and “dealers and assistants”; the former increased in number from 121,000-514,000 and the latter from 483,000-769,000 (Hoppen 33-34). In examining representations in cultural forms associated with, and consumed by, this broad middle class such as the Victorian press, the spectacular, melodramatic theatre, and the magazine detective story, I uncover not only the spectrum of meaning ascribed to the sportsman in the second half of the nineteenth century, but also the shift that occurred in the value attached to this figure, from celebration to suspicion. I argue that these
constructions of the sportsman were undertaken in response to anxieties about changing ideas of middle-class work, the various new leisure opportunities offered in the city, and the influence of commerce and technology on the health and well being of the middle-class male body. If we are to fully understand the effects of modernity on this body, then we need the explication of the relationship between men and sport that my study provides.

In exploring the relationship between men and sport in an urban setting, I am depending on a formulation of “modernity” that emphasizes lived urban experience in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a story that has been told by countless writers who have engaged with the idea of the Victorian metropolis. Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold’s *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872) is only one of countless such examples that narrativizes a visit to London by two *flâneurs* using verbal and visual techniques to establish the city as two distinct spaces: a West End of enticing and exciting leisure opportunities and an East End of danger, darkness, and crime. As Judith Walkowitz discusses in *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (1992), this decidedly masculine construct of London as a “dark, powerful, and seductive labrynth held sway over the social imagination of educated readers” (17), a formulation that Nicholas Daly takes up and expands in *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000* (2004). This lived experience of the modern was also one characterized by other aspects, ushered in by industrialization:
Technology . . . commodification; the break with traditional ways of life; urbanization and the concomitant sense of rootlessness; individualism; the expansion of democracy; the growth of commercialized leisure; the separation of work and home and the ideal of domesticity; new ideologies of gender; the growth of bureaucracy; [and] the integration of more and more territory into the capitalist world system. (5)

In using a term such as ‘modernity’ in my study, I am invoking this network of themes and depictions. Though stories have been told about the interaction of different segments of the mid- to late-Victorian public with the modern, urban space of London, the story of how the sportsman – one of the key masculine identities in the nineteenth century – interacted with this space is one that, until now, has remained obscure. My study seeks, as Walkowitz states in describing her attempts to collect the different narratives of “sexual danger” that identified late-Victorian London, to map out “a dense cultural grid through which conflicting and overlapping representations” (5) of the sportsman and the sporting sphere circulated in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In exploring these various narratives about the relationship between the urban sporting sphere and the middle-class man, I have focused on cultural forms that were an intrinsic part of the same modern, urban social and cultural space that the new world of sport occupied: the Victorian press, including daily, illustrated, and penny sporting papers; the spectacular melodramatic theatre, perhaps best exemplified by the dramas of Dion Boucicault; and series detective fiction published in monthly magazines. In each case, I have chosen representative works. The discussion I present in the following pages
demonstrates the way in which, from its inception, the figure of the sportsman has had a varied and changeable relationship with the popular media.

In designating these cultural forms as “popular,” I am drawing on the distinction made between “high” and “low” forms of art defined by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and the Structure of the Literary Field* (1996). Bourdieu argues that high or “highbrown” art forms are those which value such notions as “creativity” and “originality” (218). As Ken Gelder explains in his discussion of Bourdieu’s dichotomy, these cultural forms are “directed at small audiences, fellow-artists and like-minded or similarly trained social groups” (Gelder 13). Unlike the high, low art forms are “heteronomous”; they are “open to mass audiences and [are] necessarily caught up in the logic of the marketplace, which means [they] remain conscious of [their] readers and [are] determined to please them” (Bourdieu 218; Gelder 13). Low forms of art do not engage with discourses of originality and creativity, but rather deploy the language of industry and production. Newspapers, melodramatic theatre, and monthly magazines are all “low” Victorian art forms, according to Bourdieu’s definition. Interested, as they are, in their audiences in order to ensure commercial success, they are ideal artifacts through which to better understand the construction of the sportsman figure in the Victorian cultural imagination.

The representation of the sportsman in the Victorian press, theatre, and magazine detective fiction proves that from the beginning of modern sport, the popular media have
played a crucial role in crafting and defining the athlete, yet this relationship is one that, up until now, has been underexplored by literary critics. This study expands the coverage of the period and genre in this area to include a discussion of the complexities and ironies of literary texts in a broader cultural context and in doing so provides us with a useful way to understand modernity.

The connection between newspapers and the sporting sphere in the nineteenth century is one that has long been acknowledged by sports historians. Both Mike Huggins and Tony Mason argue that there was a “close relationship that existed between the development of British sport . . . and the expansion of published comment and news about it” (Mason, “Sport” 297). Little work has been done, however, on the way in which titles from the penny sporting press, such as The Sportsman and The Sporting Life, represented the new, modern world of sport in their pages. In examining the way in which such penny sporting papers covered the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, one of the premier events in the London sporting calendar, I contextualize this cultural work by also investigating the way in which such sport reporting was undertaken by a representative selection of other prominent press forms that imagined a broad, middle-class reading audience, namely the daily press, represented by The Times and The Daily News, and the illustrated weekly, represented by The Illustrated London News.

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Another cultural form that was an important part of urban life in the nineteenth century was the spectacular melodrama, the most famous proponent of which was the Irish playwright, Dion Boucicault. In choosing to focus on Boucicault’s two significant sporting melodramas of the 1860s, *Flying Scud; or, a Four-Legged Fortune* (1866) and *Formosa, the ‘Most Beautiful’; or, The Railroad to Ruin* (1869) I am building on an understanding of the relationship between this cultural form and the urban space in which it was performed articulated by scholars of the dramatic genre, such as Nicholas Daly. In his recent treatment of the melodrama, Daly discusses the connection between the spectacular melodrama, what he terms the ‘sensation drama,’ and the city:

[S]ensation melodrama placed the metropolis on stage, inventing a Bohemia to both fascinate and frighten the Victorian audience, and feeding and whetting the Victorian appetite for visual pleasure. Modernity is the precondition for this drama, but modernity also takes to the boards in it as technology, as the crowd, as urban setting . . . Yet perhaps the same frenzy of the visible of which sensation drama was a part, rendered those shapeless threats that were less articulable in the visual language of the Victorian stage all the more frightening. (32)

It is this work of the melodrama in relation to the sphere of Victorian sport that my project investigates. Just as spectacular melodrama aided audiences in coming to terms with the changes and challenges of urban modernity, so too did it seek to reassure theatre-goers that this aspect of the urban experience was both manageable and beneficial.

Like the Victorian press, late nineteenth-century periodicals were another print culture form that were very much a part of the urban experience. Magazines such as *The Strand* and *The Windsor*, aimed as they were at a middle-class readership, sought to
explicate the many mysteries of the Industrial Age. One way in which they performed this function was through the detective stories published in their pages. While the work of Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Morrison, discussed in later chapters of this study, is by no means the totality of such fiction published in this period, their sporting detective stories are indicative of trends in the representation of the sportsman and the sporting sphere in this period by writers such as Bertram Fletcher Robinson, and the prolific J. E. Preston Muddock. Through bookending my study with, on the one hand, the first performance date of Dion Boucicault’s sporting melodrama, *Flying Scud* (1866), and, on the other, the publication date of Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective story, “The Adventure of the Three Students” in *The Strand Magazine* (1904), I am, admittedly, constructing boundaries with a certain degree of artificiality; however, such boundaries are not without their justification. The period of the mid-1860s to the early years of the twentieth century not only mark a period in which such popular culture forms as the penny sporting press, the spectacular melodrama, and the monthly magazine flourished. Such boundaries are, however, necessary, when attempting to make a foray into an area as vast and varied as mid- to late-Victorian popular print culture. Thus, the findings I present in the following pages are, I argue, representative, rather than total.

My selection of cultural forms has also defined the focus related to specific sports, namely the sports of rowing, horse racing, pedestrianism, or track and field, and cycling. Though these were by no means the only sports at the forefront of the Victorian popular
imagination, they were the sports most frequently represented in these cultural forms. That they vary in type and practice must be acknowledged; the team sport of rowing contrasts strongly with the solitary sports of pedestrianism and cycling; the world of the Turf exists somewhat in opposition to the others by virtue of its equine nature. The one characteristic uniting such sports, beyond their prominent place in Victorian print culture, is the fact that all these sports, to differing degrees, sustained changes and developed in new directions as a result of the social, cultural, and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

Why did some Victorians feel the need to account for, and proscribe limits on, the figure of the sportsman and the sphere in which he played? That the gap in meaning between the sportsman as depicted in Donald Walker’s *Manly Exercises* and the sportsman as depicted in Albert Smith’s *The Natural History of the Gent* belies a confusion over the meaning of this figure in the middle of the nineteenth century is without a doubt; however, one cannot help but wonder why this uncertainty. This uncertainty is in part attributable to the significant change — one might even say the revolution — sport as a cultural form was experiencing in the period between 1830 and 1900 and in part a result of a similar, though more gradual change in the meaning of masculinity over the same time period.

**The Development of Sport in the Nineteenth Century: A Short History**

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the meaning of “sport,” as recorded by
the *Oxford English Dictionary*, shifted. When a young Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 “sport” was still closely linked with field sports such as hunting, coursing, shooting and fishing; however by the 1860s a secondary meaning had developed: “an activity involving physical exertion and skill, *esp.* . . . one regulated by set rules or customs in which an individual or team competes against another or others” (OED; original italics); by the end of the century, this secondary meaning became the dominant one, marking a shift in the practice of sport. Sport had gone, in the words of Mike Huggins in *The Victorians and Sport* (2007), from being an activity that symbolized continuity, a pan-class rural community, and tradition to one that signaled “excitement, social prestige and modernity” (Huggins, “Victorians” 7).

Older forms of sport were often bloody and violent. As Richard Holt notes in *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (1989), throwing at cocks (where participants stone to death a tethered bird), cock-fighting, bull-baiting (where a bull attempts to free himself from the grip of a bulldog on his belly or testicles), and bull-running, along with bare-knuckle boxing, cudgelling (where two opponents attack each other with big sticks and defend themselves with wicker shields), single-sticks, and wrestling were all popular pastimes in the first half of the nineteenth century (17-19). Such sports were cyclical in as much as they depended on either seasonal or religious calendars and they were often part of much larger celebrations such as harvest festivals, May Days, and saints’ days. As with the field sports of hunting, shooting, and fishing which were also prominent in this
period, such folk games were strongly tied to land and location, with many being linked to village custom and practiced as a form of regional identity.

By the 1850s, the native environment of the sportsman had changed significantly. No longer a cultural space the meaning of which was stability, pan-class rural community, and tradition, the new sporting sphere encompassed many of the changes brought to life as a whole by the Industrial Revolution. The changes were pronounced. The older, more violent forms of recreation were either eradicated or pushed underground by middle-class, often religious reformers, who, as Peter Bailey discusses in *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (1978), were concerned about the drinking and gambling often associated with them, aspects that made the organization and control of a sometimes reluctant workforce a challenge. Driven in part by fears of Chartism and other forms of political activism among the working class, the introduction of “rational recreation” as an alternative to these kinds of pastimes offered early forms of some sports as an attempt at social control (100-102). Richard Holt discusses how some of these sports quickly faded from public view, either ceasing to be pursued, or more often becoming clandestine activities that occurred away from the public eye, such as cock-fighting and boxing (Holt, “Sport” 64).

Many of the social, economic, political, and cultural changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution created a space for a new kind of sporting experience that differed significantly from the one described above. Changes in notions of time and in the
spectrum of wages created the space and capital for modern sport (Huggins, “Victorians” 14). While to a certain extent the middle and upper classes had always enjoyed a certain degree of flexibility, those connected with business and commerce, as well as those who worked under them, benefitted from larger amounts of approved leisure time. In the beginning of the Victorian period, a sixty hour work week was the norm; however, by the end of the century that had been reduced to an approximate average of fifty-three hours per week. Perhaps most importantly, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Saturday was established as a time for sports and by the 1850s, both office and factory workers were, at the very least, able to enjoy a half-holiday on Saturday (Huggins, “Victorians” 15). Changes that occurred in the value of real wages also helped to create the cultural space for a new sporting experience, providing people with disposable income to spend on leisure activities. In this period, real wages rose at a rate of approximately 1.2 per cent per annum with per capita wages fifty per cent higher in 1901 than in 1851 (Huggins, “Victorians” 14) and this spare cash could in theory be spent on a wide array of sport-related material goods and experiences: one could buy sporting equipment, pay club dues, or invest in popular training manuals like Walker's *Manly Exercises* (1834; 1855), as well as purchase train tickets, or subscribe to one of the many sporting papers that began to appear with regularity in the 1850s and 1860s.

Along with changes in time and money, other factors helped to pave the way for the new sporting experience. The growth of urban space, a new sphere for sport, along with
the swelling of the middle classes, helped produce a climate in which a new form of sporting experience would gain popularity. However, one of the most significant developments in this period that had an impact upon the changing world of Victorian sport was the development of the rail network in England. As Peter Bailey discusses, the completion of the major lines in the British rail system by the early 1850s meant that not only were people encouraged to travel outside their local boundaries or away from the comfort of their domestic hearth, but they could do so to participate in a variety of sporting events, either as a competitor or a spectator (59-60). It is these factors – a change in ideas of time, an increase in real wages, the growth of a transportation infrastructure – that precipitated the changes taking place in sport and helped to create the new sporting world in which the sportsman, as catalogued by both Donald Walker and Albert Smith, resided.

One sport that provides a prime example of these reforms and changes is English football. Originally a village folk game tied to various religious festivals and saints' days, football was first played en mass, with no defined playing field. By 1889, this folk practice not only had standardized rules, and a national governing body, the Football Association, formed in 1863, it also had a League to organize fixtures and, by the end of the century, football grounds, some of which are still used today, were being constructed in London, Liverpool, and Manchester. What was once a village ritual had become, by the turn of the century, the commercial enterprise that continues to this day (Huggins,
“Victorians” 62-66). Similar reforms were made in other popular folk and casual sports such as cricket and rowing (Huggins, “Victorians” 4). New sports, such as tennis and cycling, with the latter’s rise in popularity in the second half of the century linked to the various technological developments in the period (Herlihy 251), also became part of the Victorian sporting world. This new sporting experience, with its standardization, codification, national governance, class divisions, and urbanization was a revolutionary shift in how people played; in this study, I will use the term “modern sport” to describe it in order to differentiate it from older, rural traditions of sport more closely associated with the land. The spectrum of representations of the sportsman which will be discussed in the following chapters is evidence of the active working out of the meaning of these changes on the part of the Victorians as they laboured to come to terms with them.

Nineteenth-Century Manliness

The period of social and economic change that strongly influenced the development of modern sport also contributed to significant changes in conceptions of masculine identity. Indeed, the figure of the sportsman was just one incarnation of a broader notion of manliness that occupied a noteworthy place in the Victorian imagination. Scholars of Victorian masculinity have identified two major shifts in the development of this gender identity: the first was a departure from the older, aristocratic model of masculinity which thrived in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to a middle-class gender ideal associated less with land-owning and lineage and more with moral codes and the model
of domesticity; the second was a gradual shift in the mid to late nineteenth century from this kind of middle-class moral earnestness advocated by religious writers such as Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School, to what Michael Roper and John Tosh, in the introductory essay to their groundbreaking volume on masculinity, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (1991), term “the respect for muscle and might” (3). Though there are characteristics of masculinity that appear across historical boundaries such as strength, virility, and courage, how they were articulated within culture experienced a radical shift in the middle part of the nineteenth century. The ideal of the Georgian gentleman, a figure characterized by politeness, an enjoyment of leisure, and an appreciation of mixed society and socializing was quickly replaced with a more vigorous manliness, the terms of which were shaped in part by religious writing such as that by the muscular Christian minister, Charles Kingsley. This change was as much about a shift in hegemonic power from the aristocracy to the middle class as it was about gender ideology. As John Tosh notes in a recent discussion of the distinctions between these older and newer models of masculinity, this celebrated eighteenth-century ideal of a man was increasingly at odds with the codes and behaviours of the new entrepreneurial class (Tosh, “Politeness” 456). Far from being authentic, the Georgian gentleman performed an outward code of politeness and civility encouraged by popular conduct books; he was a man of private means who did not need to earn a living, but rather could engage in various forms of leisure, a stark contrast to the doctrines of hard work and
industry; lastly, the Georgian gentleman was someone who delighted in the company, conversation, and civilizing influence of women, rather than seeing them as a threat to his masculinity (Tosh, “Politeness” 462-64). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this figure “had diminishing leverage” in debates about what constituted masculinity, and as James Eli Adams notes in his discussion of the decline of the most remarkable incarnation of this figure, the Regency dandy, this disappearance of the Georgian gentleman “marked the loss of a central point of identity and social reference for large numbers of men across the class spectrum” (Tosh, “Politeness” 456; Adams 6).

The muscular Christian was just one incarnation of the masculine identity that scholars of Victorian manliness argue replaced the Georgian gentleman; the figure of the muscular Christian was first articulated by the Anglican minister Charles Kingsley and later disseminated to a wider audience through popular works including those by novelist Silas Kitto Hocking, and John Brookes, the author of Manliness and Culture (3rd ed. 1878). Another of these authors concerned with articulating a clear and practical

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3 The use of the phrase “muscular Christian” to describe the formulation of manliness articulated by Charles Kingsley was not originally coined by Kingsley himself. While the ideas behind the figure of the muscular Christian appear in such novels as Two Years Ago (1857), “muscular Christian” was first used by T. C. Sandar in his review of Two Years Ago published in The Saturday Review the same year. Discussing Kingsley’s motivation for writing the novel, Sandar conjectures that “the task that Mr. Kingsley has made specially his own . . . is that of spreading the knowledge and fostering the love of a muscular Christianity” (176). Kingsley’s initial response to the term was not a positive one, but he later went on to use it himself. In an 1857 letter to his friend F. D. Maurice, Kingsley states:

But I have to preach the divineness of the whole manhood, and am content to be called a Muscular Christian, or any other impertinent name, by men who little dream of the
definition of manly middle-class identity was William Landels, the minister of Regent’s Park Baptist Chapel in London. In *How Men Are Made* (1859) and *True Manhood: Its Nature, Foundation, and Development* (1861), Landels lays out for readers the different character traits of a manly man, emphasizing moral qualities over physical. For Landels, a manly man stands in direct opposition to the decorative and entertaining Georgian gentleman; he is the pinnacle of a Christian God’s creation, “so pure, so lofty, so symmetrical withal, so vast in intellect and wide in sympathy, so vigorous in action and upright in principle, that those witnessing [him] . . . are constrained to acknowledge and do homage to [his] manhood. What a glorious creature is such a man” (“Manhood” 41-42).

If a Georgian gentleman is primarily about surface and display, then this new formulation of masculine identity is his opposite expressed in language that emphasizes not only its materiality, but also its internal quality along with its authenticity. In a populist echo of Charles Kingsley’s comments about the primal energy that lies in the weakness of character, sickness of body, and misery of mind, by which I have bought what little I know of the human heart. (54)

Though Kingsley’s use of the phrase “muscular Christian” is hesitant in his correspondence with Maurice, by the time of the publication of Thomas Hughes’s sequel to *Tom Brown’s Schooldays, Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861), the term had gained more positive associations. Hughes himself used it in *Tom Brown at Oxford* to describe the benefits of living life with a healthy mind in a healthy body.

[T]he least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man’s body is given to him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth, which God has given to the children of men. (170)
heart of every man (Rosen, “Volcano” 17), Landels tells his readers that all men have within them the raw material that can be transformed into manliness:

As young men you are endowed with the possibilities — the undeveloped germs of manhood. You are — if we may use a homely phrase — the raw material out of which men are made, and are yet in the ductile state in which you are capable to being moulded into the noblest types of men . . .

full of buoyancy, and elasticity, and energy, and the lofty ambition of youth. (“Manhood” 7)

Through invoking the language of manufacture in his discussion of men’s untouched potential, Landels firmly situates this crude power within the material discourses of the period. Young men are “raw material” that is “ductile” and which exhibits “elasticity, and energy”; indeed, this unprocessed manliness sounds like a kind of miracle material that could respond to any kind of societal demand placed on it. The job of processing such a wondrous material into a final product, which could then be distributed throughout nineteenth-century society, is one that Landels states can only be performed by the men themselves through education, and more importantly, through self-control, a quality that both Adams, and Herbert Sussman in Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art (1995) argue is central to the formulation of manliness in this period. Men, according to Landels, should be moved by the desire to shape one’s destiny. To leave the molding of such material to external forces would be a neglect of one’s duty:

Human beings do not grow into men by an easy, passive, matter-of-course process. Things like men grow in that way, but not man . . . not by passively yielding to an external pressure, but by the putting forth of an
internal force, which resists and masters . . . if our manhood does not passively or spontaneously grow, it may be supposed to depend on that mental and moral training which we receive from others, — that with a right training, we can hardly fail to be men, and that without such training our true manhood is impossible. ("Manhood" 43; 44-45; original italics)

Like the other raw materials that were central to the Industrial Revolution, the stuff of which men are made is natural; however, like those other raw materials, it cannot be left to simply grow on its own if society is going to reap the benefits. Advocating for a “mental and moral training” executed both by the individual and by the masculine communities of religion and education, a system that sounds not unlike the heavy machinery of Victorian industry, Landels details how to manufacture a guaranteed product. In an attempt to disassociate this process of manufacture from its industrial connotations, Landels invokes the image of a healthy body, and in doing so again echoes Kingsley’s doctrine of muscular Christianity where the healthy and active physical body is taken as an indicator of the inner, moral health of the individual:

Again we say, it is necessary to manhood that these, and the powers we have previously described, should be exercised in harmony with each other. The cultivation of one to the neglect of the others would make us monsters, and not men. Just as the strength of any one bodily organ, if coupled with the weakness of others, or the capacity to perform one or a few of our bodily functions combined with incapacity for others, would not constitute a strong or well-proportioned physical frame; but the vigorous, healthy condition of every faculty and the capability of performing every function is necessary there unto. ("Manhood” 38)

Both internally and externally, a manly man must exhibit balance and symmetry. Though he does not directly emphasize the importance of physical exercise in his formulation of
manliness, Landels depends on such a metaphor to explain the spiritual or moral health of the individual indicates the important role the body plays in this mid-century model of manliness.

John Tosh mimics Landel’s description in his summation of manliness in *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999) when he states that

> Energy, will, straightforwardness and courage were the key requirements. Sometimes there was an implied claim to natural endowment; more often a manly bearing was taken to be the outcome of self-improvement and self-discipline. This aspect was explicit in what was for the Victorians the key attribute of manliness — independence . . . First impressions of an individual were strongly conditioned by physical indicators — countenance, voice and hand-clasp could (and should) all be ‘manly’. But a manly appearance suggested more than physical health and strength; it indicated virility. (111-12)

Yet in spite of this formulation, Tosh acknowledges that the list of expected behaviours associated with this identity were far from being fixed. In his discussion of the expressions of Regency and Victorian masculine identity, Tosh emphasizes this changing nature, a quality that is again made apparent when one considers the kaleidoscope of meanings attached to the figure of the Victorian sportsman:

> Manliness is [a] slippery concept. In nineteenth-century England the word was used in an extraordinary variety of contexts and it was repeatedly pushed in fresh directions by religious writers and social theorists, often in mutually inconsistent ways. In the name of manliness Victorian men were urged to work, to pray, to stand up for their rights, to turn the other cheek, to sow wild oats, to be chaste, and so on. (Tosh, “Politeness” 459)

As with the qualities that defined the sporting experience in the nineteenth century, the
terms of definition for masculine identity were also changing and thus we see these conditions reflected in the spectrum of meaning attached to the sportsman figure in this period.

Though Victorians may have been struggling to come to terms with the changing ideas of leisure and masculine identity in this period, what is evident in the representations of the sportsman that occur in Victorian popular culture is the understanding that the sporting participation of the middle-class – an activity that was the exclusive provenance of men who could afford the temporal and monetary costs of such involvement – marked those who joined in. In the Victorian popular imagination, the sportsman is represented as both remarkable, in the sense that his identity as an active and presumably healthy body set him apart from the general populace, and as a marked man, with the latter incarnation drawing on the negative connotations of criminality, duplicity, and suspicion.

In the following chapters my project will trace, in a variety of popular cultural forms, the representation of the sportsman and the sporting sphere, detailing some of the ways in which these entities were represented in the nineteenth century. In Chapter 2, I provide a survey of the current scholarly discussions of representations of sport in literature and of Victorian masculinity. Chapter 3 examines the appearance of the healthy and heroic sportsman in the pages of the Victorian press. I specifically examine the way in which a selection of newspapers – dailies, illustrated papers, and the sporting press –
represent the 1869 Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, one of the most significant University Boat Races in the 1860s. In tracing the contours of the sportsman as embodied in the pages of the Victorian press, I establish him as a man possessed of qualities of character and behaviour that would facilitate his entry into the newly developing professional, business world, a representation that responds to criticism circulating in the period about the potential damaging effect sporting involvement could have on young middle-class men preparing for public life. Rowing, the newspaper coverage suggests, is hard work, precisely the kind of activity in which one should participate if one is to then go on to become a successful professional man. Chapter 4 discusses the way in which the sporting melodramas of Irish playwright and master of the spectacular melodrama, Dion Boucicault, present theatre audiences of the 1860s with a different incarnation of the sportsman figure. If the Victorian press worked to craft a public discourse about the sportsman that emphasized his heroism, then Boucicault’s *Flying Scud; or, a Four-Legged Fortune* (1866) and *Formosa, the Most Beautiful*: or, *The Railroad to Ruin* (1869) presents a critique of this ideal by placing the sportsman in situations that challenge, and temporarily subdue his manly energies. The plays both illustrate the limits of the heroic sportsman model and offer audiences reformulations of the figure that are better able to cope with the increasingly problematic urban environment in which sport is taking place. When confronted with the challenges presented by the nineteenth-century city and all its fascinations, the sportsman may stumble but he does not fall; in the
Victorian sporting melodrama, the sportsman is a figure of resilience. 

In the fin de siècle period, there is a shift in how the sportsman is represented, echoing the shift in the broader understanding of manliness from morality to might discussed above. Chapters 5 and 6, which focus on the representation of the sportsman in series detective fiction\(^4\) published in middle-class magazines such as The Strand and The Windsor Magazine, trace the suspicions that arose in this period about this figure. For authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Morrison, the sportsman was no longer simply a hero; rather, as the detectives Holmes and Hewitt discover, he is a figure that is marked by a lack of control. In Chapter 5, I discuss the way in which the series detective story works to interrogate the notion of the sportsman as a figure that exists in a pastoral

\(^4\) Indebted to, but distinct from the serial, which was often in the end a novel with a fixed end point interrupted by numerous weekly or monthly cliffhanger moments, series detective fiction was the brainchild of Arthur Conan Doyle, derived in response to the new cultural form of the monthly story magazine that became popular in the latter half of the Victorian period. As Doyle explains in Memories and Adventures, the shape of series detective fiction grew out of the demands of the editor of The Strand, Greenough Smith.

A number of monthly magazines were coming out at that time [1891] . . . Considering these various journals with their disconnected stories it had struck me that a single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather than a help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet installments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazine. I believe that I was the first to realize this and the Strand Magazine the first to put it into practice.(90)

For Conan Doyle, series detective fiction grew out the demands of a cultural form that was in many ways made possible by the kinds of advances in technology that also affected the world of sport.
sporting space, demonstrating that by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the reality of this experience is far from the ideal; it is corrupted by a desire for commercial profit, or personal advancement. The pronouncements made about the sportsman figure and the sporting pastoral are not, however, wholly negative. While such stories recognize the incongruities present in the sportsman, there is a remnant of hope that a version of the figure will survive beyond the bounds of Britain and into the twentieth century.

Chapter 6 investigates what happens to the sportsman when his activities are enhanced by the sporting technology of the bicycle. With the advent of this new form of transport and leisure, Victorian culture struggled to come to terms with what it meant. Changes in bicycle design allowed for an opening up of the sport beyond the lower middle-class young urban men who had been the original participants (Herlihy 241). With this shift in participation also came a concern about how this new, more “liberated” form of cycling would in turn affect the men involved. In responding to these concerns, the series detective story depicts a speedy sportsman who is no longer a hero; rather, he is a figure who has been adversely affected by technology. When involvement in the sport of cycling is not turning the sportsman into a cog in the machine of commerce, it is accelerating his desires and energies beyond the point at which they can be controlled. However, as with the critique of the sporting pastoral examined in Chapter 5, there is a partial attempt to redeem this figure and reshape him into a new kind of sporting hero for
the coming modern age.

As the sporting sphere grew in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth, the anxieties felt by many Victorians about different facets of modern, urban, middle-class life shaped their response to one of that sphere’s most prominent incarnations, the figure of the sportsman. At certain times, and in specific places, he is configured as a hero in an attempt to subdue those anxieties and even dispell them. Elsewhere, he is investigated and his hero status is challenged; when presented as a product of the interaction of masculinity with commerce and technology, he comes out a villain to varying degrees. In examining how this figure was represented in the popular culture forms that appealed to the broad middle class between the years 1866 and 1904, I argue that not only can we gain a better understanding of the socio-cultural influences at work in motivating the Victorian response to sport, but also that we can trace the role that previously unexamined popular culture forms such as newspapers, spectacular melodramas, and magazine short stories played in shaping and communicating this response. Through reconstructing this varied narrative of the Victorians’s relationship with the sportsman, we thus become better equipped to understand our own heterogeneous attitude towards the athlete in the twenty-first century. It is only when we are thus equipped that we can begin to make sense of the sportsman’s reappearance in public festivals, magazines, advertisements, and music videos and the different ways in which he is celebrated: as the origin of “true” sportsmanship, and, more problematically, as an
alternative to dominant, masculinist modes of sporting participation characterized by aggression, violence, and willing involvement in global capitalist culture.
Chapter 2

Situating the Sportsman: A Review of Scholarly Literature

In a 2004 discussion of satirical sporting cartoons in the popular nineteenth-century magazines *Punch* and *Ally Sloper’s Half Holiday*, sport historian Mike Huggins defends the use of such cultural artifacts in determining the place of sport in the Victorian imagination suggesting that they offer scholars new insights for determining the various meanings sport held in the period. Through reading a range of cartoons dating from 1841-1901, Huggins demonstrates the varied attitudes present towards sporting endeavor and those who undertake it (“Cartoons” 130). Echoing comments made by another sport historian, Steven W. Pope,\(^5\) he acknowledges, however, that up until the first years of the twenty-first century, studies of the history of Victorian sport have ignored such media representations, choosing to depend on more traditional sources (“Cartoons” 125).

Huggins goes on to suggest that materials such as cartoons and other, similar popular forms are key to teasing “out the meaning of the discursive sporting practices that constitute our understanding of sporting reality” (“Cartoons” 149):

> Cartoons provide us with a deeper and subtler understanding of the meanings attached to sport by readers and cartoonists during the Victorian

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period . . . They can carry multiple and complex meanings, and are often capable of being read simultaneously as either radical or conservative, as satirically mocking the new sporting aspirations of the Victorians or sympathetically endorsing them . . . Such material operated dialectically both as a central indicator of the broader transformation of sport, and as itself one of the agents of change. (“Cartoons” 130)

In arguing for the value of such popular materials to the enterprise of determining the meaning of sport to the Victorians, Huggins is, perhaps, not saying anything that literary scholars have not heard before. Through his advocacy, however, he is drawing attention to the absence of such analysis in the body of scholarly work that informs our understanding of how the figure of the middleclass sportsman was articulated in the nineteenth century.6 It was in reading this discussion that I was first confronted with the widespread debate that such a figure – the figure that I have termed “the sportsman” – provoked in middle-class Victorian Britain and I began to conceive of a project that would trace the representation of the sportsman not only in newspapers and periodicals, but also in other related popular culture forms such as the spectacular melodrama and magazine detective fiction.

In examining popular culture texts such as the sports journalism in daily,

illustrated, and sporting newspapers related to the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, the spectacular melodramas of Dion Boucicault, and series detective fiction published in monthly Victorian magazines, I am working to address the dearth that Huggins identifies. I argue that in discovering and cataloging the different representations of the sportsman located in these diverse cultural texts, not only do we gain a better understanding of what sport meant to middle class Victorians but also of the role such texts play in the making of meaning and the shaping of the cultural imagination in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; through examining the way in which the Victorians made the sportsman “mean” we gain a new and needed understanding of their engagement with the problems and challenges of modernity. At the same time that the sportsman was represented as a healthy hero in response to concerns about the well being of men in the fast-growing professional sphere, he was also being established as a resilient, even hybrid figure that could adapt to the often threatening new space of the city. By the end of the century, however, there was less optimism expressed about the sportsman. Rather than emphasize the way in which his sporting participation helps to cultivate that all important manly characteristic of self control, fin de siècle articulations of the sportsman show him to be a man who has lost control, either of himself and his animal urges, or to forces greater than himself, in pursuit of financial gain and commercial success; that he is only occasionally depicted as recovering some of that control suggests that going into the twentieth century, the value of the sportsman was far from stable. By the 1890s, the Victorian popular
imagination had lost some of its faith in the sportsman. In piecing together these varied views of the sportsman I posit the presence of a spectrum of meaning for this figure that prefaces our own contemporary concerns with athletes and the twenty-first-century world of sport.

In this chapter, I will identify and explicate the key scholarly conversations to which my study contributes. The first is that concerned with the value of popular culture texts to tell us something about the realities of and attitudes towards sport in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a conversation in which Huggins is only one of many participants. This is an issue that is also considered by scholars of sport literature who have only recently begun to call for a challenge to the old division of “high” versus “low” culture and to the assumptions made about the value of the latter forms in teasing out the meaning of sport. The second area of discussion, which follows on from this, is that which seeks to explore literary critical understandings of sport, the most recent of which disrupt, in different ways, the lingering formulation of sport as primarily a tool of social control. Lastly, my study of the representation of the sportsman in Victorian popular culture forms engages with scholarly work undertaken to map the contours and terrain of nineteenth and early twentieth-century masculinity. Specifically, it expands past discussions of literary manifestations of the sportsman undertaken by scholars of American sports literature by situating the figure in vital and significant historical, national, and social contexts. In order to do so, it relies on work already done on the
figure of the muscular Christian, a popular formulation of manly identity based on the religious doctrine most famously associated with Anglican minister and novelist, Charles Kingsley, as well as the findings of earlier scholarship devoted to making visible the assumptions behind masculine identity in these periods.

**The Value of Popular Culture Artifacts in Determining the Meaning of the Sportsman**

Scholars who engage in the study of American sport literature, and who have produced the one sizeable body of scholarship concerned with the representation of sport in literature, echo the call that Mike Huggins issues in his discussion of Victorian satirical sporting cartoons in *Punch* and *Ally Sloper’s Half Holiday* for the examination and inclusion of sources that have received only limited treatment up until the present time.\(^7\)

In a 2007 discussion of the possibilities of expanding the field that appears in the only

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\(^7\) In his examination of the way in which the Victorian public school influenced the development of sport, and specifically the notion of the amateur athlete, in nineteenth-century Britain, sports historian J. A. Mangan proves an early incorporator of non-traditional historical sources into his analyses, beginning with a chapter on schoolboy poetry in *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*. This analysis of the work of such poets as Henry Newbolt, John Bain, Norman Gale, and Edward Bowen has appeared in many incarnations in a variety of essay collections and journals; however, Mangan’s argument has remained essentially the same: such poetry glorified sporting participation as a means of encouraging boys to grow into soldiers of Britain and the Empire. Mangan’s discussion of the cultural work of such poetry demonstrates the same recognition as that of Huggins – that cultural, literary texts can help to trace the contours of the Victorian popular imagination – prefacing the work I undertake in the following chapters.

The scope of his study and the limits of his literary analysis, however, suggest that there is still a need for a more considered examination of such cultural texts, grounded in literary analysis. For an example of Mangan’s treatment of this subject see his examination of the work of Henry Newbolt, author of the famous sporting poem, “Vitaī Lampada” (1892) in his 1996 essay “‘Muscular, Militaristic and Manly’: The Middle-Class Hero as Moral Messenger” from *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport*. The recent monograph, *‘Manufactured’ Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality, and Militarism* (2012) collects much of this scholarship from a period of over twenty years together for the first time.
journal devoted to the subject, *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*, Michael Oriard points to the untapped resources for study located in American popular culture, such as pulp story magazines and dime novels. The conclusions he draws about the potential of such material to alter and expand our current understanding of the meaning of American sport are equally applicable to popular culture in Victorian Britain:

> The ideas that my generation absorbed about basketball and football as pastoral and anti-pastoral, basketball as freedom and boxing as constriction were a product of the post-World War II era’s formulation of American myths. Magazine fiction (like pulp fiction) tells sometimes similar but more often different stories . . . The potential richness of this vast material is exciting as well as daunting. And it remains largely untapped. (‘Wanted’ 31-32)

In language that echoes Huggins’s comments about the contribution to an understanding of sport made by studies of such artifacts as Victorian sporting cartoons, Oriard also argues for the way in which a closer consideration of the representation of sport in popular culture texts can change the way we understand the place of sport in the cultural imaginary. Oriard’s comments here follow from his discussion of the use of such sources in his study of the representation of American gridiron football in *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (1993) and *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & Daily Press* (2001). Indeed, Oriard’s understanding of the cultural work such representations perform, and the way in which they challenge previous understandings of the meaning of sport, are central to the way in which I understand the operation of
popular culture representations of the sportsman in the nineteenth century.

Evaluations such as Huggins’s and Oriard’s contrast strongly with the consensus, among scholars of American literature, that views traditional, canonical literary texts as the only texts which can tell us anything of value when considering the place of sport in the cultural imaginary. In building on the work of scholars such as Huggins and Oriard, my study demonstrates that non-canonical, popular texts – manifestations of culture that scholars such as Cocchiarale and Emmert dismiss as “facile narratives” (xxiii) – offer us a larger window into the Victorian sporting imagination, revealing the role such artifacts played in the construction of the sportsman’s web of meaning in these periods.

An early example of the tendency in scholarship on representations of sport in American literature to consciously focus on canonical literature is found in a statement taken from Robert Higgs’s Laurel and Thorn: The Athlete in American Literature (1981). Higgs makes a case for examining the way in which canonical American literary texts by writers such as Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner, represent sport, attributing to them a greater capacity for critical observations about their subject matter:

Television . . . has its limitations. It cannot tell us everything about the social and cultural significance of the athlete hero whose deeds it records in minutest detail at the time of occurrence . . . By and large, the sporting press is no more critical of what it surveys than the television industry. For the most comprehensive and pluralistic view of the athlete . . . literature is still the champion. This is not to say that literature tells the whole story either, but it does remind us of some important points – that winning is not the only thing, that victory on the playing field may often be gained at a cost too high for the general good of society. (viii)
Surprisingly, this view of the limitations on popular culture representations for making sense of sport has continued to frame some of the most recent discussions of sport literature, such as Don Johnson’s *The Sporting Muse: A Critical Study of Poetry About Athletes and Athletics* (2004) and Michael Cocchiarale and Scott D. Emmert’s *Upon Further Review: Sports in American Literature* (2004). Both claim to break new ground in the type of literature being examined and in the interpretation offered; however, underlying these claims is a persistent view of popular culture representations of sport as lesser contributions to the reconstruction of the meaning of sport in the popular imagination. As Cocchiarale and Emmert explain in their introduction, they view canonical literature as offering more depth of engagement with the sporting phenomenon than the “‘cliched’ narratives [that] glorify winners, dismiss losers, [and] celebrate the underdog” which they argue frame the representation of sport in popular culture (xvi).

While it can be argued that “‘cliched’ narratives” do not have the textual complexity of those found in canonical literature, the contribution the representations of sport found in such narratives make to a project like my own cannot be overstated. By offering a sustained examination of a complex web of changing representations of the sportsman in nineteenth-century popular culture forms, I am directly challenging this accepted dichotomy between the value of “high” and popular culture in discussions of sport literature.

In presenting such a challenge, I am consciously adopting a cultural materialist
approach and depending on an understanding of culture perhaps best articulated by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in their groundbreaking forward to *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1985). Rather than think of culture as an elite sphere constructed through value judgements, in considering Victorian popular culture representations of the sportsman, I invoke the idea of culture as “the whole system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world” (Dollimore and Sinfield viii). I accept that cultural objects such as newspapers, melodramas, and magazine short stories display in their representational capacity, the culture’s ideological structures of power; however, I also adhere to the understanding that such objects may simultaneously expose that culture’s faultlines, as Alan Sinfield discusses in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (1992).

In arguing that representations of the sportsman functioned to help Victorians understand and negotiate the developing sporting sphere, I am also responding to a larger body of scholarship from both sides of the Atlantic that works to determine the cultural function of popular artifacts in the long nineteenth century and which views cultural texts such as newspapers, popular illustrations, and popular entertainment as valuable in mapping out the terrain of the Victorian popular imagination. A key premise in this discussion is an understanding of such artifacts as more than just simply repositories of historical fact. Rather, as Peter Sinnema explains in *Dynamics of the Pictured Page*:
Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News (1998), cultural texts such as the weekly picture paper exert a dialectical influence, representing as well as constructing nineteenth-century reality. Julia Thomas makes a similar point in the course of her discussion of Punch magazine’s representation of nineteenth-century women’s fashion in Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image (2004); however, she moves beyond considering just the Victorian press to discussing the cultural function of a varied collection of artifacts including, but not limited to, paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and William Powell Frith, and illustrated fiction and poetry by writers as diverse as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Alfred Tennyson. Studies such as these, as well as work by Laurel Brake (1990; 2001; 2005; 2009), Julie Codell (2005), Marysa Demoor (2009), and others invoke a methodology perhaps most memorably elucidated by D. F. McKenzie (1999) in his description of “the sociology of texts” (McKenzie 13): they seek to explore both the artifacts of material culture and their function in society. Though the scope of such studies considers the representation of a broad range of subjects including, but not limited to, the developing rail network and increasingly complex funeral rites in nineteenth-century, there has been only a limited consideration of the way in which such popular culture texts could be used to better understand the Victorian experience of sport, of which Mike Huggins’s discussion of sporting cartoons is the prime example.⁸ In

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⁸ Huggins briefly identifies a handful of similar scholarly treatments which he claims makes up the bulk of the criticism concerned with such materials in an English context. See Alethea Melling’s “‘Ray of the Rovers’: The Working-Class Heroine in Popular Football Fiction, 1915-1925.” in The International
addressing this topical gap in the field, my study also helps to develop a more complex understanding of how such artifacts function in popular culture.

**Literary Critical Understandings of Sport**

In mapping out the ways in which the sportsman was constructed in the Victorian popular imagination in response to anxieties about urban modernity, I am building on the previous work of those scholars who have deployed literary critical analysis in an attempt to uncover the meaning of sport both in the nineteenth century and in other historical periods. Along with Michael Oriard’s work on American football, other recent literary critical treatments of the representation of sport by Gregory M. Colòn Semenza and Anthony Bateman have influenced my approach to this topic in that they argue for sport not as a merely a tool of social control, producing disciplined bodies, but rather as a site for the production of multiple meanings. My evaluation of the role that popular culture texts played in shaping the meanings attached to the figure of the sportsman in the Victorian period depends on such previous work.

From the outset, Oriard’s consideration of sport establishes American football – the game in the abstract, individual games played at key historical moments, the press coverage of these games, and other writing and other forms of media coverage – as a text

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with a set of complex narratives that, if read closely, can reveal the place the sport holds in American culture. As he states, “To consider the ‘meaning’ of football in America is thus to confront a plurality of meanings. In this, football is no different from other cultural expressions with large, diverse audiences; the actualities of this plurality are simply more apparent” (“Reading” 3-4). In establishing gridiron football as a cultural text in this manner, Oriard borrows from the work of Clifford Geertz, whose discussion of the Balinese cockfight suggests that sport operates in culture “symbolically,” “allegorically,” and as “an image, a fiction, a model, a metaphor” (Geertz 23). Through conceptualizing gridiron football in this manner, he offers a challenge to previous understandings of sport that not only assume that a game such as football holds only one meaning for a society – as Oriard states, gridiron football means different things to different people at different times – but that also figure sport as part of a mass culture that functions only to release and contain subversive energies. As Oriard explains:

I am proposing, then, that football is indeed a cultural text, that it tells a story, that this story is read differently by different groups and individuals, and that these different interpretations change through time . . . I am also proposing that the richly detailed record of sports journalism in newspapers and periodicals offers cultural critics perhaps a unique resource: a range of texts that at least bring us close to the varied and changing readings of actual audiences. The texts of popular journalism fall somewhere between totalizing allegory and the specific interpretations of a million readers. The sportswriter mediates between the athletic contest and its audience; sports writing is the text of that mediation. (“Reading” 17)

This argument about the heterogeneous and multiple meanings of sport is one that is
echoed by other scholars outside the field of American sport literature. Arguments along similar lines to Oriard’s have also been made by Semenza in *Sport, Politics, and the English Renaissance* (2003), and more recently by Bateman in *Cricket, Literature, and Culture: Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire* (2009).

In his discussion of the representation of sport in Renaissance literature and culture, Semenza, like Oriard, challenges previous arguments about the meaning of sport in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, taking issue with the prevailing belief that “sport, in the sense of athletic activities and contests, is collapsible with holiday revelry, gambling, tippling, and other carnivalesque activities,” as articulated by Leah Marcus and Peter Stallybrass, among others (Semenza 16-17). He argues for a more varied meaning of sport, by tracing its fluctuating and slippery collection of associations through the work of well-known Renaissance literary, cultural, and political figures. As he explains, his discussion will produce

[a] new definition of sport as a phenomenon as central to Renaissance conceptions of order and control as it was to fears of disorder and excess. As this last point should make clear, my book does not intend to simply reverse what has been said about sport in previous studies; the point is not to show that whereas most critics have claimed sport to be a carnivalesque activity, it was, in fact an orderly one. Instead, once I have resurrected the Renaissance conception of functional sport, I focus . . . on the unique ability of sport to represent the ideals of order as well as disorder in the Renaissance imagination. (23; original italics)

In expanding understandings of sport in the Renaissance, Semenza first recovers the idea of sport as “functional” – or regulatory – and then proceeds to read major texts of poetry
and prose in the period as demonstrative of the duality of the concept. As he notes, though Renaissance writers might use “the term ‘sport’ in reference to function and lawful activities . . . it often continued to communicate various sexual and/or socially licentious ideas” (21).

One last recent discussion of the cultural representation of sport and the sportsman that has influenced my argument for the existence of multiple, and often conflicted representations in the later Victorian period is that undertaken by Anthony Bateman in *Cricket, Literature, and Culture: Symbolising Nation, Destabilising Empire* (2009). Like Oriard and Semenza, Bateman is interested in locating a complex structure of meaning for sporting representations in English literature and culture, though in this instance he focuses specifically on representations of cricket. As Bateman explains in the first section of his argument which deals with the “literaturization” of cricket in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the representation of cricket was a cultural project focused on cataloguing and controlling the various connotations the sport held as it changed in response to the social and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution (15-16). While his argument about the increasingly conservative meaning of the sport in a British context derived from his analysis of popular and literary texts differs from the conclusions I reach in relation to the representation of the middle-class sportsman in a similar textual field, he does argue for the complexity of meaning that cricket acquires in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the cultures of former
British colonies. Like that demonstrated by Oriard and Semenza, Bateman’s understanding of the cultural representation of sport as a process of meaning-making underpins my discussion of the popular culture representation of the Victorian sportsman which appears in the chapters that follow.

**Literary Representations of the Sportsman**

Another important conversation to which my study of the representation of the sportsman in nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular culture contributes is that concerned with the way in which such representations comment on, or respond to, the sportsman figure. The existence of a spectrum of meaning related to the sportsman and the sporting sphere is something that has, to a certain degree, been recognized by literary scholars interested in sport in various capacities, but the evidence used to support the elucidation and elaboration of these various clusters of meaning has sometimes been taken out of its historical and social context; it is also a discussion that has been concerned with nineteenth-century American, not nineteenth-century British texts – as is the case with discussions of the sporting “hero” in American literature undertaken by Robert Higgs, Christian K. Messenger, and others. In establishing the spectrum of meaning associated with the figure of the sportsman in the Victorian sporting imaginary, I am not only demonstrating the complexity and variation of meaning associated with this figure, but also, in doing so, providing a new perspective on how the relationship between sporting participation and masculinity was understood in the period. Though we
now recognize the different ways in which the activities associated with being a
sportsman could have both a positive and negative impact on the men who undertook
them, the fact that the Victorians also recognized this ambiguity concerning the effects of
the sporting sphere has, until now, been overlooked by scholars.

The most sustained consideration of how literature has represented the sportsman
can be found in the early works of literary scholarship that engage with American
literature of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Laurel and Thorn: The Athlete
in American Literature* (1981), Robert Higgs elaborates the three models of athletic
heroism he argues are present in literary representations of sport, an argument he briefly
makes in the anthology and essay collection he edited with Neil D. Issacs, *The Sporting
Spirit* (1977). He advocates for the centrality of the athlete to twentieth-century American
literature and culture when he states that:

> As a popular hero, the athlete has anthropological and mythological
importance, and the values he represents are quite indicative of the tastes,
attainments, beliefs, and ideals of his society. Whenever the athlete has
prospered previously, notably in ancient Greece and Victorian England, he
has figured prominently in the literature of his time. The same is true
today, and this work is nothing more or less than an attempt to show how
the athlete has fared in modern American literary art, not as an artistic
creation, but as a symbol, in the eyes of the authors, of American culture.
(Higgs, “Laurel” ix)

If Higgs’s Apollonian hero is one who represents the perfect incarnation of the sportsman
in that he “in a different way attempts to embody or uphold some concept or code of the
unity of body and self” (“Laurel” 9), then the Dionysian and Adonian are his flawed
counterparts. The former “feels no need to conform to an Apollonian order of any sort” and is “narcissistic in that he worships his own body as an end in itself”; the latter is a more complex and intriguing figure in that he is more or less a hybrid produced of the binary of Apollo/Dionysus.

He does not kill himself on the one hand, nor does he uncritically conform on the other. He does not seek knowledge for the sake of adaptation, but knowledge for the sake of self . . . a sort of middle way between Dionysian and Apollonian or animal indulgence on the one hand and authorized forms of behaviour on the other . . . He is a divided being who reminds us that body and self must be united on the side of nature and not on the side of control and conformity as Apollo would have us believe . . . He does not conform to temporal codes on the one hand nor hedonistically indulge his body on the other. Hence he lives in a world of tension, pain, struggle, and hope. Through his revolt he reminds us of the imperfectability of man and of the hubris of those who would assume to spell out the best manner of reconciling the body and mind. (“Laurel” 11)

The multiple meanings attached to the sportsman in the Victorian sporting imaginary are in many ways underpinned by the manifestations that Higgs describes. This triptych of the sportsman, however, has limited possibilities for interpretation, as identified by Christian K. Messenger in Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction: Hawthorne to Faulkner (1981). In a similar critical spirit, Messenger elaborates on Higgs’s model of variations on the idea of the sportsman, offering in total three possible incarnations, devoid of classical references and based on the historical development of the American nation. If Higgs identified in representations of sport in American literature the figures of Apollo, Dionysus, and Adonis, then Messenger finds the School Sports Hero, the Popular Sports Hero, and the Ritual Sports Hero (Messenger xii). Rather than employing a
classical framework, Messenger chooses to define his models with different criteria and it is the first two models that resonate directly with my own study. Echoing in many ways the summary of the Apollonian hero presented by Higgs, Messenger describes the School Sports Hero, the most familiar incarnation of which is Jay Gatsby, as

a serious figure, expressing in a sober battle a more elite America, defining what the community believes through a disciplined self-restraint. The School Sports Hero defines himself through his leadership and teamwork, through his conflicting roles of brilliant individual achievement and subordinating to a larger cause . . . The School Sports Hero is, on the whole, a pious upright moralist born out of Civil War aggression and American society’s need to find continuity in peacetime preparedness for further organized activity. He thus embodies values and goals which America believes crucial to its welfare. (130)

Like the School Sports Hero, the Popular Sports Hero negotiates a relationship with ideals; however, it is a more troubled relationship:

He was physically prodigious and boldly manipulative in an environment that demanded such power and deception for his survival. His sport grew out of his work with horse, rifle, and riverboat. Gradually, the Popular Sports Hero was refined and scaled down to fit into the modern arena of industrial society where he played for a team before huge crowds . . . “Popular” sport first denotes the games and contests of the frontier and later the spectatorial pastimes of an industrial urban society. (8-9)

It is these different conceptions of the ideal and conflicted sportsman, conceptions that mark the poles at either end of the spectrum of meaning concerned with the Victorian sportsman, that my project illustrates. In the different popular texts from the period 1866-1904, the representations that one finds do not fall neatly into these archetypal characters, but rather often appear as a blend of the two or three. In fleshing out this spectrum by
discussing not only the figure of the sportsman, but the representation of the sphere in which he played, my study offers a new way to conceive of the cultural function of these representations.

**Manliness and Muscular Christianity**

In further developing our understanding of how the sportsman has been represented, building on the work of American sports literature scholars such as Higgs and Messenger, I am also depending on discussions of the relationship between men and sport found in scholarly treatments of the Victorian religious doctrine of muscular Christianity, perhaps best summed up by that well-known phrase, *mens sana in corpore sano*, or a healthy mind in a healthy body; for the muscular Christians, moral and spiritual strength was directly linked to physical health and vitality. Following on from Bruce Haley’s early work in *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (1978) which discusses the development of this school of religious thought most famously associated with the Anglican minister Charles Kingsley, scholars such as Norman Vance (1985), Donald Hall (2004), Clifford Putney (2001), David Faulkner (2004), Maureen M. Martin (2002), and Paul Puccio (1997) have worked to examine the central tenants of muscular Christianity and to chart its influence on (and incarnations in) nineteenth and twentieth-century history and literature. Of use to my discussion of the different ways in which nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular culture forms represented the figure of the sportsman is the recognition, articulated by Vance and several of his fellow scholars, that
the public reception of the muscular Christian ideal shifted as the century progressed. In *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (1985) consideration of how the muscular Christian athlete was represented in literary texts in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Vance charts a shift in opinion from the endorsement and celebration in novels such as Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) (in which “the sturdy traditions of physical manliness [are] praised for their own sake and as socially beneficially opportunities for individuals and social classes to come together in a common enthusiasm” [Vance 156]) to a more negative attitude in the years before the First World War when representations of the muscular Christians suggested that “games-playing manliness was beginning to grow threadbare” (Vance 191). Though Vance charts this shift in attitude towards the relationship of men to sport, a trajectory which informs the later work of Hall (2004), Faulkner (2004), Putney (2001) and others, it is not the prime focus of his discussion, interested as he is in tracing the development of the religious ideal across a variety of texts. In accounting for the representation of the sportsman in various Victorian popular culture forms, I am building on Vance’s work, expanding this timeline and adding to it a consideration of cultural fields other than canonical literature. Through such an examination, I trouble the idea, put forward by Vance, that in the middle to later part of the nineteenth century, the relationship between men and sport was one that was depicted culturally as universally positive.
Another recent study of manliness to which I am responding is Kelly Boyd’s *Manliness in the Boys’ Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940* (2003), which examines the role the popular culture form of the boys’ story paper – a cheap, weekly publication featuring serial short stories of sport and adventure – played in developing Victorian and modern ideas of what it meant to be a man with specific attention focused on the ideal of the muscular Christian. While there are some similarities between my study and Boyd’s we differ in the conclusions that we reach. Like Boyd, I locate in the popular culture forms I study a changing idea of the sportsman and his value for the age in which he appears; Boyd identifies three key articulations of manly identity in the periods 1855-1890, 1890-1920, and 1918-1940 in the material she studies. Boyd’s framework is useful to my study; however, the cultural work I see representations of the sportsman performing differs significantly from that which Boyd discusses. For Boyd, representations of manly men in papers as the *Boys’ Own Paper* function as mechanisms of social policing, facilitating “the control of the respectable working class” (Boyd 69). I view the cultural work of the diverse representations of the sportsman found in the press, the spectacular melodrama, and the magazine detective story as more complex than simply indoctrinating readers. Formed as they are in response to cultural anxieties that arose out of the Victorians’ engagement with modernity, these different incarnations of the sportsman figure confirm and challenge a range of discourses about men’s involvement in sport, sometimes simultaneously.
The Cultural History of Nineteenth-Century Masculinity

Part of the impetus behind Boyd’s project is that which has guided the broader study of Victorian masculine identity by scholars such as John Tosh (1991; 1999; 2002), Michael Roper (1991), David Rosen (1993), Herbert Sussman (1995), James Eli Adams (1995). As Michael Kimmel explains in his preface to *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (2005), it is the work of such scholarship “to make masculinity visible, to begin to explore how the particular historical and social definitions of masculinity have developed, from whence they have come and where they might be going” (x). It is, lastly, to this larger project as articulated by Kimmel that my project contributes.

John Tosh and Michael Roper’s essay collection, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (1991), David Rosen’s *The Changing Fictions of Masculinity* (1993), Herbert Sussman’s *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (1995), and James Eli Adams’ *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood* (1996) each offer reformulations of masculine identity based on an analysis of its representation in a variety of cultural texts. Sussman and Adams, for instance, catalogue the variety of different articulations of masculine identity in the Victorian period that depend on the notion of self-control and an ascetic outlook. In doing so, however, they provide only a limited account of the role sport played in developing the different incarnations of the masculine ideal. The figure of the sportsman is understood to function solely as an incarnation of manly control. By
establishing the spectrum of meaning associated with this sportsman through an analysis of such popular culture texts as those I discuss in the following chapters, not only does this discussion contribute to our understanding of muscular Christianity and its various interpretations in the period, but it also helps to better develop our understanding of the articulation and the reality of different incarnations of masculinity in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In exploring the way in which popular culture forms such as the press, theatre, and magazine fiction represented the sportsman in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the following chapters illustrate how this figure was shaped by fears of the modern world’s effects on the male, middle-class body. Worries about the changing nature of professional work and its environment, the temptations of the new urban leisure sphere, and the impact of commerce and technology on men influenced the creation of the sportsman in the popular imaginary. This discussion responds to several areas of scholarly inquiry: that concerned with evaluating the nature of the contribution such popular texts can make to our understanding of nineteenth and early twentieth-century sport, that interested in tracing, more broadly, the representation of sport in literature, and lastly, that focused on rendering visible normative masculine identity. The sportsman is a figure that still thrives in our own, twenty-first-century imagination and through a discussion of his appearance in the Victorian period, we can equip ourselves with tools to better understand him in his current manifestation.
Chapter 3

The Healthy, Heroic Sportsman, the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, and the Victorian Press

In the 1860s there was a widespread concern about the health of Victorian men, who, as a result of the changing professional culture of the period, were facing new challenges in establishing themselves in the public sphere. As W. J. Reader explains in *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England* (1966), this was a time when the idea of what constituted an acceptable profession broadened beyond the church, military, medicine, and law to include many different occupations such as engineering, accountancy, architecture, journalism, and surveying (153). Access routes to all professions also changed, with patronage and apprenticeships being replaced by the need for academic qualifications and success in various competitive or qualifying exams. Along with these changes, the newer professions sought legitimacy through the founding of professional associations, seeking consensus as to what constituted a professional body of knowledge, and insisting on a specific standard of conduct from members (Reader 145; 98-99; 71). Along with coping with this changing employment landscape, middle-class men often also had to cope with pursuing such endeavours in an urban environment that was unpleasant and wearing. According to
Shearer West, the nineteenth-century city was seen as a difficult setting in which to maintain both physical and moral health, as she discusses in *Fin de Siècle*:

> Using the Darwinian paradigm, writers claimed that the development of cities had raced ahead of the ability of modern man to adapt. In attempting to adapt to such overwhelming and adverse social conditions, human beings were wearing themselves out. According to some writers, the use of machines destroyed the traditional delicate balance between body and soul, and debilitated the body through its lack of use . . . The ultimate result of such unhealthy living is a decline of the species. (25)

In spite of these challenges of the changing professional and difficult urban landscapes, as John Tosh explains, an “occupation, or ‘calling’ in more elevated usage, was the nub of middle-class identity” and “men certainly had a great deal invested in doing the kind of responsible and useful work which distinguished them from the supposed idleness of the aristocracy” (“Place” 24; 34). Though it may be physically and morally damaging, in order to truly be a man, one had to work.

At the same time that this change in the professional sphere was underway, as discussed in the introductory chapter, the sporting world was also changing significantly, and as works such as Donald Walker’s *Manly Exercises* (1835; 1855) proclaim, sport was often offered up as an antidote to the damage inflicted by men’s working lives. By the 1860s, the modern sporting sphere was beginning to take shape and its place in culture, and in relation to masculine identity specifically, was being strongly debated in public discourse. The figure of the sportsman – a man who energetically took part in activities associated with the sporting sphere – was one that provided a variety of different
responses, all of which went into shaping the public discourse about men and sport, a discourse which still influences our discussion of this relationship in the twenty-first century. In this chapter I will examine the way in which the Victorian press participated in creating the multifaceted figure of the sportsman through an exploration of the coverage of one significant event in the London sporting calendar, the annual Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race, in a cross-selection of daily illustrated, and sporting newspapers.

Though it was first run in 1829, the Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race did not become an annual fixture in London’s sporting calendar until 1856. In *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872), Blanchard Jerrold describes the atmosphere of the 1870 Boat Race in a chapter titled “All London at A Boat Race”:

But the holiday was for all London: for Parliament and people, for the Heir Apparent planted in the Umpire’s boat, and for the workfolk lining the sylvan shores. Every tint and shade and film of shade of Gainsborough’s Blue Boy, was patched upon the myriads who covered the Thames Valley from Putney to Mortlake. They who had blue dresses were indeed fortunate and sported them: they who could afford to buy, bought, and were happy. Every London apprentice aired one University colour. I verily believe that the drunkard was on that day happy as he stroked his blue nose. From Hampstead to Sydenham, from Islington to Brompton, London was covered with the blues – the sardonic foreigner would say – and exactly the English way of making a holiday . . . The “little village” was completely out – even to the babies – and all were happy in the glory of fine clothes put forth in the sight of neighbours . . . Business the most important was put aside. The Land Bill was as far away from men’s minds as Magna Charta or the Bill of Rights. The Great Boat-Race of the year had grown gradually to this startling exodus of the million-voiced city. (50)
Though in some ways it looked back to the seasonal folk festivals that preceded it, the Boat Race was very much a public spectacle born of the host of social, political, and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. As Huggins notes, “it was a social event with ritualised and theatrical aspects, a cultural and communal expression of pleasurable leisure” (“Sport” 85). It is because of this place of the Boat Race in the Victorian sporting imaginary, noted by both nineteenth-century contemporaries and twenty-first-century scholars, that I have chosen to focus on exploring its representation in the Victorian press and the connections between that representation and nineteenth-century concerns about male health and well-being.

The choice of the 1869 Boat Race was not arbitrary. Throughout the 1860s, this amateur rowing event grew in size and importance, as my larger investigation of the coverage of the Boat Race over this decade demonstrated. For example, in 1860, The Times published four brief discussions of the event, followed by one column of analysis following the Race, which was a Cambridge victory. By 1869, however, as the increase in quantity and quality of coverage in The Times represents, the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race had become a large matter of public interest and debate. Between February and April, 1869, The Times published thirteen articles concerning the Boat Race and, unlike the coverage earlier in the decade, many of these pieces were substantial, including a lengthy editorial on Thursday, 18 March 1869. By the end of the decade, as the volume of coverage indicates, there was a sizable increase the public’s interest in this
event. The choice of the 1869 Boat Race as a focus for this chapter is also related to the significance this specific Race holds in nineteenth-century amateur rowing history. As the final victory in a string of nine Boat Race successes for the Dark Blues, it marks a period in the Race’s history where it was dominated by the strength and style of the Oxford University Boat Club’s specific style of rowing. The continued success of the OUBC, and the continued defeat of their rivals at Cambridge, resulted in sustained debates about the merits of the two boat club’s training and rowing styles, a matter that by 1869 began to occupy a notable place in the sporting pages of both the daily and the penny sporting press, providing ample material for scholarly investigation.

By focusing on the 1869 Boat Race in this chapter, I am also able to illustrate the unique relationship between the new, urban sporting sphere and the penny sporting press, a sub-genre of newspaper that began with the arrival of The Sporting Life in 1859 and The Sportsman in 1865. As both Tony Mason and Mike Huggins have pointed out in their respective studies of newspapers and nineteenth-century sport, there was a “close relationship that existed between the development of British sport . . . and the expansion of published comment about it” (Mason, “Sport” 297). Recently, scholars such as Matt McIntire (2007) in his discussion of the transnational representation of cricket and baseball in the British and American press have begun to investigate this relationship;
however, there is still significant work to be done. Along with fleshing out one of a
variety of incarnations of the figure of the sportsman in the nineteenth century and
assessing the way in which this healthy and heroic model was in part articulated in
response to period concerns about men, health, and work, this discussion will also further
demonstrate the value of cultural artifacts such as the products of sports journalism in
articulating the larger narrative of sport’s development in the nineteenth century.

The newspapers discussed in this chapter were selected as representative of a
cross-section of publications from the period and as illustrative of three significant press
genres: the daily newspaper, the illustrated paper, and the sporting paper. In the first
category, The Times and The Daily News are illustrative of the practice of daily sports
reporting in the 1860s, being two of the leading dailies in that decade (Altick 355). The
two newspapers are illustrative of different political standpoints, with The Times under
the editorship of John Thaddeus Delane being the “champion of middle-class opinion”
(Wood 627) and The Daily News, under the editorship of Thomas Walker and Frank
Harrison Hill, representative of the views of the Victorian Liberal party (Fox-Bourne
271; Kofron 158). Indeed, the late 1860s were an interesting time for The Daily News as

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9 One of the reasons for this dearth of scholarship on the penny sporting press is the practical difficulty
involved in working with the material. While complete runs of The Sporting Life and The Sportsman exist,
and Bell’s Life in London has recently been digitized in Gale Cengage’s 19th Century UK Periodicals Series
1: New Readerships database, the printers’ and publishers’ records of all three papers, which would tell a
great deal about the day to day running and organization of the papers as well as their relationship to their
readers, were destroyed during World War II when the Oldhams Press building was bombed (Mason,
“News” 169).
its descent in price from 3d to 1d in 1868 helped to significantly boost its readership as did changes to the paper brought about by Harrison Hill (Fox Bourne 272). The Illustrated London News is representative of the genre of illustrated, often weekly, papers and is widely-regarded as the premier example of this genre; as Brian Maidment notes, the ILN appealed to a primarily middle-class, even domestic, audience (Maidment, “Illustrated” 302). The sporting press is in part represented by established titles, such as Bell’s Life in London, which, while aimed at a lower-class audience, was read across the class spectrum, being “something of a national institution, the premier, indeed unique, sporting paper, without which a gentleman’s Sunday was incomplete” (Richards and Milne 47; Mason, “News” 169). From its inception in 1822 up until 1859, Bell’s was the one sporting paper of note, and it served as the forerunner and model for the crop of penny sporting papers that were to emerge in the 1860s. Following the abolition of Stamp Duty in 1855 and the repeal of the Paper Duty in 1861, others began to emerge. It is with these penny titles that this chapter is largely concerned. The Penny Bell’s Life and Sporting News was first published in 1859 and as a result of a suit brought against it by Bell’s Life in London, it soon changed its name to The Sporting Life (Mason, “News” 170). The Sportsman was first published in 1865, and along with The Sporting Life, such penny papers presented a significant challenge to the longevity of their older, more established competitor, providing as they did a broad range of coverage of sports old and new, for a cheaper price (Smith and McIntyre 595). In constructing the figure of the
healthy, heroic sportsman, such publications depended on certain strategies of representation, which I will explore in more detail in the following pages. Along with directly connecting the sport of rowing and its participants to both classical and English models of heroism, the coverage of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race in the press of the period also emphasizes the physical and moral health of its participants at the same time that it situates those participants in a specific social and cultural landscape through both verbal and visual techniques. That the sportsman could be considered healthy and heroic was not, however, something to be easily assumed. As debates in the Victorian press about the relationship between men and sport in the 1860s demonstrate, an active strategy of representation was necessary in order to establish the sportsman as such.

To look to the press to ascertain the way in which the sportsman is represented in the Victorian imagination is to recognize the role the press played both in mediating these debates about health, work, and masculinity, and in constructing this figure. In many ways, the pages of such newspapers as those listed above provided a public forum where the relationship between men and sport was illustrated, debated, and questioned. As Matthew Rubery (2009) notes in his discussion of the rise of the newspaper and its effect on the Victorian novel, in the 1860s, after the newspaper had finally been freed from the system of taxation that hindered access, Victorian England became a society defined by the newspaper (Rubery 6; Eliot 48). By the time Leonard Courtney of The Daily Telegraph coined the term “newspaperized” in 1901, readers were inundated with choice
in a flooded market: “Morning papers, evening papers, mid-week papers, week-end papers, magazines, containing newspapers articles . . . in the club, in the railway carriage, or tram car, [people] are always reading or talking of what they have just read” (Courtney 365). The body of scholarship concerning the Victorian press, of which Rubery’s The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News (2009) is one of the most recent additions, has long sought to throw off the identification of newspapers as merely repositories of historical fact. Following groundbreaking work done by Michael Wolff, J. Don Vann, Rosemary VanArsdel, Lucy Brown, and others from the 1970s to the 1990s, recent studies have worked to further develop the constructivist function of newspapers and apply it to a variety of publications and issues. Laurel Brake, in Print in Transition, 1850-1910: Studies in Media and Book History (2001), and in her introduction with Marysa Demoor to the collection The Lure of the Illustration in the Nineteenth Century: Picture and Press (2009), Peter Sinnema, in Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News (1998), and Clare Horrocks, in an article for the Victorian Periodicals Review, have all argued for an understanding of the Victorian press as a “single discursive practice, active in the production of truth(s), and engaged in a complex array of other discourses at the mid-nineteenth century” (Sinnema 2). It is this understanding of newspapers as active in the production of cultural discourse that I will explore in this chapter with specific attention
to the way in which a range of newspapers helped to construct the figure of the healthy and heroic sportsman.

“A seed sown”: F. C. Skey and the Boat Race Controversy

One incarnation of the more general debate about men’s health that was occurring in the middle part of the nineteenth-century in part as a response to the growing and changing nature of sport, was that which was played out in the pages of The Times in October of 1867. In a letter to the editor on 10 October, then president of the Royal College of Surgeons, F. C. Skey wrote a letter voicing his concern about the potentially damaging effects on university men of participation in the annual Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race. Skey argued that during both the training program and the race itself, the level of effort required and the amount of energy expended could damage men’s health beyond repair. Skey’s principle worry was about the way in which such participation could enact detrimental long-term health effects:

I venture to assert that the University boat race as at present established is a national folly . . . it involves a draught on the muscular powers of the gentlemen engaged in it more or less injurious to their future health, some temporarily, some permanently . . . The evil, should it occur, is not immediate, but remote. It is but a seed sown. It may or may not germinate, but that it does occasionally, I will not say how frequently, develope [sic] itself into a formidable tree, neither I nor others entertain a doubt. (9)

The image that Skey uses to illustrate his concern is a telling one. Rather than oarsmen being likened to the famed English oak, they are characterized here as having within them the “seed” of future ill health. In choosing such an image, Skey is not only drawing
on the language of the period for the threat posed to men by venereal disease, but also on contemporary discussions about ideas of hereditary degeneracy. The threat posed by over-exertion in rowing, according to Skey, has the potential to endanger both the mental and physical health of a generation of young men.

Skey's concerns about the possible damage sustained through participation in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race elicited many different responses from a variety of quarters. In the most immediate sense, numerous letters of support or rebuttal appeared in response to Skey in the pages of *The Times* throughout October of 1867, along with the cautious and considered editorial which appeared on 15 October. Skey's comments, which he defended in a second letter to *The Times* published on 21 October, were, however, themselves part of a much larger debate in Victorian society about the effect – whether positive or negative – of sport on men. Following the debate opened by Skey's letter, in 1869 John Edward Morgan began gathering material that would eventually be published in 1873 as *University Oars: Being a Critical Enquiry into the After Health of the Men Who Rowed in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-Race*, a work which presented in an edited format the responses of over 250 past participants in the Boat Race detailing their past and current states of health. Morgan cites Skey as one of his influences for undertaking such a study and boasts that his “statistics are I believe calculated to dispel all . . . gloomy forebodings, and to show that the hardy disciples of the Isis and the Cam
may fairly dispute the palm of health and longevity with their less active commiserators” (xiii).

Unlike Morgan, some respondents echoed Skey's comments about the possible dangers of sport to young men. In a letter published in *The Times* on 30 October, 1867 and signed “Cornelia,” one of Skey's respondents addresses not simply the decline in young men's physical health, but rather the laxity of their moral health brought about by their involvement in the world of sport. “Cornelia” outlines the typical response of the young men she knows who have “gone in for rowing” when faced with the prospect of choosing a profession:

[A]fter Oxford comes the question, what profession do you fancy, Church, army, or navy? “Certainly not the first, as I had not time at Oxford to think about the many views that are held there, and I could not well smoke as a clergyman, and without that necessary quietus I should die; as for army or navy the 'exams' are so devilish hard I should have no chance.” So as these energetic youths must live and earn their own bread they are then sent to be “crammed” at an expense of many hundred pounds to their parents, and the 200l. Or 300l. a year previously spent for about 16 years on their education is, like many modern speculations – a dead loss. I know a young man who decided, after a public school and Oxford life, that he should like to go to India . . . The cramming was very severe, but he passed for the Indian Civil Service, and great joy it was to his poor parents and great surprise to himself. Then came the medical examination. “I am sorry I can't pass you, Sir, your heart is singed.” “That is not possible,” said the kind-hearted master of his school, “this boy was seven years here, never ill, one of our best 11, and one of the first at football.” He was then too old for army and navy, not fit for a navvy, without money for trade. So much for modern education. (11)
“Cornelia's”

account of the young man who goes in for sport while in public school and
at university contrasts his supposed energy with his flippancy – he “could not well smoke
as a clergyman” – and the evidence of his lack of application to his studies while at
Oxford. This lack of moral fibre is then linked to the example of physical degeneracy
provided by the young man who desires to join the Indian Civil Service. The negative
physical and moral effects of sport on young men, “Cornelia” suggests here, have far-
reaching consequences, for not only will the still-expanding British Empire suffer from a
lack of healthy men to staff colonial outposts, but the structures of power within England
are also in danger. A young sporting man from Oxford is fit for neither the older
professions of the church, army, or navy, nor the newer professions gaining legitimacy in
this period; indeed, he is not even physically healthy enough to engage in manual labour.

This combination of physical and moral degeneration is later echoed by Wilkie
Collins, the well-known author of such works of sensation fiction as The Woman in White
(1860) and The Moonstone (1868), who draws on Skey's comments in the preface to his
1870 novel Man and Wife in order to frame the character of all-round athlete and
attempted wife-murderer Geoffrey Delamayn. Collins establishes that Delamayn is the
embodiment of his investigation of the “connection between the recent unbridled

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10 The pseudonym chosen by the author of this letter invoke the figure of the classical devoted mother,
Cornelia (100 BCE), whose sons, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and Gaius Sempronius Gracchus (the
“Gracchi”) are supposed to have benefitted greatly from her care in educating them. Susan Dixon’s 2007
biography of Cornelia, Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi, traces her representation as an excellent mother
who took pride in her sons and exerted notable influence over them in a variety of classical sources.
development of physical cultivation in England, and the recent spread of grossness and brutality among certain classes of the English population” (6). As evidenced by Skey's original letters and the varied responses they generated, throughout the latter half of the 1860s, Victorian society was very much concerned about and often alarmed at the effect that extensive participation in sport could have on young men.¹¹ In responding to this debate, the figure of the sportsman as it is constructed in the press coverage of the 1869 Boat Race is established as one that signifies both physical health and the equally, if not more, important quality of heroism. This is perhaps most evident in the way such representations invoked established classical and English models of heroism in describing the Boat Race and its participants.

**Classical and English Heroes**

One of these strategies used in the Victorian press’s construction of the healthy and heroic figure of the sportsman in its coverage of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race was the invocation of both classical and recent historical events, as well as other significant English cultural texts, as allegories to explain the nature of the race and the

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¹¹ It was not only Skey and “Cornelia” who wrote letters to *The Times* lamenting the negative effect of rowing on young University men. The sentiments they put forward were echoed by other letter writers: “Father of a University Oarsman” recounts the rapid decline in his son’s health following a program of strenuous exercise and “M.H.R.” and “Moderation” also contribute similar anecdotes in their 1867 letters to the editor, along with comments by “Broad Blue,” “Number 4,” “A Sexagenarian,” letter-writers signing themselves “P.P Pennant,” and “W. Russell Griffiths,” and F. Willan, the President of the Oxford University Boat Club.
men's participation in it. Borrowing from key events in English history such as the Duke of Wellington's defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and famed naval heroes such as Lord Horatio Nelson, the Boat Race coverage in *The Times* and *The Daily News* establishes Cambridge oarsmen as distant kinsman of these figures; editorials in these papers and others such as *The Sporting Life* also link the Boat Race participants with both classical and literary figures. Though none of these representations directly counters the charges of the potentially dangerous effects of rowing in the Boat Race, they do work to establish the effort the oarsmen expend on the Thames as heroic by likening them to models that carry a significant cultural weight.

In an article that appeared in *The Times* on 2 March 1869, Cambridge is celebrated for choosing once again to face their Dark Blue rivals, even after the history of eight consecutive defeats: “[N]otwithstanding a long series of defeats sufficient to discourage all but the most resolute Englishmen, Cambridge has again and again sent up a crew to Putney to do battle for the University, undismayed by previous ill-fortune, and determined to deserve, if not command, a victory” (4). Praising Cambridge for their willingness to return to the contest even when hope of victory is slim, the language here casts the Cambridge crew in a martial mold. They are “resolute” men who are heading not to a sporting contest, but to “do battle,” and like English heroes of old they will “command a victory.” While this 2 March *Times* article does not directly reference any specific historical victory, the language is evocative of previous English military
victories, perhaps the most widely known of which was the Duke of Wellington's defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. These allusions are made more directly in a *Daily News* editorial of 17 March that not only draws on English military history, but also on classical history to underscore the heroism of the Cambridge crew:

Cambridge has the memory of eight successive defeats to rouse her. The gods know no nobler sight, said the ancients, than a brave man struggling with adversity. We Englishmen, like the fabled tenants of Olympus, have a sympathy with often defeated men. Nothing so much rouses our enthusiasm as to see the vanquished return again and again to the encounter, as though forgetful of defeat. And Englishmen never fight better than when they thus ignore disaster. “Those Englishmen,” said NAPOLEON in feigned contempt, “cannot tell when they are beaten” . . . Such ignorance is our pride; and the Cambridge men, who if aquatic oracles are to be trusted, have come up to London for their ninth defeat, will row all the better for the consciousness that they are enacting the part of gallant Englishmen. (5)

Asserting first and foremost the element of the English character that celebrates the efforts of the underdog, *The Daily News* editorial likens the willingness of Cambridge to return the challenge of the Boat Race year after year to the actions of the British army when facing Napoleon, refusing to give in to what looked to be certain defeat. Foretelling a possible loss for Cambridge, the editorial asserts that though they may not gain the victory they so desire, they can still maintain a higher sense of pride as their actions will continue to be viewed through this national lens as “gallant.” As with the earlier article from *The Times*, rowing is likened to military activity and through this connection becomes a pursuit of heroic proportions, even if it ends in defeat.
Similar allusions are made in *The Sporting Life* in an editorial published on March 17:

We may apply to Cambridge VIRGIL's words on a similar occasion – possunt quia posse videntur. In any case, Cambridge will owe much to Oxford. Like the Romans, whose naval triumphs resulted from lessons learnt from their antagonists, the Cantabs have not disdained the assistance and advice of the celebrated oarsman and still more celebrated “coach” who has so often led the Oxonians to victory . . . At all events, Cambridge has tried hard and bravely, and be the issue what it may, we hope never to see the year when the gallant Light Blue be without representatives to struggle with Oxford for the Blue Riband of the Thames. (2)

Echoing many of the allusions made in previously discussed examples, *The Sporting Life*’s editorial not only invokes the language of battle, but also of chivalry: we are told the Light Blues are “gallant” like medieval knights, but the references upon which it most depends are those to the Greco-Roman tradition. Translated as “They can win for it seems they can win” (1.231; original italics), the choice of quotation from Book V of Virgil's *Aeneid* links the actions of the Cambridge oarsmen with classical models of heroism and manliness, likening the upcoming Boat Race to that which takes place between the boats captained by Cloanthus, Mnestheus, Gyas, and Sergestus during the athletic contests Aeneas organizes to commemorate his father. This classical heroism is further emphasized when it discusses the choice Cambridge has made to engage George Morrison, former celebrated Oxford oar, and now a well-known and respected coach. Through likening Cambridge's position with Morrison to that of the Romans learning from past failures with various aquatic antagonists, the reader is invited to place the Light
Blues in a long line of willing naval men, including that most famed of English naval heroes, Lord Horatio Nelson. As with the links that other items in the press make between Cambridge's willingness to meet Oxford and the “gallant” English attitude towards war, these attempts to associate Boat Race participants with figures from both English and classical history work to reinforce in the reader's mind a vision of the sportsman as a heroic figure in both classical and English economies of understanding.

If the coverage of the 1869 Boat Race in newspapers drawn from both the daily and the sporting press was indebted to the use of cultural and historic allusions to establish it as the environment for heroes, then it could also be said to draw upon references to English literary works – namely those by Shakespeare – as a way of further underscoring the participants’ heroism; in doing so, such representations also link this heroic sportsman with the English national character. The first of these references comes in a 20 January article that appeared in The Sporting Life addressing the question of whether or not Cambridge will decide to return the annual challenge offered to them by Oxford, thus ensuring a Boat Race for 1869. Noting that George Morrison has arrived to begin coaching the Cambridge crew, The Sporting Life assures its readers that it is only a matter of time before the issue is settled: “We understand that lodgings have been taken for Mr. Morrison, and that as soon as the question 'To be or not to be?' is settled he will again be heard and seen on the river's bank” (3). In using this line from Act III, scene i of Hamlet, The Sporting Life hints at annoyance with the lack of a firm commitment from
Cambridge. In continuing undecided as to whether or not they will meet Oxford's challenge, the Light Blues are inviting comparisons with one of the greatest figures of uncertainty – and thus compromised masculinity – in English literature. Unlike the previous allusions made to martial heroes and Greco-Roman history, The Sporting Life's invocation of Hamlet for the first time registers a questioning of the supposed gallant heroism of the Cambridge crew.

This criticism is, however, dispelled later in The Sporting Life's coverage of the 1869 Boat Race through another reference to the works of Shakespeare, this time Henry IV, Part I, in the 17 March editorial. The editorial acknowledges the importance of the meeting between Oxford and Cambridge in the greater history of the event when he states, “This afternoon Fate will decide whether Oxford is to score a ninth successive victory, or Cambridge this year gather laurels in turn, and “pluck up drowned honour by the locks!” (2). In Act I, Scene ii these lines are spoken by the character of Hotspur who is questioning the possible ascent of Prince Hal, later Henry IV, to the throne. Rather than celebrating the supposedly natural connection between kingship and honour, Hotspur implies that such characteristics can simply be “plucked” and added to one's public face so as to appear worthy. Indeed, Hotspur's speech concludes with the lines “So that he doth redeem her thence might wear/Without corrival, all her dignities:/But out upon this half-faced fellowship!” (Shakespeare I. 204-208). Though it is unlikely that the choice of quotation from Henry IV, Part I is meant to cast a questioning eye over Cambridge's
quest for a Boat Race victory, it nonetheless allies the Light Blues with the marginal character of Hotspur who, in *Henry IV, Part I*, presents an unsuccessful challenge to the sitting king in much the same way that Cambridge will go on to unsuccessfully challenge Oxford, the reigning monarchs of the Thames. As with the other kinds of allusions made in the Victorian press' representation of the 1869 Boat Race, these references to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Henry IV, Part I* remind readers that the actions of the two crews on the Thames are strong examples in a long heroic tradition.

**Individual Examples of Heroic, Healthy Sportsmen**

Another way in which the Victorian press worked to construct the figure of the sportsman as both heroic and healthy was through a singling out of individual men involved in the 1869 Boat Race as living examples; whereas the classic and literary invocations emphasize the heroic nature of the men’s actions, this discussion of individual participants – namely the Cambridge substitute oarsman, John Still – links this notion of heroic action to the kind of moral fortitude described by the popular, nineteenth-century idea of “pluck.” By pointing out flesh and blood heroes from among the participants, the press succeeded further in suggesting that those involved in the Boat Race represented strong examples of the manly identity that comes with participation in the sporting world. Indeed, in its 17 March editorial, *The Daily News* argues that more than any other sport, rowing cultivates “pluck” in its participants, a decidedly English quality:
In strength and in the will to dare and endure [other sports] are, no doubt, as equal as may be; but what we are all interested in is that the chosen heroes of aquatic strife should know their mettle, their endurance, in fine their pluck. There is nothing like a boat-race for testing this quality. In the cricket-match a quick eye and a ready hand make up for the want of more sterling qualities; in the rifle match or fencing-bout, steadiness of nerve, which is quite another thing from pluck, may serve all purposes. Even in athletic sport, pluck is not largely called into action. But in the boat-race it is all essential. (5)

Other sports, *The Daily News* acknowledges, require of their participants a demonstration of qualities such as “a quick eye” and a “steadiness of nerve,” both important attributes for a manly individual. However, as the language here suggests, often the sports that require these attributes also have ways in which individuals can “make up for the want of more sterling qualities.” Rowing is thus presented as the one sport in which displays of heroism can be guaranteed to be authentic, for unlike cricket, target sports, or fencing, there is nothing in rowing that can compensate the lack of “pluck,” or if the word is traced back to its original meaning as “the heart, liver, lungs, and other viscera of an animal” (OED), courage. As evidenced by the language used in the coverage by *The Daily News*, the Victorian press valourized specific participants in the Race, emphasizing the way in which these men exemplified the sportsman. One individual stands out from coverage of the 1869 Boat Race: John Still, the recent president of the Cambridge University Boat Club, and a man who agreed to fill a last-minute vacancy only days before the race on 17 March. In the coverage of the Race, Still is marked out as
embodying heroic qualities as well as providing for Cambridge the model of a healthy oarsman to carry forward into the future.

Following the illness and eventual withdrawal of P. H. Mellor from the position of seven seat on 14 March, three days before the Race, Still, an occasional substitute and past member of the Cambridge University Boat Race crew from 1866-1868, volunteered to take up the vacant seat. In working to construct Still as the consummate heroic and healthy sportsman, the Victorian press echoes other popular assessments of the oarsman that envision him as exemplary. In Record of the University Boat Race 1829-1883 (1884), a contemporary account of the history of the Boat Race, George Treherne and John Goldie underscore the “pluck” that informed Still's willingness to help his former crewmates: “[Still] came manfully to the rescue, and arrived that same afternoon in time to do a short paddle in a snowstorm before dinner” (126). This assessment is underscored again in Treherne and Goldie's account of his performance during the Race itself:

Luckily, Mr. Still was in much better condition than most men would have been under such circumstances; but of course he was not able to do himself full justice at such a very short notice. However, he astonished every one by the manner in which he worked, and still more by the style in which he kept up his swing and form in the race, after his condition had failed him. He had been gaining in strength and growth ever since he first figured in a University crew, and his impromptu performance on this, his last appearance, showed how fortunate Oxford were in not having him opposed to them in training. (126)

It is this characterization of Still that is repeated in the press coverage of the Boat Race. Along with celebrating Still for his willingness to step in at the last minute and save the
honour of his university, it is also pointed out to readers that his health is such that it allows such spontaneous participation. Indeed, the emphasis on Still's continuing physical health is only further emphasized by his own admission in John Morgan's University Oars that, “I may safely say that as yet I have felt no bad effects whatever from my rowing; but on the contrary, consider it to be the source of much of the good health I now enjoy” (280). It is this combination of a celebration of Still's physical and moral health that runs throughout the press coverage of the Race. Responding indirectly to the concerns as to the possible negative effect on a man's health and morality that were voiced by those with an anti-sport bias, depictions of Still in the press establish him as a man who not only performs according to a manly standard, but who is also able to draw on the strength because it has been maintained by participation in sport. Some concern is expressed in a 15 March account of the crew's training in The Daily News as to Still's physical fitness for the Race, but it is established early on that though he has not followed the same program of training for the upcoming race, nonetheless there are within latent reserves of health and strength upon which he might draw:

[Still] is a thorough fine oarsman, with great power, having weighed 12st 11 lb after severe training in the University race last year. Although he is stated to be in tolerably good condition he has not been training, and there is no time to think of that now. The crew went out twice with him late in the afternoon with an interval of half an hour between and rowed up to Hammersmith and down on the ebb, at 38 and 39 strokes per minute. The boat went fast and well, and it could scarcely be discerned that there was a new hand in her so well timed was the work . . . They retain that fine grip of the water at the beginning of the stroke with all their original power. (2)
Though *The Daily News* is quick to point out that Still has “not been training, and there is no time to think of that now,” it also emphasizes his “great power” and “good condition.” Further celebration of Still's healthy state is revealed in the comment that the entry of a new man into the crew was “scarce [to] be discerned” in that the crew was able to row through the course with “all their original power.” Readers are left with no doubt as to Still's capabilities, or his continuing physical health. A similar sentiment is expressed in the 16 March account of training in *The Daily News* that balances its criticism of Still's lack of training – “the new man comes to the contest without adequate training [and this] is sufficient to affect very largely the amount of work he is able to do” (5) – with a hypothesis as to why Still was not included in original plans for the race: “We believe that, as far as mere oarsmanship is concerned, the change is not for the worse, and that the only reason Mr. Still did not originally form part of the crew consisted in the fact that he was of standing somewhat above that to which the crew are usually . . . limited” (5). If Still's skill will eventually prove an asset to the Cambridge crew, then so too will his determination to see the race through to the end without letting down his fellow oarsmen. Indeed, *The Daily News* expresses some concern that in a desire to do his duty, Still may possibly draw on reserves of fortitude to the possible temporary injury of his physical health. On 16 March, it cautions:

> It is, of course, unlikely that [Still] will be in sufficiently good condition to row his best and hardest over the whole course. But, as a veteran oarsman, he is likely to do good work from beginning to end. In fact, it is rather for himself than for the crew that we should be disposed to feel anxious; since
he may be led to despise the influence of the want of training and so run
the risk of over-exerting himself. (5)

It is suggested here that though Still will not be working to his highest possible physical
standard, previous experience as an oarsman has provided him with the fortitude to
respond to the demands of the race in a manner that may discharge his duty, but do so at
possible expense to his physical health. This willingness to do so is cast here as a
sacrifice worth celebrating. Though the press may acknowledge Still's current lack of
training in the weeks and months leading up to the Race, it suggests that there is within
the man a latent physical strength, continuing health, and morality, not to mention a
practiced skill stemming from previous experience, that will make him an asset
nonetheless.

In spite of the faith in Still expressed by the coverage of his replacement of
Mellor at the last possible moment by The Daily News, this event was not one that met
with universal celebration; yet even in these moments of doubt registered in the Victorian
press, the construction of Still as an exemplary sportsman figure survives. As is
evidenced in part by The Daily News coverage, there was some question of whether or
not Still was physically able – a question asked most directly by Bell's Life in London in
their response to the news of Mellor's illness. However, even in this registering of
uncertainty concerning Still's physical fitness, the reader is left in no doubt as to his
moral strength. In a post-race analysis published on 20 March, Bell's Life in London
acknowledges:
Though too high praise cannot be awarded to Mr Still, both for his 
promptitude and self-sacrifice in coming forward to fill the vacant thwart 
in the emergency, as well as for the indomitable pluck he displayed 
throughout the whole race – about as trying an ordeal as could well be 
imagined for a man who had scarcely handled an oar for a twelvemonth – 
it is, nevertheless, impossible to ignore the important difference one 
untrained man, more particularly when occupying such a responsible place 
as No. 7, must necessarily have made in an eight over a four-and-a-half- 
mile course. (6)

Though Bell's warns of the possible negative effects Still's presence might have had on 
the speed of the Cambridge boat, it nevertheless reassures readers that Still has within 
him the necessary heroic qualities of “self-sacrifice” and “pluck” to see him through the 
ordeal of the race. The majority of the coverage, however, was less cautious in its praise 
of Still's efforts both in taking Mellor's place in the boat and during the race itself.

On 17 March, The Sporting Life presented a striking contrast between Still and the 
man he replaced, P. H. Mellor. 12 Though The Sporting Life does not dismiss or disdain 
Mellor's efforts it is implied that his withdrawal due to illness demonstrates an absence of 
the stronger qualities of character to be found in a man like Still:

MR. STILL's name has frequently figured in our columns, and his 
excellence as an oarsman is incontestable. Had he in the first instance 
resumed his place of last year at No. 7, a general feeling of satisfaction

12 It is perhaps indicative of exactly the extreme nature of the discourses circulating about the damage 
caused by participation in the Boat Race that Mellor's absence from the Cambridge crew three ignited 
rumours of his death. The Sporting Gazette notes in its March 20 report on the Race that “a painful rumour 
got afloat in the City that Mr Mellor had died on the previous evening and that in consequence of such an 
untoward event the race would not be rowed. The rumour turned out to be a mere canard” (201; original 
italics). Though the cause for Mellor's absence was confirmed to be quinsy, from which he recovered, as 
indicated in The Sporting Gazette's report of the rumour, this desire to attribute Mellor's absence to his 
untimely demise perhaps indicates just how prevalent anti-sport sentiment was in the period.
would have hailed his acceptance of that important post . . . How far MR. MELLOR fulfilled the necessary condition is now beside the question. He is 'on the shelf' and it remains for us to canvas the prospects of his successor. Were it “STILL versus MELLOR,” the plaintiff would certainly obtain the verdict. (2; upper case in original)

Along with establishing Still's reputation from past seasons as a Cambridge competitor, 

*The Sporting Life* furthers the sense of judgement through the invocation of legal language, establishing Still and Mellor as the plaintiff and the defendant in a legal case, ostensibly concerning who is the more manly of the two possible seven seats. Acting as judge, *The Sporting Life* awards in favour of Still with the convention of typesetting which renders both men's names in upper-case letters indicating their larger than life stature in the pages of the press. Still's heroism is further emphasized by *The Sporting Life* when it provides for its readers an account of what will be required of him during the race:

> It is no exaggeration to say that No. 7 is at least of equal importance with any seat in the boat. A skillfull [sic] idler in the bows may rest himself . . . whereas, on the hard and continuous labour of “seven” and “stroke” the “go” of every eight-oar is essentially dependent . . . Can flesh and blood and arms and lungs stand it? And yet, if the Light Blue is to be to the fore, the natural man must for once be iron-clad; he must have sinews of brass and bellows of leather, for Cambridge cannot carry a “passenger” and win. The pluck of the Cantabs is apparently not favoured by Dame Fortune. At any rate, in their case the wheel seems to have lost all power of revolution. (2)

That Still should attempt to fill this post is laudable, especially as, according to *The Sporting Life*, it requires physical attributes beyond the pale of human possibility. In an interesting invocation of the language of technology and manufacture, *The Sporting Life*
suggests that the man who will choose to replace Mellor must exhibit physical capabilities akin to those of an automaton. Far from simply requiring a strong and healthy man, if they are to successfully face down any challenge offered to them by Oxford, Cambridge will need a rower of mechanical proportions. Whereas in other areas of popular culture in the period the idea of athlete as machine is sometimes invoked to emphasize the danger that such activity poses to the health of sporting man\(^\text{13}\), here, The Sporting Life invokes this model to celebrate the super-human qualities of the rower, and to suggest that by taking up this position in the Light Blue boat only days before the race, Still is undertaking a feat worthy of praise, regardless of the ultimate outcome.

In the pages of The Daily News, Bell's Life in London, and The Sporting Life, John Still is established as the hero of the hour for his willingness to replace the ill P. H. Mellor in the days leading up to the 1869 Boat Race. The terms of Still's heroism are clear and articulated in such a way as to dispel the negative connotations potentially associated with the Boat Race. Though it is acknowledged that Still is an untrained addition to the crew, and thus might not be fully the oarsman needed, readers are reminded of both his physical and moral fitness for the role, with the latter characteristic being especially emphasized through discussions of Still's “pluck.” Through its

\(^{13}\) For instance, see the discussion of Arthur Morrison's series detective story featuring the unscrupulous Horrace Dorrington, “The Affair of the 'Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Ltd'” in Chapter 6; Morrison provides a description cyclists riding on a man-made track that draws attention to the way in which their bodies have become like the 'machines' they ride.
representation of Still, the Victorian press constructs the figure of the sportsman as one associated with physical health and the characteristics of heroism that make up ideas of moral health, a construction that is only further underscored in the post-race analysis provided by The Daily News editorial column of 18 March:

Muscle was king yesterday. The talk was of feats of strength; the anticipations were all centred on the staying power or the training of the crews . . . Everyone felt that Cambridge was defeated, not for lack of pluck, or skill, or training, but sheer deficiency of strength. There was no falling to pieces among her men; nor did they collapse at the end of the course, but turned together with their victors and paddled quietly homewards . . . Into the causes of the continued failure of the sister university one is tired of inquiring. Everybody has his (or her) immovable conviction on the subject. But pray let us hear no more of the condescending tone not infrequently adopted towards the light blue. Whatever be her faults, lack of spirit is not to be reckoned among them. She needs not the exhortations:

Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito

The last week of years ought to be evidence enough that she will be, as she has been, ready to fight on till victory comes. (5)

The Daily News here suggests that while the Cambridge crew may not have exhibited the strength required to win the race, it is not this lack that is of interest to readers. Rather, The Daily News draws attention to the way in which, even in the face of the insurmountable challenge presented by the Oxford crew, they maintained their “pluck.” The editorial dismisses the suggestion that the line from Book VI of Virgil’s Aeneid, translated as “don’t give way to these evils, but move the more boldly against them” (l. 95), is an exhortation to be aimed at the Cambridge crew, choosing instead to comment
that “whatever be her faults, lack of spirit is not to be reckoned among them.” As the Victorian press’s representation of the health and heroism of individual oarsmen demonstrates, the figure of the sportsman was one associated with positive ideas of masculinity in its pages. If such representations establish an idea of the sportsman associated with health and heroism, then they also work to situate this figure both in spheres closely allied with other markers of middle-class identity such as work and family as well as in the broader social and geographic landscape of nineteenth-century England.

**Work, Family, and the Sportsman**

In its representation of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race and the sport for which this was a signature event, the Victorian press constructed an incarnation of the figure of the sportsman characterized by health and heroism; it also deployed strategies of representation that linked this figure with discourses of work and family that were strong markers of middle-class identity in the period. As discussed at the opening of this chapter, the doctrine of work, which emphasized hard work for its own sake and a disinterested and even altruistic approach to professional obligations, was a set of ideas at the core of a new employment identity crafted by the middle class in this period. By invoking this ideal through the language used to represent the sportsman, the Victorian press encourages a construction of this figure that counters the caricature of an indolent and lazy son depicted in “Cornelia’s” letter to *The Times* in 1867. In an editorial
following the race on 18 March, 1869, *The Times* establishes the sport as one which will not encourage a neglect of academic duties, but rather will help young men better understand what is meant by “severe work”:

Men impose on themselves strict restraints, and perform severe work; they learn to pull together in more senses than one; and there is less room for personal rivalry than in many other sports. One reason why this race possesses such an extraordinary interest for the public is that it is, perhaps, the most genuine and honourable contest in the world. It is perfectly certain that both sides are doing their very best; that there are no private ends in view; that, in fact, sixteen of the picked youths of England are straining every nerve for the honour of their respective Universities. (9)

In this account of what rowing asks of its participants, readers are informed of the way in which the sport asks for co-operation and community at the same time that it demands a strict work ethic of never-ending effort. As John Tosh notes in *A Man’s Place*, it is these qualities that informed the mid-Victorian attitude towards productive, professional manliness: “Work acquired almost hallowed authority. Manly energy was to be focused not on anti-social self-assertion, but on occupation or ‘calling’. The material reward for living by the work ethic was not only personal wealth, but true freedom from dependence on patronage” (112). Along with affirming that rowing asks of men the same qualities that will later make them productive professionals, the editorial also underscores the ethos of the very idea of a professional in this period through its reference to the way in which the men “strain every nerve for . . . honour” with “no private ends in view.” By emphasizing the oarsmen's amateur status, *The Times*’ editorial echoes the language often associated with the middle-class professional (as distinct from the sporting professional).
W. J. Reader outlines this idea of professional ethics, explaining it as a blend of aristocratic and middle-class values:

[T]he new professional man brought one scale of values – the gentleman's – to bear upon the other – the tradesman's – and produced a specialized variety of business morality which came to be known as 'professional ethics'. It is based upon the fact that what the professional man sells, generally, is expert advice, often upon confidential matters. Unless the client can rely on his adviser's honesty, exactness, and devotion to his (the client's) interest, the transaction falls to the ground. Therefore the professional man must cultivate and deserve a reputation for probity. He must cultivate it even more zealously than the ordinary business man. (159)

Laura Fasick (2003) further illuminates this disinterested professionalism when exploring the way in which the meaning of work changed in the nineteenth century for the middle classes:

[P]ersonal involvement and the development of talents helped distinguish “professional work” from manual labor. The claims that . . . “learned professions” were respectable and genteel rested partly on arguments that their practice involved intellectual powers and noble motives, and could enrich, rather than coarsen or limit, the personality of the practitioner. The professions in which a “gentleman” could engage had to have an altruistic aspect to them . . . Service to others, not profit, should be the motive for . . . gentlemen performing professional work. (2)

In The Times’s 18 March 1869 description of the motivation behind rowing in the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, readers are reminded that the men involved are merely exhibiting the same spirit of disinterested, even noble action. Their actions are not motivated by profit, but rather the newly expanded idea of professional ethics that
defined the work environment into which they would soon enter and, by implication, be well placed to succeed.

A similar sentiment is expressed in *The Daily News* in its 17 March editorial in a telling passage that is worth quoting from at length:

As the boats leap forward in answer to the umpire's signal, each man feels that not one stroke, – nay, not a single inch of stroke, must be shirked from that moment right up to the finish. As “first wind” goes, and that terrible half minute is past through, in which it seems as though “second wind” would never come, there is positive pain in the effort to keep at full work without even a moments [sic] flagging . . . Each man feels that the rest of the work is fairly within his grasp . . . Ten or twelve minutes of glorious exertion follow before the aching muscles tell him, what in the fierce joy of the race he would scarcely have noticed, that the work is taking effect upon him. But now the goal is near. Defeated or victorious, it is not time for him to let his exertions flag. He knows that what he feels is felt in common by the whole crew. He bends anew to the work, taking pleasure in the very pain that it gives him, and at length, as the boat shoots past the winning post, he comes conscious of having thoroughly rowed himself out – that is, having thoroughly done his duty, and acquitted himself like a man. For it may be assumed as the fundamental axiom of racing, that the man who is not dead beat during the first few moments after a close race has not done his duty by his boat or his fellow oarsmen. (5)

Affirming many of the connections made between rowing and the middle-class doctrine of work by the previous example, this account of the race experience from the perspective of the rower allies the physical effort of the race with ideas of work as a calling or duty, while also making connections to discourses national and military. The reader is here assured in terms borrowed from the religious idea of a work ethic, that in fulfilling one's duty through “glorious exertion,” a rower will be rewarded with both “fierce joy” and “pleasure in the very pain that [rowing] gives him.” The obligation to
crew members that is discussed at the close is not unlike the obligation an individual was encouraged to feel towards his professional brethren, and with the conclusion of the race, it matters not whether the oarsman was able to secure victory, for through his consistent and unyielding effort alone, he has affirmed that he is truly a man.

If the coverage of the 1869 Boat Race assured readers that the sportsman was a figure that, through his participation in sport, was familiar with the work ethic of a middle-class professional, then the Victorian press also chose to depict rowing as both an art and science, areas of which professional men might demonstrate a certain knowledge. In a series of columns that ran throughout January of 1869 and were signed “Jason,”14 *The Sportsman* discusses various aspects of rowing including the different boats and the technique of a proper stroke. He qualifies this discussion in much the same way findings might be introduced into a professional journal, not only acknowledging the body of knowledge that precedes him, but also notifying readers that what he is about to say concerns specialist knowledge, only of interest to a specific body:

> Whilst, however, it may be taken for granted that all accomplished oarsmen are familiar with the theory of scientific rowing, it may well happen that this may be to many amongst the readers of THE SPORTSMAN a dead letter, and I would wish it to be understood that the present article is intended for the use and enlightenment of the class last

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14 The choice of pen name here refers to the Greek hero, Jason. Jason was the famed hunter of the Golden Fleece and leader of the Argonauts, a band of fifty men who sailed on the Argo, a story told by Apollonius Rhodius in his epic poem *Argonautica*. As with other allusions to the classical tradition, this pen name underscores a certain class status among both the readers and journalists associated with *The Sportsman*. 
named. If, therefore, I may be unable to bring forward anything startlingly novel in theory, I shall, at least, promulgate nothing that is untenable in practice, and shall in all cases endeavour to give good and sufficient reasons for whatever may be advanced, and to explain as clearly as possible whatever may stand in apparent need of elucidation. In this article I propose to treat only the art of rowing an oar as practised in light boats and on smooth water. Rowing in heavy boats and on salt water will not be alluded to, as offering no field for the display of the art in its scientific form. (4: original upper case)

Establishing himself as speaking from a position of knowledge and authority, “Jason” takes the tone of one who has stepped outside the confines of his profession in order to speak to the uninitiated. By using words and phrases such as “dead letter,” “art,” and “scientific form,” he constructs rowing as an area of study not unlike both a university discipline with the kind of working knowledge one would acquire in the pursuit of a profession. The qualification that he makes regarding the focus of his discussion is telling in that it limits his subject matter not only in terms of boat-size and rowing experience, but also in terms of the class of men who might engage in such activities. The “light boats and smooth water” are the terrain of the amateur, whereas the “heavy boats and salt water” are the sphere of the professional waterman, both those who row for their livelihood and those who race.

This distinction is further underscored by another column of 28 January that marks out rowing in such a way as to assure readers that participants knew the distinction
between work and play. In this context, the sportsman’s middle-class associations are affirmed when he is identified as an amateur rather than a waterman:15

Perfection of style must be looked for, not amongst professionals, but amongst high-class amateurs, and is to be found in a thoroughly trained University crew, or in a crew from one of the London clubs . . . I have little hesitation in saying that the style of professional oarsmen, as a class, is far from being so perfect as it is generally represented to be. What professional crew . . . could sustain the ordeal of minutely-searching criticism annually undergone by the representative boats of the rival Universities? What have been the characteristics of even the most celebrated crews from the Tyne? Perfect time, a lively stroke, and an immensity of power brought to bear by each man at one and the same instant; but a great amount of polish has seldom been displayed . . . In pace [professionals] have, thanks to their usually superior physical endowments, a decided advantage over amateurs, but to the latter, as demonstrators of the art of rowing upon a system, the palm must be awarded. (4)

“Jason” draws clear lines between the capabilities of the two different classes of rower. While professionals may be able to exhibit significant strength due to the frequency with which they row (for their livelihood), it is the amateur or university oarsman who, while not exhibiting such strength, is intimately acquainted with the finer details of the activity.

15 Throughout this discussion, I use the term “watermen” to refer to professional rowers – those who rowed for pay – whether as transport on the urban rivers such as the Thames and the Tyne, or in advertized races with cash prizes, such as the many that were announced in the advertising columns of many of the sporting papers of the period, such as those discussed in this chapter. These rowers were distinct and separate from the amateur oarsmen who took part in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race and who maintained their amateur status by soundly refusing to take part in sport for profit. Eric Halladay’s Rowing in England: A Social History: The Amateur Debate (1990) traces the tension between these two groups of rowers, while Neil Wigglesworth’s The Social History of English Rowing (1992) challenges the sport’s narrative of development, largely written by sympathetic historians from various amateur clubs, by establishing the contributions of professional watermen, such as the Clasper family.
What is perhaps most interesting about “Jason's” assessment here is the way in which it attributes to amateur oarsmen a self-awareness and ability to sustain critical inquiry from others within the rowing body, a characteristic closely associated with the regulation of the middle-class professions. “Jason” further reinforces these distinctions later in the article, continuing to firm up class boundaries:

What [the amateur] regards as the mere prettinesses of the art are almost invariably despised by the professional as non-essentials, and his whole attention is usually directed to the attainment of one object – the maximum of speed, irrespective of style. With the amateur the case is different. What he lacks in physical force he must make up in skill, and consequently cannot afford to despise what may be called the niceties of his art; add to this is more perfect comprehension of the theory of rowing, due to his superior mental development, and the superiority of the amateur to the professional oarsman, in point of style, is accounted for. (Jas6914)

The claims “Jason” makes here are important in establishing rowing as the kind of activity that trains up young men to the standard of professionalism. Watermen, focused as they are on turning a profit from a race victory, are not concerned with maintaining any kind of style – what in previous discussions of each of the Boat Race crews by The Times was established as the necessary component to control the raw animal power behind muscular effort. This is the province of the amateur oarsman, who is able to temper this strength with the control it necessitates. It is through distinctions such as these and through the language of middle-class professionalism that “Jason's” columns in The Sportsman depict the sportsman as a figure associated with a respectable position in the public sphere in the Victorian imagination.

92
One of the final ways in which the Victorian press coverage of the Boat Race situates the sportsman in middle-class spheres is through its articulation of the functioning of the rowing community in terms similar to those used to describe the Victorian family. Its representation of the coach and his influence – in this instance, specifically George Morrison, the former Oxford oarsman who coached Cambridge in the 1860s and 1870s – calls to mind the ideal of the *paterfamilias*.

“Coach” in its original sense derives from the practice of academic coaching common at both Oxford and Cambridge from the eighteenth century onwards. Defined as “an individual who was to deliver aid above and beyond the help of a tutor” (OED), a coach was viewed as a person who would supplement an undergraduate's studies and assure that he met the academic standards required of him. Coaches later become popular also in preparing young men to sit qualifying examinations for entry into professions such as the civil service in the middle of the nineteenth century (Reader 85-99). In establishing that what is needed is an amateur coach such as George Morrison to address the problems in the Cambridge crew and in collegiate rowing as a whole, *The Sporting Life* is again articulating a model of the sport that aligns with middle-class professional expectations and experiences. This is not “professionalism” in its mercenary sense, but an element of “professionalism” in its attention to detail and desire to meet high standards.

In a 20 February article *The Sporting Life* proposes the idea of Morrison as amateur coach:
We advise those captains who do not know how to coach to run on the bank with the 'Varsity and see good rowing; to watch each movement of every man there; to listen to what Mr. Morrison says, look at the man he says it to, see what the man is doing wrong, and to watch him and see how he gets rid of his fault. We can hardly see why captains should have recourse to watermen when there is such a good coach as Mr. Morrison up at Cambridge, and when there is every opportunity of learning from him what they want. (3)

In a kind of manly hierarchy, the men who are responsible for their own college crews – the “captains” – are advised to watch those above them in rank, the men of the University boat, preparing for the upcoming Boat Race. From this, it is suggested they will see not only the proper style of rowing exhibited by the oarsmen, but the proper model of coaching as demonstrated by Morrison. The Sporting Life here reminds readers of the easy access available to such information, in much the same way that advice is always available from an ideal paterfamilias.

This hierarchy of rowing is given a traditional family structure in a 6 February article in The Sporting Life where the positive amateur influence of Morrison is highlighted:

Let young oars be taken down by their captains who have themselves been coached by Mr. Morrison. Let these captains, now that they are fresh from his teaching, impart that teaching to their college crews, making their young oars, after they have been told of their faults, run on the bank and watch their betters. Let the captains themselves, too, run on the bank with the 'Varsity, watch the men rowing, and listen to what Mr. Morrison says to each man, how he says it, &c., so that they may go back to their crews a little wiser as to what expressions to use. Let each captain think well over the faults of each man in his crew, and let him not simply tell men of their faults, but tell them how to get out of them. If he cannot do this, let him go
and ask some one else; and if he cannot get it from him, let him go to the great coach himself. (3)

In this community of mutually helpful and instructive manliness, the captains of the college crews take the knowledge they have gleaned from Morrison and pass it on to their charges in much the same way that a father might prepare his sons for contact with the public sphere. Morrison here acts as a kind of ur-father on whom the captains should base their actions and attitudes, mimicking in their attempts to help new oarsmen the kind of concern a father might show his son in preparing to him to enter manhood, and which *The Sporting Life* assures us, Morrison communicates to the Light Blue boat. In this manner, as in the way in which other daily and sporting papers align rowing with a professional occupation, *The Sporting Life* works to rehabilitate the reputation of rowing and to assure readers that far from being dangerous to the physical, mental, and moral health of young Englishmen, it is precisely the kind of activity that prepares them for the challenges and obligations of manhood.

**The Boat Race in the English Landscape**

If the coverage of the 1869 Boat Race in daily and sporting papers helped to identify the sportsman with cultural discourses of work and family associated with the middle class, then the coverage provided by an illustrated paper such as *The Illustrated London News* situated this figure in the broader social and geographic landscapes of which these discourses were a part by utilizing effective verbal and visual strategies. In
the 27 March edition, it published not only a detailed account of the race, but also three illustrations that establish the Boat Race as an event that is part of the English physical and socio-cultural landscape. The first of these illustrations appeared on the front page with the caption “Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: The Start From Putney” and it provides the reader with a panoramic view of the activity of the Boat Race both on the water and on the riverbank (Figure 3). Given the placement of the illustration on the front page, it is at first surprising to note that neither the Oxford nor the Cambridge boat is easily visible. Indeed, they are located to the left of the illustration almost indistinguishable in the middle distance, overshadowed by the trees on the riverbank, the tower of a church, and the black smoke flooding from the stack of the umpire's paddle steamer. This lack of visibility is increased by the depiction of the heavy spectator traffic on the Thames, including paddle steamers and other rowing boats and the density and diversity of the crowd gathered on shore. In the foreground one can make out the figures of policemen and middle-class men in top hats accompanied by their wives and daughters as well as working-class figures in flat caps waving flags and other items in encouragement. As the focus of the illustration suggests, what is important about the Boat Race is not just the efforts of the eighteen young men involved, but rather the significance of the event for Victorian England. At the same time as the illustration establishes the Boat Race in the physical landscape around Putney through its inclusion
Figure 3: "Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: The Start from Putney"

from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 1
of the church and the railway bridge to the centre and right of the frame, it also signals the importance of the event to the country's socio-cultural landscape, a point at which different social groups are, briefly, brought together. This sentiment is again underscored in the two other illustrations included in the 27 March edition of The Illustrated London News. Though depicting very different moments during and after the event, both “Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: View of the Race From Barnes Railway-Bridge” (Figure 4) and “Exhibition of the Oxford and Cambridge Boats at the Crystal Palace” (Figure 5) continue the work of the cover illustration, reminding ILN readers of the place of the Boat Race of 1869 in the physical and socio-cultural landscape. In the first of these two illustrations, much the same technique is deployed as in the cover illustration. The perspective, as in the previous image, situates the viewer among the crowds that flocked to see the race, though in this instance, the vantage point is from the Barnes railway bridge, a significant interval in the Boat Race course. The presence of the two crews on the left-hand side of the illustration is dwarfed by the sight of the spectators both on and off the river. Along with the crowds that stretch off into the lost point of perspective along the shore are throngs of people in sailing boats, in rowboats and sitting on the roofs of buildings lining the bank. It is difficult to discern which is the greater spectacle, the sight of the men cutting through the water or the sight of the crowds seeming to move en masse ever closer to the river's edge. Coupled with “Oxford and Cambridge Universities
Figure 4: "Oxford and Cambridge Universities Boat-Race: View of the Race from Barnes Railway-Bridge" from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 308.
Figure 5: "Exhibition of the Oxford and Cambridge University Boats at the Crystal Palace" from *The Illustrated London News*, 27 March 1869, page 308
Boat-Race: The Start From Putney,” and thus providing readers with two distinct geographical vantage points from which to see the race, these illustrations in the *ILN* establish the place of the Boat Race in the physical and socio-cultural landscape of the capital and the nation.

The final illustration that appeared in the 27 March edition of the *ILN* at first seems to differ significantly from these previous two as it does not depict a moment of struggle in the race, nor does it show the throngs of spectators enjoying the race. Rather, “Exhibition of the Oxford and Cambridge Boats at the Crystal Palace” illustrates the sight of the two rowing shells on display for curious spectators following Oxford's ninth successive victory, contrasting in subject matter with the previous illustrations that depict multitudes. Nonetheless, it performs much of the same cultural work in that affirms for *ILN* readers the links between the Boat Race and the nation, tying it to a significant place and a significant social group. Central to this illustration are the two rowing shells resting on display stands with their oars still in the oarlocks. The location is easy to identify visually as the Crystal Palace from the distinctive iron framework and glass panels that make up the background of the central exhibition hall. Crowded around the two shells is a large group of top-hatted visitors with a significantly larger portion of women – presumably wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters – than in the previous two illustrations. If the previous two illustrations enforce for the reader the national popular significance of the Boat Race, s/he is now reminded of the way in which the artifacts of the Race are
associated with other materials of Empire such as those exhibited at the successful Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851. The predominantly male crowd of spectators in the previous two illustrations is not evident here; rather, readers are treated to a panorama of Victorian respectability, with the Crystal Palace being a far more suitable place to take one's female relatives than the crowded riverbank.

The illustrations that appeared in the 27 March edition of *The Illustrated London News* presented to the reader a visual assessment of the importance of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race and the sportsman associated with it. Through establishing its presence both in the physical and socio-cultural landscape, the *ILN* echoed visually the sentiments expressed in its written coverage of the race which placed a particular emphasis on place names to measure the different stages of the race. An examination of a section of the *ILN*'s post-race report reveals the importance of geography to the meaning of the event:

[T]he Cambridge crew struggled on, and again gathered themselves together for another effort at Chiswick Church, past which Oxford led by half a length . . . At the White Cottage, between the church and the bathing-place in the Duke of Devonshire's meadows, the Oxford boat drew clear, and off the creek led by a length and a half. From this point the Oxford eight gradually went away, notwithstanding several well-sustained spurs in the Cambridge boat, and passed Barnes Bridge two lengths in front. (320)

In this race report, the *ILN* measures the progress and effort of both crews against the landscape along the Thames. For a reader to understand the shifts in the crews' positions during the race, it is assumed that s/he will have a familiarity with the geography of the
area. Indeed, completing the Boat Race course is as much about moving through an iconic landscape, as it is about making progress down the river.

This situating of the Boat Race in a physical and socio-cultural landscape is carried out in a similar fashion by *The Times*’s coverage of the crews' training in the weeks leading up to the race. In an article from the 15 March edition, the training of the Oxford crew is described in such a manner that the sportsman’s abilities are measured against the landscape in which he trains:

The pace of the Eight, however, appeared to be very slow at first, their time to the Bishop's-creek being 1 min. 45 secs.; to Hammersmith-bridge, 9 min. 40 secs.; to Barnes-bridge, 10 min. 15secs.; and to the Ship, 22 min. 34secs. Off the Chiswick meadows they were picked up by a scratch eight manned by Messrs. Moxon, Richards, Finch, Ryan, Henley, Stout, Corrie, and Gulston (stroke), Walton (coxswain), which took a start of upwards of a length and raced the University crew . . . Just after passing Barnes-bridge the Oxford crew overhauled the scratch eight, but fell away again off the Limes at Mortlake, and, notwithstanding a well-meant effort just above the Brewery, were unable to head their opponents. (5)

In this description of their training, the Oxford crew's efforts are measured not only against those of a rival 'scratch' crew – an incidental meeting on the river – but also against the important landmarks, buildings, natural features, and bridges that line this stretch of the Thames. Just as the place names conjure up associations of a certain kind of English landscape – Barnes Bridge, Bishop's Creek, Hammersmith Bridge, the Limes at Mortlake, the Brewery – so too do the last names of the scratch crew, albeit a social one. In reports such as this from *The Times*, the Boat Race becomes identified with a specific
physical and socio-cultural landscape that can be considered the natural habitat of a sportsman with pretensions to manliness.

If the report of the Oxford crew's training in *The Times* emphasizes the place and class specific origins of the Boat Race, in a manner akin to the message communicated by the illustration of the rowing shells exhibited in the Crystal Palace in *The Illustrated London News*, then *The Sporting Life* sends a message more akin to that of the other two *ILN* illustrations that draw attention to the broad appeal of the event. Establishing the Boat Race as an event of national importance on 17 March with the confirmation that the day of the contest “is essentially the day of . . . the Boat Race – and of the Boat Race only [where] all sorts of business and pleasure alike resolve themselves into a mist, from which rises a vision of two racing crews” (2), *The Sporting Life* goes on in the 20 March post-race report to emphasize the way in which the Race appeals across geographic and class boundaries:

All over the kingdom the University Boat Race holds a place in the public estimation unlike anything else in the calendar of British sports, save, perhaps the Derby and St. Leger. The noble, unselfish aim of the rival crews has made their meeting the most absorbing topic of conversation for weeks together, in parts of the country where outriggers would be preserved as curiosities, and where the Shibboleth of the rowing world is a tongue not known of men. As well in the workshops of the Midlands, amidst the smoke and flame and dust of the furnaces and pits of the Black Country, as on the banks of the Thames or the Tyne, Irwell or Ouse, is the result of that meeting anxiously awaited; whilst there is hardly a country village where the recurrence of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race does not make at least one man young again, as it reminds him of the Alma Matter [sic] that sent him forth, it may be long years ago. (4)
Like other accounts, *The Sporting Life*’s discussion of the Boat Race ties the race to a national landscape, but this is slightly different national landscape than the ones that have appeared before. First it is a socio-cultural landscape that has associated with it a specific sporting calendar. The mention of the Derby and St. Leger races echoes other invocations of seasons of sport found in the pages of *Bell’s Life in London* which on 17 March states that “like the Derby, the University Boat Race is a sight every Englishman should see at least once in the course of his lifetime” (4). This calendar is also invoked by *The Times* when, on 2 February, it refers to the “annual aquatic Derby” (4) or on 2 March, “the 'Easter' or 'Water Derby’” (4). While the other reports tie the training for and the running of the race to the specific sites that line the famed Thames course from Putney to Mortlake, here the coverage places the event in a farther reaching landscape that stretches from London and the south of England through the Midlands and up to the industrial north. Along with this broadening of the physical landscape there also comes an extension of the socio-cultural landscape. It is implied though the reference to places where “the Shibboleth of the rowing world is a tongue not known of men” that the Boat Race has a cross-class appeal. In spite of this, however, the middle-class orientation of the sport is still underscored through the references to the spirit of amateurism that is recognized as being at the heart of the race; the rival crews have a “noble, unselfish aim” (“The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. Oxford Again Victorious”, 4) and cannot be said to be guided by baser motives like profit.
A similar broadening of the Boat Race's appeal is also found in the pages of *The Sportsman* on 18 March. While the physical landscape mentioned in the previous accounts is noticeably absent, what strikes the reader is the panorama of different Boat Race spectators that anxiously await the start of the race:

From the cabby or 'bus-driver, with his knot of ribbon round his whip, to the City magnate, blushing even over his fine port-wine countenance under the influence of his rosette; from the 'girl of the period,' with yards of silk dangling from her chignon or her veil streaming in the wind, to the young City gent, with his ample chest adornments; from the schoolboy, with a knot stuck jauntily through his button-hole, to the lady in her brougham from St. John's-wood, sheathed from the crown to the toe in a panoply of blue – all gave encouragement to Oxford. (3)

If the geography of this description is tied specifically to the landscape of London – the influence of the Boat Race here reaches from the suburbs of St. John's Wood through to the heart of the City – then so too are the cast of different characters to be found anticipating the Boat Race. The description zig-zags through, back and forth across class boundaries, up from the cab driver to the business man, across to the fashionable young woman, and beside her, the young professional man, then down to the anxious schoolboy and down again to the suburban woman of dubious virtue, perched in her carriage. In moving up, down, and horizontally through the class hierarchy of the period, the speaker here is drawing attention to the way in which the appeal of the Boat Race crosses those same boundaries, similar to the account published in *The Sporting Life*, and in contrast to the specifically middle-class appeal identified by the illustrations and text in *The Illustrated London News*, and *The Times*. While broadly speaking, the Victorian press
worked to identify the Boat Race, and thus the figure of the healthy and heroic
sportsman, as intrinsically part of the physical and socio-cultural landscape, it also
registered the way in which the event crossed different class boundaries and extended the
appeal of the linked ideas of sport and a manly identity. It was an inclusive event in its
appeal and, commentators sought to argue, its values.

Through various tactics of representation, then, the Victorian press challenged the
unfavorable judgment of rowing voiced by anti-sport critics in the 1860s. By identifying
the Boat Race as an event woven into the physical and socio-cultural landscape of
England, aligning the Race and its participants with classical and English historical
models of heroism, and demonstrating the way in which rowing mirrored the recently
broadened middle-class sphere of professional employment, newspapers such as The
Sportsman, and The Sporting Life represented rowing as a sport that was closely tied to
inspiring and maintaining the health of manly men. While the press in this instance
affirmed the relationship between men and sport as a positive one, another facet of
popular culture, the sensational theatre, was presenting audiences with a different view of
the sportsman, distinct from that located in the press coverage of the 1869 Oxford and
Cambridge Boat Race.
Chapter 4

The Urban Sportsman: Victorian Spectacular Melodrama and the Representation of Modern Sport Culture

If the middle-class man was confronted with challenges in the professional sphere, as discussed in Chapter 3, then he was also confronting them when he was at his leisure. New leisure opportunities cropped up in the city as part of the change in the way people played after the Industrial Revolution, as discussed in Chapter 1, and many of these emphasized the passive involvement of spectating over the idea of active participation. As Mike Huggins notes in his discussion of urban sporting realities, the London sporting calendar grew to include spectacular annual public events that encouraged the gathering of diverse crowds entertained by athletic effort; the annual Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race was only one such event (Huggins, “Victorians” 85-88). Another popular meeting, the Derby, held on the Epsom Downs racecourse, was depicted by Victorian painter William Powell Frith in his panoramic painting The Derby Day (1858) (Figure 6). With its representation of the crowds gathered at the Epsom Downs racecourse, Frith’s painting captures the essence of this new kind of urban leisure that was characterized by ideas of license and freedom for spectators. Huggins describes some of these associations in his discussion of Victorian sport, noting that the Derby was viewed as having “pleasures in abundance, with amenities in the grand style, an occasion for the relaxing of inhibitions, for gambling, sexual licence, overindulgence in food and
alcoholic drink, loud music, fighting and folly” (“Victorians 86). It was these kinds of public spectating events that were the key component of the leisure opportunities a city could offer:

Such . . . events were key annual holiday occasions, like the fairs, wakes or rushbearings which still formed part of the traditional cycle of customary leisure, looked forward to for months beforehand and, like Christmas, used as events to date from . . . Victorian industrialists had little choice but to shut down, or accept major levels of absenteeism. Miners left the pits. Farm workers took time off from work. Schools found their pupils absent. Sociability was a central part of the experience. (“Victorians” 88)

In capturing the panorama of people and events attendant on such a gathering as the Derby, Frith’s painting provides a striking summary of the details of such an event, an element that made *The Derby Day* attractive to contemporary viewers. As Andrew Montana notes in his discussion of the painting’s Australian tour, *The Derby Day* was “an emblem of mid-Victorian British urban modernity, reflecting contemporary interests” (758), a point reinforced by Mary Cowling’s treatment of the painting in her discussion of its use of the popular Victorian visual discourses of phrenology and physiognomy. In considering the way in which the banquet of experiences available to the horse-racing spectator would have been interpreted by contemporary viewers, Cowley states that Frith’s painting provides “a wide and varied selection of modern types, types whom the public would recognize, understand, praise and blame according to their deserts” (462). From the young country lad, taking his sweetheart to the races towards the left of the
Figure 6: William Powell Frith's *The Derby Day* (1856-1858) ©Tate Images
frame, across to the card sharps and thimble riggers swindling unsuspecting punters, to the middle-class race-goers in their carriages attempting to rise above the antics of the acrobats below them, to the fast young man being tempted by the young flower seller to the right, *The Derby Day* emphasizes the degree to which the different classes of individuals intermix. As Frith himself commented in a letter to his sister following the painting’s exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1858, the painting was astoundingly well-received not only by the critics, but also by the general public, in part because of the way in which it accurately, and entertainingly, portrayed the realities of the modern leisure experience: “Some people go as far as to say ‘It is the picture of the age,’ and no mean judges are they” (Frith, “Autobiography” 285). The space of the urban sport spectacle was not, however, a cultural space without its perils, especially for the men occupying it as it was a part of the larger space of the city with which many men, in the second half of the nineteenth century, were trying to come to terms.

As Judith Walkowitz discusses in *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), many of the authors who produced narratives of the city – the literary and textual equivalents of Frith’s panoramic painting – were motivated by a desire to understand the ever growing and rapidly changing urban space in which they lived and wrote. Albert Smith’s *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847), Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-1861) and Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Doré’s *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872) are all works that are exemplary of this very masculine project of writing about
the city, one which depends heavily on the idea of the *flanêur* which, in the period, was articulated in part through the poetry of Charles Baudelaire. In attempting to make sense of the city – to somehow contain it within the bounds of an exhaustive narrative catalogue – these writers and artists such as Baudelaire, Smith, Mayhew, Frith, Jerrold, and Doré were engaged in an endeavour to respond to what Walkowitz terms “a range of psychological and social crises troubling literary men and their social peers” (17). In representing urban experience, they were not only gathering data about city life, but also negotiating a relationship between middle-class masculine identity and the spaces and experiences with which that identity came into contact on a frequent, if not daily, basis. While poetry such as Baudelaire’s, paintings such as Frith’s, journalistic accounts such as Mayhew’s, and popular catalogues such as Smith’s, Jerrold’s, and Doré’s all respond to the urban experience, they were not the only cultural producers in the mid-late nineteenth century struggling with the realities of life in the Industrial Age, and visual and textual representations of the city were not the only efforts at mediating urban modernity to which Victorian viewers and readers could turn in an attempt to better understand their cities. The spectacular melodrama – a variety of theatrical entertainment that was at its peak of popularity in the 1860s – is another popular form involved in trying to determine the way in which the city affected middle-class masculinity.

16 Charles Baudelaire’s collection of poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1858; 1861), is a key text in understanding the figure of the *flanêur*, or urban explorer. In the “Tableaux Parisiens” section of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, there are eighteen poems that comment on, and respond to, the experiences of life in a nineteenth-century city, exploring such urban themes as alienation and heterogeneity.
While the healthy and heroic oarsman found in the pages of the Victorian press discussed in the previous chapter was a prominent incarnation of the sportsman in the 1860s and through into the 1870s, this embodiment was by no means his only appearance in the Victorian sporting imaginary in this decade. While daily, illustrated, and sporting papers worked together to craft a sporting participant that helped to allay concerns about the vitality of middle-class men in this period, this cultural work was augmented and complimented by similar actions on the part of the Victorian spectacular melodrama, a popular form of theatre entertainment that flourished in the same decades. The sportsman that appears on the spectacular melodramatic stage is not, however, identical to his press counterpart. Though to a certain degree, he still exhibits traits of manliness that are identified as being at the core of this sporting identity, it is a manliness that is challenged, and for a brief time overcome by the urban sphere he must confront. In two sporting melodramas by Irish playwright Dion Boucicault, *Flying Scud; or, a Four-Legged Fortune* (1866) and *Formosa, the 'Most Beautiful'; or, The Railroad to Ruin* (1869), the Victorian theatre-going audience is presented with a different incarnation of the sportsman figure, one that emphasizes the need for both adaptability and masculine community. In staging spectacular scenes of a sporting nature, the plays offer their audiences sportsmen that respond to contemporary anxieties about the effects of urban modernity on the male body. At the same time that they demonstrate to the audience the dangers of the city space to the physical and moral health of men, the plays also illustrate
strategies by which to combat these negative effects. Not only do the sporting heroes of Boucicault’s two spectacular melodramas claw their way back to health and vitality, but they also adapt to this new environment and carve from within it a space of the attributes, behaviours, values, and attitudes of middle-class masculinity. The sportsman in the spectacular sporting melodrama may stumble, but he does not fall. In focusing on the way in which Dion Boucicault’s spectacular sporting melodramas represent the sportsman in order to better understand the place this figure held in the Victorian popular imagination, I am working with a genre that is intricately bound up with nineteenth-century worries about the Victorian city, as articulated by the full cast of scholars concerned with the cultural work of the melodrama.

**Mediating Modernity: The Cultural Work of Melodrama**

A specific sub-genre of the melodrama, the spectacular melodrama, can be identified by key conventions, the most important of which is the sensation scene. Making use of a variety of nineteenth-century technological advances, the sensation scene presented the audience with a moment of hair-raising peril of a startling veracity. David Krause (1964) outlines the various mechanisms and devices that entered the Victorian theatre in this period:

Mid-nineteenth century progress had created many advances in mechanical science, which inspired the invention of a variety of new stage devices: the diorama, in anticipation of the revolving stage, an apparatus that propelled a series of panoramic scenes across the stage; sliding traps in the floor for mobile ghosts, and overhead wires for hovering or flying
figures; limelight illuminations, projected by heating lime in an oxyhydrogen flame; overhead lights with coloured glass; water scenes constructed in huge tanks with moving ships and waterfalls; sheets of gauze for simulated water scenes, and gauze curtains for supernatural scenes; off-stage treadwheels for wind and storm effects, and sheets of zinc for thunder; lavishly constructed historical sets in period scenes, and interior scenes with accurately produced furniture and trappings. (23)

As Michael Booth (1965; 1981; 1991; 1996) discusses in his work on the Victorian theatre, these technological developments changed the shape of the Victorian drama:

“The physical was elaborated and natural catastrophes were multiplied. A horse race, an avalanche, a train wreck became the whole point of the act or the play” (“Age” 154). The sensation scene was soon viewed as the central feature of the spectacular melodrama, beyond even the details of character or plot. By the 1880s, the excesses of the sensation scene were almost comedic. In his account of an 1882 production of *Pluck; a Story of £50 000* at Drury Lane Theatre, Russell Jackson describes the extent of this excess:

*[Pluck’s] incidents included a double train crash; the interruption of a wedding breakfast (with the arrest of the bridegroom); the murder of a banker and the hiding of the corpse in a Chatwood safe; Piccadilly Circus and the Criterion restaurant in a snowstorm; and the destruction of a three-storey slum (containing the villain) in a fire. (59)*

Above all, such spectacular scenes were meant to invoke the speed of the modern age, as Jeffry N. Cox notes (171).

Recent discussions of melodramatic genre are particularly interested in the sensation scene and the kind of cultural work it performs. In *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000* (2004), Nicholas Daly recognizes the effect of the spectacular
melodrama and argues that plays such as Dion Boucicault’s *After Dark, A Drama of London Life* (1868), function to reassure audiences in the face of their nightmarish experiences of city life. Daly reads Boucicault’s *After Dark*, with its thrilling sensation scene involving the rescue of a man from the path of an oncoming underground train, as celebrating the moment when “a human agent can beat a mechanical agent; the human for a moment comes to enter and master the temporal world of the machine” (23). Though Daly recognizes the discomfort present in such depictions of modern city life, he is also careful to note that the spectacular melodrama “was at the very least ambivalent about the modernity that produced it [and] despite its pastoral moments . . . drew much of its social energy from the kaleidoscope of city life, and rendered the texture of urban modernity with bold strokes” (15). While focused specifically on the spectacular melodrama, Daly’s discussion also draws on broader scholarly discussions of how the melodrama functioned in the Victorian popular imagination.

Scholars of the melodrama, such as Peter Brooks (1994), Michael Booth (1965; 1981; 1991), Nina Auerbach (2004), Martha Vicinus (1981), Lynn M. Voskuil (2002), and Ben Singer (2001), account for the popularity of melodrama – and the longevity of the hyperbolic register that Singer terms the “melodramatic” mode in present day discourse (6) – by demonstrating its close relationship to revolution. In times of social and political upheaval, whether brought about by the beheading of kings or the production of heads of steam, the melodrama works to inscribe the absolutes of a value
system for those who feel they have lost traditional bearings. Peter Brooks examines the function of French melodrama following the French Revolution and argues that plays such as Sylvain Maréchal’s *Le jugement dernier des rois* (1793), in which all the crowned heads of state from France to Britain to Russia to Naples are exiled to a desert island where they are killed by a volcanic eruption, function as “the genre, and the speech, of revolutionary moralism: the way it states, enacts, and imposes its moral messages, in clear, unambiguous words and signs” (16). Martha Vincinus and Jacky Bratton present similar discussions of the Victorian domestic melodrama which celebrates domesticity and home as a way of lessening the trauma of the Industrial Revolution; they see in melodrama a similar functioning to that which Brooks describes: “the working out in popular culture of the conflict between the family and its values and the social and economic assault of industrialization” (Vincinus 128). David Mayer also acknowledges this cultural function of the form when he states that the domestic melodrama “offers a brief, palatable, non-threatening metaphor which enables the audience to approach and contemplate at close range matters which are otherwise disturbing to discuss” (147).

Building on these ideas of melodrama mediating modernity, I argue that in his sporting melodramas *Flying Scud; or, a Four-Legged Fortune* (1866) and *Formosa, the Most Beautiful; or, The Railroad to Ruin* (1869), Dion Boucicault attempts to account for the new urban experience of sport, and more specifically, the manly identity such a
sphere was seen as producing. If, in plays such as *After Dark*, Boucicault is mediating the audience's concerns about life in England following the Industrial Revolution, in both *Flying Scud* and *Formosa* he is helping his audiences come to terms with the changes brought about in the sporting world as a result of the same influence of industrialization and urbanization. That the sporting world had been changed by the Industrial Revolution was evident, as the depiction of Epsom in Frith’s *The Derby Day* attests. In response to this change, Boucicault’s *Flying Scud* suggests that the pre-industrial model of manliness associated with ideas of aristocracy, lineage and its attendant forms of recreation is no longer sufficient and it offers audiences a new formulation of the sportsman that can negotiate the realities of industrial England. He then goes on to elaborate on the conditions necessary for the sportsman’s long-term survival in *Formosa*.

**Dion Boucicault, Not Just Your Stage Irishman**

Dion Boucicault is widely recognized by scholars of the Victorian theatre for his innovative development of the sensation scene in the numerous melodramas he wrote in the mid-late nineteenth century. As Nicholas Daly discusses in an article for *Victorian Studies* (1998), it was Boucicault’s borrowing from French melodrama that introduced to

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17 *Flying Scud* and *Formosa* are two of three sporting sensational melodramas that Dion Boucicault wrote over his almost 50 years in the theatre. The third, *The Jilt* (1885), was Boucicault's final play as well as final appearance on the stage in the role of Irish jockey, Miles O'Hara. I do not discuss *The Jilt* in part because it is a reworking of many of the same scenes from *The Flying Scud* and also because it falls so much later in the period, after the initial popularity of the sensational melodrama had significantly waned.
the English-speaking stage the now clichéd trope of the girl tied to the train tracks (“Blood” 48), and along with this importing, he went on to develop memorable sensation scenes that had a strong appeal for Victorian audiences. In *The Colleen Bawn; or, The Brides of Garryowen* (1860), the Stage Irishman Myles-na-Coppaleen saves the beleaguered heroine Eily O’Connor from drowning in a water cave by performing a head-first rescue dive into a lake. Other sensation scenes from Boucicault melodramas include a burning tenement rescue by a genuine fire engine in *The Poor of New York* (1857), later staged as *The Poor of Liverpool, The Poor of Leeds, The Poor of Manchester, The Streets of Islington*, and *The Poor of London* (1864) in each title city (presumably each with its own fire engine), as well as a ship going down in flames in *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisanna*.

With the exception of Daly’s discussions of Boucicault (1998; 2007; 2009), many of the scholarly treatments of his work focus on his development of the figure of the Stage Irishman and his engagement with questions of Irish national identity (Schoch 153). Boucicault's first biographer Townsend Walsh said of the playwright: “With the shamrock for its symbol, Boucicault's fame rests secure, and Ireland may claim him as her peculiar national property” (xvii). Similarly, David Krause focuses primarily on Boucicault's three Irish plays, *The Colleen Bawn; or The Brides of Garryowen* (1860), *Arrah-na-Pogue; or, The Wicklow Wedding* (1864), and *The Shaughraun* (1874) when he
outlines the playwright's contribution to expanding Irish representation on the Victorian stage:

His hero is a wise fool, the master of the mischievous revels who is the inevitable occasion of hilarity in others as well as natural humour in himself. To be sure, he is a blathering rogue, a cheerful liar with a powerful thirst, but he is also a liberated playboy who cavorts outside the ordinary restraints of society, a picaresque clown who ingeniously rights all wrongs with an instinctive sense of justice and bonhomie. (13)

Recent discussions of Boucicault, such as Scott Boltwood's alignment of the largely sympathetic, but nonetheless problematic, representation of black slaves in The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisianna (1859) with that of the Irish in The Colleen Bawn, and Elizabeth Butler Cullingford's examination of Boucicault's staging of Englishness in Arrah-na-Pogue, continue in this nationalist vein; it proves very difficult to get away from Boucicault the Irishman18.

Along with Nicholas Daly's discussions of Boucicault's work in terms of the relationship between melodrama and modernity discussed above, the other recent scholarly study of Boucicault to which my consideration of Boucicault’s spectacular sporting melodramas responds is Richard Fotheringham’s Sport in the Australian Drama (1992), which contains the only detailed scholarly analysis of Flying Scud. In reading

18 Just as recent scholarship has attempted to recover Boucicault and contextualize him beyond national boundaries, so too has it attempted to reconfigure Irish theatre history without Boucicault's influence. In his essay 2007 essay “Modernity, Geography and Historiography: (Re)-Mapping Irish Theatre History in the Nineteenth Century,” Mark Phelan charts the terrain of different kinds of theatrical experiences in Belfast, from “legitimate” performances, to street theatre and the political area.
Flying Scud in the context of the play’s production and performance history in nineteenth-century Australia, Fotheringham considers the cultural work the play performs, arguing that the dichotomies that shape melodrama – rural/urban, hero/villain, masculine/feminine – helped to allay anxieties about identity, class, and leisure in an antipodal context; he demonstrates this, in part, through tracing the various past theatrical influences on Flying Scud, including the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century hippodrama, and the various dramatizations of Pierce Egan’s bestselling novel Tom & Jerry: Life in London (1820-1821) by W. T. Montcrieff, and Egan himself. While Fotheringham’s discussion of Flying Scud recognizes the cultural function of the melodrama, his reading of the play presents an argument that contrasts directly with mine in the following pages. For Fotheringham, Flying Scud communicates the message of “the social benefits of re-establishing a leisured, benevolent, hereditary aristocracy” (84). Leaving aside the issues of geo-cultural difference, based on the analysis I present, I suggest that such an interpretation fails to fully account for the way in which the play works, in a nineteenth-century British context, to make sense of the social, technological, economic, and political changes that characterized urban modernity, and more specifically, the ideal of manliness that developed from the new experience of Victorian sport.
Flying Scud; or a Four-Legged Fortune (1866)

In spite of the relegation of Boucicault's most famous sporting play to the sidelines by many of those who have worked to assign Boucicault a legitimate place in the theatre history of England, at the time of its premier Flying Scud was by all indicators a significant success. Perusal of an early review of it in the Times on October 8, 1866, included in a discussion of the opening of the Holborn Theatre, reveals a warm reception, hinting that the play would enjoy a lengthy run following its opening on October 6, 1866, challenging Townsend Walsh's assessment that upon its premier, “the critics shook their heads in sorrow and said that Dion Boucicault was called to higher things” (112).

Commissioned for the opening of the Royal Holborn Theatre, Flying Scud; or, a Four-Legged Fortune, tells the story of trainer Tom Meredith's and retired jockey Nat Gosling's adventures when they both seek to better their lots in life by betting money on the star of Nobbley Hall stables, the Flying Scud. Though Tom begins the play as a humble farmer and trainer associated with Nobbley Hall stables, he is soon advanced to the position of squire of the Hall through a provision in the late incumbent’s will, provoking the ire of villain Grindley Goodge, the ne’er do well nephew of the previous squire. Goodge sets about to exact revenge on Meredith for not only stealing his fortune but also for ruining his chances at the conquest of Nat Gosling's beautiful and virtuous granddaughter, Katey Rideout by tempting Tom to London and embroiling him in various gambling schemes. Goodge's associates, an Irish colonel named Mulligan, a
Stage Jew named Moses Davis, and mysterious “foreigner” named Chousir – the four men are nicknamed “the quadruped” – are anxious not only about the outcome of Goodge's fleecing of Meredith, but also of the success of their attempts to defraud the young aristocrat, Lord Cecil Woodbie, for they themselves are held together by a series of past debts that constantly threaten to catch up with them. As Woodbie is infatuated with Colonel Mulligan's niece Julia Latimer, they feel assured of their success, just as they feel assured of the success of their racehorse, Voltigeur, entered in the Epsom Derby against the Flying Scud, for they have paid a bribe to have the Scud “nobbled” just prior to the race. The exposure of the quadruped's dishonest methods is in part precipitated by a duel between Goodge and Julia Latimer (disguised as her lover, Woodbie) and in a key moment of dramatic tension, Nat Gosling replaces an ailing jockey minutes before the Derby race, going on to ride the Scud to victory. The Flying Scud's victory in the Derby not only restores Tom Meredith's fortunes, but also gives him the means to prosecute Goodge and his associates; Katey Rideout's virtue is restored by a timely revelation on the part of Woodbie, leaving Nat to remark to the audience in the play’s final lines, “Well, I don't mind telling you, that our hoss is engaged to run over the course every night this week. Take my advice, back him; and tell your friends they won't go far wrong if they put a bob or two on “Flying Scud” (Boucicault 227).19

19 Two different versions of Boucicault's The Flying Scud exist. The first, that which was submitted to the Lord Chamberlin's office in 1866 and later performed at the Royal Holborn Theatre, places the sensational Epsom Derby scene at the close of Act 2, with the machinations of Goodge and his associates to “ruin”
At the opening of *Flying Scud*, Boucicault presents the audience with a manifestation of the sportsman that has clear connections to the pre-Industrial sporting world in terms that echo those used in the Victorian press’s representation of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, discussed in Chapter 3; this is accomplished through the setting up of a contrast between Grindley Goodge, the chief villain and a denizen of the “fast” sphere of urban leisure, with the hero Tom Meredith who represents a manliness that depends on the virtues of honesty and fidelity, and on the value of family, both human and equine. Initially, it would seem that *Flying Scud* contains the kind of sportsman whose health and heroism are beyond question.

When Goodge arrives at Nobbley Hall to attend the reading of his late uncle’s will, he assumes that he will take easy possession of both the Hall and its stable of race horses. He is established as an outsider by his inability to read the language of the setting in which he finds himself. Attracted by the sight of the beautiful Katey Rideout, Goodge arrives, lost and confused by his surroundings and thus enters into a bargain with Nat Gosling:

GOODGE. Where is she? Surely I have not mistaken the road? No, she disappeared round that corner and dived into this lane. Ha! A cottage

Tom following on from the failure of their Voltigeur scheme. In response to the criticism voiced in various newspapers and periodicals, the play was rearranged so that the sensation scene closes the play and resolves some of the problems and tensions created by “the quadruped’s” attempts to gain from Tom's rise in social status. For the purposes of my analysis here, I have decided to work with the later version of the play, as collected in *Forbidden Fruit and Other Plays* (1963).
hiding under the rose bushes. [Looks over the paling] The very nest for such a bird. . . . Does old squeezebags keep a sharp eye on the girl? NAT. Lord love ye, I can get over him. GOODGE. Egad! then I have hit on the right man to do my business for me. NAT. You may bet your last shirt button on it. GOODGE. I'll pay you handsomely if I win the girl. . . . tell her that I am Captain Goodge, Grindley Goodge, of Nobbley Hall. [Going R.] Stay, what is your name, my man? NAT. Well, I be called Nathaniel Gosling, but more often old Nat here abouts. GOODGE. The grandfather himself! I have been done. NAT. [Enthusiastic] Yes, you have been done brown. I've got the sovereign, no money returned. [Exit R.] GOODGE. And here I stood, I, Grindley Goodge, to be reckoned up and turned into cash by a yokel like that. (158-60)

In a parody of the rural sport of hunting, Goodge pursues Katey Rideout in a manner similar to that of an aristocrat dressed in hunting pink, yet as with many of Goodge's other actions in this scene, he demonstrates he is incapable of adjusting his urban habits to the setting of "Love Lane, near Doncaster" (157); just as Goodge proves to be physically lost upon his arrival, he also demonstrates that he is incapable of navigating the social landscape. Indeed, in his dress, manners, and speech, he echoes the characteristics of Albert Smith’s notorious Gent, discussed in the opening chapter. As his usage of phrases such as "old squeezebags" and "my man" and his repetition of his name and association with Nobbley Hall suggests, Goodge attempts to assert his status in a manner that does not fit with rural ways. His masculinity is here revealed to be an urban one motivated by a selfish desire – for status, for money, for sexual conquest – that is at odds with the morality of this sporting sphere. Not only does he show disrespect for the
social hierarchy, he attempts to assert power over Nat by bribing him to engage in sharing information for nefarious purposes.

If Goodge is revealed in this first Act to be motivated by a dangerous kind of desire – for money, for status, for Katey Rideout, Nat Gosling's beautiful granddaughter – then Tom is established as his clear antithesis, according to the traditional moral economy of the melodrama, with its seemingly black and white boundaries. Following Goodge's attempted scheming to find out who Katey is and where she lives, which is foiled by her cagey grandfather, Nat, Tom discloses his more honourable matrimonial intentions when he asks Goodge to let him continue to farm his smallholding and train the Hall's thoroughbreds:

*I'll take in all your stud, sir. I trained for your uncle. There's a two-year old in the stable now, that never had any hand but mine over him . . . I – I can't take no for an answer; it will just be ruin to me to quit the low meadows. I – I am in hopes of being married, sir. Now if you deny me I shall have no home to offer my young wife, for every penny I have is dug into your land or spent on the house I hoped that she would one day share with me. Don't turn me out like a dog, sir. (160)*

With the stuttering “I”s and the repeated use of “sir,” Tom demonstrates here that he knows his place in the class hierarchy of the rural sporting world, no matter how unjust it might seem. He also establishes his intentions relating to Nat's daughter Katey as the exact opposite of Goodge's more nefarious ones. In presenting Tom as desiring Katey as his wife rather than just a throwaway romantic liaison, the play demonstrates the morality of this sportsman, and also suggests that this figure places a high value on the ideas of
home and family, a focus no doubt pleasing to the Royal Holborn's primarily middle-class audience (Davis, “Audiences” 101). Later in the same scene, Nat assesses Tom’s value as a man following his exit from the stage: “There goes a square, honest, good bit of stuff. His character is as sweet as new mown hay; free from dirt, of a fine nose, and jest such as any woman or friend may thrive on” (163).

It is these rural associations made evident by Nat's evaluation of Tom's character that are only further underscored during the reading of the late squire's will, which sees deferential and hard-working Tom reinstated as lord of the manor, a position which Boucicault reminds us, is actually Tom's by right of birth. In an earlier exchange with Goodge, Tom explains his intricate relationship to Nobbley Hall:

You see, sir, my father, Colonel Meredith, owned this estate. He was a great racing man. Your uncle was his groom. But when my father was ruined and sold up, your uncle stepped into Nobbley Hall and became the squire. Perhaps when he found me his poor tenant, he remembered how good and generous my father had been to him, for though close-fisted to all the world, he was ever open-handed to me. (160)

As Tom's revelation here implies, it is Goodge that is the wrongful usurper, seeking to occupy and profit from Nobbley Hall and its stables based on the suspect actions of an ancestor. Following the revelation at the close of Act I, Scene v, that the squire has left Tom the entirety of Nobbley Hall and the contents of the stables in an attempt to right the past wrong of his usurpation, Tom is cheered by all present, and it seems that early in the play, order has been restored to a previously troubled paradise:
NAT. Ooraw! Ooraw! Three cheers, lads, for Thomas Meredith, the Colonel's son, the heir to Nobbley Hall.
ALL. Hurra! Hurra! Hurra! (183)

Here, Nat's call for a celebration of Tom seems to affirm and demand celebration of the kind of sportsman that Tom is. Nat not only establishes Tom's family ties and bloodline back to the rightful ownership of the property, but his call of “Ooraw,” with its obvious invocation of a Yorkshire dialect, seems to reassert the traditional class distinctions upon which such a society depends. It would seem that this is the kind of sporting masculinity which the play would like to assure viewers can confront the new and modern challenges presented to it by the urban sphere associated with characters such as Goodge and his nefarious partners in crime, the other three men who make up “the quadruped”: Colonel Mulligan, an Irish confidence trickster, Moses Davis, a scheming Stage Jew, and the mysterious Chousir.

It may at first seem surprising that in presenting such a sportsman as Tom, *Flying Scud* draws such little attention to his physical qualities. Though it can be assumed from Tom's occupation as a farmer and horse trainer that he possesses a moderate degree of strength and fitness, in this sporting melodrama, he is never called upon to demonstrate that his morality is mimicked by his health. Rather, he is provided with a substitute body in the thoroughbred horse he has spent two years training, the Flying Scud. In a relationship that only seems to underscore the value of this pastoral sporting sphere, the sportsman has his masculinity confirmed in the public sphere of the racetrack by the
actions of his horse. As Gina Doré discusses in *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse* (2006), the link between a horse and his rider or trainer was one that traditionally underscored a dependable kind of masculinity: “skilled equitation marked a rite of passage for qualified males, and the symbolic values that preserved what were seen as inborn dignity and physical grandeur of the horse were readily transferred to horsemen to verify the rightfulness of their masculine supremacy” (26). Early assessments of the Scud draw attention to his “first-rate form” (Boucicault, “Scud” 174) as well as his apparently innate ability to surpass all other contenders for the Derby crown:

NAT. For two years the Squire has been keeping that colt dark, as month after month he grew under your training, we sor the bit of stuff coming an' comin' out as sure and clear as the ye'rlly mornin' and then we kept it darker . . . I swore I'd never back anything as wore hoofs, except to lose, but I've backed him to win and he will, he will. I've been a jockey, man and boy, for fifty-nine years, and never saw his match. (162)

As with Nat's assessment of Tom's character, here he affirms the Scud's potential by comparing him with another phenomenon of nature. If Tom's good character is underscored by its comparison to “new mown hay; free from dirt” (163), then the link between the Scud's ability growing as he matures and the “clear” light of the “ye'rlly mornin'” performs much the same function in the play's discourse. Again, as with Nat's usage of dialect in relation to the evaluation of Tom Meredith, his slippage into the Yorkshire idiom while celebrating the Scud's ability only further reinforces the links between this sporting pastoral, family or lineage, and the sportsman represented by the character of Tom Meredith. Far from being emphasized merely in characters’ dialogue,
the play further drives home this point by including stage directions for the Scud's appearance on stage in I, i (158), I, iii (174), III, iv (212), and III, v (219). In his discussion of the Australian stagings of *Flying Scud*, Fotheringham notes that a specially trained horse would have played this part on stage (71).

Though by the end of Act I, this pre-Industrial world of sport seems to be stabilized by the restoration of Tom to the position of squire at Nobbley Hall, this can by no means be taken as indicative of the health and stability of the sportsman, or of his ability to meet the challenges from the urban sphere of leisure that will arrive in the subsequent acts. Tom's position as hero and as model sportsman is challenged, not only by the machinations of “the quadruped,” but also by his tenure in London. Far from being the decisive and direct man of the first act who engages with Goodge in an attempt to secure a home and the woman he loves, Tom's response to the leisure opportunities present in London reveals the sportsman’s inability to cope. In contrast to his direct request of Goodge in Act I, Tom engages in a circular and repetitive attempt to avenge Goodge's apparent ruining of Katey in Act II. Rather than engage Goodge physically, he resorts to attempting to ruin him financially through card games – a strong contrast to the healthy masculinity he presents in the first act. Goodge reveals Tom's intent to his compatriots and his desire to ruin Tom through continually arranging such meetings:

GOODGE. Tom Meredith is coming here tonight, and has promised me my revenge for the large sum I lost to him the night before last. I don't propose to begin playing cards with him till he gets half drunk, and then I fancy I shall be able to turn him inside out.
Mo. Jumping Moses! he always seems to be inclined to turn us inside out. Goodge. Curse him, I'll be even with him yet. He's never forgiven me that affair with his sweetheart, Katey Rideout . . . it's a sharp game between us, and we shall see who will win. (184)

Though Tom has the intention of avenging the wrong done to the woman he loves, his method of dealing with Goodge here contrasts sharply with his earlier request for a home and employment in order to facilitate his marriage. In this latter instance, Meredith speaks with Goodge directly and requests an opportunity to continue in meaningful labour; however, in this discussion of their later meetings at the opening of Act II, Goodge's comments reveal the change in Meredith's methods. No longer does Tom directly engage with Goodge, but rather, he attempts to affect his revenge through the indirect and even cyclical means of gambling on card games. Mo Davis registers that Tom's plan for a revenge enacted financially does have some effect, but Goodge declares his intent to continue the encounters, if only to avenge the wrong he feels has been done him by Tom's replacing him in his late uncle's will.

The effects of his encounters with the urban sporting world have a physical as well as a moral manifestation for the sportsman. As Nat notes in a conversation with Tom at the London club frequented by “the quadruped” as well as by Tom and Woodbie, his health has been affected by his urban sojourn:

NAT. Sorry to say you're not looking so well. London air doesn't agree with you like the country. You don't look half so well as when you were in the training stable at Doncaster.

TOM. And I don't feel half so well. I daresay many envy me, but they little know what I think of myself. I was never intended for the so-called “fast
life” in London. I'm getting pretty sick of it. Late hours and heavy drinking are enough to break the strongest constitution, and although I am regarded as the fortunate Tom Meredith, my money has no value for me. (189-190)

If Tom seems no longer able to avenge the disgracing of Katey by the traditionally masculine means of direct confrontation, as his conversation with Nat reveals, it is in part because he no longer has the physical health and vitality that he previously had as a resident of Nobbley Hall. The urban experience has troubled Tom's seemingly healthy and vital masculinity, both robbing him of his directness and leaving him physically scarred. In his encounters with the urban sporting world, Tom's seemingly strong and untroubled pre-Industrial identity as a sportsman cannot meet the challenges presented by life in the city. Boucicault demonstrates for his audience the limitations of a masculinity that comes from this sphere; it is not capable of meeting the challenges posed to it by urban modernity.

Tom Meredith's struggles with the urban experience are mirrored in the comic character of Lord Cecil Woodbie, the young aristocrat who turns to the Turf world in order to craft for himself a more masculine identity. While the Victorian sportsman is a predominantly middle-class identity, in representing the failures of someone of Woodbie’s class to deal with the influences of the urban leisure sphere, the play only further underscores the inadequacies of incarnations of sporting participation that look backwards rather than forwards. Like Tom Meredith, Woodbie is identified with a pre-Industrial and aristocratic world; his challenge in the play is to win the love of Julia
Latimer, the niece of the suspect Colonel Mulligan, despite the objections of his mother, Lady Woodbie, who wants to maintain a strong hold on her son. As with the character of Tom Meredith, Woodbie is represented in the play as struggling to come to terms with the experience of the urban sporting sphere, having his masculinity compromised by “the quadruped's” machinations at the same time that he suffers the nasty physical side effects of attempting to behave as a Gent, the popular incarnation of the sporting spectator chronicled by Albert Smith in *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847), and also visually represented in William Frith’s *The Derby Day* (Figure 6).

Upon closely looking at *The Derby Day*, the viewer is struck by a forlorn and bedraggled looking, slight young man who has just lost his watch and chain to a group of grifters standing behind him to the left of the painting. Dressed in a jacket and trousers of a fashionable cut and sporting a top hat, he strikingly embodies for the viewer the figure of the Gent, first discussed in Chapter 1. Understood to be overly concerned with appearance and dress, precocious in his pursuit of vices such as betting, and eager to play the man of the world, though stunted and weakened in various capacities due to insufficient exercise and overstimulation from his urban environment, the Gent was, as Mary Cowling (1983) notes, “born very much of his own time” (467). Far from the manly paragon of the heroic sportsman, the Gent as depicted in Frith’s painting serves as a reminder of the potential such spectating experiences had for inflicting damage on the health and well-being of the men involved in them. It is this figure Woodbie hopes to
emulate, but as his connections to “the quadruped” reveal, he is too inexperienced to fully comprehend the kind of plotting and scheming that occurs in the sphere inhabited by such a creature. For the likes of Goodge, Mo Davis, Colonel Mulligan, and Chousir, he is a resource and an opportunity:

GOODGE. . . . Have you heard any news from Lord Woodbie's trainer? How are the horses we sold him? 
MO. Vulcan has broken down, and Tripod has been and justified his name, and goes on three legs. He says the stable looks like a coffin lid, it's full of screws. You couldn't pain von of them to look like a horse. 
GOODGE. Where's the young lord now? 
MULL. Playing billiards. 
MO. His Lordship is a comfortable anooity to me, and Mulligan makes a settled income out of him at billiards. 
GOODGE. While you and I manage his stable and advise him how to lay his money out. 
MO. Ah, he's a young mine of wealth, as ve've discovered, and ve've all shares in him. (164)

Far from registering as a mature man with the likes of “the quadruped,” Woodbie is here reduced to a speculative business opportunity and a regular income for the men.

Woodbie, it is suggested here, has taken up what he believes to be manly interests – training and racing horses, playing billiards, and, it is later revealed, gambling; however, his aping of these behaviours is without insight, or the ability to negotiate the dangers and swindles of such a sphere. Far from confirming his adulthood or masculinity, it only further emphasizes the inability of this pre-Industrial masculinity to handle the pressures of the urban sporting world.
As with Tom, the limits of Woodbie's ability to cope with the urban leisure sphere are also brought to the audience's attention through his dialogue with Julia Latimer over his adoption of behaviours which he believes will imbue him with a certain kind of maturity, behaviours associated with Albert Smith’s Gent and viewed as an integral part of leisure practices in the city. To a degree familiar with such habits through her exposure to the world inhabited by her uncle and his associates, Julia measures Woodbie's ability to physically endure the effects of such behaviour and determines him lacking. For Julia, however, familiar with the questionable behaviour of “the quadruped,” this lack, at least for her, is something desirable. Following Woodbie's proclamation of “I can't get up in the morning till I've had a cigar, and positively I could not get over the afternoon without a pick-me-up at two and a stiff tod before dinner” (166), Julia responds:

**JULIA.** Don't bet, you lose your money; don't drink, you can't stand it; don't smoke, you don't like it . . . Lord Woodbie, do not affect vices for which you have no taste, nor mimic manners of which you are really ashamed. Smoking makes you sick, I have seen you grow pale at your second cigar . . . You abhor brandy, yet you drink it neat, just to show off. Tobacco and spirits offend your mouth, and you wince when you swear. (166-167)

In *The Natural History of the Gent*, Albert Smith outlines some of the favourite behaviours of that denizen of the urban modernity, “the Gent who Goes to the Races” discussed in Chapter 1. Fond of a cigar and cutting a dash in public, the Gent (Figure 7) assumes certain behaviours primarily to be seen and counted as such, in much the same manner that young Woodbie takes up gambling, smoking, drinking, and swearing. As demonstrated by Julia's response to Woodbie's attempt to affirm that he is indeed a man
according to the standards of the London “fast set,” Woodbie is not physically mature enough, nor capable enough, to withstand the demands such behaviours make of his body. This inability, for Julia, signals his difference of character from the men with whom she is familiar; however, it also signals for the audience the lack of ability such a model of masculinity has when faced with the challenges of the urban sphere. This lack of maturity and inability to negotiate the life in the city is only further underscored when Woodbie finds himself physically replaced by women in two significant encounters with men. On the occasion of his duel with Goodge in Act II, Scene vi, his place is taken by Julia in disguise, and in the opening scene of Act III, while Julia is convalescing following her encounter with Goodge in Calais, it is his mother, Lady Woodbie who superintends his engagement at Nat's lodgings in London. As the pun on Woodbie's name suggests, he would be a man, but is never able to translate that desire for a masculinity able to handle the challenges of the urban sporting sphere into a reality.

The type of sportsman represented by the character of Nat Gosling is different from that represented by characters such as Tom Meredith and Lord Woodbie and it is this difference that signals to the audience the arrival of a sportsman who, while still associated with key manly attributes at the heart of middle-class identity, has adapted and thus is able to take on the challenges presented by the world of urban leisure. Though, like these two men, Nat has a clearly identifiable place in the class spectrum of the pre-industrial sporting world of Nobbley Hall and its stables, the gender identity he embodies

136
Figure 7: The Gent from Albert Smith's *The Natural History of the Gent* (1847), page 4
on stage is much more successful at encountering the temptations and pitfalls of the urban sporting sphere than the older idea of masculinity suggested by Tom and Woodbie. 

*Flying Scud* does not erase Nat's class identity – indeed, the play draws attention to it through his often comic Northern accent and his dropped aitches and gees; however, it uses other means to ultimately present Nat as a hybrid masculine figure. Not only does it associate the jockey with ideas of fatherhood and bodily control central to middle-class manliness in the period as discussed by James Eli Adams, Herbert Sussman, and John Tosh, but it also presents him as a manifestation of the sportsman able to navigate the urban sphere to his advantage, culminating in his triumphal entry riding the Flying Scud at the close of Act III. In presenting to audiences such a sportsman, the spectacular sporting melodrama performs the cultural work of allaying anxieties about the potentially damaging effects this new, urban sporting sphere might have for the middle-class masculine participant.

In his position as the senior and most experienced jockey in Nobbley Hall stables, Nat Gosling occupies a place of privilege and respect among his fellow sportsmen. While he performs the role of legal guardian for his granddaughter, Katey Rideout, he is also represented as someone who acts as a father figure to many of the young jockeys in the stables, telling tales of his past racing triumphs and from that extracting truths about the effort necessary to maintain a manly sporting identity. From the opening of the play, one of the aspects of this identity that is emphasized time and again by various characters is
that of control – of one's self and one's appetite – perhaps most strongly associated with the comedic character of Bob Buckskin, the overweight jockey continually attempting to reduce his weight and bring his errant body under control. In mentoring Bob, Nat is established as a father figure, dispensing advice and advocating for the cultivation of the manly quality of self-control among the jockeys of Nobbley Hall. Though the sportsman that is produced in an environment such as this one is shaped by the demands of the sport, and thus is antithetical to the much-lauded amateur ideal most often associated with ideas of middle-class sporting manliness, Nat's addressing the problem of appetite and the necessity for self-control positions his character's fatherly discourse in the middle-class sphere of masculinity. Within the walls of the Nobbley Hall stables, Nat polices the jockeys' bodies. In response to seeing Bob's overweight frame carrying a mug of beer, Nat responds:

NAT. Bob, my son, what's all this here? You told me as you wos on a regiment! Oh, this won't do! This must all come off! D'ye drink beer?
BOB. A drop or so.
NAT. You look it. And you eat butter; I see it in yer. And cheese! What d'ye expect to come to with a constitootion and a career like wot you have?
BOB. I don't know what to do with myself.

In presenting the audience with a character such as Bob Buckskin, Boucicault is drawing on the then-still popular figure of the Victorian freak, Daniel Lambert. As both Sander Gilman and Joyce Huff discuss in their various treatments of Lambert, the 739 lb. Regency prison custodian who exhibited himself in Piccadilly in the early part of the nineteenth century, representations of the man functioned long after his death as “a focal point for readers’ fears about the ability to manage consumer desires in a developing commodity culture” (Huff 39).
NAT. Tomorrow, lad, you'll breakfast on a pint and a half of warm water, and you'll put that in it. [Gives him packet] Hepsom salts! So called 'cause they prepares the body for training. Then you'll put yourself on dry toast, stale bread, and arf a pint o' tea a day, no milk in it, mind ye. Ye mustn't look at sugar, and if you dream of beer at night, take another dose of salts in the morning . . . Fifty years ago, they knew how to breed jockeys, but, love ye, I'd split a pen, and make more of a jockey than half the boys that gets the crack mounts now. (171-172)

Nat's jocular use of phrases such as “my son” and “lad” firmly establishes the age difference between the two men at the same time that they hint at the power dynamic which that implies. Though it may at first seem that Nat's Northern accent as it is rendered here – “regiment” for “regimen” and “constitootion” for “constitution” – emphasize his class position they also highlight the discourse of control that runs throughout his speech. In response to Bob's exclamation of “I don't know what to do with myself,” Nat outlines a measured diet that echoes not only the diet outlined for athletes in training in such popular exercise manuals such as Walker's Manly Exercises (1855), but also the exclusion of foods believed to produce fat, namely dairy products and carbohydrate-rich foods, suggested by William Banting's popular weight loss pamphlet A Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public (1863). What Nat is advocating here is not the cultivation of a body that will fit within the pre-Industrial sporting world with its fixed class hierarchy, but rather a controlled and managed body that will help the individual achieve some kind of advancement in the “career like wot [he] have” in the modern sporting world. As Nat informs his charges prior to Bob's beery arrival, “I was laid down right as a boy, lads; I'd a father as wouldn't stand no fat, and he skinned me
close before I could walk. He brought me up in the weight I should go and when I was old I didn't depart from it” (169).

Nat is established as a father figure who advocates for self-control among his fellow sportsman; however, this is not the only way in which he is marked out in the play as an example of the kind of manliness which can successfully meet the challenges of modernity. At several points in the play, *Flying Scud* reveals to the audience that Nat has been quite successful in negotiating the challenges of the urban sphere drawing further attention to the unsuitability of the older model of the sportsman embodied by Tom and echoed by Woodbie. As Fotheringham notes, Nat is the only character in the play able to beat “the quadruped” at its own game, setting up schemes that ultimately benefit those in the right. While Fotheringham suggests this canny behaviour is indicative of a possible threat the jockey presents to the security of the rural class hierarchy which is only quelled by the fair treatment of men like Tom Meredith (84), a consideration of Nat's actions in the play, and his status in the Turf world, suggest that his capacity as a trickster is indicative, rather, of his ability to meet challenges presented by the city. From the moments of his first encounter with Goodge in Act I, during which he extracts payment for promising to help Goodge get around the protection of Katey Rideout's guardian before revealing he is her grandfather, to his plan to sell “the quadruped” access to the *Flying Scud* for £2000 (only to then switch the animal with another, resulting in the men nobbling their own horse, Voltigeur), Nat continually proves he is able to counter the
challenges presented by the post-industrial sporting sphere. Though this may be read as a triumph of the rural over the urban, details of Nat's situation in life revealed throughout the play suggest otherwise. While he may drop aitches from time to time and play the part of the country bumpkin when it suits, the sportsman Nat represents is a hybrid identity that comes from his connection to a sporting world that is in and of itself fluid. As Nat reveals to his fellow jockeys in Act I, Scene iii, his success on the Turf has helped him to establish himself in a comfortable, middle-class situation:

NAT. Well, I might have saved more if I hadn't spent so much, but I suppose I mustn't grumble. You see I does pretty well even now; I gets all the information from the boys in the stables, I advertises in the “Pink 'un,” and I sells tips, straight tips too, not like some on 'em. I can truly say that I've never done anything yet that I'm ashamed of, and I can look back on the past with knowledge that I have never wronged man, woman, or child. (169)

As Mike Huggins notes in his discussion of the Victorian turf, *Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914: A Social and Economic History* (2000), “top trainers, jockeys and race officials were middle-class in terms of income. Racing provided the means of social mobility” (74), an opportunity of which Nat has availed himself not only through the money he made as a jockey – the suggestion that he “spent so much” but is still in a comfortable position at the time of the play's action hints that he has done quite well for himself – but also through his practice of selling racing tips to punters. While Huggins notes that this was a suspect practice, Nat is careful to distinguish himself as a man who is known for his honesty. The fact his tips are “straight” and that he sells them to a
prominent sporting paper are only further indications that Nat has managed to transcend his rural roots.

This is confirmed in Act III, Scene i, which is set in “Neat chambers in Nat Gosling's London lodgings” (201). While for the most part the settings used in the play differ between outdoor rural settings in Doncaster and indoor, urban settings such as the club rooms in London frequented by Tom Meredith and “the quadruped,” the fact that Nat occupies a comfortable space both near Nobbley Hall, but also in London signals this sportsman’s ability to adapt, rather than succumb to, his urban surroundings. This is emphasized in an exchange he has with his granddaughter upon the arrival of a visitor.

Nat assumes it is one of his neighbours, the grocery woman, Mrs. Soursawkins:

Katey. [At window] Good gracious, there's a carriage drawn up to our door, and an old lady and a young gentleman have got out of it.

Nat. P'raps it's Mrs. Soursawkins, the greengrocery woman, calling with her son about a bottle of embrocation I promised for the boy's leg; he strained himself at football. (202)

While this exchange does work to further emphasize Nat's class position through the rendering of his accent in words such as “p'raps,” it also establishes Nat as a comfortable member of an urban community. His comment about aiding the greengrocery woman's young son suggests that not only is Nat known to his neighbours, but that he is also part of the city, providing medical treatment for a young boy injured through playing one of the many folk games that were to become popular urban sports in the nineteenth century. Though the details of young Soursawkins' participation in football is limited – we do not
know if he has played in a pick up game organized among neighbourhood children, or as part of a team established by a local church or school – the fact that it is football has caused his injury is significant, for with the ratification of the “London Rules” in 1862 and the formation of the Football Association in 1863, both of which occurred in London, football had become an identifiable urban game (Huggins, “Victorians” 63). Though Nat is identified throughout *Flying Scud* as a character who has strong ties to the rural and the local, this spectacular sporting melodrama works to give audiences a sportsman who actively engages with the new, modern sporting world and emerges the better for it, demonstrating that such involvement can be healthy rather than destructive. Nowhere is this more evident than in the sensation scene that closes Act III out of which Nat Gosling emerges as the hero.

Following the premier of *Flying Scud* on October 6, 1866, the Victorian press recorded the audience response to the Epsom Derby sensation scene that originally appeared at the close of Act II. On October 8, 1866, in an article titled “Holborn Theatre” discussing the opening of the new venue, *The Times* describes the enthusiastic audience response:

> To describe the excitement of the audience during this scene would be impossible. Carried on by the course of events, they had so completely identified their own feelings with those of Nat Gosling that they watched the progress of the mimic race with an anxiety that could scarcely have been surpassed if every one of them had actually put his money on Flying Scud. The shout from the pit, boxes, and gallery that greeted the old jockey when he came forward as the victor expressed not only violent
approbation, but a strong sense of relief. Thank goodness! the “legs” are defeated and the Derby winner is Flying Scud. (7)

Similar comments were made in the pages of *The Saturday Review* in its theatre review column, “The Theatres”: “never were the walls of a building shaken with more clamorous emotion than those of the Holborn Theatre . . . during the progress of the race, which terminated with the veteran jockey mounted on a real horse as the winner” (455). The weekly, comic journal *Fun*, in the October 20 edition of its column “From Our Stall” also noted that the effect of Nat Gosling deciding to ride the Scud and the outcome of the race that followed “is as of lighted turpentine on a tar barrel. Every man, woman, and child in the ‘auditorium’ becomes ‘hossy.’ One touch of horseflesh makes the world pigskin” (57). The impact of this scene was also noted in newspapers and journals as diverse as *Bell's Life in London, The Sporting Gazette, The Illustrated London News, The New Sporting Magazine, The Athenaeum, The Ladies' Monthly Magazine*, and *The London Review*. Aside from recording the noteworthy response of the audience to observing a realist rendering of the Turf experience on stage, what is telling in these accounts of the reception of *Flying Scud* is the place that Nat Gosling's character captured in the audience imagination. Far from celebrating the triumph of Tom Meredith's assumption of a new class identity with the acquisition of Nobbley Hall, the arrival of Nat Gosling riding on the back of the Flying Scud emphasizes the old jockey's ability to not only outwit the scheming quadruped, but also to navigate the sphere of urban leisure. Far from presenting audiences with a calm, pastoral sense of order, the sensation scene invokes the idea of the
urban crowd and its diversity in a fashion similar to the depiction of crowds in *The Illustrated London News*'s visual coverage of the 1869 Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, discussed in the previous chapter. As indicated by the stage directions at the opening of Act III, Scene v and later (following the Flying Scud's race victory), the crowd is a very mixed and colourful one:

**SCENE 5: Front scene near Epsom Downs. Crowds of people, such as at frequent races. Thimble riggers, Negro minstrels, vendors of race cards and dolls, vans, tents, drags, costermongers' carts, etc. Woodbie and Julia in a phaeton. Negro minstrel song is going on. Enter gipsy who tells Julia's fortune, while two cockneys are taken in by the thimble riggers. Enter policeman. The thimble riggers decamp. This scene should maintain several natural episodes in pantomime during the dialogue . . . Immense tumult. The grandstand is seen to flutter with hats and handkerchiefs. The crowd surge and sway in the distance. A number is seen to go up in the distance on the post. Renewed cheers. The course is flooded with the crowd . . . Frantic cheers. Enter policemen surrounding Nat, who is mounted on Flying Scud and is on his way to the weighing room. Mo Davis appears very ill in one corner, Goode, Mulligan and Chousir in another, stamping with vexation. (214; 219 original italics)

As the arrangement of some of the characters on the stage indicates – specifically, the positioning of Julia and Woodbie in a carriage and the scene set up with the two cockneys being scammed by a thimblerigger – the play purposefully evokes Frith's *The Derby Day*. Indeed, what is emphasized by both Frith's painting (and its world-wide success) and *Flying Scud*'s staging is the diversity of the crowd, whose attendance at the race has been facilitated by such modern inventions as the rail network and the sporting press. Though class divisions were still to a certain extent in place in such an environment, as Huggins notes, the modern Turf was a physical and cultural space in which identity was very fluid:
Meetings provided the major setting for local social gathering and cross-class mixing. More importantly still, they were a privileged site for ludic behaviour, an arena where the bonds of convention and respectability could, if wished, be temporarily laid aside and where risk and the *risqué* coincided . . . Much of the attraction of the races was their carnival spirit, their loosening of the bonds of convention and respectability, and betting, gaming, food, liquor and prostitution all played their part in creating that spirit. (“Flat” 117; original italics)

Huggins goes on to discuss not only how the railway changed the size and composition of attendance at race meetings, but also how developments such as the telegraph and the rise of the penny sporting press in the mid-century affected the Turf experience. Like many sports in the middle of the nineteenth century, horse racing had been changed by technological development. As such, to have the sportsman emerge from this sensation scene which not only reproduced the sight of the crowd but which also created the illusion of a horse race being run on stage through the use of miniature or cardboard horse silhouettes and the manipulation of perspective, is to suggest to the viewer that this is a character who represents the kind of masculinity that will be able to confront the challenges presented by the urban sporting sphere and rise above them. *Flying Scud* exploits the traditional division between rural and urban, country and town, in order not only to demonstrate the limits of the heroic incarnation of the sportsman, such as that represented by Tom Meredith and Woodbie, but also to establish for the audience an adaptable and resilient sportsman who can meet the challenges presented by urban modernity, thus allaying contemporary concerns about the dangers such a sphere might hold for the middle-class, masculine participant. Nat Gosling, an old jockey who is a
blend of both the rural and urban world, is just such a figure, and in Boucicault's later sporting drama, *Formosa, the Most Beautiful; or, the Railroad to Ruin* (1869) we can see a further development of these comments on the sportsman demonstrate his strength in facing the challenges of modernity and indicating the important place such an incarnation held in the Victorian popular imagination. The cultural work performed by *Flying Scud* – of providing audiences with a new kind of hero who is able to subdue the threats presented by the modern sporting experience while demonstrating the limitations of the older model of sporting participation – is one continued in Boucicault’s second spectacular sporting melodrama, *Formosa, the Most Beautiful, or The Railroad to Ruin* (1869).

**Formosa, the Most Beautiful; or The Railroad to Ruin (1869)**

In the final moments of Act IV of Boucicault’s *Formosa*, audiences are treated to a life-size, real-time staging of the annual University Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge. Central to this scene is a double track laid across the stage, along which “steamboats and two race boats, supposed to be forty-five feet long, with profile eight rowers . . . are worked across; one has a light blue, the other a dark blue, flag at the prow” (5). The technical complexity of the scene is augmented by the appearance, “on the bridge . . . behind the parapet, [of a] group of profile figures, men and women, [in] miniature to . . . jump up and down as if to see the end of the race” (5). Add to this the crowd of spectators described in the stage directions for the opening of the fifth and final
scene – a crowd containing “Acrobats, . . . Negro Minstrels . . . Boys fighting, [and] Women and Men quarrelling” (42; original italics) – and the jubilant cheers and antics of the Oxford coach, Sam Boker, and what you have taking place on this Victorian stage can be described as nothing short of spectacular. I argue that in staging the University Boat Race at the conclusion of Formosa, the play further emphasizes the complex but resilient nature of the manly identity the sporting sphere produces. While Flying Scud establishes the retired jockey Nat Gosling as a new kind of sportsman, in Formosa it is suggested that the sportsman, represented by the character of Tom Burroughs, and to a lesser degree the Earl of Eden, can ultimately withstand and survive the dangers of urban modernity, but only if protected, maintained, and policed by a community of men devoted to this ideal – in short, a community of fellow sportsman, such as those found among amateur university oarsmen, bringing to mind the familial structure of the university boat club represented in the coverage of the 1869 Boat Race in The Times and other newspapers, discussed in Chapter 3. Boucicault’s Formosa pits an exemplary sportsman against the corrupting forces of the urban world of London, which threaten the health and stability of his manhood; in depicting the ultimate triumph of this sportsman over such a corrupt city environment, the play assuages audience fears that middle-class manliness might be forever infected by such new influences.

The premier of Formosa on 5 August, 1869, at the Drury Lane Theatre, ignited debate in the Victorian press, due to the play's seemingly unabashed depiction of the
more unsavoury elements of London life, including drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Though the play's title references the secret identity of Jenny Boker – her life as “Formosa” in London has established her as one of the “the most celebrated among the tawny sirens of Hyde Park” (Boucicault “Formosa” 12) – what *Formosa* is first and foremost concerned with is not women, but men.²¹ Set on the eve of the annual Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race in 1869, the action concerns the descent and rise of the stroke oar of the Oxford Blue Boat, Tom Burroughs. Torn between his love for Nelly Doremus, the daughter of his Oxford tutor, and his attraction to and fascination with Jenny Boker, the daughter of publican turned rowing coach Sam Boker, Tom is tempted to London by the unscrupulous villain Compton Kerr who, with other members of his Black Crew, set about facilitating Tom's ruin. With the revelation of Nelly Doremus's humble origins as the daughter of Bob Saunders, Tom's dissipation intensifies, as does his gambling, and he

²¹ In a 19 August, 1869 letter to the editor, signed “An Amateur Critic”, one *Times* reader voiced his moral outrage in strong terms which characterized much of the debate surrounding *Formosa*:

> Either I have been dreaming, and like Rip van Winkle, awake to find myself Heaven only knows how many seasons behind my age, or else *Formosa* is one of the most impudent, and from its magnitude, most mischievous attempts that have ever been made to corrupt the English stage . . . the great fault of the piece, so far as morality is concerned [is] the fact that the heroine who gives the play its name, and upon whose virtues and vices the interest chiefly turns, is, in plain English, a harlot . . . I have, of course, often enough seen this sort of thing on the French stage . . . I can, therefore, only appeal to Mr. Boucicault himself. Let him add to the usual advertisments of *Formosa* the announcement that no unmarried woman or minors will be admitted to the theatre while is is being played. (7)

Further comments of this nature appeared again in the letters column of *The Times* as well as in reviews of the play in sporting papers such as *The Sporting Times*. 

150
soon finds himself unwittingly enmeshed in the Black Crew's plot to throw the race by having him arrested and imprisoned for debt. In spite of protests about his lifestyle from his friend and coxswain, the Earl of Eden, Tom falls victim to Kerr's plans. Upon his release from prison thanks to the work of men from both Boat Race crews, his name is cleared, his relationship with Nelly Doremus re-established, Kerr and his fellow villains punished, and Jenny is restored to her parents. The play concludes with the sensation scene described above in which Tom strokes the Dark Blue boat to victory over Cambridge, calling to mind the actual outcome of the race which took place in March of 1869.

The play opens with a scene in which the sportsman is celebrated and the audience is introduced to Tom Burrows at his manly peak. It is this appearance of the sportsman that the events of the play will test in the coming acts, only to ultimately assure the audience of its survival. Tom and his crew of fellow Oxonians are preparing for the annual race against Cambridge by training on the Thames, taking instruction from Sam Boker, the prizefighter-turned-publican-turned-rowing coach who, with his wife, runs the Old Swan Tavern. Coming off the water at the end of a long practice, the men are praised by their coach in terms that emphasize their healthy manliness. As the conversation between Sam, Mrs. Bolker, and their daughter Jenny in Act I, Scene i indicates, Tom and his fellow crewmates are the physical and spiritual embodiment of manly perfection:
Boker . . . Give it to her - work her up! Time! Time, gentlemen, if - you please! Now, send her along! Long, strong and steady! steady! Well rowed! There! (gets down and puts on his coat) I never coached a finer crew. True as steel and fine as a needle . . . That’s the Eight coming. They will want a stiffener arter their pull. Mother, make nine pots of shandy gaff. If any of the gents should be noisy, I’ll take ‘em off into the skittle-alley. (holds up his hands in pugilistic position)

Mrs. B. (to Jenny). You go in, my dear. The young gentlemen are gentlemen, but they are rather wild and frisky. You go in - it will be the best for all parties. (8)

With their instant response to his instruction and Sam’s comment to his wife, that the men are “true as steel and fine as a needle” (8), Tom and the crew are firmly established as iconic examples of the sportsman figure. Rowing for their university has not only made the crew into “fine” examples of physical strength and skill, but it has also instilled in them a moral “truth,” or self-control, which is demonstrated in their hard work with the oar. Though it at first may seem contrary to ideas of control, Sam’s promise to “take ‘em off into the skittle-alley” coupled with Mrs. Boker’s warning to her daughter Jenny to go in for fear of the men’s possible “wild” behaviour bring to mind Charles Kingsley’s formulation of muscular Christianity in that they hint at the men’s healthy sexual appetites. That men had sexual desires was not problematic, for the energy that fueled these desires was the very same that fueled their achievements in sport (Rosen, “Volcano” 22). What mattered, and what demonstrated physical and spiritual strength, is that men prove capable of controlling those desires through various ascetic regimes. Mrs. Boker characterizes these appetites as “frisky” and therefore somewhat lessens the threat of the men’s arrival, turning them into playful young kids rather than horny old goats.
Once the men physically enter the scene, this relatively harmless characterization is further emphasized in that the stage directions instruct the men to “hustle and kiss” Mrs. Boker in a mass demonstration of manly affection, after which they exit “leaping and running” in response to Boker’s query of “[W]ho’s for a little gentle exercise?” (Boucicault, “Formosa” 8-9). This is an idyllic world of sport, full of vigorous and righteous sportsmen in the process of learning the proper manly behaviour, a charming example of the pastoral world of sport that will be explored further, through a darker lens, in the series detective fiction discussed in Chapter 5.

While Tom, the play’s hero, appears at the opening of Formosa to be well on his way in his development into an upstanding specimen of the sportsman, there is another character in the play who illustrates this process in more detail, emphasizing its value, and reminding the viewer of the role that sport plays in crafting middle-class masculinity. This character demonstrates to the audience that though it might have its dangers, the modern, urban sporting world also contains opportunities for me to develop a healthy and stable masculine identity. From his first entry onto the stage in Act I, scene i, the Earl of Eden, coxswain to the Oxford University Eight, is marked as a figure struggling to live up to the standard of manliness that his crewmates embody. As his name suggests, throughout the play, Eden embodies a kind of prelapsarian masculinity, untouched and untainted by the influences which corrupt Tom Burroughs. In many ways, Eden’s progress from boy to manly man acts as the illustration of an ideal progression - one
which Tom Burroughs may have undergone prior to the action of *Formosa*, but the results of which he is unable to maintain in the face of temptations from Jenny/Formosa and her Black Crew. Unlike his counterpart Lord Cecil Woodbie in *Flying Scud*, Eden achieves a degree of acceptable manliness and later in the play heads up the community of oarsmen who ultimately rescue Tom and help to reinstate him as a hero, suggesting that not only is it possible to throw off an older masculine identity associated with land ownership and bloodlines, but also that such an identity no longer has currency in this period. Eden’s transformation from an ineffectual aristocrat to a healthy sportsman figure signals to the audience that in order to thrive, the sportsman must adapt, in a manner similar to that demonstrated by Nat Gosling in *Flying Scud*. In a brief, joking exchange, the Oxford rowers tease about Eden’s apparent lack of maturity:

*Enter Tom Burroughs, Sir John Talbot playing a bugle, and the rest of the Oxford Crew, the last to enter being Earl of Eden.*

**Eden.** Now, then all together, gentlemen!
**All.** Hip–hurrah!
**Tom B.** Now then, Talbot, rouse the house up with a strain.
**Talbot.** In what key.
**Tom.** Like Eden – in the minor. (8)

While the function of Eden’s place in the crew is to act as a leader, and while he tries to exercise this position upon his entry, calling for the men to execute a team cheer with his admonition “Now, then all together, gentlemen,” his attempts at displaying qualities of manliness similar to those he sees in his crewmates are undercut by Tom singling him out as a “minor” – a male who has yet to come of age, and who has yet to attract the
financial, moral, and physical responsibilities which that position entails. Eden himself later reinforces his own position when he confesses to Tom his love for Tom’s sister Edith and the problems he faces in winning her affections. Following on the heels of Tom’s confession of love for and from not one, but two women (the Boker’s daughter Jenny, and Nelly Doremus, the ward of Tom’s Oxford tutor, Dr. Doremus), Eden categorizes his failings using the same language as Tom does at the opening of the play: “Ah I wish I could inspire women with love like you. But I am only a boy, and I shall always be a boy! So thinks your sister Edith – she won’t see that I am in love with her” (10). This image of Eden as a youth permanently detained in a kind of continuing adolescence is only further emphasized when one consults the cast list for the first performance of Formosa at Drury Lane on Thursday, August 5, 1869 and notes that the role of the Earl of Eden was played by Miss M. Brennan.

Throughout the course of the play, Eden struggles to acquire and maintain a manly identity as a sportsman. In undertaking this project, Eden exemplifies for the audience the place of sport in the development of men and illustrates the potential longevity of this ideal. As his exchange with Sam Boker in Act I, Scene iii reveals, sports such as boxing can work to transform a man so that he is capable of taking up the duties necessary to his position, namely those associated with matrimony and familial obligations. As Eden spars with Boker, he reveals his anxieties about failing to fulfill the expectations of his family name:
Boker. Werry pretty, my lord! werry good! Now, then! Strike out! Mind your guard. Hit out well from the shoulder. Well countered.
Eden. Oh! (staggers and takes seat R. C. Boker takes seat L. C.) It’s very hard work, Sam. Ain’t you thirsty?
Boker. Always, my lord. (pours from decanter L. C. table and drinks.)
Eden. Sam, do you think this will make me a man?
Boker. Well, you aren’t a coward, and that’s a long way towards it.
Eden. I’ll let you into a secret, Sam. I would be a coward, if I dared. My hall at home is filled with portraits of effigies of my ancestors, great stalwart men, clad in armor, who never seemed to take kindly to me. They say, the eyes of portraits follow you around a room - but these only look at one another, never at me.
Boker. (carelessly). What’s the odds?
Eden (sits R. C.). I am the last of my race, the Earls of Clitheroe and Lords of Eden. This family of English paladins, who came in with William the Conqueror, has dwindled down to me. What has reduced a valiant line to this extremity of nature?
Boker. Time! (rises) Now, then! (they spar) Don’t be afraid to go in. (16-17)

Eden’s conversation here with Sam Boker reveals the acute, though comedic sense of his own failings. While to a certain extent functioning to make him a figure of fun, the terms into which Eden puts his worry and anguish are telling, for they clearly lay out the manly expectations up to which he, and others in a similar social position, attempt to live. The image that Eden invokes to explain to Boker the weight of these expectations is that of his family’s portrait gallery in an unnamed country house, a hall “filled with portraits of effigies of [his] ancestors, great stalwart men, clad in armor.” This line of portraits is later echoed in the blood-line Eden discusses – a “family of English paladins” or brave knights – of which he views himself as an “extremity of nature.” If this discourse of hereditary privilege and chivalry is naturalized through Eden’s speech, so too is the solution he
undertakes to cure himself of his lack of courage, for in turning to Sam Boker for boxing instruction, he expresses a hope of disciplining his “boyish” body and turning it into that of a man. The scene opens with Boker giving Eden instruction in boxing form and through this it emphasizes the way in which boxing training is meant to change Eden from an “extremity of nature” into a fine, manly physical specimen. What this “extremity of nature” needs is regulation and shaping, and following the form of boxing will do that. In doing so it is also expected that it will craft in Eden a true sportsman, one unwilling to balk at the idea of “going in” that is voiced by Boker at the end of the exchange, “going in” not only to the immediate sporting ring, but also the larger arena of public and private life.

The first steps Eden takes in fulfilling his familial obligations, and thus entering into the public life of a grown man, look back to sport as a model. In one of his first romantic encounters with Edith, Tom’s sister, Eden chooses to understand the conversation of courtship in terms of this sport. Chiding Edith for responding coldly to compliments delivered by Boker, he says:

**EDEN.** You are in the habit of giving encouragement. A person who gives encouragement to vulgar admirers, must not complain if they pay their tribute in copper. You are like the ornamental gardens, on which the public are not allowed to gaze, but on condition that they do not walk on the grass, or pick the flowers. **MISS B.** (after a pause). What are you reading? **EDEN.** A work on Sparring. **MISS B.** Conversational? **EDEN.** No, physical. **MISS B.** How provoking you are! (c.)
EDEN. (suddenly turns and embraces her). Edith, you don’t mean that! Miss B. Oh! let me go! You are walking on the grass! (17-18)

Interestingly, here Eden’s crisp and curt exchange with Edith over his reading material perfectly exemplifies the very kind of sparring that Eden denies he is studying; however, later in the play, this linguistic manifestation of action becomes a dominant feature of Eden’s speech, marking his successful transition and emphasizing the role that amateur sports such as boxing and rowing play in cultivating the manliness the play celebrates.

This successful transition is first hinted at in the meeting between Tom and Eden that takes place at Jenny/Formosa’s villa, in Act II, Scene iii. Eden arrives in order to try and talk some sense into a wayward Tom who introduces him to the assembled crowd of dissolute, gamblers, and fornicators with a recognition of a change: “Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you the coxswain of the Oxford Eight, known as quality and not quantity – a pocket Apollo!” (29). Though Tom’s language here at first seems derogatory due to the emphasis on “quality and not quantity,” Tom’s comparison of his friend to Apollo is evidence of change in Eden. Whereas previously both Tom and Eden referred to the young earl as a figure on the cusp on manhood, the comparison with Apollo is one that underscores the way in which Eden has grown to fit the manly mold. Later in Act IV, Scene i, Edith Burrough’s claim that Eden is “[f]lying about the town to get the bail of [her] poor brother” (37) animates this sportsman, for not only is Eden moving freely about London, he is attempting liberate his fellow sportsman from the literal and moral shackles that are holding him prisoner. Finally, this recognition of
Eden’s change in manly status in the play is driven home by his own active locution in Act IV, Scene i in response to both Nelly’s and Tom’s concerns about the efficacy of the campaign to prove Tom’s innocence, and capture the members of the Black Crew, Compton Kerr and Major Jorum: “We are leaving no stone unturned.” (40). By the time the curtain drops on the sensational Boat Race scene and its obligatory tableau, the Earl of Eden has completed his transformation. With the victory of Oxford over Cambridge, he emerges the victorious leader of a group of sportsmen, fêted by his contemporaries on stage.

That *Formosa* depends on a secondary character – what denizens of the Victorian theatre often referred to as the “light comedy”22 – to embody for the audience a stable and constant example of the kind of manliness that sport can cultivate hints at the play’s opinion of this development process. While *Formosa* acknowledges that exemplary manly figures such as Tom Burroughs and other members of the Oxford exist, there is a necessity for them to actively strategize about how to manage their involvement with the potentially corrupting pleasures of the new urban modernity. It is no surprise that Boucicault chooses a crew of oarsmen to embody the sportsman; not only does a crew resonate with associations of physical and moral strength due to the sport's strong amateur connotations in this period, but it also exemplifies, in its structure, the kind of

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22 The designations assigned to roles in the 1869 published version of the play include “Light Comedy”, “1st Comdey”, and “Low Comedy” (2)
close-knit, manly community the play believes is necessary to maintain the vitality of this manly ideal. That the sportsman is the right kind of man, there is no doubt; however, he cannot survive in the urban sphere without the support and regulation of other similar individuals.

If the Earl of Eden represents the formation and cultivation of an ideal of manliness, then the hero Tom Burroughs represents its contact with the city’s potentially damaging influence. If Eden undertakes a journey into manhood through his involvement with sport, then Tom undertakes a journey of a darker sort through his involvement in the passive world of urban leisure, as the secondary title of the play suggests – *The Railroad to Ruin*. The journey metaphor is again invoked in the synopsis appended to the published version of the play (meant for reprinting in small bills of advertisement or inclusion in programs), which describes each of the four acts as a different stage on a disastrous train journey. Tom’s encounter with urban modernity and its “sports” is made up of stages with titles such as “The Bell Rings,” “Going at Full Speed in the Dark,” “The Red Danger Signal,” and “The Collision!” (44). In choosing to understand Tom’s fall from manly grace as akin to a train disaster, the language of the play links the fears

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23 The secondary title to *Formosa* is Boucicault's play on the title of Thomas Holcroft's famous 1792 comedy, *The Road to Ruin* in which Holcroft depicts the tenuous situation of an English family, the Dortons, whose continuing social status is dependent on a series of gambles, on horse races, bank runs, and marriage. As David Karr notes in his discussion of *The Road to Ruin*, Holcroft deploys the techniques of the eighteenth-century sentimental drama in order to register a radical, if Jacobin, political critique of English society at the time of the French Revolution (328-29).
provoked by Tom’s decline with larger fears of the urban and the modern that were present in Victorian culture, specifically those related to the fast-growing rail network that began covering England in the middle of the 19th century. As Nicholas Daly notes in his discussion of the staging of train wrecks in the Victorian theatre, the railway “was both an agent and an icon of modernization” (Daly “Technology” 56):

  [T]he railway transformed the country, blurring the lines between rural and urban, facilitating the growth of the major cities, sweeping away local times and introducing its own standard time . . . For the members of the Victorian middle classes, the railway was often their most direct encounter with the discipline of this new industrial technology . . . In this sense, the railway quite literally brought people up to speed. (“Technology” 57)

To use language associated with this new mode of transport to describe the journey that Tom undertakes signals to the audience that it is also a modern concern, and like the challenge presented by modernity in the form of the railway, the challenges to the sportsman presented by the modern and the urban, though threatening, can be met and overcome. In Formosa, Tom Burroughs encounters a whole host of modern temptations in a parallel world of urban leisure, and after succumbing, eventually triumphs, ensuring not only the longevity of the influential model he and Eden embody, but also providing for audiences a comforting reassurance that the individual will not be overwhelmed or permanently corrupted by modernity.

If Tom and the Earl of Eden present two varied models of the sportsman, then Compton Kerr – identified in the Cast of Characters of the published version of Formosa as the “Heavy Lead” (2) – represents for the audience just how far an individual with
manly potential can be corrupted if he fails to embrace the right influences. In many ways, Kerr is a darker version of the Gent, akin to Grindley Goodge in *Flying Scud*. In the character economy of the Victorian melodrama, Kerr’s character supposedly provides a foil for that of Tom, the undisputed hero; however, it is revealed in an early exchange with Tom in Act I, Scene i, that like Eden, Kerr once had manly potential that was wasted. While Kerr is in many ways an opposite for Tom, he is also akin to Tom; if Eden represents to viewers the ideal journey of manly development, Kerr exemplifies the undoing effected by urban modernity of the second half of the nineteenth century. In discussing the possibility of Kerr marrying Tom’s sister Edith, the two men discuss their past experience at public school:

**Kerr.** Dr. Doremus referred me to you.  
**Tom.** Well, frankly, I must refuse to speak for you.  
**Kerr.** Ah! Why? because I am poor, and you prefer some titled fool, with more baronies than brains.  
**Tom.** No! I only want a man of undeniable character and a good fellow.  
**Kerr.** What is there against me?  
**Tom.** Nothing, I confess. But you were not liked at Eton. I followed you there, and found no traditions favorable to you. And boys are generally just to one another. Then you left abruptly the second year.  
...  
**Kerr.** Was I reputed wild?  
**Tom.** Not exactly; or, at least, it was said that you were less wild yourself than one who profited by the wildness of others. (11)

Here, Kerr accuses Tom of dismissing his matrimonial suit based on his lack of fortune, but as Tom’s response indicates, what is of more note, and what poses a larger problem is Kerr’s lack of “character”. That the world of Eton possesses no lasting testimony to Kerr,
but only affirms his reputation as a “one who profited by the wildness of others” through its silence, marks Kerr out as an individual whose journey into respectable manhood was interrupted and later abandoned. While this stands in stark contrast to both the Earl of Eden and to Tom, it also echoes the disastrous journey Tom is about to undertake and hints at the fragility and the instability of this very model of manhood celebrated at the opening of the play.

Though Kerr is having this conversation with Tom at the Swan Inn, he is not a denizen of this environment which characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Boker, and the Oxford Eight inhabit. Rather, Kerr and his associates, often referred to in the course of the play as the Black Crew (34), occupy an urban space that exhibits characteristics antithetical to those that make up the world of Oxford and the Swan Inn, and reminiscent of the London haunts of “the quadruped” in *Flying Scud*. Where life at the Swan Inn is authentic, linear, and active, the urban world inhabited by Kerr and his dark associates is inauthentic, circular, and passive. In the former environment, the sportsman flourishes, in the latter, he is endangered and corrupted, and must overcome the challenges presented to it in order to remain intact.

The stage directions for creating the setting of Act I, Scene i reveal the pastoral nature of the Swan Inn, establishing it as the perfect environment for the cultivation of amateur sporting manliness. The stage directions create a space that speaks of manly activity and innocent, if constructive, pastimes:
(English, present time.)

Act I. Scene 1st: View of Tavern and River Thames in 7th grooves.

Landscape; two-arch bridge over narrow river up L.C., painted. Trees R., and bank of river. A, low fence, partly overgrown with creepers. B, B, B, a low fence before cottage L. 3 and 4 E. L. 2 E., side of outhouse with fishing poles and oars stood up against it. R. 2 and 3 E., a boat-house, high roof extending across stage to L.; boats run on, as if high and dry, and on wooden horses, with sculls, oars, masts with sails wrapped around them. Window in cottage latticed, not transparent; door practicable. C, a sign, “Sam Boker, Boats to Let, Old Swan.” (3)

The intricacy of the directions helps to emphasize the importance of sport in this environment. From the oars leaning against the side of the outhouse to the centrality of the boat-house and moving boats in the background, the Swan Inn is set up as a place of idyllic manly activity, the nature of which is linear and direct, in as much as a crew works hard to move as efficiently as possible from the beginning to the end of a race course.

This is further emphasized in the stage directions for the opening of Act I: “Scene I. – Inn and view of River Thames. Overture of nautical and English Country airs, “Jolly Young Waterman,” “Lass of Richmond Hill,” etc.” (7). The call for “English Country airs” imbues the setting with a kind of nostalgia, while the ballads specifically mentioned by the stage directions bring to mind courtship in a pastoral setting. Along with this

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24 “The Jolly Young Waterman” is a song taken from Charles Dibdin’s 1774 ballad opera, The Waterman, or The First of August, which like Formosa has a plot focused on a boat race, in this case the ‘professional’ boat race of Doggett’s Coat and Badge. Another interesting feature which both plays have in common is the central hero, a young oarsman named Tom.

25 “Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill” is a popular English folk song written by Leonard MacNally (1752-1820) and composed by James Hook (1746-1827). The lyrics describe a beautiful woman, believed to be MacNally’s wife, Francis I’Anson.

164
emphasis on peaceful activity, there is also an emphasis on authenticity, for not only do
the intricate directions help to establish a believable rural setting, but the pub sign which
references Sam Boker’s position as landlord hints at the direct connection between
individual and setting, a connection that becomes twisted or broken later in the play,
when the action moves into an urban space. It is, however, worth noting that as with
many of Boucicault's other “authentic” or realistic stagings of pastoral spaces – such as
the rural Ireland he creates in *The Colleen Bawn* – the very authenticity of this pastoral
scene (effected through the increasingly complex stage technology of the period)
ultimately brings the audience into direct contact with the very modernity it, in the world
of the play, seems to exclude.

Contrasted with this riverside setting is the urban environment associated with
caracters such as Compton Kerr and his “crew” members. If Tom and the rest of the
Oxford Eight are identified with the rural setting of the Swan Inn and all that it
represents, then the Black Crew, including Jenny in her guise as Formosa, are associated
with an environment that exhibits exactly opposing characteristics. If the play's opening
scene establishes the value of authenticity, linearity, and activity, then Formosa’s Fulham
Villa and the surrounding environs of Victorian London are spaces of inauthenticity,
circularity, and passivity. An early exchange between Jenny and Kerr at the opening of
the play establishes the way in which the environment from which they both come is far
from the authentic one of the Swan Inn. While up until this point, the audience has been
only suspicious, if not completely ignorant, of Jenny’s double life, in this exchange, Kerr unfolds her true identity, or in this case, identities:

**Kerr.** I take you for the person sometimes called Mrs. Lascelles, and sometimes Lady Arthur Pierpoint, but known amongst her set of the dashing and delightful as Formosa, the Most Beautiful!

**Jen.** You make a dreadful mistake!

**Kerr.** No! why your hair has not yet recovered from its late attack of *Auricoma*!

**Jen.** Cense, sir! you do not know me! (12)

Unlike her father and mother, whose names are clearly and unmistakably associated with the Swan Inn through the signs that advertise for accommodation and boat rental, Jenny is revealed here to have an abundance, indeed even a surplus, of identities, as Kerr’s catalogue of aliases reveals. His parting shot of “why your hair has not yet recovered from its late attack of *Auricoma*” is also significant in this regard, for it emphasizes the way in which Jenny’s urban identity is one built on illusion and duplicity, for “auricoma” was a popular term used to refer to blonde hair dye in the period. While at her parents' pub by the river, she may be viewed as a happy and innocent maid, pure and authentic, Kerr’s comment reveals that her appearance, altered through the use of hair dye, is but one of many, and that even her authenticity is in fact inauthentic, one of many identities she assumes to suit the moment; her plethora of aliases confirms this.

While the seasoned denizens of Fulham and London are marked by their inauthenticity, the environment also lures its long-term inhabitants into behaviours that contrast strongly with the linear directness that is part of life in at the Swan Inn. During
his stint as an active member of the Oxford Eight, the majority of Tom’s time is devoted to working toward a goal of moving from one point to another in the fastest time possible. This devotion to the linear contrasts sharply with his behaviour following his move to London and his commencement of a life of dissipation and pleasure. Stunned by the revelation of Nelly’s true origins – she is revealed to be the daughter of a disreputable dog seller and jack of all trades, not the respectable middle-class woman she initially appears to be – and caught up in his own life of gambling and dissipation, Tom can no longer take decisive action against the injustice of Nelly’s fall from middle-class respectability, but rather finds himself engaged in a kind of ineffectual policing, tracing her movements through the city, mindful of her predicament, but unequipped, nay even unable to act decisively. As Cobb the manservant reveals to a questioning Kerr, Tom’s actions have a frustrating circularity to them:

COBB. The ‘Ansom cab, sir, as usual! (L. TOM changes his coat.)

. . .

KERR. Cobb! (COBB comes to C.) what do you mean by “the ‘Ansom cab as usual?”

COBB. Why, sir, at the same hour every day, wet or dry, master goes out in a ‘Ansom cab.

KERR. I suppose you know where he goes in it?

COBB. Yes, sir. He goes to Oxford street, where he waits till a slim young gal comes out of a bootmaker’s, when he follers her ‘ome to Lambeth, No. 8, Roach’s Rents. Then, when he has seen her in doors, he take another cab can comes ‘ome. And that’s what he does every day. (22)

Though Tom is active here, in as much as he moves through the streets of London, ensuring from a distance that Nelly’s new place in life does not in any way corrupt her,
he is ultimately ineffectual in that he repeats this action day after day, and in no way does it bring him closer to the celebrated middle-class manly goal of marriage and a family. Though his policing and patrolling have echoes of chivalry in them, ultimately, it is a flaccid rather than virile action, speaking more of Tom’s ineffectuality as a sportsman than of his ability to act and protect.

If life in London is one of inauthenticity and circularity, is it also a life of passivity. This is perhaps the greatest ill effect of all, as the manly man should be active – spiritually, morally, and physically. This passivity is shown, in the course of the play, to creep up slowly on Tom, gradually taking over more and more of his sporting body to the point that he is rendered completely immobile and ineffectual. The first signs of this are early in the play, immediately after the almost overwhelming display of energy and high spirits that marks the first entrance of the men from the Oxford Crew. After Eden reveals to both Mrs Boker and her daughter Jenny Tom’s romantic attachment to another woman – Nelly Doremus, the ward of Tom’s Oxford tutor – Tom discusses the fact that he is attracted to two women at the same time and reveals that the “fascination” that he feels for Jenny is one that negatively affects him due to her association with the urban:

**Eden.** You are not angry with me, Tom?
**Tom.** *(pacing to and fro).* No! I am angry with no one but myself. The fascination that girl exercises over me is irresistible.
**Eden.** Depend upon it, it is a bad influence. After you have been with her, you are good for nothing.
**Tom.** I know it, but I can’t shake it off. I feel I am infatuated with her, spite of my affection for Nelly.
**Eden.** You can’t love them both, Tom!

168
TOM. Yes, I do. I love Nelly because she is an angel - but I love Jenny like the devil! (10)

In this exchange both Tom and Eden use language associated with the physical body to make sense of Tom’s predicament. In keeping with his manly behaviour up to this point, Tom expresses the requisite affection for his female counterpart in the play, Nelly Doremus, when he says to Eden that he loves “Nelly because she is an angel.” While Tom’s comment may hint that he understands and appreciates the expectations attached to his manly position – that he will marry an “angel in the house” 26 and raise a family, all the while protecting it and providing for it – his discussion of his attraction to Jenny reveals that his manliness is perhaps not so secure. Though Jenny’s double life as “the most celebrated among the tawny sirens of Hyde Park” (Boucicault, “Formosa” 12) is only revealed after the entrance of the villain Compton Kerr later in Act I, Scene i, here Tom and Eden are both unconsciously registering her dual nature and expressing this recognition through the language they use to make sense of Tom’s attraction to her. That Jenny is part of two worlds morally at odds with each other – that of the suburban-rural world of the Swan Inn where university amateurs caper and cavort and that of the urban world of Formosa’s villa a place of gambling, prostitution, and male passivity – makes

26 The term “angel in the house” comes from the title of Coventry Patmore’s narrative poem, the first part of which was published in 1854. Three more parts followed: “The Espousals” (1856), “Faithful for Ever” (1860), “The Victories of Love” (1862) and when taken together they narrativize the ideal courtship and marriage of Felix Vaughan and Honoria Churchill, characters based on Patmore and his first wife, Emily. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the term “angel in the house” became synonymous with the Victorian feminine ideal of submissive wife and selfless and devoted mother.
her a dangerous woman. Unlike Tom’s attraction to Nelly, which will spur him on to the heights of manly middle-class achievement, his attraction to Jenny has exactly the opposite effect. It renders him passive, as Eden notes when he comments that following any time with Jenny, Tom is “good for nothing” (10). Interestingly, Jenny’s influence is understood in physical terms. It is a “bad influence” that leaves Tom unable to turn his hand to any manly activity, including, the audience can assume, rowing. Tom recognizes it as an inferior kind of attraction when he terms it an “infatuation” – it is a more appropriate “love” he feels for Nelly – but it is one he “can’t shake off”, words that align these feelings with those associated with a nagging illness rather than a lasting love. If Tom’s love for Nelly enables him, his infatuation with Jenny disables him, and briefly demonstrates the dangers the urban world poses for the health of Tom’s manly, athletic body.

This urban danger is enhanced following Tom’s move to London and the further effects of it on his once active body become visible when he entertains a visit from a concerned Eden at Jenny’s Fulham villa. Eden has come out of concern not only for Tom, but for the fate of the Oxford crew in their upcoming race against Cambridge, and he attempts to cajole Tom into action, highlighting in his comments the way in which Tom’s life of dissipation in London has changed his once manly body, reminding the audience that while the manly sporting amateur is an ideal Boucicault values, it is not one that can maintain a continuous healthy existence apart from a community of influence:

170
EDEN. I have come from the crew. They want you in your place again. We are on the eve of the struggle, and moments are of all importance. You have fallen off in your training. Why, you must be soft as wax. They say that the race is sold; that you have fallen into the hands of a rascally set, with whom you spend your nights in dissipation and your days in bed.

... 

TOM. The public lacks confidence! Bah! (to GAMBLERS in room L.) Dudley! put me on another thousand for the Dark Blue! ay, double it, if there are takers!

EDEN. Oh! that will not restore confidence or give us our old place. We want you at the stroke, Tom! the boat misses you - there’s not heart in her. Her life is gone! (29)

If, at the opening of the play, Tom physically embodied everything that was active and manly, in this exchange with Eden, his changed perspective on the Boat Race and its outcome indicate the way in which that manliness has been corrupted by the life he is now leading in the city. Eden’s speech creates a body that is the exact physical opposite to that which the audience has earlier observed. Whereas in the opening scene, Tom bounds onto the stage like a frisky, young animal, here he has “fallen” – note the Biblical connotations of Eden’s choice of words – and has become “soft as wax”. This physical disintegration is echoed by his moral failings. If earlier, Tom’s support of the Oxford Crew came in the form of his modeling from the stroke seat of the boat the kind of oarsman and manly men they should be, he now offers Eden and the others in place of this modeling a cry of “put me on another thousand for the Dark Blue! ay, double it, if there are takers!”; a kind of financial substitute for his bodily presence. In this moment, it is the passivity of Tom’s body that is problematic, coupled with the fact that the only
action that he undertakes is that of placing a larger bet. These are not the actions of a manly man.

If, in his exchange with Eden, Tom finds his body capable of only circular or limited action, then as the play progresses, and the urban begins to take a further toll, this capability becomes reduced even further - his body begins to gradually disappear from before the audience’s eyes until it is problematically absent altogether, at a crucial moment. For example, at the opening of Scene ii of Act III, Tom is discovered asleep on a sofa in Jenny’s villa, undisturbed by the ribald laughter around him, leading Jenny to comment that she “could think that he was sleeping in death” (33). By the time he has been imprisoned for debt in a sponging house in Act IV, Scene ii, his body has ceased to be visible to the audience and has to be extracted by men from both the Oxford and Cambridge Eights crews, as the stage directions detail:

**BOK.** The stroke of the boat is in there - and they won’t let him out though the money is ready and offered them. Shall the race be run or not? All cheer and attack POLICE. Enter CAMBRIDGE CREW, L. Cheers. Enter OXFORD CREW, R. Cheers. Enter MEN R., with two long ladders. Ladders are set up against house, C. and L.C. OXFORD MAN goes up L.C. ladder. CAMBRIDGE MAN goes up C. ladder, and gets attic window open, so that TOM can come out and descend ladder. All cheer. Tableau.

*Scene closes in.* (41)

Through this scene, Boucicault counters the relative inactivity of Tom’s body with the manly heroics of both the Oxford and Cambridge crews, reminding the audience that while it may be fraught with certain tensions due to the kind of animal energies it contains, the recreational sporting body is preferable to the inactive, urban body. The
spectacular staging of the Boat Race that shortly follows this scene only further reminds the audience of this, for akin to his experience of the race, a man’s sojourn in the world of sport is finite, and as with the race, should a man work hard enough, he will emerge a victor.

Sporting practice was irrevocably changed by the Industrial Revolution; the space of modern sport which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century was only one facet of the larger urban experience with which writers, artists, and dramatists were attempting to come to terms. Like William Frith’s *The Derby Day*, and other works by Baudelaire, Smith, Mayhew, Jerrold, and Doré, Dion Boucicault’s *Flying Scud* and *Formosa* are popular culture artifacts concerned with mediating the relationship between the middle-class masculine participant and the new experience of sport. They perform the cultural work of allaying audience anxieties about the potentially negative effect such a new sporting experience might have on middle-class men through both pointing out the dangers located in it and through offering audiences incarnations of the sportsman that sustain no lasting damage either physically or morally. In *Flying Scud*, audiences are shown the inadequacies of an older, aristocratic model of masculinity in the face of challenges from the changed world of the mid-Victorian turf, and offered a new idea of heroism in the hybrid character of Nat Gosling. In *Formosa*, they are presented with a sportsman able to maintain his health and vitality, but only when he has the support of a masculine community to help him withstand the testing conditions of the urban sporting
world. Like the representations of the sportsman found in the pages of the Victorian press in this decade, those found on the Victorian stage ultimately work to celebrate this figure as indicative of the potential of the new, urban sporting sphere to foster healthy participants, however drastic might be the falls from which they rise. This optimism voiced in the 1860s through the press and the spectacular theatre was not, however, sustained through to the end of the nineteenth century. As the incarnations of the sportsman present in series detective fiction from later in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth demonstrate, in the decades following the sportsman’s positive appearance, suspicions began to emerge in the Victorian cultural imagination as to whether or not this was a variety of middle-class masculine identity that could be trusted to remain healthy and stable.
Chapter 5

The Pastoral Sportsman: Series Detective Fiction and the Sacred Space of Athletics

In the next two chapters, I will examine the way in which the series detective story, as published in monthly magazines such as The Strand Magazine and The Windsor Magazine, contributed to the articulation of the sportsman figure at the close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth. Sports journalism and the spectacular melodrama, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, examine the sportsman and the sporting sphere in order to demonstrate his ability to adapt to and even thrive in the modern, urban environment of Victorian Britain while at both work and play, series detective fiction provides its readers with a somewhat different representation. By the end of the century, this key popular culture form in the urban leisure sphere was offering a less positive representation of the sportsman. In the intervening years, the new, modern sporting sphere continued to grow, and the model of participation embodied in the sportsman gained a wider currency and appeal. This fuelled the still on-going debates about the effect involvement in this sphere would have on middle-class masculinity.

In the coverage of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race discussed in Chapter 3, the Victorian press strove to present the life of the sportsman and his activity in the sporting sphere as a remedy for the potential harm to be found in the urban, professional environment; this representation of the healthy, manly sportsman responded to the
popular medical opinion that viewed the developing sphere of modern sport as something potentially damaging to the middle-class, masculine participant. The Victorian spectacular melodrama, as exemplified by Boucicault’s *Flying Scud* and *Formosa*, though perhaps more explicit in the way in which it represents the dangers that are a part of the urban environment, also depicts the sportsman as a positive, if not triumphant, figure. He is able either to adapt without compromising his essential manliness or, with the help of the sporting community comprised of like-minded men, to subdue and control the chaos that is identified with the city. By the time of the publication of series detective fiction stories by Arthur Morrison and Arthur Conan Doyle, however, there is a discernable shift in the public perception of the sportsman, as evidenced by his representation in Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” (1894) and Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students” (1904). In both narratives, this figure is represented as one that fails to live up to the standards of masculinity associated with his active sporting participation. The stories span a decade during which the sportsman is revealed to be a flawed and problematic figure and during which the narrative of middle-class men’s relationship to the urban sporting sphere was scrutinized, once again becoming a matter for concern. Arthur Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” presents readers with a sportsman who is deformed and damaged by his existence in a sporting sphere driven by profit and business concerns. While Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students” also demonstrates that the sportsman is capable of
criminal activity, it chooses instead to emphasize the way in which he is eventually able
to control his baser impulses, thus accentuating and reaffirming his strength and nobility.
This varied response registered in these stories’ representations of the sporting world
articulates a shift in the place of the sportsman figure in the Victorian popular
imagination. By the close of the century, the sportsman is represented as no longer solely
benefitting from his involvement with modern sport. Rather, these representations
highlight the way in which his sporting participation has left him either deformed and
degenerate or struggling to uphold the ideal of the healthy hero more freely celebrated in
previous decades. Both stories feature illustrations by Sidney Paget, perhaps best known
for his solidifying of the visual appearance of Conan Doyle’s Holmes through his work
for The Strand Magazine. It is through the prose of Morrison and Conan Doyle,
combined with the work of Paget, that series detective fiction registers at worst a distrust,
and at best a concern, about the figure of the sportsman and the world of sport in which
he plays.

**Solving the Crime: The Cultural Work of the Detective Story**

As with the spectacular melodrama of the 1860s, the series detective story was a
popular cultural form that worked to mediate, if not manage, contemporary anxieties
about a host of different issues during the *fin de siècle*. As scholars such as Elaine
Showalter and Joseph Kestner note, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning
of the twentieth was a time of massive social, political, and economic upheaval. In *The*
Edwardian Detective (2000), Kestner provides a veritable catalogue of worries dominant in the cultural imagination, worries, he goes on to argue, that the detective story in various incarnations, attempts to manage:

- international diplomacy, global espionage, racial deterioration, imperialism, international competition, class, fear of Germany, terrorism, science, urbanism, suburbanism, technology, criminality and gender, surveillance, the status of women, conurbation, violence, male and female transgressive behaviours, and the role/rule of law. (28)

In response to these concerns, series detective fiction provided, in the words of Albert Hutter (1975), an early evaluator of the cultural role played by such narratives, “conflict resolution” (207) for the various social and political tensions it addressed in its various plots. Like Hutter, in his influential The Novel and the Police (1988), D. A. Miller ascribes to the detective story – what he refers to below as “the novel” – a comforting regulatory power that counteracted the threat of upheaval and change:

The novel – as a set of representational techniques – systematically participate[s] in a general economy of policing power . . . The story of the Novel is essentially the story of an active regulation . . . Detective fiction is thus always implicitly punning on the detective's brilliant supervision and the police supervision it embodies. His intervention marks an explicit bringing-under-surveillance of the entire world of the narrative. (2; 10; 15)

detective story acts to reassure “readers of the reliability of . . . quite deterministic codes of class, gender, and ethnicity . . . and to render logical the social order that they imply” (12; 14). This reading of the detective story, dependent upon ideas articulated in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), thus requires a certain kind of detective, one who responds reassuringly to the challenges presented, especially as they relate to masculine identity. As Stephen Knight comments in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980), the detective was “the model of a superior being, a superman” who displays “the aura of chivalry, of patronizing autocracy and essential conservatism” (79; 83).

In *Adventure, Mystery, Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1977), John Cawelti discusses how this conservative cultural work of the detective story and its hero – focused as it often was on solving crimes occurring with a family circle (both actual and metaphoric) – was aimed at addressing primarily middle-class concerns arising from the changes in moral, spiritual, and political authorities in the period:

> The particular combination of cultural factors [such as] the decline of traditional religion, the growth of uncertainty about the social order, together with a general acceptance of the ideals of individual achievement and the family circle . . . were most evident at precisely the time the classical detective formula reached its widest general popularity, the early twentieth century . . . these factors were strongest among that group who were apparently the most enthusiastic devotees and even addicts of the formula – successful, highly educated professional people whose backgrounds were most firmly in the middle-class tradition. (103)

My discussion of the representation of the sportsman and the sporting sphere in series detective fiction responds to both these claims about the cultural function of the detective
story and also to this prevalent understanding of the detective as an agent of order and normative values. In many instances, the detective figure participates directly or indirectly in the action at the heart of the sporting environment; this complicity raises questions for the reader concerning how this involvement alters the way in which the detective performs as an emblem of masculine identity.

The “sporting detective” is an ambiguous figure, marked by his familiarity with the codes and behaviours of the world of sport, as is the case with Arthur Morrison’s Martin Hewitt and, as discussed in Chapter 6, Horace Dorrington, but also remarkable due to his active participation, as in the case of Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. In examining the relationship between the detective and the sporting sphere, I build on the work of scholars such as Ed Wiltse, who has argued in relation to Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes canon that “the kind of cultural work these stories have performed is much more complex and multivalent than the 'incarcerated' readings of [the detective story] would have us believe” (107). I also engage with ideas about this relationship, especially as it is rendered in the work of Conan Doyle, discussed by Emelyne Godfrey in *Masculinity, Crime and Self-Defence in Victorian Literature* (2011). More broadly, Joseph Kestner, Diana Barsham, and Charles Rzepka have also discussed a more complex reading of the cultural function of the detective story. Kestner notes that it is “important to underscore that a detective does not always succeed, and even when there
is success, there often remains a residue of doubt, equivocation and ambiguity to destabilize an attitude of complacency about order in the culture” (21).

**The Sporting Pastoral**

If one is to consider the response of series detective fiction to the development of modern sport culture in the Victorian period, it is important to consider how such fiction engaged with popular discourses about the environment in which the sportsman played. In Arthur Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” (1894) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students” (1904) the setting common to both stories is a variation of the broader idea of the pastoral. More generally speaking, the pastoral can be understood as first a literary form, and second as what Terry Gifford in Pastoral (1999) describes as “an area of content” which always has at its heart “the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” that is always marked by “some form of retreat and return” (2; 1). As Raymond Williams states in his polemical discussion of the pastoral in The Country and the City (1973), it is also “a social order, and a consequent way of seeing, which we are not now likely to forget” (34). From this understanding of the pastoral space – a literary setting that offers a retreat from the urban – one can then move on to apply this idea specifically to the culture of sport, wherein the sporting space takes on these connotations of “retreat and return,” even if the actual, physical environs are located in urban centres. In these instances, the sporting pastoral is a cultural imagined space to which men can retreat in order to affirm their masculinity either
through directly engaging in sporting activity, or through seeking the company of other men of similar interests and inclinations. Both John Tosh and Mike Huggins touch on this formulation of the sporting pastoral in their discussions of the history of men and sport and the development of sport clubs in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Tosh argues, the sporting club was a “primarily a masculine affair, and it took men out of the home” (“Place” 188):

One category of club grew with breathtaking speed during the late Victorian period – the sports club . . . Victorian men sought out an associational life for masculine conviviality, intellectual discussion, politics, and culture [and] the addition of sport to this list represented a major increase in men’s out-of-home activities . . . For many men sport held out the reassurance of an alternative way of life to the feminized home. (“Place” 187-88)

Mike Huggins also discusses this cultural expression of sport as an escape for men, commenting that many such institutions were “all-male, with speeches, conviviality, cheers, songs and toasts,” all rituals that “helped to assert male team spirit, together with a sense of the club’s importance and uniqueness” (“Victorians” 107). If the pastoral offered escape from the pressures of urban life, then the sporting pastoral offered men an opportunity to escape from the increasing pressures of complying with the Victorian ideal of domesticity, what Tosh refers to as the “tyranny of the five-o’clock tea” (“Place” 7). In Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the sporting pastoral is represented by the physical space of the Victorian sporting pub and the broader sporting town, whereas in Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students” it is established as a nameless,
quiet, Oxbridge university college. Both stories illustrate that the sportsmen who come out of these different incarnations of this space do not fully measure up to the ideal embodiment celebrated earlier in the century in such popular culture forms as the Victorian press and the spectacular melodrama. In the first instance, the sporting pastoral and its inhabitants are revealed to be damaged beyond repair by the influence of the insatiable desire for financial profit, an influence that Hewitt’s solution to the mystery does not alter or remove. In the latter, the assumption that the figure of the sportsman represents a healthy body and healthy mind is undermined by Holmes’ discovery of the truth, although ultimately the story still works to reaffirm the sportsman’s identity as a controlled and noble figure.

**Arthur Morrison’s “The Loss of Sammy Crockett”**

In “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” originally published in *The Strand Magazine* in February 1894 and later collected into the first collection of Martin Hewitt detective stories, *Martin Hewitt, Investigator* (1894), Arthur Morrison’s detective, Martin Hewitt, finds himself embroiled in the mystery of a missing athlete. In order to gain information he needs for another case, Hewitt befriends Mr. Kentish, landlord of the Hare and Hounds public house, and primary investor in Sammy Crockett, a promising pedestrian. In the early stages of Hewitt’s friendship with Kentish, Crockett goes missing, and as a way of enticing Kentish to divulge the information he needs for his other investigation, Hewitt undertakes to find Crockett. After piecing together clues from the scene of his
disappearance – a training ground at the rear of the Hare and Hounds – Hewitt determines that Crockett was lured away by a group of rival sporting men who played on his attraction to Nancy Webb, a local barmaid. Crockett was then locked up in a failed commercial development owned by a Mr. Danby, a bookmaker and sometime contractor, and Kentish’s key sporting rival. Mixed up in the affair, and guilty of conspiring with Danby, is Crockett’s trainer Raggy Steggles. With the aid of Kentish’s son, a sergeant in the Grenadier Guards, Hewitt returns Crockett to the Hare and Hounds and the pedestrian then competes in his scheduled race for Kentish and wins. News of this victory reaches Hewitt back in his rooms in London, via a sporting newspaper. During Hewitt’s investigation of the circumstances of Crockett’s disappearance, the sportsman is represented as a figure that is deformed, both physically and morally, suggesting to readers that involvement in the sporting sphere does not always guarantee that participants will emerge as manly paragons.

That the setting of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” is a version of the sporting pastoral is established at the outset in the manner in which the space of Kentish’s Hare and Hounds and the “sporting” town of Padfield are represented both verbally and visually. Though it is clearly not Sidney’s Arcadia, Kentish’s Hare and Hounds pub fits the model of the sporting oasis discussed by Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew in Mud, Sweat and Beers: A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol (2002). Collins and Vamplew make a strong case for understanding the Victorian sporting pub as a space that
responded to nostalgia for simpler, pre-Industrial times by offering a welcome escape from difficult urban environments. As they note in their discussion of bowls, a game played on greens connected to pubs, such sites were popular because they partially recreate the inclusive, cross-class leisure patterns of pre-industrial times, when the sport of the common people took place under the patronage of the gentry. Indeed, much of the appeal . . . was based on [the] associated imagery of summer, green fields and leisurely playing time so redolent of English pastoralism — and for many working-class players and spectators, the bowling green may well have been the only green field within walking distance. (29)

This idea is echoed in Brett’s description of the Hare and Hounds, and of the landlord Kentish. With Padfield established as “a northern town, pretty famous for its sporting tastes,” which may be a reference to the village of Padfield in Derbyshire that in 1851 had a population of just over 2000 people (Francis White 588), the Hare and Hounds is revealed in the course of Hewitt’s investigation, to possess all the necessary accouterments of a sporting pub. The pub’s name harkens back to the pre-Industrial, cross-class, outdoor sporting tradition of hunting, and attached to the back of the pub is a space for pedestrians to train – what Kentish refers to as his “bit o’ground at the back [with] a cinder-sprint path there, over behind the trees” (Morrison, “Crockett” 364). Together, the gesture to field sports and the “bit o’ ground” marked off with trees suggest an idyllic retreat from the workaday world.
At the heart of this idyll, is the landlord Kentish, whom Brett establishes as a jovial and friendly denizen of the pub, familiar and welcoming to strangers who possess an interest in sport. Though he first appears “a stout, bull-necked man, of no great communicativeness” he later reveals himself to be a “jolly (and rather intelligent) companion . . . with innumerable anecdotes of his sporting adventures” (361). Thus the Hare and Hounds is not only a space within which a visitor can participate in sport, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a space in which he can talk about sport. As Collins and Vamplew note, this is a key characteristic of the pub as part of a sporting pastoral:

Such discussions [of sport] were an indispensable constituent of the conversational glue which held together the ‘masculine republic’ of the pub. Both the pub and sport were almost exclusively the domain of the male, places where men would usually go to enjoy the company of other men and avoid the presence of women . . . And like the sports field, the pub was also a site of masculine ritual: fathers would get their sons drunk . . . and apprentices were expected to buy drinks for their instructors as part of their admission to their chosen trade. (25)

This reading of the space of the Hare and Hounds, and the village of Padfield in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” engages with a reading of the importance of setting to the story offered by Lila Marz Harper in her singular critical treatment of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett.” Harper seeks to establish Arthur Morrison in the fin de siècle tradition of detective writing and to understand his shifting perspective on the urban poor as depicted first, sympathetically, in his short stories of the 1890s and later, more critically, in his revised edition of Tales of Mean Streets (1894). In doing so, Harper reads the setting of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” as exemplary of a shift away from “Conan Doyle’s fog-
shrouded London” (78), still implying, however, that the setting is Southern: “The stories take place in less atmospheric offices, pubs, or in newly built struggling suburbs rather than in old twisting streets. Morrison seems to be saying that this is the London of today and of the future, here are mysteries to be solved” (78-79). While this reading points to the potential dangers located in Morrison’s setting for “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” it overlooks both the pastoral sporting associations of the pub in this period and also the fact that a village in Derbyshire is in no way a suburb of a city almost 200 miles to the south.

One element of the story that works to reinforce this seemingly idyllic sporting atmosphere is the group of illustrations provided by the artist Sidney Paget. In Paget’s drawings, the Hare and the Hounds, Padfield, and the neighbouring town of Sedby are all established as thriving sporting locations. Of the eight Sidney Paget illustrations that accompanied the first publication of Morrison’s short story in the February 1894 edition of *The Strand Magazine*, five help to characterize the setting as a sporting pastoral along the lines of the kind of social space described by Tosh and Huggins. 27 Two depict the cozy, all-male interior of the pub and three depict outdoor settings. Of the former, the illustration titled “In the tap room,” best establishes the setting of the story as a sporting

27 The five illustrations, not all of which will be discussed in detail here, are “I’ve got the final winner in this house!” (361), which depicts Hewitt in private conference with Kentish at the Hare and Hounds, “In the tap room” (362), “That’s a licker” (364), which illustrates the moment of Kentish’s discovery of Crockett’s absence, “Capital lad,’ the other replied” (366), a depiction of Kentish’s conversation with Denby, and “Steggles and the young lady in earnest confabulation” (372).
retreat (Figure 8). A group of six men is gathered around one of the tables in the pub. They are attired in various forms of “sporting” attire ranging from a jockey’s silks and cap to hunting pink. There are mugs of beer on the table, and one man is very prominently smoking a long, clay pipe. Of interest to both the men in conversation and the viewer are the two figures sitting on the right-hand bench, more or less facing the viewer; the one on the left is Raggy Steggles, and the one on the right is Sammy Crockett. We are welcomed into this circle of sporting men not only through the overheard conversation that is recorded by Brett, but also through the perspective of the viewer of Paget’s illustration, bringing to mind Collins and Vamplew’s comments about the exclusively male nature of such a space.

Along with establishing the pub as an interior sporting retreat, Paget’s illustrations for “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” also draw attention to the suburban setting, playing with Edenic associations that give the sporting world a suggestion of prelapsarian innocence. If the pub’s interior is established as a kind of male sporting haven, free from the intrusion of women and stocked plentifully with beer to which men can retreat to discuss sport undisturbed, then the exterior grounds of the Hare and Hounds is connected
Figure 8: "Sidney Paget's "In the Tap-Room" from "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," page 362
Figure 9: Sidney Paget's "Steggles and the young lady in earnest confabulation"

from "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," page 372
to another type of sanctuary that acts as both a retreat and a place of temptation.

“Steggles and the young lady in earnest confabulation” (Figure 9) emphasizes the suburban location of the pub through its depiction of a meeting between the trainer, Raggy Steggles and the barmaid, Nancy Webb. Though their meeting is one in which they are discussing the way in which Webb will lure Crockett away, the visual overtones of the illustration act to construct this moment as exemplary of the space around the pub as a suburban oasis. Clearly set in the space behind the Hare and Hounds, Steggles and Webb are speaking in front of a cluster of sunflowers in bloom, while Webb’s posture and the watering can she has gripped in one hand suggest to the viewer that she has been disturbed by Steggles while tending to the plants, further underscoring her associations with Eve in the Garden of Eden. The other Sidney Paget illustrations of the environment of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” further reinforce these associations. The depiction of Hewitt and Kentish deep in conversation at the Hare and Hounds on page 361 also emphasizes the spirit of masculine retreat that characterizes the pub, while the illustrations that appear on pages 364 and 366 again draw attention to the suburban surroundings in which the story is set. Though these spaces are depicted as an escape from the stresses and strains of the urban environment, this sporting pastoral is later revealed to be far from idyllic.

Unlike the community of men located in Oxbridge rowing clubs celebrated in the press coverage of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race and the final scenes of
Boucicault’s *Formosa*, the pastoral sporting environment depicted in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” is one that has within it potential dangers for the sportsman. The tension that is evident in the illustration depicting Steggles and Webb conspiring in the garden of the Hare and Hounds manifests in different ways later in the story as Hewitt works to uncover the truth about Crockett’s disappearance. As the facts come to light – and the limitations of the sportsman are demonstrated through the depiction of Crockett and his associates – the environment in which they play is also established as corrupted.

While it may seem on the surface as if Padfield and the Hare and Hounds pub are ideal places to which one can retreat and find solace in sport and male companionship, Hewitt’s uncovering of the terms of Sammy Crockett’s disappearance demonstrates that the reality underneath is a different matter entirely. After determining that Crockett was lured away from the Hare and Hounds by a note from the attractive Nancy Webb, Hewitt tracks his location to a half-finished commercial development in the nearby town of Sedby owned by the rival bookmaker, Danby. While Brett acknowledges that the string of empty shops is in a “new and muddy suburb, crowded with brick-heaps and half-finished streets” (Morrison, “Crockett” 367), it is in no way the London suburb that Harper wrongly assumes it to be her article, attached as it is to a small town. Nevertheless, it still carries with it certain associations, as Lynne Hapgood points out in *Margins of Desire: The Suburbs in Fiction and Culture, 1880-1925* (2005). Whereas the pastoral ideal depends on hierarchies of class and old ways of being, the suburb has a
“subversively egalitarian nature” due to the fact that in creating suburban spaces, “[f]or the first time in English society, the land was being redistributed for the benefit of the majority.” As Hapgood notes, “[t]his process of individuation became a formidable barrier to the vertical strategies of class hierarchy, social engineering and political grouping” (Hapgood 4). While the idea of “rural England belonged in the past,” the suburb presented an “in-betweenness of country and city, of class categories, and of gender identities” that both questioned old assumptions associated with the pastoral model and allowed this “rural [ideal] to be re-imagined and reinterpreted” (Hapgood 7-8). Represented as it is in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the suburb is a dangerous space that contaminates the sporting pastoral, and it is suggested that the desire for commercial gain that inspired its building is the same force that causes the bodies within this pastoral space to become corrupted. Indeed, in Brett’s description of the suburb in Sedby, the reader recognizes failure above all else:

When at last he found [Granville Road], in a new and muddy suburb, crowded with brick-heaps and half-finished streets, he took a slow walk along its entire length. It was a melancholy example of baffled enterprise. A row of a dozen or more shops had been built before any population had arrived to demand goods. Would-be tradesmen had taken many of these shops, and failure and disappointment stared from the windows. Some were half covered by shutters, because the scanty stock scarce sufficed to fill the remaining half. Others were shut almost altogether, the inmates only keeping open the door for their own convenience, and, perhaps, keeping down a shutter for the sake of a little light. Others again had not yet fallen so low, but struggled bravely still to maintain a show of business and prosperity, with very little success. Opposite the shops there still remained a dusty, ill-treated hedge and a forlorn-looking field, which an
old board offered on building leases. Altogether a most depressing spot. (Morrison, “Crockett” 367)

Unlike the community found in the Hare and Hounds, perhaps best captured in Sidney Paget’s illustrations, this unfinished development embodies fractured relationships and failed businesses. Perhaps the most depressing sight of all is the “ill-treated hedge and . . . forlorn-looking field” which act as reminders of the way in which the idyll has been corrupted. The sporting pastoral, as it is represented by the locations of the Hare and Hounds, the village of Padfield, and the suburb of Sedby, is not the wholesome community of sport found in the representations of such a space in the nineteenth-century press or on the melodramatic stage. Rather, it is a disturbed space in which one finds deformed bodies, as the character of Sammy Crockett illustrates.

The visual and verbal strategies of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” work to invoke the idea of the pastoral in relation to the setting only to demonstrate the way in which it has been corrupted by a desire for financial gain, and a similar message is evident in the depiction of the sportsman, namely the character of professional pedestrian athlete, Sammy Crockett. The representation of the sportsman that occupies this space is not a testament to the positive influence that sport could have on Victorian men. In contrast to the representations of the sportsman located in the press and the spectacular melodrama, the sportsman in this example of series detective fiction – and, indeed, other occupants of this sporting pastoral – is represented as damaged, if not deformed, both physically and morally by his participation.
Far from being the epitome of manly athleticism, Sammy Crockett is revealed on his first appearance in the narrative to be an irregular and problematic body. Rather than standing as a physical icon – a classical sculpture made flesh – Crockett is an individual whose bodily presence does not overtly conjure up ideas of manliness and physical supremacy, unlike the crews of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race in the nineteenth-century press. As the sporting pundits at the Hare and Hounds note, Crockett does not strike a manly figure. Indeed, he is allowed “two glasses of mild [beer] a day [as he] never puts on flesh” (Morrison, “Crockett” 363). Described by Brett as “a lean, wire-drawn-looking youth, with sloping shoulders and a thin face” who looks “sheepishly angry” (362), Crockett is teased by the pub’s regulars for not measuring up to the manly standard to which a woman might be attracted: “‘Tarn’t no good, Sammy, lad,” some one was saying, “you a-makin’ after Nancy Webb – she’ll had’ nowt to do with ‘ee.” “Don’t like ‘em so thread-papery,” added another. “No, Sammy, you aren’t the lad for she” (362). Sammy’s lack of physical presence here is taken as somehow indicative of a lack of sexual potency. This is only further emphasized by his visual representation in the Paget illustrations titled “In the tap room” (Figure 8) and “The prisoner, trussed and helpless” (Figure 10). Discussed earlier in terms of how it helps to establish the space of the Hare and Hounds as exemplary of the sporting pastoral, in this context, “In the tap room” also reveals the extent of Sammy Crockett’s physical deformity. In Paget’s illustration, his figure sits slumped on a bench beside Raggy Steggs. In comparison to
straw that had been Sammy's bed.

"You won't be very jolly, I expect," Kentish said, "for some time. You can't

"THE PRISONER—TRussed AND HELPless."
the men around him, Crockett looks wan and weak, the hollowness of his cheeks being emphasized by the shadows on his face. Indeed, as a way of deflecting the taunts of the pub’s regulars, Kentish urges him to focus not on the sexual promise of his body – which has ostensibly been depleted through long hours of demanding training and a controlled diet – but rather on the financial promise of it, and the future security enabled by a successful pedestrian career. “What about Nancy Webb? . . . Sammy’s all right, any way. You keep fit, my lad, an’ go on improving, and some day you’ll have as good a house as me. Never mind the lasses” (362).

In choosing to represent the sportsman as both sexually deficient and physically weak, in this instance, the series detective story is offering readers an embodiment of the sportsman that contrasts strongly with the physical standards normally associated with the idea of participation in the sporting sphere. As Roberta Park discusses, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, sport was viewed as a cultural space in which men could craft their bodies to fit classical models such as the Apollo Belvedere, or Myron’s Discobolus (Figure 11). The recurrence of these two figures in a variety of cultural forms from the 1860s to the end of the century demonstrates their prominence in the Victorian popular imagination:

Reproductions of Myron’s ‘Discobolus’ appeared in *Punch* and other periodicals and on programmes produced for dinners commemorating the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race. Apollo was the frontispiece of astronomer Richard A. Proctor’s *Strength: How to Get Strong and Keep Strong* (1889). A frail child who became captain of the boat club at St John’s College, Cambridge, Proctor used an oarsman American William Blaikie’s
Figure 11: Myron's *Discobolus* ©Trustees of the British Museum
How to Get Strong and Stay So (1879) and a relief of Theseus (king of Athens and one of the most celebrated heroes of antiquity) to illustrate improper and proper muscular development. In a lecture given at the Royal Institution, S. Messenger Bradley stipulated that the ‘law of proportion’ dictated that the lower half of a man’s body should be 618.03 cm and the upper half 381.97 cm – substantially the proportions of the Apollo Belvedere. (1611)

As Park notes later in her discussion, by the 1880s, those practicing the science of anthropometry – the study of the measurements and proportions of the human body – were undertaking to evaluate and catalogue different segments of the population, including English university students using standards derived from classical sources such as sculpture (1618). In an 1888 article, the medical journal The Lancet reported on the activity of Francis Galton, author of Hereditary Genius (1869), who was carrying out the measurement of 2000 people at his anthropometric laboratory opened at the South Kensington Health Exposition, and attempting to determine how those examined quite literally measured up. In discussing his findings, the journal notes that when these measurements were compared with those of the “average Cambridge student” it revealed that the latter was superior in many regards including height and characteristics such as lung capacity, thus demonstrating the better “physical condition of the upper educated classes” (“Anthropometry” 886). To measure up was to be manly. The sportsman found in the pages of the series detective fiction at the end of the nineteenth century, does not, however, fit this model. The sportsman as represented by the character of Sammy Crockett does not exhibit the striking physical characteristics of the classical examples, as
discussed above, nor does he occupy the central position in the narrative as do other manifestations of the sportsman, both in the press, and in the spectacular melodrama. The Oxbridge “heroes,” as well as characters such as Nat Gosling and Tom Burroughs, can easily be held up as protagonists. In the case of Sammy Crockett, however, the sportsman does not even play a role in his own rescue.

The distinct lack of manliness in Crockett’s sporting body is only further emphasized later in the story as Hewitt attempts to piece together the events surrounding his tricking and abduction by Danby and his henchmen. As is suggested in Kentish’s response to Hewitt’s questioning as to whether or not Crockett would attempt to fight off his attackers, the backer emphasizes the proscribed nature of Crockett’s manliness – it is only evident in the parts of his body that will enable him to have a strong and promising professional career: “No, I should say not. He’s not plucked un, certainly; all his manhood’s in his legs, I believe. You see, he ain’t a big sort o’ chap at best, and he’d be pretty easy put upon – at least, I guess so” (368). Though Sammy Crockett is an athlete in peak physical condition – there is never a doubt that he is the surest bet for the upcoming pedestrian contest – he does not possess the kind of body that should be at the heart of the sporting pastoral. As is suggested here by Kentish’s comments, the focus in this sphere on profit has led to the sportsman’s body being developed only in the ways that are financially beneficial. Because of this, Hewitt must bring in another exemplary body to execute Crockett’s rescue.
In attempting to recover Crockett from Danby’s clutches, Hewitt resorts to bringing along Kentish’s son, “a six-foot sergeant of Grenadiers, home on furlough, and luxuriating in plain clothes” (Morrison, “Crockett” 368). He demonstrates that he is a strong man when during the rescue he manages to knock one of the ruffians unconscious: “Instantly, Kentish let fly a heavy right-hander, and the man went over like a skittle” (369). Interestingly, these brief descriptions that the reader receives of Kentish’s strapping military son appear at the moments in the narrative where they contrast sharply with the reality of Sammy Crockett’s misshapen and captive body. Indeed, it is Young Kentish who is responsible for replacing Sammy’s body with that of the gaoler, Browdie:

Sergeant Kentish tied Browdie’s elbows firmly together behind, and carried the line round the ankles, bracing him up tight. Then he ran a knot from one wrist to the other over the back of the neck, and left the prisoner, trussed and helpless, on the heap of straw that had been Sammy’s bed. (369-370)

While this key moment of Sammy’s rescue is the one that is first and foremost about Hewitt’s skills of detection, surprisingly the action they emphasize is not the capability of the sportsman, but rather the necessity of having a military man present in order to effect the rescue; it is not Crockett’s physical skill that is of value in this moment, but rather Sergeant Kentish’s, coming as it does from the official, regulated military world out of which he has briefly stepped. This is reiterated in the Paget illustration, “The prisoner trussed and helpless” (Figure 10) that once again displays Crockett’s body, this time following his rescue by Hewitt and Sergeant Kentish. In an image that emphasizes the
struggling figure of Browdie bound and gagged through the efforts of young Kentish, Crockett is just discernable standing off to the right, his lanky frame shrouded in a great coat, his bare legs just visible, his head hung, and his hands shoved in his pockets. It is telling that in this moment, the sportsman has been both literally and figuratively cast to one side. For the series detective story, the sportsman is neither the paragon of manliness, nor the capable figure of earlier incarnations. Rather he is a useful, though misshapen object, valuable only in as much as he is capable of performing actions that result in profit, which, in the case of Sammy Crockett, involve running in a fixed race so as to ensure a financial return for his backers, as Kentish reveals to Hewitt when he explains that the race will come off to his advantage because two of the competitors “aren’t tryers, and the other two [he] can hold in at a couple of quid apiece any day” (373). If the sportsman is condemned through his representation as deformed both physically and morally in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” then the story also passes judgment on the sporting sphere and all its inhabitants in the manner in which the detective engages with the environment. In the case of Martin Hewitt, his involvement with the sporting sphere results in the temporary deformation of his otherwise remarkably middle-class body.

In attempting to assess Hewitt as a manifestation of the late Victorian detective figure, scholars such as Harper and John Greenfield compare him to his potentially more bohemian and therefore supposedly more remarkable contemporary, Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. Though he allies Hewitt with Holmes in providing “a safe haven
against the perceived onslaught of not only domestic crime and foreign threats but also, in their predictable restoration of property, inheritance, reputation, and order, against change itself” (Greenfield 35), Greenfield argues that Hewitt is not like his more famous contemporary because he lacks the colourful qualities that make Holmes so distinctive. As Greenfield states, “Hewitt’s personality and professional demeanor, judging by the little we really know about him, is certainly in contrast with the eccentricities of Holmes’s habits and opinions” (20). Though Greenfield does not directly pronounce it, there is a disdain implied in his comparison of Holmes and Hewitt perhaps best voiced by the first part of his title in which he categorizes Hewitt as Holmes’s clone, and this categorization of Hewitt as a lesser incarnation of the detective figure is echoed in Harper’s assessment. Harper argues, as does Greenfield, that Hewitt was designed to fill the gap in the market created when Conan Doyle appeared to kill off his famous and beloved detective in “The Final Problem” (1893), and that in many ways, Hewitt was meant to invoke Holmes. Her assessment identifies an “everyman” characteristic to Hewitt that Holmes was lacking, and Harper’s discussion registers this as a failing rather than a virtue:

Morrison drops his Martin Hewitt down a few pegs socially. Hewitt evokes no suggestions of superior training or artistic temperament. He has no private income and relies on his profession for support . . . . Hewitt has no reason for disguises; he is not theatrical like Holmes but simply plays an everyman, an amiable conversationalist who can engage a groom in conversation. When he does take on a part, it is usually played by a changed stance or a feigned deafness rather than with a change in clothing. Yet, even when Hewitt is not being someone else, he is playing a part after
Throughout this description of Hewitt, Harper contrasts it to Holmes’s unconventional behaviour. As a result, Hewitt’s ability to blend into the background registers as a lesser quality and as indicative of Morrison’s own discomfort with his ambiguous class background. While both Greenfield and Harper acknowledge the everyman quality that Hewitt embodies – indeed, Greenfield even goes so far as to point out that “Hewitt . . . seems more representative than Holmes of the readers of the magazines in which the stories appeared” (Greenfield 20) – neither sees it as an attribute of the detective to be celebrated, or as in any way revolutionary.

Rather than simply functioning as an attribute that marks Hewitt as a lesser kind of Holmes, his “everyman” status is, I argue, what actually makes him remarkable. As Lennard Davis discusses in Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body (1995), with the rise of statistics in the middle part of the nineteenth century, it is the body of the man in the middle that becomes on the one hand the norm, and on the other the most desirable, but unattainable (26-7). That Martin Hewitt is unremarkable and lacking in physical presence as a detective except when he is assuming a disguise is significant, for it marks him out as an embodiment of the manly, and in this specific case professional, ideal. Described in the opening of the first Martin Hewitt story published in The Strand Magazine, “The Lenton Croft Robberies” (January 1894), as “a stoutish,
clean-shaven man, of middle height, and of a cheerful, round countenance” (Morrison, “Lenton” 309), this image of Hewitt is reinforced by Sidney Paget’s first illustration simply titled “Martin Hewitt” (Figure 12). In it, Hewitt is depicted sitting at a desk, a pen raised to his smiling mouth. This contemplative pose contrasts with his introduction in the moment of the narrative where he runs into his first client, Mr. Vernon Lloyd, as he leaves his offices. The illustration reveals Hewitt to have regular features, a receding hairline, and a nondescript suit. It is this body of the “everyman” that is often absent from Sidney Paget’s illustrations in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” and it is this body that prospective readers are asked to share through the illustrations to the story and the moments of the narrative on which they focus.

At the same time that Hewitt possesses that rarest of things, a normative body, it is a body that is not impervious to the damaging effects of time in the corrupted world of the sporting pastoral that comprises the setting of “The Loss of Sammy Crockett.” If only to further emphasize the fact that this space of the sporting pastoral has been damaged by its association with the money-making machine of professional sport, in order for Hewitt to enter into this world, he needs to present his body, and thus himself, as other than it is. From the outset, the sporting world into which Hewitt enters is one that is marked out as distinct, and even otherworldly, compared to the middle-class, professional, bachelor existence that both Hewitt and Brett share. Brett makes clear in the story’s opening
Figure 12: Sidney Paget's "Martin Hewitt" from "The Lenton Croft Robberies," page 309
paragraphs that this is not a world that is easily entered into as such an entry requires skill
and a disguise on Hewitt’s part in order to pass:

    It was, of course, always a part of Martin Hewitt’s business to be
thoroughly at home among any and every class of people, and to be able to
interest himself intelligently, or to appear to do so, in their various
pursuits. In one of the most important cases ever placed in his hands he
could have gone but a short way towards success had he not displayed
some knowledge of the more sordid aspects of professional sport, and a
great interest in the undertakings of a certain dealer therein. (Morrison,
“Crockett” 361)

Indeed, according to Brett, in order to pass in this sporting environment, Hewitt
purposefully “arrayed [himself] in a way to indicate some inclination of his own toward
sport [and] began to frequent the bar” (361). Hewitt is able to transform his usually
invisible middle-class professional body into a passably visible one that gains him access
to this world of professional sport at the same time that it makes him sufficiently visible.
This successful assumption of a convincing disguise which Hewitt can sport and thus
convince the denizens of the Hare and Hounds that he is one of them, openly contradicts
Harper’s claim that when Hewitt assumes “a part, it is usually played by a change in
stance or a feigned deafness rather than with a change in clothing” (Harper 78).

    Hewitt again assumes a convincing disguise in his meeting with Nancy Webb
during the course of his investigations. Though his change of character for the purposes
of uncovering the truth about Sammy Crockett does not involve a change of clothes, he
does depend on a pair of glasses and a walking stick in order to trick Webb into revealing
her handwriting. Assuming the persona of “a stoutish old gentleman with spectacles, who
walked with a stick,” Hewitt changes his voice to “the peculiarly quiet voice of a very deaf man” in order to inquire of Webb directions which he later gets her to write down in a notebook he is carrying. While still in sight of Webb he walks slowly but as soon as he is out of sight he “put[s] the stick under his arm, thrust[s] the spectacles into his pocket, and [strides] away in the ordinary guise of Martin Hewitt” (366). As with his change to a sportsman, Hewitt again alters his body by making it visible, this time through the assumption of infirmities, thus equating his earlier transformation with another kind of disability. Though he successfully passes in this world, Hewitt chooses to end his participation in it as soon as the case is resolved, putting both physical and moral distance between himself and its denizens. His willingness to absent himself, and the judgment implied in his declining Kentish’s offer of extra remuneration through the placing of informed and strategic bets only further underscores the story’s devaluation of the figure of the sportsman and the sporting sphere at the close of the nineteenth century.

Even though Hewitt quickly deduces the fate of the missing pedestrian, the recovery of Sammy Crockett does not mean a return to order or the cleansing of this sporting pastoral, as both Harper and Greenfield suggest in their discussion of the generic Martin Hewitt story arc (Harper 70; Greenfield 22). Rather, Crockett’s return to the care of Kentish only suggests, more problematically, the continuation of the corruption. While Sammy Crockett is recovered and returned to Kentish, and Danby’s plot is exposed, the reader is reminded at the close of the story that this return to order does not in any way
affect the corrupted state of the sporting pastoral. In this instance, the detective does not act as the normalizing agent. This is most evident in Kentish’s response to Sammy’s return and his discussion of how he plans on punishing Danby for his interference. While talking it over with Martin Hewitt, Kentish reveals that he will return Danby his trouble in the manner of their community:

“You’ll probably use the interval to make him pay for losing the game – by some of the ingenious financial devices you are no doubt familiar with.”

“Ay, that I will. He’ll give any price against Crockett now, so long as the bet don’t come direct from me . . . . There are four more in [Crockett’s] heat tomorrow. Two I know aren’t tryers, and the other two I can hold in at a couple of quid apiece any day.” (Morrison, “Crockett” 373)

At Hewitt’s prompting, here Kentish reveals that indeed tomorrow Sammy will win the race, and from this victory, untold financial ruin will confront Danby. What he also reveals, however, is his willingness to fix the race in order to achieve these results, rather than simply depend on Crockett’s innate athleticism and his trained body. Crockett may have been returned to his place of the sporting pastoral of the Hare and Hounds pub; however, it is still as corrupt as it was at the opening of the story. Hewitt’s response to Kentish’s offer of “How much are you going to have on? I’ll lump it on for you safe enough. This is a chance not to be missed – it’s picking money up” (373) would have been reassuring to The Strand Magazine’s middle-class readership in that it condemns Kentish’s offer:

Thank you; I don’t think I’ll have anything to do with it. This professional pedestrian business doesn’t seem a pretty one at all. I don’t call myself a
moralist, but, if you’ll excuse my saying so, the thing is scarcely the game I care to pick up money at in any way. (373)

With the dismissal of “the thing is scarcely the game I care to pick up money at in any way,” Hewitt departs from the corrupted sporting pastoral and the readers are once again reminded that neither the body of the sportsman nor the sporting pastoral are spaces which can be viewed as conducive to the cultivation of manliness. Rather, in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” both the figure of the sportsman and the sphere that he inhabits are represented as damaged by the desire for financial gain, and though the detective might solve the immediate mystery, his intervention does not restore the sportsman or cleanse the sporting sphere. This view of the nineteenth-century world of sport as depicted in Morrison’s story is indicative of a shift in attitude towards the close of the century as Victorians, now familiar with the sphere and the potential that it presented, began to turn a critical eye to the effects of a man’s participation in it. “The Loss of Sammy Crockett” investigates not only the figure of the sportsman and what he represents in the Victorian popular imagination, but also the sphere of sport out of which he comes. In this story we can trace the change in attitudes towards sport in this period. By the close of the century, the place of sport in the Victorian popular imagination had shifted. If, in the middle part of the century, people were willing to think of the sportsman and the sporting sphere as holding promise and opportunity for those in pursuit of a manly identity, then by the turn of the century, attitudes towards this relationship between men and sport had changed. As the story of Sammy Crockett’s disappearance and return suggests, along with being
associated with mythic and practical heroes, the world of sport and its inhabitants carried connotations of deformity, corruption, and greed. By the time of the publication of Conan Doyle’s “The Adventures of the Three Students” in 1904, however, the Victorian cultural imagination was again seeking to locate in the sportsman hope for the continued health and vitality of middle-class masculinity. In the ten years between the publication of Morrison’s story and Conan Doyle’s sport had once more grown and expanded beyond the boundaries of England and into the Empire as a whole, as scholars such as J. A. Mangan discuss in *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (1986). In attempting to re-evaluate the sportsman, Conan Doyle’s story points to his potential failings; however, it also works to rehabilitate him, deploying him for service abroad.

**Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Three Students”**

Arthur Conan Doyle’s June 1904 story in *The Strand Magazine*, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” later collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1904), offers a different comment on the space of the sporting pastoral and the men who inhabit it. In investigating the theft of an exam paper on the eve of a prestigious scholarship exam, Holmes and Watson discover that the thief is the college’s remarkable and hard-working student athlete, Giles Gilchrist; indeed, it is the trace of Gilchrist’s sporting body that provides Holmes with the necessary clues, suggesting an incongruity between the seemingly manly physical exterior that sporting prowess produces and the less laudatory
desires within; however, at the same time that the story presents the figure of the
sportsman as one that might occasionally lose control of his desires, it also recovers
him in a manner similar to the recovered Tom Burroughs of Dion Boucicault’s *Formosa*
discussed in Chapter 4. The text deploys several strategies to emphasize the potential for
heroism that exists within Gilchrist. It verbally contrasts his heroic sporting body with the
marginal and non-normative ones of the two other suspects, fellow students Daulat Ras
and Miles McLaren. It visually emphasizes Gilchrist’s classically-proportioned frame in a
series of illustrations by Sidney Paget, and coupled with this, it provides Gilchrist with
links to public worlds of order and control through a benediction provided by a masculine
community that exists within a pastoral space that has been uncorrupted by profit or
recognition seeking. By the close of the story, readers are assured that though the figure
of the sportsman might occasionally succumb to temptation, the core of the figure is still
comprised of the stuff of heroes – pluck.

Upon arrival in a nameless Oxbridge university town in order to pursue an
esoteric research project, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson find themselves visiting St.
Luke’s college at the request of its Greek tutor, Mr. Soames, who begs the help of the
detective in solving a mystery that has the potential to turn into quite a public scandal.
After completing the galley proofs for the Fortescue Scholarship exam the day before its
sitting, Soames returned to his college rooms to find the papers disturbed, and thus he
strongly suspects someone had gained access to the document in an attempt to guarantee
a successful result. The Greek tutor asks Holmes to find the guilty party in order to save the embarrassment and publicity that would result from involving the police and presents the detective with three likely suspects: Daulat Ras, a hard-working Indian student, Miles McLaren, the mysterious college aesthete, and Gilchrist, the manly student athlete. All three have valid reasons for seeking to ensure their success the following morning. After Holmes interviews the suspects (or in the case of McLaren, attempts to interview), he investigates the scene of the crime and locates several tell-tale clues – the fragments of a pencil, several deep gouges on the surface of Soames’s desk, and some tiny balls of black clay. He concludes that, based on the evidence and the deductions he makes about the methods employed in order to access the exam papers, the guilty party is Gilchrist, the student athlete. Upon being confronted, Gilchrist drops to his knees and confesses, explaining that he was tempted to cheat because of financial necessity. Holmes and Soames offer him absolution and the opportunity to begin a new life for himself in the Rhodesian police. The story concludes with Gilchrist accepting this opportunity and Holmes offering him the parting words of “‘For once you have fallen low. Let us see, in the future, how high you can rise” (613).

Although the solution to the mystery at the heart of “The Adventure of the Three Students” identifies a sportsman as the criminal, the representation of the character of Gilchrist ultimately acts to underscore the way in which this figure represents the heroic and noble characteristics associated with popular ideas of Victorian manliness. This
recuperation is in part effected by establishing a startling contrast between Gilchrist and the two other student suspects at St. Luke’s. While undertaking his investigation, Holmes encounters two students who provide a remarkable juxtaposition to the striking Saxon. Due to either race or lifestyle, both Daulat Ras and Miles McLaren are established as antithetical to the masculine figure of the sportsman. Watson’s description of Ras upon his first encountering him in the course of Holmes’ investigation firmly characterizes the Indian student as Other. In describing him as “a silent, little, hook-nosed fellow, who eyed [them] askance” (609), Watson invokes several racial stereotypes of appearance that depend on Ras’s birthplace elsewhere in the British Empire. When the trio visits his rooms, Soames follows suit in his summary of Ras’s character as “a quiet, inscrutable fellow, as most of those Indians are . . . He is steady and methodical” (607). A trait that is normally valued in assessments of masculine identity – namely Ras’s “steady and methodical” approach to his university obligations – is rendered sinister when it is identified as an attribute of a brown, rather than a white, body.

Equally as suspicious, and equally as non-normative, is the character of Miles McLaren, another student competing for the Fortescue Scholarship. Like Daulat Ras, McLaren is represented in the story in terms that indicate his lack of a strong, manly identity. Soames gives Holmes and Watson a précis of his character by relating some of his undergraduate exploits:

He is a brilliant fellow when he chooses to work – one of the brightest intellects in the University, but he is wayward, dissipated, and
unprincipled. He was nearly expelled over a card scandal in his first year. He had been idling all this term, and he must look forward with dread to the examination. (607)

These oblique hints towards a possibly effete and decadent character – the use of words such as “wayward and dissipated” suggest this, as does McLaren’s predilection for gambling – are only further underscored when McLaren manages to keep himself from view not only from Holmes, Watson, and Soames when they attempt to investigate his room, but also from the reader, who is allowed no more introduction to McLaren than his “substantial torrent of bad language” which he issues in response to the trio’s application to view his study (609). If Ras becomes suspicious due to his visibly Other body, then McLaren is rendered so by his unsettling invisibility. It is against such examples that the character of Giles Gilchrist is set.

From the moment of his introduction into the story, several strategies are deployed to signal to the reader that such a sportsman is both physically and morally healthy, in spite of his action of stealing the exam results. In Holmes’s initial encounter with Gilchrist he is described as “a tall, flaxen-haired, slim young fellow” (609), whom Soames earlier characterizes in terms that link his physicality with his morality:

Gilchrist [is] a fine scholar and athlete; plays in the Rugby team and the cricket team for the college, and got his Blue for the hurdles and the long jump. He is a fine, manly fellow. His father was the notorious Sir Jabez Gilchrist, who ruined himself on the Turf. My scholar has been left very poor, but he is hard-working and industrious. He will do well. (607)
In this description, Soames offers Gilchrist’s athletic accomplishments as proof of the “hard-working and industrious” nature that will ensure the student academic, and later, professional, success. In doing so he is helping to represent the sportsman in terms that link him with period ideas about healthy minds in healthy bodies. As Bruce Haley explains, such an outward appearance as Gilchrist manifests in the story would be read by contemporaries as suggestive of an overall healthy individual – *mens sana in corpore sano*:

> Health is a state of constitutional growth and development in which the bodily systems and mental faculties interoperate harmoniously under the direct motive power of vital energy or the indirect motive power of the moral will, or both. Its signs are, subjectively recognized, a sense of wholeness and unencumbered capability, and, externally recognized, the production of useful, creative labor. (21)

Along with existing in this state of health, the sportsman, as he is embodied in Gilchrist, also has associated with him the characteristics of restraint and control. The son’s discipline – both athletic and scholarly – contrasts sharply with the profligacy of his “notorious” father, whose inability to curtail his Turf activities has put the family name and financial state in equally questionable health.

This representation of the sportsman as healthy and in control is reinforced by the illustrations provided by Sidney Paget for the story’s publication in the June 1904 edition of *The Strand Magazine*. The visualization of Gilchrist that accompanies Holmes’s first meeting with him, titled “He insisted on drawing in his note-book,” gives readers the opportunity to visually assess Gilchrist for themselves (Figure 13). In this illustration,
Gilchrist is presented as standing at the very centre, after just rising from his studies. He is dressed in a very similar fashion to the three men visiting him, with the cut of his suit underscoring the classical proportions of his figure. The light falls curiously in that it seems to highlight not only Gilchrist’s suitable dress, but also his Saxon blonde hair and glowing, white skin. With the reader’s eye drawn to the statuesque Gilchrist by the glow of the lamp on the table, he becomes an object of curiosity at the same time that his presence exemplifies the kind of man expected to inhabit such as space as St. Luke’s college. If Sammy Crockett’s ungainly figure contrasts sharply with such classical icons as the Apollo Belvedere, then Giles Gilchrist presents exactly the opposite. This identification of the sportsman as a kind of paragon is further emphasized in Gilchrist’s appearance in later illustrations, even as those illustrations mark moments when his guilt becomes more and more evident. Indeed, his heroic visual appearance seems to increase along with the surety of his culpability, offering readers a striking reminder that while the sportsman might slip, it is possible for him to regain his nobility and control. In “An instant later the tutor returned, bringing with him the student,” the reader is presented with a full-length view of Gilchrist, fittingly clothed, again, in a double-breasted suit and clean, white collar and black tie (Figure 14). His stance as he comes through the door is noteworthy in that it shows off the perfect proportions of his body. He is also depicted as staring directly ahead with a determined look, indicative of the moral fortitude about
Figure 13: Sidney Paget's "He insisted on drawing it in his notebook" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 309
which Soames commented earlier in the story. In “Here it is, Sir,” the reader is again presented with an upright and athletic man, clothed in his suit, this time handing a letter of confession to Soames, observed by a thoughtful Holmes and a rather detached Watson. As in the earlier illustration, he is the only erect and straight-standing figure, and the light colour of his suit draws attention to this posture: upright, chin up, and chest out. In contrast the other men in the room, Soames, Holmes, Watson, and the college scout, Bannister – all pale in comparison. Though this is a moment in which Gilchrist is confessing his guilt, the visual representation of his figure in Paget’s illustration reassures the reader that ultimately, though troubled, the sportsman will emerge unscathed.

Along with visually representing the figure of the sportsman in terms that emphasize his heroic physical stature, and thus reassuring the reader as to his healthy morality, “The Adventure of the Three Students” also associates the character of Giles Gilchrist with systems of order and regulation through the noticeable similarities between the student and Holmes himself. Gilchrist is gifted with physical and personal similarities to the famed detective, thus readers are once again reminded that the figure of the sportsman carries connotations of control. In doing so, the fallibility he demonstrates in copying the exam paper is mitigated and the sportsman is shown to be a hero for the twentieth century. The physical and professional similarities between Holmes and Gilchrist are striking. As Soames notes, Gilchrist is a “fine, manly fellow” who “got his Blue in the hurdles and long jump” (607); Holmes displays similar athletic abilities in
Figure 14: Sidney Paget's "An instant later the tutor returned, bringing with him the student" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 611
outlining to Watson his investigative methods. Describing his early morning visit to the university athletic track, he states, “Aha! It is not for nothing that I have turned myself out of bed at the untimely hour of six. I have put in two hours’ hard work and covered at least five miles, with something to show for it” (610). Akin to this notable fitness on both their parts, Gilchrist and Holmes are also physically similar. Watson describes Gilchrist as “a fine figure of a man, tall, lithe, agile, with a springy step, and a pleasant, open face” (611), a physicality that is echoed in Holmes’s famed height and gauntness as well as his physical actions at the conclusion of the case. After dismissing Gilchrist he prepares to leave St. Luke’s, “heartily, springing to his feet” (613). Lastly, both Holmes and Gilchrist are set to perform the task of upholding turn-of-the-century notions of empire: Holmes has undertaken to do so, as recorded by Watson in a fresh series of stories published in The Strand and later collected as The Return of Sherlock Holmes, and Gilchrist promises a similar action in South Africa upon taking up a commission in the Rhodesian Police. In having Gilchrist undertake such an adventure following his departure from St. Luke’s, “The Adventure of the Three Students” also acknowledges the discourses which associate sporting practice with the creation of men for Empire, as discussed by Mangan (1986).

The figure of the sportsman as embodied by Giles Gilchrist is finally reaffirmed as noble and heroic through his confession and absolution by and re-admittance to the manly community symbolized by St. Luke’s college at the close of the story. From the opening paragraphs, “The Adventure of the Three Students” presents a setting that
invokes the idea of the pastoral space that provides a similar kind of solace to the sporting pastoral present in Martin Hewitt’s earlier adventure; however, unlike the seemingly idyllic space in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the college world of Holmes’s investigation is not shown to be riddled with failed business ventures. While by no means similar in atmosphere to the sporting pub of the Hare and Hounds, the college of St. Luke’s does present a masculine oasis to which one can retreat from the challenges of urban spaces. As previously discussed, Holmes’s presence in Oxbridge is a result of his own wish for time to pursue scholarly interests, a rest and retreat from his urban adventures. This sense of seclusion is again emphasized by Mr. Soames’s panicked desire to maintain it by keeping the college, and mystery it contains, out of the public eye. In response to Holmes’s callous suggestion to call the police rather than him, Soames protests,

No, no, my dear sir; such a course is utterly impossible. When once the law is evoked it cannot be stayed again, and this is just one of those cases where, for the credit of the college, it is most essential to avoid scandal. Your discretion is as well known as your powers, and you are the one man in the world who can help me. I beg you Mr. Holmes, to do what you can. (603)

As in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” Sidney Paget’s illustrations for this story’s publication in The Strand Magazine contribute to the development of this setting as a space apart from the workaday world, and a space in which a strong community of men exists. While there are no depictions of the lush green of the college lawn or the abundant flora of its gardens which would strongly suggest an idyllic location, the illustration titled
“How could you possibly know that?” gives the reader a glimpse of the cool, wood-paneled interior of Mr. Soames’s study (Figure 15). As the setting for the above exchange between Holmes, Watson, and Soames, the illustration immediately calls to mind the comfortable, domestic interior of a gentleman’s club, which as John Tosh explains, was another kind of masculine pastoral environment that offered an escape from the commitments of domesticity. Gentlemen’s clubs proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth century:

Every kind of taste and avocation was catered for, and almost every pocket. All the clubs excluded women, and nearly all of them were characterized by a bachelor ambience of smoking rooms, billiards, cards and manservants. The club was a refuge for the bachelor without a ‘good’ address of his own, the ‘man’s man’ who kept female society at arm’s length, and the administrator or soldier on leave from his posting overseas. Often the culture of misogyny was not far from the surface, especially in the more bohemian clubs which grew in numbers towards the end of the century . . . That so many club members were bachelors of long standing indicates that club culture had become a viable alternative to the married state. (Tosh, “Place” 187)

It is an association with this kind of space that is cultivated through Paget’s illustration. The window, hung with heavy curtains, looks out onto other college buildings, suggesting the seclusion offered by such a space from contact with the more vigorous world outside. The image of the three men, in close conversation about the college mystery, calls to mind the patrons of the Hare and Hounds eagerly discussing sporting matters, and as Soames’s explanation of college life outlines, though it has no sporting grounds of its own, St. Luke’s college is a space which allows for the cultivation and
Figure 15: Sidney Paget's "How could you possibly know that?" from "The Adventure of the Three Students," page 604
maintenance of such sportsmen as Gilchrist, who excels at a variety of sports including track and field, rugby, and cricket. Unlike the sporting pastoral found in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the sanctity of the space of St. Luke’s college is left unchallenged.

It is into this strong, secure masculine community that Giles Gilchrist is readmitted following his confession at the close of the story, and it is this re-admittance that recuperates the figure of the sportsman from the dubious associations it had previously gathered through being identified as the perpetrator. As at the conclusion of Formosa, the reader of “The Adventure of the Three Students” is offered an incarnation of the sportsman figure that identifies the importance of manly community in maintaining such an identity. In keeping with his manly deportment, Gilchrist confesses his guilt of his own volition, as he explains to Holmes, Watson, and Soames:

I have a letter here, Mr. Soames, which I wrote to you early this morning in the middle of a restless night. It was before I knew that my sin had found me out. Here it is, sir. You will see that I have said, ‘I have determined not to go in for the examination. I have been offered a commission in the Rhodesian Police, and I am going to South Africa at once.’ (612-13)

Following this confession, and the revelation by Holmes of the part the college scout Bannister played in aiding Gilchrist to gain access to the exam, Holmes absolves the sportsman and closes the story with the promise of a “bright future” for him. That Holmes’s parting words to Gilchrist are “Let us see in the future how high you can rise” is significant, for not only does this benediction invite Gilchrist back into the manly community with the use of the word “us,” but it also employs the language of physical
accomplishment in order to predict Gilchrist’s future success. In doing so, it recalls the
self-control required of the muscular Christian, as discussed by William Landels in his
1861 sermon, *True Manhood*. Like Landels’s manly man, Gilchrist must now submit to
the “*mental and moral training* [of] others” without which “true manhood is impossible”
(Landels, “Manhood” 44-45; original italics).

This recovery of the sportsman from his dubious associations is finalized in the
full-page illustration that opens the story in the June 1904 edition of *The Strand
Magazine* (Figure 16). In “‘Come, come,’ said Holmes, kindly, ‘It is human to err,’”
Gilchrist is pictured kneeling and resting his forehead and arm on Soames’s desk.
Soames, Watson, Holmes, and Bannister all look on. While Gilchrist’s prostrate position
might at first suggest weakness, if not failure, on the part of the sportsman, especially
when contrasted with the firm and upright posture his character is depicted as having in
the various other illustrations that accompany the story, it also evokes older ideas of
chivalric masculinity. By kneeling at Soames’s desk upon the confession of his guilt,
Gilchrist is not only evoking religious ideas of the confession of sins, with Holmes as the
priestly interlocutor, but is also assuming the posture of a knight at court, kneeling to
acknowledge the presence of his ruler. In depicting Gilchrist as submitting to the
authority of the men who inhabit the strong, healthy masculine community of the college,
the illustration only further underscores the nobility and heroism the sportsman is seen as
embodying.
Figure 16: "Sidney Paget's "'Come, come,' said Holmes ..." from "The Adventure of the Three Students," frontispiece
By the 1890s, the Victorian popular imagination began to register suspicions about the sportsman and in series detective stories such as those published in *The Strand* and *The Windsor Magazine*, the private detective interrogates this figure in an attempt to better understand his connotations. In “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the sportsman is established as a being corrupted by the forces of commerce and the desire for profit. The space of the sporting pastoral, so reassuring in the sporting melodrama, is represented as a space rife with duplicity and double-dealing. In “The Adventure of the Three Students,” the sportsman is also represented as fallible in his drive for public recognition and personal success; however, he is redeemed and re-admitted into the manly community from which he came, suggesting in a fashion similar to that of the sporting melodrama that if the sportsman is to continue to survive into the twentieth century, he must maintain connections with his fellow healthy men. This overall ambivalence present in series detective fiction also registers in the way in which such stories engage with another model of the sportsman, the speedy sportsman, explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 6

The Speedy Sportsman: Series Detective Fiction and the Mystery of Sporting Technology

In his tribute biography of Cambridge Professor of Arabic and famed amateur cyclist, Ion Keith-Falconer, *Memorials of the Honorable Ion Keith-Falconer, M.A.* (1890), Robert Sinker quotes from a description of the phenomenon of Keith-Falconer on his bicycle, demonstrating the way in which, in its early days, cycling was a sport that was very much the provenance of the middle-class man:

His bicycling feats were one subject of common interest between us. Bicycles were just then coming into fashion when he went to the University: he was an enthusiast in the use of them, and an admirable performer; and when he appeared in riding costume . . . with his tall figure mounted on the enormous machine that he rode, it was a sight to see. He kept up the amusement for many years: for two or more he was certainly the best bicyclist in England, and his delight in success only shewed in more than common relief the charming modesty with which he carried his honours. He had a real delight in the feats of strength and endurance for their own sake. (qtd. in Sinker 17)

As suggested by the description provided of Keith-Falconer, in the middle part of the nineteenth century, the sport of cycling carried strong manly connotations; not only is the cyclist modest about his striking physique and commendable sporting achievements, but he takes “a real delight” in this accomplishments, “for their own sake,” eschewing financial gain. As David Herlihy explains in his discussion of Keith-Falconer in *Bicycle: The History* (2004), such a remarkable sportsman had a positive influence on the
reputation of the sport, aiding in its “growing respectability and appeal” (186). During this era of the high-wheel, or “Ordinary” bicycle (1870-1885), cycling was the exclusive arena of the manly sportsman, with the majority of participants being “young, urban males who held middle-class, white-collar jobs” and who wished to perpetuate the image of the sport as one belonging to “respectable gentlemen” (Herlihy 167; 187). Following the arrival of the “safety” bicycle (Figure 17) – a chain driven machine with two wheels of a similar diameter – in 1885, that perception of the cycling sportsman and his community began to radically change as participation in that community widened to include women, children, the elderly of both sexes, and even those in the British colonies, helped along by the trade networks of Empire (Herlihy 241). Along with investigating the new, urban sporting sphere’s relationship with active middle-class male participants in the stories discussed in the previous chapter, the series detective fiction genre also interrogated the new speedy sportsman that developed following the introduction of the Ordinary, and the broadening of cycling participation across the Victorian class and gender spectrum. Stories by Arthur Morrison and Arthur Conan Doyle in The Strand and The Windsor magazines evaluate the way in which this more accessible sport of cycling affected its middle-class male participants and try to come to terms with the discourses of freedom, acceleration, and transgression that were, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, associated with cycling in the Victorian cultural imagination. Whereas in the stories discussed in Chapter 5 the sportsman is
Figure 17: The first advertisement for Starley and Sutton's Rover Safety Bicycle in

*The Graphic*, 31 January, 1885
regarded with a certain degree of suspicion at the same time that he is recovered and reaffirmed, in the stories discussed in the following pages, a much different representation emerges. As with the pastoral sportsman, there are questions concerning his health, but unlike the pastoral sportsman, the speedy sportsman also embodies desires that transcend attempts at control, whether self-control, or regulation by the morality and law of the middle classes. In attempting to come to terms with the speedy sportsman, series detective fiction represents the figure and the sporting sphere out of which he emerges, as a threat to healthy, middle-class masculinity, although there are at the same time indications of attempts to reimagine him as a new kind of hero for the dawning twentieth century.

**Men on Bikes**

In the decades before the arrival of the safety bicycle, the sport of cycling was primarily defined by the participation of those middle-class men devoted to the pursuit of riding the “Ordinary,” a bicycle with a large front wheel, which was notoriously difficult and dangerous to ride. Figures such as Ion Keith-Falconer were, in many ways, the face of the sport in this period, linking participation in it with the standard manly discourses of self-control and physical and moral health. With the introduction of the safety bicycle, however, the place of cycling in the Victorian cultural imagination changed. No longer an activity engaged in by hearty Oxbridge scholars looking for healthful exercise and manly community, cycling became emblematic of freedom from societal conventions, perhaps
most memorably embodied by the figure of the New Woman. The link between the bicycle and the New Woman is one that has been explored by a range of scholars, including Patricia Marks in *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman and the Popular Press* (1990) and Andrew Ritchie in *The Quest for Speed: An History of Early Bicycle Racing, 1868-1903* (2011). As Marks explains, by the 1890s, far from symbolizing the health and vitality of the patriarchy, the bicycle had become emblematic of the growing freedom of women as they challenged, and successfully overcame, many of the gender barriers of Victorian femininity. Marks’s description of a New Woman on her bicycle imbues the sport with far different connotations than those encouraged by its association with Ion Keith-Falconer:

> [T]he woman on a bicycle represents both activity and options; the woman on wheels may decide where she wishes to go and what she plans to do when she gets there, regardless of a male companion, or lack of one. Her influence upon the world is more immediate; no longer confined to the home or hoping to escape from the vicissitudes of earning a living, she actively seeks new experience and intends to have some impact on the world around her. (175)

Far from the manly self-control identified with male cyclists such as Keith-Falconer, the New Woman cyclist is linked with ideas of freedom, autonomy, and a kind of social, political, economic, and even sexual acceleration that forces her to push beyond the bounds of what was deemed respectable in late Victorian Britain.

While this shift in meaning has been well documented when it comes to discussions of the entry of women into the sport of cycling, there has been little
discussion of how the change in cycling’s accessibility through the introduction of the more manageable safety bicycle altered its meaning when it came to its original middle-class masculine participants. Evidence from the period suggests that these new connotations of cycling were by no means easily accepted. In an August 1901 article in the monthly, illustrated magazine, *The Idler*, novelist Eleanor Hoyt registers a note of concern about this change in the meaning of cycling through her personification of the bicycle as a wayward, but later repentant, young man who echoes in many ways the failed, young, Oxbridge oarsman lamented by “Cornelia’s” 1867 letter to *The Times* discussed in Chapter 3. “The Bicycle and its ‘Wild Oats’” presents the reader with a catalogue of the bicycle’s objectionable behaviours, intimating that the middle-class men involved in cycling following the introduction of the safety bicycle were a far cry from the celebrated figure of Ion Keith-Falconer on his Ordinary.

So it sowed its wild oats with lavish prodigality, and disregarded the frowns of Dame Grundy. It became a sporting character, going in for century runs and professional races, and constantly cheapening itself. It went out with wildly yelling bicycle clubs, clad in sweaters that shrieked to heaven, making Sunday a day of horror to the quiet and orderly park of the community. It appeared in popular resorts with notoriously gay soubrettes, and dined at the “Star and Garter,” not wisely but too well – going home later, on its back, in a handsome cab with its (w)heels sticking out over the dashboard. It scorched down Hind Head with bloomer-clad girls, and was to be seen leaning against the railings of notorious roadhouses in close communion with bar maids. It passed its old friends in their smart traps, as it was whirling suburban-wards for Sunday dinner, in company with strident voiced hoodlums, and the friends looked the other way. The hours it kept were enough to shock a Club man. It was outside the pale, and respectable society could not spread its mantle of clemency broadly enough to cover this black sheep. (42-43)
A striking contrast to the iconic Ion Keith-Falconer, Hoyt’s anthropomorphically imagined bicycle is a figure that displays characteristics of excess and a disturbing lack of control. He exhibits a troubling love of speed, earning himself the reputation of a “scorcher,” or fast rider, and going in for distance races as a “sporting character.” This love of physical speed is also indicative of his “fast” social tastes and accelerated appetites. Not only does he demonstrate an appetite for dining “not wisely but too well,” but he also possesses a taste for questionable company, whether it be noisy compatriots who dress in “loud” clothing, or sexually suspect “gay soubrettes,” “bloomer-clad girls,” and “barmaid”; all this he does while ignoring the protests of that arbiter of Victorian respectability, Dame Grundy.

It is the promise of acceleration, and the recognition of the dangers it presented to Victorian masculinity, that comes through in all the representations of the sportsman in late Victorian and early Edwardian series detective fiction in The Strand and The Windsor Magazine. This speedy sportsman is present in Arthur Morrison’s “The Case of Mr. Foggatt (1894)” and “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’” (1897), as well as in Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” (1904). In all of these representations, the speedy sportsman’s desire for the kind of acceleration promised by the bicycle, both physically and metaphorically, is presented as pushing him beyond the bounds of normalcy and into the clutches of uncontrollable animal urges for violence, duplicitous desires for easy wealth, and disturbing
manifestations of male sexual desire. With the arrival of such sporting technology, the representation of the figure of the sportsman changes from one that emphasizes his heroism, and occasionally his fallibility, to one that sees him as a man who is all but controlled by a machine. Like the urban sportsman from spectacular melodrama, discussed in Chapter 4, the speedy sportsman is represented as struggling to come to terms with modernity; however, unlike Nat Gosling and Tom Burroughs, he does not always triumph over such influences or successfully negotiate them. Rather, like the pastoral sportsman represented by the athletes Sammy Crockett and Giles Gilchrist discussed in the previous chapter, the speedy sportsman is sometimes overwhelmed by his relationship to sporting technology, and only sometimes does he manage to incorporate such influences into his sporting practice with any degree of success.

**Arthur Morrison’s “The Case of Mr. Foggatt”**

In “The Case of Mr. Foggatt”, another story from the first collection of Martin Hewitt stories to appear in _The Strand Magazine_ in 1894, Arthur Morrison examines the way in which the sporting technology development of the bicycle disturbs the relationship between participation in sport and the cultivation of a manly identity. In “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” the speedy sportsman is represented as a man for whom the acceleration offered by the bicycle, and by cycle racing, has proved too much, exciting as it does within him the animal that lurks beneath his veneer of civility. Through Martin Hewitt’s investigation of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of his
neighbour, a rich-living decadent named Foggatt, Morrison acknowledges that while cycling may enhance the strength and ability of the masculine participants, it also misshapes within them the material that writers in the period, such as William Landels, identified as being the natural endowment of every man. The acceleration of pace provided by the bicycle, especially in a racing context also brings about the acceleration of other, more dangerous forces in the male body.

In “The Case of Mr Foggatt,” London clerk and competitive cyclist Sidney Mason murders Mr. Foggatt, Martin Hewitt and Brett’s decadent bachelor neighbour. Desiring revenge for a wrong done his family, Mason hunts Foggatt down and, in a moment of passion, shoots him in a locked room, exiting in a spectacular fashion by an upper story window. Upon discovery by Hewitt, Mason manages to outwit the detective and escape prosecution, but not before he posts a letter to Hewitt in which he reveals the motivation for, and the exact execution of, his crime. Hewitt is convinced that justice will not be served by pursuing his quarry, and he allows him to go free. Throughout, Morrison emphasizes the ways in which Mason’s history as a cyclist has altered both his physical and moral manliness in problematic ways. With the advent of the bicycle to sport, the focus is now on the acceleration of an individual’s body beyond one’s innate physical, mental, and emotional ability, thus producing a new kind of potentially dangerous sportsman.
It is the spectacular nature of Mason’s escape from Foggatt’s locked room that first draws attention to the way in which cycling negatively affects the manly body. In assessing the evidence left at the scene of the crime, Hewitt describes to Brett the stunts the murderer would have had to perform upon exiting the building via the upper floor window – stunts made possible, it is later revealed, because of an exceptional physical agility Mason has acquired through his cycling activities:

Mr Foggatt did not shoot himself. He was shot by a rather tall, active young man, perhaps a sailor, but certainly a gymnast . . . Over the window is nothing but the flat face of the gable-end; but to the right; and a foot or two above the level of the top of the window, an iron gutter ends . . . If a tall man stood on the end of the window-sill, steadying himself by the left hand and leaning to the right, he could just touch the end of this gutter with his right hand. The full stretch, toe to finger, is seven feet three inches. I have measured it. (Morrison, “Foggatt” 528)

The precision with which Hewitt catalogues the range of the murderer’s movements invokes the ideal of the manly body that had taken hold of the Victorian imagination in this period, discussed by Roberta Park. With each bit of data that Hewitt reports to Brett – “a foot . . . above the level of the top window,” “seven feet three inches” – the detective emphasizes the extraordinary physical ability of Mason’s body, establishing with a scientific precision the way in which such a body does not measure up to the valued “balanced” ideal represented by such statues as the Discobolus and the Apollo Belvedere. It is a physicality that literally stretches beyond the bounds of what is held to be manly. Mason’s body excels in a way previously unimagined and clearly dangerous.
In the course of the investigation, Mason’s cycling body has attributed to it darker characteristics that suggest that such an acceleration or stretching beyond the boundaries of the manly ideal is somehow indicative of dangerous, and even dark energies within the figure of the speedy sportsman. Period writings about manliness, such as William Landels’s *True Manhood* discussed in Chapter 1, posit that these energies lie dormant in all men and are a part of the unformed material that needs to be shaped and molded through self-control. Participating in cycling, however, does not foster such self-control; rather, it excites these energies with dangerous consequences with the liberty provided by the sport working to compromise the healthy manly identity of its participants.

The first darkening of Mason’s body is quite literal. Upon first seeing the cyclist in Luzatti’s restaurant, Brett is struck by his remarkable presence in part due to the marks the sport has left on his body, including blue “cinder scars on his face from numerous accidents” and a smile punctuated by “a bad fall that had cost him two teeth, and broken others” (Morrison, “Foggatt” 530). The journalist concludes his assessment by noting that Mason was a “fellow with a dark, though very clear skin . . . a hard, angry look of eye, a prominence of cheek-bone, and a squareness of jaw that gave him a rather uninviting aspect (530). In this description, Brett not only notes characteristics that might identify Mason as manly, but also aspects of his appearance that push beyond those boundaries. If his jaw is square, it endows him with a “rather uninviting aspect,” and perhaps more problematically, if his skin is clear, it is also “dark,” suggesting that underneath the
distressing physical scars, there lurks in Sidney Mason a form of energy associated with
the savage and uncontrollable.

This strange duality to Mason’s body – manly on the surface but also possessing
markers of a savage energy – is also present in the visual representation of his character
in Sidney Paget’s illustrations for “The Case of Mr Foggatt.”28 The first illustration, titled
“Hewitt reached swiftly across the table,” gives the reader a first glimpse of Mason in
rendering visually the moment in Luzatti’s restaurant when Hewitt, following a first
conversation with the cyclist, decides to pocket a half-eaten apple in order to later test
what proves to be an incriminating bite pattern (Figure 18). While the focus of the
illustration is inarguably Hewitt’s fast reach across the restaurant table, the figure of
Sidney Mason is troubling in that the only view the reader is given of him is from his
back. Following as it does Brett’s description of him as a dark and threatening character,
this inability to see those features leaves their composition up to the reader’s imagination.
This, along with the fact that the majority of what the reader sees of Mason is in dark ink
– his black suit jacket and his black hair – only further emphasizes the “darkness”
attributed to him by Brett. Mason becomes a dark, unknown threat and a mystery. In part,
this lack of visual recognition provided by the illustration mirrors both Brett’s and the
reader’s position with regard to Mason at this point in the narrative. While Hewitt has

28 In an effort to ensure some continuity between Sherlock Holmes’s final appearance in The Strand
Magazine in 1893 and the advent of Martin Hewitt, Paget provided illustrations for this first cluster of
Hewitt stories. While there is a visual continuity in terms of style, there are also marked differences in how
both the detective and the mystery are visually recorded.
Figure 18: Sidney Paget's "Hewitt reached swiftly across the table" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 531
reason to gather evidence that might convict Mason, both Brett and the reader are not completely sure why he is of interest.

If this initial illustration highlights Mason’s darkness, then the later representations of him focus on the energy of his character, underscoring the potential danger to be found within the figure of the speedy sportsman. The illustrations titled “You see I am prepared” (Figure 19) and “I stood erect before him” (Figure 20), depict the history of Mason’s encounters with Foggatt prior to the murder and they characterize Mason’s body as striking, but also dangerous. In “You see I am prepared,” Mason’s striking physicality is emphasized through the contrast he presents to the character of Mr. Foggatt. Presented standing next to the corpulent and sly Foggatt, who is depicted grinning and brandishing a handgun, Mason looks powerful, with a remarkable physical presence. While Foggatt stands holding the mantelpiece in a position that draws attention to his corpulence, Mason’s tall, erect figure offers a sharp contrast. Foggatt’s body is illustrated with round, curvy lines, whereas Mason’s is composed of striking verticals. Though his black hair and a startling black moustache are still visible, Mason’s light-coloured overcoat balances out the dark of Foggatt’s suit and the threat of the handgun he is holding.
Figure 19: Sidney Paget's "You see I am prepared" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 535
Figure 20: Sidney Paget's "I stood erect before him" from "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," page 536
The second of these two illustrations (Figure 20) hints that there are dangerous energies stirring beneath Mason’s striking physical surface. If in the first illustration what strikes the reader is the contrast to Foggatt’s undisciplined body, in “I stood erect before him,” Mason maintains his stature, but his wild face hints at the energies lurking underneath the surface. With Foggatt sitting in a chair with a pleading look on his face, it is the erect figure of Sidney Mason, standing with his feet spread apart and his fists balled at his side that is the threatening figure. Gone, too, is his light-coloured overcoat, and now his black suit combines with his black hair and moustache to emphasize the “dark” nature of his figure. While he still stands straight and tall, the tension in his frame hints at energies that are about to break through the barrier of self-control; the balled fists, wild look in his eyes, and suggestion of disheveled hair and clothing also hint at this. In these two illustrations, the reader is presented with the visual equivalent of the assessment that Brett records upon their first meeting; however, it is worth noting that while the textual representation of Mason’s body comes to the reader through Brett, these visual representations are doubly mediated in that they represent an encounter as described by Sidney Mason in a letter to Martin Hewitt which is then presented to the reader through Brett’s account. These illustrations suggest that a speedy sportsman such as Mason may present a striking physical veneer, but that this remarkable body is only really notable due to the fact that it hints at the way in which his participation in the sport has misshaped his manly potential.
This idea of a man whose animal energies are boiling beneath the surface is again emphasized towards the close of the story with Hewitt’s revelation of exactly what led him to deduce Mason’s guilt – a half-eaten apple. Replying to a plea from Brett that he reveal all, Hewitt explains,

I examined that apple, and found it bore marks of very irregular teeth. While you were gone, I oiled it over, and, rushing down to my rooms, where I always have a little plaster of Paris handy for such work, took a mold of the part where the teeth had left the clearest marks. I then returned the apple to its place for the police to use if they thought fit. Looking at my mold, it was plain that the person who had bitten that apple had lost two teeth, one at the top and one below, not exactly opposite, but nearly so. The other teeth, although they would appear to have been fairly sound, were irregular in size and line. Now, the dead man had, as I saw, a very excellent set of false teeth, regular and sharp, with none missing. Therefore it was plain that somebody else had been eating that apple. Do I make myself clear? (532)

The initial association in Hewitt’s description with a man’s fall in the Garden of Eden echoes the more contemporary, nineteenth-century associations with identifying latent criminality in the human body as it is manifested through physical traits, an idea popularized by nineteenth-century writers on crime, such as Cesare Lombroso, author of L’uomo delinquente (1876), or The Criminal Man. Depending on the idea of biological determinism, Lombroso claimed that criminals have particular physiognomic attributes or deformities that can be classified and referred to when attempting to assess an individual’s potential latent criminality. Because these characteristics indicate a kind of evolutionary failure on the part of the criminal individual, the criminal body was viewed as closer to the animal than the human, and therefore easily visually distinguishable. As
Piers Beirne explains in *Inventing Criminology: Essays on the Rise of ‘Homo Criminalis’* (1993), Lombroso’s work reinforced the popular belief “in the existence of habitual “born criminals,” collectively comprising a classe dangereuse, a group of poor, semiproletarian, professional thieves . . . who were committed to a way of life dependent on the proceeds of crime” (147). Mason’s idiosyncratic bite hints at the potential for this latent criminality within the body of the speedy sportsman. The fact that this remarkable bite is in part due to his past cycling career works to identify participation in the sport as a catalyst that works not to transform such energy into that which defines a manly character, but rather to encourage it to develop unchecked.

The invocation of ideas popularized by Lombroso is not the only instance of cultural intertext in this moment that works to suggest the potential danger present in the figure of the speedy sportsman. The half-eaten apple, with its telltale bite marks, recalls another text which further emphasizes this identification – Edgar Allen Poe’s 1841 short detective story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” a locked room mystery in which the brutal murderer of a Parisian mother and daughter is revealed to be none other than an escaped orangutan.29 In a moment in the story echoed in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” Poe’s detective, the indomitable C. Auguste Dupin, reveals to the nameless narrator the

29 It is worth noting here the etymology for “orangutan” recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which identifies the word as coming from Malay via Dutch in the 17th century. Its original form was “orang utan” which translates loosely from Malay as “person of the forest”; in 1850, the *Journal of the Indian Archeipelago* stated that the Kayan of Borneo “know it as orang-utan, meaning ‘man of the woods’ or ‘wild man’” (*OED*). By the time of the publication of “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” these allusions to Poe’s murderous monkey would have provoked connections not only to evolutionary discourse, but also to concerns about the civilized veneer of man.
way in which the bruise marks left by the grip of a hand with an abnormally large span on
the neck of Camille L’Espanaye indicate the animal’s guilt:

‘You will perceive,’ continued [Dupin], spreading out the paper upon the
table before us, that this drawing gives the idea of a firm and fixed hold.
There is no slipping apparent. Each finger has retained – possibly until the
death of the victim – the fearful grasp by which it originally imbedded
itself. Attempt, now, to place all your finger, at the same time, in the
respective impressions as you see them.’
I made the attempt in vain . . . ‘This,’ I said, ‘is the mark of no human
hand.’ (Poe 176)

By echoing such an episode in the production of a half-eaten apple as conclusive of
Mason’s guilt, Morrison’s story further emphasizes the way in which the speedy
sportsman is a threat to, rather than a beacon of, late nineteenth and early twentieth-
century manliness.

Though the story goes to great lengths to identify the ways in which cycling is
responsible for Sidney Mason’s physical and moral abnormality, at the close of the story
Mason is to be partially redeemed through a letter which he sends to Hewitt, confessing
his guilt and explaining his motivation. Concern over the danger presented by the figure
of the speedy sportsman is, for the moment, assuaged, though the story’s conclusion
contains a note of ambiguity that ultimately works to undermine this supposed
redemption. Mason may confess his guilt, and reveal seemingly manly, even middle-class
motives for his actions; however, he remains outside the bounds of the law, and the
narrative, escaping apprehension.
Upon receiving Mason’s letter – which contains the cyclist’s confession of guilt and the revelation that he murdered Foggatt because of the way in which the unscrupulous businessman ruined his family name through shaming his father – Hewitt partially re-evaluates Mason, and attempts to rewrite his abnormality. Hewitt endeavors to substitute the letter as a new textual “body” for Mason, replacing the one created by Brett’s narration and Paget’s illustrations. Thinking that he might be able to trace Mason following his escape, Brett asks if there was a postmark on the letter, to which Hewitt responds:

“It wasn’t posted. It was handed in with the others from the front-door letter-box this morning in an unstamped envelope. He must have dropped it himself during the night. Paper,” Hewitt proceeded, holding it up to the light, “Turkey mill, ruled foolscap. Envelope, blue, official shape, Pirie’s watermark. Both quite ordinary and no special marks.” (Morrison, “Foggatt” 537)

If the exceptional content of the letter partially exonerates Mason from accusations of succumbing to an energy excited by his cycling exploits in that it reveals his motivation to be familial, it is the very unexceptional nature of the letter’s physical characteristics that in a sense offer a new “body” for Mason. In attributing such characteristics to Mason’s paper “body” – “quite ordinary [with] no special marks” – Hewitt is offering another understanding of Mason that differs from that of him as exceptional and abnormal presented throughout the investigation. This attempt at redemption and narrative closure is not effective, however, for Mason – the self-professed “odd freak of a man . . . wrong, hardened, and flagitious” (536) – remains at large at the close of the
story. In “The Case of Mr Foggatt,” Martin Hewitt’s investigation not only searches for
the truth about a mysterious murder, but in doing so also interrogates the speedy
sportsman. Sidney Mason’s cycling body garners much attention, and its physical
appearance is presented as indicative of the way in which cycling has mis-shaped the
manly potential supposedly located within every man.

**Arthur Morrison’s “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’”**

The representation of the speedy sportsman in “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche
Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’,,” another story by Arthur Morrison, echoes many of the
conclusions reached in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt” regarding the way in which the entry of
the new technology of the bicycle has altered this figure. This critical view is in many
ways rendered more emphatic through the presence of a detective who is complicit in the
suspect, modern world of cycling. Horace Dorrington, a “private inquiry agent,” was
introduced to readers in the pages of *The Windsor Magazine* in 1897. If “The Case of Mr
Foggatt” displays an ambiguity towards the new sporting technology of the bicycle and
the way in which it shapes and influences the manly sporting body, this ambiguity is
cleared up and a darker opinion is registered through the outcome of Dorrington’s
investigation into the shady business practices of a cycle manufacturer.

Following the success of the Martin Hewitt stories, launched in 1894 in *The
Strand Magazine* to make up for the untimely death of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes,
Arthur Morrison moved his middling, professional detective to the pages of *The Windsor
*Magazine* for two subsequent series in 1895 and 1896, later collected as *The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt* and *The Adventures of Martin Hewitt* respectively. If Hewitt is sometimes viewed as a foil to Holmes, then Horace Dorrington, the private inquiry agent whom Morrison introduced to the pages of *The Windsor Magazine* in January of 1897 with the short story “The Narrative of Mr. James Rigby,” is another matter entirely. In a series of six stories narrated by an Australian gentleman artist, James Rigby, Morrison presents to his readers a difficult and unsettling detective, Horace Dorrington of the firm Dorrington and Hicks. Rigby is a unique narrator in the tradition of series detective fiction in that rather than record the activities of a remarkable detective from the perspective of sidekick, he details the activities of Horace Dorrington from the position of victim. In the inaugural Dorrington story, Rigby outlines the plan to which he fell victim and only narrowly escaped:

The plot was clear now. The followings, the footsteps, the face at the window, the label on the door – all were a mere humbug arranged by Dorrington for his own purpose, which was to drive me into his power and get my papers from me. Armed with these, and with his consummate address and knowledge of affairs, he could go to Mr. Mowbray in the character of Mr. James Rigby, sell my land in South Australia, and have the whole of my property transferred to himself from Sidney . . . I was made to efface my own trail, and could be got rid of in the end with little trouble; for my body, stripped of everything that might identify me, would be simply that of a drowned man unknown, whom nobody could identify. (Morrison, “Rigby” 258)

As Clare Clarke (2010) notes in her recent discussion of Dorrington, he is a character that “subverts the usual moral, formal, and political conventions of the late-Victorian
detective genre” (8). That such a fiendishly clever attempt at identity theft would appear in the pages of a “family magazine” may at first appear unusual; however *The Windsor Magazine* – home of Dorrington, and later Kipling’s challenging schoolboy, Stalky and Hornung’s dastardly Raffles – was a distinct manifestation of the illustrated, monthly magazine, perhaps most famously represented by *The Strand*. Like *The Strand*, *The Windsor* was aimed at middle-class, domestic audiences, although in its initial edition it acknowledged that those audiences might be diffuse in terms of geography. Nonetheless, the readers were, it confidently claimed, “united in their concern for the well-being of Empire and [their] desire for a high-quality periodical” (Vaughn-Pow 1). While, thematically, *The Windsor* “reveals the concerns and anxieties of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, both in terms of British society and the ways in which the colonies and major international powers were represented” (Vaughn-Pow 6), it altogether had a character that departed slightly from the normative model. As Mike Ashley notes:

> Britain, in the mid-late Victorian period, had been awash with what were euphemistically called “home” magazines. These were devout Christian magazines that oozed upright living and sentimentality and were prone to preaching. What The Windsor wanted to do was keep the upright morality but loosened the collar. It felt that stories and articles could remain ethical and fun. (223)

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of *The Windsor Magazine* was its engagement with the technological advances of its age. As Catherine Vaughn-Pow notes in her cataloguing of the magazine’s fiction, along with publishing non-fiction pieces on radio and telegraphy, electricity, and new concepts in astronomy, *The Windsor* also
evaluated such advances as the increasing popularity of the automobile and the invention of the airship. As early as 1896, *The Windsor* published fiction that dealt with technological innovation, such as William Livingston Alden’s “The Scientific Balloon” and John Mills’s “The Aerial Brickfield.” While these stories often presented the new inventions of the age, the attitude on the whole was not praiseworthy. Indeed, they “demonstrated an awareness of the comical aspects of human reliance on technology, even while stressing the importance of technological progress and its potential benefits for human society” (Vaughn-Pow 8). It is within this tradition of technological evaluation that Arthur Morrison’s fourth Dorrington story fits. In “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’” Morrison investigates further the figure of the speedy sportsman and the technologically enhanced, profit-driven sporting world of which he was a part. In doing so he suggests to readers in a fashion similar to that in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” that the speedy sportsman, along with the hybrid business and sporting environment built around the bicycle, presents a threat to the health and stability of a manly identity.

In “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche and Bicycle Tyre Co., Limited’,” Horace Dorrington moves of his own volition into the world of bicycle manufacturing and racing. As his office – the firm of Dorrington and Hicks, Private Inquiry Agents – has just completed a simple investigation into the validity of a patent, Dorrington sees the time as ripe for some personal financial speculation in the developing cycle industry. Using the
knowledge gained from the patent investigation as an introduction, Dorrington familiarizes himself with the workings of the “‘Indestructible Bicycle and Tyre Company’ of London and Coventry” (Morrison, “Avalanche” 583), and in doing so is invited by one of the managers, Mr. Steadman, to watch the company’s athletes race at the company cycle track. While observing a practice, Dorrington meets Mr. Paul Mallows, “the founder . . . managing director, and a great pillar of the cycling industry” (584). During their meeting, one of the athletes in training for an upcoming promotional race meant to further the fortunes of Indestructible has a freak accident on the track and is seriously injured. Dorrington undertakes to investigate at the request of Mr. Mallows and uncovers an ingenious plot. While Mr. Mallows has registered what appears to be a genuine concern for his injured athlete, he is revealed to be the cause of the accident, for not only is Mr. Mallows sabotaging his own cyclists prior to a big race, he is doing so in order to further the fortunes of a suspect, upstart, rival company of which he is also the founder and managing director. Dorrington confronts Mallows with the truth of his business practices, demanding a share of the ill-gotten gains, and in response Mallows attempts to kill Dorrington by locking him in an enameling oven. Following his escape, Dorrington ensures that he “blows the whole operation wide open” both literally and figuratively (594) and the story concludes with Dorrington holding the upper hand. “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’” suggests that cycling – both the sport and the business practice which creates the sport – does not support or enhance the
manly identity of the men involved, and the speedy sportsman is represented not as a heroic paragon of sporting manliness, but rather as a cog in a fraudulent and suspect business, focused merely on profit. The machines the speedy sportsman rides supplant his body to the point that the man becomes secondary to the machine; he is a mere accessory that works to further promote the value of the object. Ultimately, when working as they should, the men’s bodies become absorbed in the machines. It is only when bodies fail – as is the case with the injured rider, Gillett – that they become noticeable.

One of the indications of the problematic nature of the cycling world for the men involved in it is the way in which the language used to describe the men and the environment in which they train emphasizes the mechanical and artificial nature of the setting. While a cycle track might at first seem a likely candidate for a positive sporting space, the representation of it here not only highlights its artificiality, but also its other-worldliness. Upon Dorrington’s arrival, the track appears as a kind of alien space: “[I]nside the track, the two highly ‘banked’ ends . . . seemed to a nearsighted person in the centre to be solid, erect walls, along the face of which the training rides skimmed, fly-fashion” (587). In this space, the cyclists are wedded to the machines, and they move as a strange kind of man-machine hybrid. The emphasis is not on the speedy sportsman’s physical ability, but rather on how machine-like he has become:

In fifty yards his pace quickened, and he settled down into a swift even pace, regular as clockwork . . . ‘Look at the action! . . . Just watch him. Not an ounce of power wasted there! Did you ever see more regular ankle
work? And did anybody ever sit a machine quite so well as that? Show me a movement anywhere above the hips! (587)

Here, the cyclists are praiseworthy when their bodies blend seamlessly with the machines, and when this blending is just right, the view of the cyclists' bodies becomes fragmented and broken down into their most important component parts, just like the machines they ride: “The machines became invisible, and little could be seen of the riders across the ground but the row of rhythmically working legs and the white cap that Gillett wore” (587).

This blend of technology and man is echoed in the language used to describe the progress of the cycle industry and the role the cyclists have in advancing the success of the companies with which they are affiliated by virtue of their many race victories. In discussing the race, one of the businessmen with whom Dorrington is talking shares his hopes for the upcoming match: “There’ll be a good race on Saturday, I expect . . . Or rather . . . I expect the fifty miles record will go. I fancy our man Gillett is pretty safe to win, but he’ll have to move, and I quite expect to see a good set of new records on our advertisements next week” (584). This connection is again reiterated following Gillett’s crash, when the men discuss the effect this will have on their competitors, “the ‘Avalanche’ people”:

With Gillett out of it Lant is just about as certain a winner as our man would be if all were well. And there would be a boom for the ‘Avalanche’ company, on the very eve of the share subscription! Lant, you must know, was very second-rate till this season, but he has improved wonderfully in the last month or two, since he has been with the ‘Avalanche’ people. Let
him win, and they can point to the machine as responsible for it all. ‘Here,’ they will say in effect, ‘is a man who could rarely get in front, even in second-class company, till he rode an ‘Avalanche’. Now he beats the world’s record for fifty miles on it, and makes rings around the topmost professionals!’ Why it will be worth hundreds of capital to them. (588)

As with the world of professional pedestrianism discussed in the previous chapter, participation in this world of competitive and commercial cycling does not ensure the production of a healthy male body according to popular gender standards of the period. Indeed, rather than deform the speedy sportsman’s body through developing one muscle group over another, cycling in this fashion all but erases the body. Yes, as Mallows suggests in his comments, the individual rider will have an indisputable acceleration in speed, but that will not be attributable to his own hard work in training, or his pluck during the race. Rather, it will come from technological advancement that ultimately brings fame to the product and not the rider.

This emphasis on machine over man is also evident in the advertising practices of the Avalanche Company. Rather than have the athlete represent the promise of the company to investors, they display the machine responsible for it all. The speedy sportsman has become secondary to the product he rides:

In the midst of it all was another bicycle covered with dried mud, of which, however, sufficient had been carefully cleared away to expose a similar glaring transfer to those that decorated the rest -- with a placard announcing that on this particular machine somebody had ridden some incredible distance on bad roads in very little more than no time at all. (583-84)
This conflation of the sporting world with the business world is represented as being harmful to manliness, for in this hybrid space of sport and profit there is no way in which bodies can excel on their own terms. Rather, the speed promised by the bicycle, though it enhances a man’s activity, is not that which accelerates his journey to manly status. In a cycle race, it is the machine that is the hero and the industry that is demonstrated as being strong and robust. Consider the language of the Avalanche prospectus that is presented to the reader:

And below this list there were such positive promises of tremendous dividends, backed up and proved beyond dispute by such ingenious piles of business-like figures, every line of figures referring to some other line for testimonials to its perfect genuineness and accuracy, that any reasonable man, it would seem, must instantly sell the hat off his head and the boots off his feet to buy one share at least, and so make his fortune forever. (584)

This circularity of the language of the prospectus mimics the circular motion of the cycle track racing which is the backbone of the industry, and the absence of the speedy sportsman as a marker of the value of such a sport for those looking to cultivate a manly identity mimics the way in which he is also absent from the heart of the mystery. In “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’,” as in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett,” the figure of the sportsman is relegated to the margins of the narrative. In this instance his injury is the catalyst for the investigation; however, it is the businessmen who inhabit this sphere that are the main focus.
This relationship between cycling, machinery, and business is also evident in the way in which the business aspect of cycling and specifically Mallows’s questionable business practices are understood as a “game” – a “game” at which he and Dorrington are very adept. The drive for profit has worked both to create a sportsman who is circling out of control, driven by the desire for business success and to turn the sphere of sport in to a space for shady business dealings. Unlike other detectives, Horace Dorrington’s only association with the world of sport is in the way that his criminal detective practice mirrors the corrupting motions of the cycle industry and the way in which both institutions mimic the idea of “fair play,” a sharp contrast to the relationship to the supposed sporting pastoral that Martin Hewitt exhibits in “The Loss of Sammy Crockett.”

The first instance of the idea of “business as game” is evident in the opening account of the cycle industry. Investors thinking of putting money into one of the many cycle companies trading on the open market are depicted as taking a chance in the manner of gambling:

All the old private cycle companies suddenly were offered to the public, and their proprietors, already rich men, built themselves houses on the Riviera, bought yachts, ran racehorses, and left business for ever. Sometimes the shareholders got their money’s worth, sometimes more, sometimes less -- sometimes they got nothing but total loss; but still the game went on. (583)

Rather than be represented here as an industry which governs itself on the same principles of manly sport, cycling manufacture is an industry which cultivates a different
kind of masculinity, distinct from the sportsman, one which has overtones of decadence and irresponsibility, as well as a lack of surety as to the guarantee of the investment.

When Dorrington discovers the truth of Mallows’s plan, and presents him with the evidence that proves he sabotaged his own cyclist in order to allow the “rival” cyclist to win the race and thus drive up the shares of his bogus company, the detective claims he is playing fair with his fellow criminal. The language of sport is corrupted through its use here:

Here it is, you see, still in my pocket-book, where I put it last night by the light of the lantern; just a sticky black silk thread, that’s all. I’ve only brought it to show you I’m playing a fair game with you . . . . You can’t fight, you know, with this bogus company business known to me. So that I am only showing you this thread as an act of grace, to prove that I have stumped you with perfect fairness. (592)

In this encounter with Mallows, Dorrington holds the incriminating piece of evidence – a black thread from a bandage that Mallows had on his finger. The language Dorrington uses to describe his discovery of Mallows’s plan, far from echoing the fast developing world of cycling, is rather taken from cricket. Assuring Mallows that he is playing fair, in that he has the evidence that proves Mallows is guilty, Dorrington reiterates to Mallows that he is out or “stumped” through all fair action on his part. This language continues when Mallows concedes defeat to Dorrington, and just as Dorrington’s invocation of fair and manly sport to understand his detection practice is insincere, so too is Mallows’s response: “Well, that’s done, and the least said the soonest mended. You’ve won it, and I won’t grumble any more. I think I’ve done this thing pretty neatly, eh?” (594-95).
Following his escape, Dorrington decides “[t]here should be no more honour between these two thieves now” (593) and in response literally “blows the whole operation” (594).

Interestingly, Dorrington justifies Mallows’s suspect business model, and reveals that he has the same approach to running his private inquiry business. Unlike Holmes, or even Hewitt, Dorrington’s detection practice does not operate on the same principles as the world of the sports they investigate. While he may appropriate the language of cricket to explain his capture of Mallows (in as much as he appropriates the detection practices of more manly detectives), Dorrington easily shifts into the language of speculation and chance associated with the cycle industry in describing his criminal activities:

Well now, do you know, I am exactly the same sort of man as yourself -- if you don’t mind the comparison. I am disposed for a little side flutter, so to speak -- a little speculation outside my regular business. I also am not ashamed of it. And since everybody does it, and there is so much money going -- why, I am thinking of making my share. So we are evidently a pair, and naturally intended for each other! (593)

This is precisely the problem with the sport of cycling as it is represented in “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’”; the introduction of a new technology has taken a sport which could potentially contribute manly bodies to a society in desperate need of them and turns it into a factory for the manufacture of crooks, swindlers, and those who are more interested in profit than anything else.
Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist”

In “The Case of Mr. Foggatt” the speedy sportsman and the sport of cycling are represented as a potential threat to the health and stability of manliness, in much the same way that they are represented as both bound up in duplicity and criminal activity and in “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’.” Their representation in Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” (1904) also registers a discomfort with the speedy sportsman; however, the conclusions the story comes to about the place of such a figure in the modern age differ from those just discussed. While the representation of the speedy sportsman in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” attributes to this figure many of the same characteristics as those attached to Sidney Mason in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” unlike the conclusions about the sportsman and cycling found in “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited,” it posits a potential role for this figure in the world taking shape in the first decades of the twentieth century, a role that can no longer be filled by the Victorian detective.

In “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist,” Holmes and Watson are visited at 221B Baker Street by Miss Violet Smith, a shabby-genteel music teacher who is bothered by the mysterious figure of a bearded man following her on his bicycle to and from the rural train station near the manor house at which she is engaged. Holmes and Watson investigate and discover a dastardly plot to force Smith into marriage with a ruthless and violent South African fortune hunter, Jack Woodley; a plot hatched by Woodley and his
two accomplices, Mr. Bob Carruthers, Smith’s employer, and an unscrupulous, defrocked minister, a Mr. Williamson. Upon first reading, it appears that cycling is peripheral to the story in that there are no clear descriptions of the activity as there are in “The Affair of the ‘Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Limited’” or of the men who engage in the activity as in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt.” Nevertheless, as the title of the story indicates, the figure of the ‘Solitary Cyclist’ is at the heart of this mystery; while Watson’s first use of the phrase indicates Violet Smith – “Miss Violet Smith, the solitary cyclist of Charlington” (Conan Doyle, “Cyclist” 3) – as the story progresses, it becomes clear that the character that is emblematic of the story’s attitude towards the figure of the sportsman is another solitary cyclist,30 Violet Smith’s employer and one time accomplice of the villains Woodley and Williamson.31 In its representation of Carruthers, the story does indeed depict the speedy sportsman as a figure given over to the influence of the dangerous energies that cycling accelerates, but it does not entirely condemn him. Along with registering that cycling contributes to Violet Smith’s “tall, graceful, and queenly” appearance (3), the story also provides a limited kind of redemption for Carruthers and

30 It is interesting to note that, according Joseph Kestner, Conan Doyle’s original title for the story was “The Solitary Man” (85).
31 There are two other stories published in this series of Holmes adventures in The Strand Magazine and later collected into The Return of Sherlock Holmes that involve cycling. The “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter” Holmes trails a suspect doctor using a bicycle and in “The Adventure of the Priory School” Holmes is able to determine the fate of a missing schoolteacher and student through tracking the patterns left by a specific brand of bicycle tyre. As is the case in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist,” racing culture is not present in these stories. I have chosen to focus on “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” because it offers the most sustained comment on cycling and the most developed representation of the speedy sportsman. The judgment that is ultimately expressed in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” is in keeping with the sentiments expressed in these other stories.
his unrequited desire for Violet Smith. Indeed, though this story also celebrates Sherlock Holmes’s own past as an amateur sportsman, that history proves insufficient to foil the villainous plot, and these two factors together suggest that for Conan Doyle the speedy sportsman potentially has a place in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The first representation of cycling in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” is through the introduction of the character Violet Smith. At the same time that Conan Doyle identifies Smith as a moderately independent woman, he also associates her identity as a cyclist with that independence. As in Morrison’s “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” cycling leaves telltale marks on the individual; however, in the case of Violet Smith, these are not damaging signs, nor are they permanent. Watson introduces Smith to the reader as “the young and beautiful woman, tall, graceful, and queenly, who presented herself at Baker Street” (Conan Doyle, “Cyclist” 3), and Holmes quickly notes the way in which her passion for cycling has caused “the slight roughening of the side of [her] sole caused by the friction of the edge of the pedal” (3). Violet Smith proves to be a confident and clear-headed woman, and though cycling brings her noticeable health, it does little to excite in her any energies that might be deemed contrary to the kind of femininity valued in the period. Holmes provides assurance for the reader of her “spirituality” through identifying her as a music teacher (4), and readers are reassured of this femininity when they are informed that she is only working as a governess only until the time when she can marry her fiancé, an enterprising young electrical engineer named Cyril Morton, the
mention of whom sends her into an appropriate kind of feminine distractedness – “Yes, Mr. Holmes; Cyril Morton, an electrical engineer, and we hope to be married at the end of the summer. Dear me, how did I get talking about him?” (4).

While cycling may be depicted here as having a positive effect on women who take it up, “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” does not draw the same kinds of conclusions about the men engaged in the same activity. Through the representation of Mr. Bob Carruthers, Violet Smith’s employer at Chiltern Grange and a reluctant participant in the scheme to obtain the young woman’s fortune, the story represents the speedy sportsman as a figure struggling to control the animal energies which cycling excites. As with Violet Smith, the initial appearance of Carruthers suggests a body well within the bounds of normative gender ideology. In telling Holmes about her employer, Smith states that he “was a much older man, [and] was more agreeable. He was a dark, sallow, clean-shaven, silent person; but he had polite manners and a pleasant smile” (4-5). Indeed, he appears as a kind of *paterfamilias* figure in that he creates at Chiltern Grange the kind of home that meets with standards of respectability, overseen by “a lady-housekeeper, a very respectable, elderly person, called Mrs. Dixon to look after the establishment” (5). Though Carruthers initially appears to be a prototype of the *paterfamilias*, as Holmes and Watson’s investigation unfolds, it becomes clear that beneath that surface of respectability bubble masculine energies that both fuel the plot
against Violet Smith, and which also find their best expression in the cycling surveillance he performs over the young woman’s journey to and from the train station.

Watson observes Carruthers prior to his being identified as Violet Smith’s stalker. As Carruthers trails the music teacher, Waston notes not only the energy of his riding, but also the way in which his body’s interaction with the machine produces a distorted figure. When Carruthers is on his bicycle he becomes the physical embodiment of his intent: “the man behind her [was] bending low over his handle-bar, with a curiously furtive suggestion in every movement . . . [an] active cyclist who sprints away from that athletic young lady’s pursuit” (7-8). When he is later observed by both Holmes and Watson this crouched figure, intent on following his lady love, becomes even more severe: “A solitary cyclist was coming towards us. His head was down and his shoulders rounded as he put every ounce of energy that he possessed on to the pedals. He was flying like a racer” (10). Here, Carruthers’s furtive posture, which is meant to conceal his identity from Violet Smith, is connected with the posture of a racing cyclist and the fury with which he pedals is cause for remark. Later, it comes to light that Carruthers’ motivation for following Smith in such a manner is love and a desire to protect her from the machinations of the villains Woodley and Williamson, but as Watson points out, this monitoring is just as expressive of selfish desire as it is of Carruthers’ desire to keep Smith from harm:

“Why didn’t you tell her of her danger?”
“Because then, again, she would have left me, and I couldn’t bear to face that. Even if she couldn’t love me it was a great deal to me just to see her dainty form about the house, and to hear the sound of her voice.”

“Well,” said I, “you call that love, Mr. Carruthers, but I should call it selfishness.” (13)

This masculine energy that fuels Carruthers’ cycling is ultimately outside the bounds of acceptable manly behaviour. Though he tries to cloak it in the language of love and chivalry, the desire at the bottom of it is cast as dangerous. That such a desire should find expression in cycling – indeed, that it should prove the motivation behind such sportsman-like displays – demonstrates the story’s unease with this speedy sportsman.

This figure is cast in an even darker light when it becomes evident that Carruthers is not the gentleman widower who Smith believed him to be, but rather a member of the cabal of wicked men conspiring to attain her fortune. In linking Carruthers with the cabal and their overt sexual energy and desire for financial gain, the widower’s activities, no matter their stated motivation, are understood as coming from the same place as the plot against Violet Smith. Though he does much to distinguish himself as separate, Carruthers is only the more subdued and contrite version of his accomplice, the animalistic “Roaring Jack Woodley . . . the greatest brute and bully in South Africa, a man whose name is a terror from Kimberly to Johannesburg” (12-13). Throughout the story, Woodley is presented as the epitome of masculine energy left uncontrolled and undirected. Implicated as he is in the plot to steal Violet Smith’s inheritance, his desire for financial gain is coupled with his physical desire for the woman. In recounting to Holmes and
Watson, one of her first meetings with Woodley, Smith makes clear the man’s objectionable nature and his uncontrolled animality:

He was a dreadful person, a bully to everyone else, but to me something infinitely worse. He made odious love to me, boasted of his wealth, said that if I married him I would have the finest diamonds in London, and finally, when I would have nothing to do with him, he seized me in his arms one day after dinner – he was hideously strong – and he swore that he would not let me go until I had kissed him. Mr. Carruthers came in and tore him off from me, on which he turned upon his own host, knocking him down and cutting his face open. (5)

Along with the overt sexual desire represented here, Woodley threatens to use violence against Violet Smith should she not comply with the financial requests of her new husband (13) and the image presented at the moment when Holmes, Watson, and Carruthers confront Woodley underscores this savage nature:

On the farther side of [the glade], under the shadow of a mighty oak, there stood a singular group of three people. One was a woman, our client, drooping and faint, a handkerchief around her mouth. Opposite her stood a brutal, heavy-faced, red-moustached young man, his gaitered legs parted wide, one arm akimbo, the other waiving a riding-crop, his whole attitude suggestive of triumphant bravado. (11)

In this moment, the reader is presented with the most overt and direct display of the animal energies within man (Figure 21). Linked to the distorted and covert figure of Carruthers riding his bicycle in pursuit of Violet Smith, here Woodley’s body appears larger than life, his stance provocative, his intention clear in his brandished riding-crop and his waving arm. Celebrating the fact he believes the defrocked minister, Williamson,
Figure 21: Sidney Paget's "As we approached ..." from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 11
has just married him to Smith, he is the embodiment of the very kind of dangerous masculine energy that the story suggests should be monitored and controlled.

What is offered to the reader as a means of subduing and controlling the dangerous masculine energy exhibited by Woodley, and to a certain extent, Carruthers, is Sherlock Holmes’s strange blend of professional detecting and an amateur athleticism that does not depend on technology. As readers are reminded in “The Adventure of the ‘Gloria Scott’,” Holmes has a past history of athletic accomplishments, as his similarity to the young athlete Gilchrist in “The Adventure of the Three Students” demonstrates. In recounting his university days to Watson, Holmes outlines his student life:

I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson, always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year. Bar fencing and boxing I had few athletic tastes, and then my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so that we had no points of contact at all. (Conan Doyle, “Gloria” 395)

From this early stage, Holmes’s intellectual and athletic pursuits are linked and the idea of the professional consulting detective becomes associated with a class-specific idea of amateur athleticism traditionally associated with the very kind of university college atmosphere seen in “The Adventure of the Three Students.”32 It is this physical presence

32 That Holmes is a proficient boxer is a detail that surfaces several times in the canon. In A Study in Scarlet (1887), Watson catalogues the various traits and habits of his new housemate and notes a proficiency in single-sticks and boxing. In his numbered list titled “Sherlock Holmes – his limits,” Watson notes under number eleven “Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman” (Conan Doyle, “Scarlet” 21). In The Sign of Four (1890), Holmes’s interaction with McMudo, the butler at Pondicherry Lodge, also reminds Watson of his friend’s athletic ability. In response to Holmes’s reminding him of a bout in which they had both fought, the butler exclaims “Not Mr. Sherlock Holmes! . . . God’s truth! how could I have
that is put into contention against Woodley’s out of control colonial masculinity, a conflict Emelyne Godfrey discusses in her treatment of the story (130-131).

This policing of the threat that Woodley presents is memorably depicted in Holmes’s own account of his meeting with the South African at a local pub. Returning to London, Holmes appears at 221B Baker Street “with a cut lip and a discoloured lump upon his forehead, besides a general air of dissipation which would have made his own person the fitting object of a Scotland Yard investigation” (Conan Doyle, “Cyclist” 8). As Holmes recounts his adventure to Watson, it becomes apparent that the kind of athletic manliness that he embodies stands in direct contrast to the more dangerous masculine energy fueling the plot against Violet Smith. Holmes is brought face to face with Woodley when the latter discovers him asking questions of the pub landlord:

We had got as far as this when who should walk in but the gentleman himself, who had been drinking his beer in the tap-room and had heard the whole conversation. Who was I? What did I want? What did I mean by asking questions? He had a fine flow of language, and his adjectives were very vigorous. He ended a string of abuse by a vicious back-hander which I failed to entirely avoid. The next few minutes were delicious. It was a straight left against a slogging ruffian. I emerged as you see me. Mr. Woodley went home in a cart. (8)

mistook you? If instead o’ standin’ there so quiet you had just stepped up and given me that cross-hit of yours under the jaw, I’d ha’ known you without a question” (Conan Doyle, “Four” 74). The most recent recognition of Holmes’ athleticism can be found in Guy Ritchie’s 2009 and 2011 Sherlock Holmes films in which Robert Downey Jr. portrays a vigorous and agile Holmes who had a predilection for competing in professional boxing matches. It is interesting to note that while one might be able to hypothesize Holmes’s exposure to the professional world of pugilism and prize rings through the comments made by McMurdo in The Sign of Four, Conan Doyle is careful to emphasize the amateur sporting associations of his detective in order to better craft Holmes’s professionalism and remove from it any taint of the factory. Indeed, Holmes identifies himself to McMurdo as “the amateur who fought three rounds . . . at Alison’s rooms” (Conan Doyle, “Four” 73-74).
It is this match between the two very different men that perhaps best illustrates the contest of masculinity taking place in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist.” Pitted against a “slogging ruffian” who has no appreciation for the “sweet science,” Holmes emerges not only victorious, but having demonstrated the superiority of “the good old British sport of boxing” (8) in the face of a challenge from the uncontrollable and dangerous colonial masculine energies embodied by Woodley. The contrast between the two men is heightened by the language. While Holmes deploys a “straight left,” Woodley does little more than “slog.” This contrast is further emphasized by the Sidney Paget illustration, titled “A straight left against a slogging ruffian” (Figure 22). In this depiction of the contest, Holmes’s erect posture, firm stance, and proper boxing form (along with his neat suit and deer-stalker cap planted firmly on his head) opposes the slouching, violent form of Woodley, whose fists appear to be swinging with a remarkable randomness. If Holmes’s body is all straight lines and angles, then Woodley’s is all curves and softness. The distinction given to Holmes by the contrast between his very white skin and his very black suit only draw attention to the mix of greys that makes up Woodley’s composition. In spite of Holmes’s success in subduing his challenger – the image of Woodley lying prone in a cart on his way back to Charlington Hall is striking– the story reveals a momentary lack of faith in this kind of controlled, amateur manliness, perhaps most pronounced at the story’s climax, with Holmes and Watson pursuing the
Figure 22: Sidney Paget's "A straight left against a slogging ruffian" from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 9
abductors of Violet Smith over Charlington Heath. In this moment, it is the speedy sportsman, once again helped along by technology, who intervenes and saves the day.

On account of the fact that Holmes miscalculates Smith’s movements on the railway, he and Watson arrive too late to foil her abduction. Sensing she is in danger, they set off in hot pursuit, and Watson passes some comment on the state of his friend’s fitness:

From the instant that we passed the rise we could no longer see the vehicle, but we hastened onwards at such a pace that my sedentary life began to tell upon me, and I was compelled to fall behind. Holmes, however, was always in training, for he had inexhaustible stores of nervous energy upon which to draw. His springy step never slowed until suddenly, when he was a hundred yards in front of me, he halted, and I saw him throw up his hand with a gesture of grief and despair. (10)

The image of Watson trailing behind Holmes, cursing his “sedentary lifestyle” is, perhaps, not surprising, and here it is Watson’s un-athletic body that provides the contrast for Holmes’s perpetual state of being “always in training.” What is surprising in this moment is that even at its height of performance, when all its stores of nervous energy are being used in the services of detection, Holmes’s amateur athletic body fails to intercept the kidnappers. This failure is only compounded by his own admission, earlier, that he failed to predict Smith’s movements – “I had given a margin of half an hour . . . she must be making for the earlier train” (10). Failing to track Smith, and to catch up with her kidnappers, is coupled with a failure to demonstrate his usual remarkable facility with a technological advancement such as the railway. The failure of Holmes’s body is only
further emphasized by the Paget illustration of this moment in the narrative (Figure 23). Appearing on the same page as Watson’s account, ‘‘Too late, Watson; too late!’ cried Holmes,’’ shows Holmes looking after a retreating, empty trap, gesturing to it with his long, white finger. Having just arrived on the scene, Watson is depicted as breathless and distraught. The image of the empty carriage is symbolic of the lack of manly action on the part of Holmes. In this moment, ‘‘The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist’’ suggests that the kind of athleticism that is linked to Holmes’s professional practice cannot fully contend, or contain, the masculine energies associated with the new sport technology of cycling.

Indicative of the story’s burgeoning endorsement of the figure of the speedy sportsman is the final contribution to the solution of the mystery provided by Mr. Carruthers. Though Holmes dismisses his intervention as indicative of the very energies that he opposes throughout the narrative, the speedy sportsman is given an opportunity to redeem himself, and in so doing redeem the new form of sporting technology with which he is associated. When Holmes, Watson, and Carruthers arrive on the scene of Woodley’s sham marriage to Violet Smith, Holmes is noticeably in the background. Holmes and Watson are described as being “at [Carruthers’] heels” (11), and following Carruthers’ removal of his fake beard at Woodley’s taunting, and in response to the latter’s boast “You’re too late. She’s my wife!” Carruthers fires a revolver and wounds the villainous
still behind. Holmes, how-in training, for he had
of nervous energy upon
His springy step never
denly, when he was a
ront of me,
saw him
id with a
d despair.

for that
abduc-
knows
road! Stop the
ht. Now, jump
' I can repair the
own blunder.'
into the dog-cart,
ting the horse,
t with the whip,
along the road.
curve the whole

Figure 23: Sidney Paget's "'Too late, Watson; too late!' cried Holmes" from "The
Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," page 10
South African: “His revolver cracked, and I saw the blood spurt from the front of Woodley’s waistcoat. He spun round with a scream and fell upon his back, his hideous red face turning suddenly to a dreadful mottled pallor” (11). It is only following this outburst that Holmes is once again able to take control of the situation and admonish Carruthers for his impulsiveness. The peripheral nature of Holmes, and the centrality of Carruthers, is further emphasized by another Paget illustration, titled “He spun round with a scream and fell upon his back” (Figure 24). In it, Woodley is depicted as limply falling over backwards as the shot leaves Carruthers’ revolver. Once again, Woodley is contrasted with a more or less upright and heroic manly figure, with a sharp profile. It is, however, the profile of Bob Carruthers, as Holmes is identifiable just at the edge of the frame by his hollow cheeks and deer-stalker cap. Watson is almost invisible. In this moment, Holmes’s traditionally athletic amateur sporting body has been replaced by a body associated with the new sporting technology of the bicycle, and the vibrant masculine energy which fuels it, perhaps best represented by the very phallic symbol of the firing revolver. The speedy sportsman is no longer simply the problematic threat that he has been represented as in earlier stories. The location of this illustration is also telling, for it appears prior to the start of the story as a full-page enticement to read further, suggesting that it is this moment of the narrative, where a new, technologically enhanced manliness appears, that is of the most interest to the reader.
"He spun round with a scream and fell upon his back."

(See page 11.)

Figure 24: Sidney Paget's "He spun around with a scream ..." from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," frontispiece
The kind of manly energy associated with cycling and Bob Carruthers in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” does not, however, pass without comment. Though the story allows the character of Carruthers to be somewhat redeemed by his impulsive and energetic rescue of Violet Smith, this is not rewarded with her affection, and his outburst is contained. Holmes is later re-established as the figure of authority through his claim to “represent the official police until their arrival” (12). Watson chips in with an overstatement of Holmes’s presence following this moment – “The strong, masterful personality of Holmes dominated the tragic scene, and all were equally puppets in his hands” (12) – that sounds all too overzealous to be completely accurate. The story is not quite ready to give up on the manly potential represented by Holmes’s amateur athleticism. As with Sidney Mason, the cyclist in “The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” Bob Carruthers is depicted at the close of the narrative as having somewhat redeemed himself through his punishment by the law. Watson admits to the readers in the final paragraphs of the story that he has little information about Carruthers to pass on:

Of the fate of Carruthers, I have no record, but I am sure that his assault was not viewed very gravely by the Court, since Woodley had the reputation of being a most dangerous ruffian, and I think that a few months were sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice. (14)

That his impulsive masculine energy is contained by the legal and penal systems is of note, for it suggests the story’s unease with the technologically enhanced body, at the same time as it suggests its acceptance of it, as does Holmes’s offer of aid to the widower should he need a witness during his inevitable trial. As with the depiction of cycling in
“The Case of Mr. Foggatt,” “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” registers ambivalence towards the way in which the new technology of the bicycle interacts with the manly sporting body. Bob Carruthers, as a speedy sportsman, represents to readers the possible dangerous release of masculine power that cycling can provoke, or at the very least provide an outlet for; he is also a figure that is ultimately redeemed by the close of the story, presenting the case of the individual who has learned from his actions and their consequences.

The development of cycling in the last decades of the nineteenth century provoked questions in the Victorian popular imagination about the effects such an activity might have on masculine participants. The speedy sportsman, as he appears in the pages of series detective stories by Morrison and Conan Doyle is part of the cultural work of the genre in coming to terms with the arrival of this figure into Victorian sporting culture. As with its earlier considerations of the sportsman discussed in Chapter 5, in these stories, series detective fiction, as a genre, is far from comfortable with the potential lack of manly control the speedy sportsman represents. Through investigating this figure, and the sphere in which he cycles, detectives such as Hewitt, Dorrington, and Holmes uncover truths about the sporting technology of the bicycle and its relationship to masculinity: accelerated sports such as cycling can provoke, rather than contain, the primal energies within man; the cycling industry, with its focus on business profit, corrupts the body of the sportsman and the sporting ideal to the point that it is criminal;
though cycling might stir up desire in men and be understood as an expression of such, there is potential for the speedy sportsman to adapt and live on in the twentieth century if he can find a way of existing within the bounds of middle-class ideas of masculinity, respectability, and domesticity.

By the time of the publication of “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” in 1904, the figure of the sportsman had undergone a number of changes and re-articulations from his earlier appearance in the pages of the Victorian press and on the Victorian stage. As demonstrated by the way in which so many of the representations of the sportsman discussed in this study look back to the healthy and heroic model, it would be wrong to assume that these incarnations existed independently or in isolation from each other. Rather, the spectrum of meaning in which these different versions of the sportsman exist can be found in all the representations I have explored, in much the same way that it underpins our own understanding of the relationship between men and sport in the twenty-first century.
Chapter 7

Conclusion: The Sportsman in the Twenty-First Century

In the period between 1866 and 1904, the sportsman appeared in a variety of popular culture forms: representations of this figure in the Victorian press, the spectacular melodrama, and the series detective story demonstrate the way in which these forms contributed to the working out of the sportsman’s value in the Victorian popular imagination. The meaning attached to the sportsman in this process was by no means singular; rather, his representation in these forms established a spectrum of meanings in response to anxieties about the effect different aspects of urban modernity might have on the physical and moral health of the Victorian man. In representations of the 1869 Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race in daily, illustrated, and sporting papers, the sportsman appears as the healthy hero. This manifestation is later echoed in the spectacular sporting melodramas of Dion Boucicault, which interrogate this figure and test its limitations; *Flying Scud* and *Formosa* invoke the healthy and heroic sportsman but only to demonstrate to audiences that he must adapt if he is to survive in the urban leisure sphere that was a part of city life in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By the time of the sportsman’s appearance in fin de siècle series detective fiction published in *The Strand* and *The Windsor Magazine*, attitudes towards sport and ideas about manly identity had shifted, and the nature of the sportsman’s representation reflects those changes. Though there is still a small degree of optimism present for the potential
the sportsman could be said to possess, overall these representations register suspicion
and distrust. The sportsman is depicted as no longer being able to exercise the kind of
self-control necessary for a solid manly identity. Rather, his existence in the world of
sport is shown to be the factor that is responsible for him being out of control, whether
that loss of control occurs through submission to outside commercial or industrial forces,
or arises due to irrepressible animal energies from within. While these representations in
popular culture forms such as the press, the melodrama, and the series detective story
provide a useful map for exploring the meaning of the sportsman and the sporting sphere
in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they are also of value to us in the
twenty-first. By understanding the way in which in these cultural forms constructed the
sportsman figure in response to the challenges of urban modernity, we are provided with
knowledge that aids us in unpicking some of our own assumptions about the connections
between sport culture and masculine identity.

In suggesting that the Victorians can teach us something about our own
conceptions of men who participate in sport, I am drawing attention to a connection that
has already been explored by other scholars of Victorian literature and culture. In such
collections as John Kucich and Diane Sadoff’s *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture
Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000) and Christine Krueger’s *Functions of Victorian
Culture at the Present Time* (2002), as well as Cora Kaplan’s *Victoriana – Histories,
Fictions, Criticism* (2007), and Simon Joyce’s *Victorians in the Rearview Mirror* (2007),
recent discussions of the relationship between modernity and the Victorian period have argued for the value in thinking about the twenty-first century’s relationship to the nineteenth. As Krueger explains, studying the nineteenth century provides a unique opportunity for locating the “broad relevance of Victorian culture to contemporary practices and values” (xiii). By examining “current-day uses of Victorian culture” outside the academy, scholars of the Victorian period are in a singular position to comment on what those appropriations tell us about the time in which we live, work, and think (Krueger xiii). In mapping the meaning of the sportsman in the Victorian popular imagination, I am conscious that such a project tells us about what the Victorians made sport mean in the nineteenth century and provides us with the tools to understand how invocations of these Victorian constructions in our current cultural moment reveal the place the sportsman occupies in the popular imagination of the twenty-first. We invoke the sportsman in moments when the stability of heteronormative male identity is under threat. Though he is often conjured up in order to stabilize this identity – to reassert the vitality and hegemony of men – he also functions in other, less constructive ways, often simultaneously. By acknowledging the full spectrum of meaning the Victorians attached to this figure, we can thus understand how this invocation simultaneously works to shore up and, perhaps more importantly, disrupt such a project. One striking example of this functioning in a contemporary revival of the Victorian sportsman can be found in the
music video released in 2010 to accompany British boy band Take That’s hit single, “The Flood.”

**Take That, “The Flood,” and the Victorian Sporting Imaginary**

In October 2010 aging British boy band Take That released the music video for their long-awaited single “The Flood” as a promotion for their forthcoming album, *Progress* (2010). The massive public interest in the video was due to the fact that it featured the return of ex-band member Robbie Williams, thus reproducing for the first time since 1995 the original line up of Williams, Gary Barlow, Howard Donald, Jason Orange, and Mark Owen. Filmed at Eton Dorney in Buckinghamshire, the rowing facility for the London 2012 Olympics, it depicts the band members preparing for, and participating in a rowing race against a rival crew, much to the thrill of a small crowd gathered to watch on the riverbank. “The Flood” uses the rowing race as a metaphor for the journey of Take That to the point of reunion and on into the future of popular music in the twenty-first century. The events themselves are well-known to Take That fans: the band’s astonishing international success following the release of the 1993 album, *Everything Changes* (nominated for the 1994 Mercury Prize), the departure of Williams in 1995 just prior to their world tour due to his escalating drug use, the break up of the remaining band members in 1996, and their reunion in 2006 for the Ultimate Tour, the release of the successful albums, *Beautiful World* (2006) and *The Circus* (2008), concluding with Williams’ much-discussed reunion with the band in 2010 (*Take That*). It
is in telling this story that “The Flood” resurrects the figure of the sportsman; he functions to secure the heteronormative male identity that a boy band such as Take That threatens while at the same time disrupting this security.33

In a recent study of the boy band the Backstreet Boys in the journal Genders, Gayle Wald discusses the way in which the lyric, aural, and visual presentations of boy bands present a challenge to the stability of the participants’ masculinity. According to Wald, their performance style (based as it is on an appropriation of techniques associated with black male vocal harmony groups), their lack of compliance with the popular mythologies of authenticity and instrumental virtuosity that define rock masculinity, and their visually and lyrically performed submission to the erotic possession of their fans, all work to construct the members of boy bands not as securely heteronormative, but rather as the embodiment of what she terms “‘girlish’ masculinity.” Wald goes on to analyze the content of Backstreet Boys music videos in order to demonstrate how such cultural objects reveal what the “cultural imagination [thinks] of girls as consumers, citizens, and subjects.” In representing their reunion and the larger development of the band as a rowing race in “The Flood,” Take That are reviving the sportsman figure in order to rewrite the band’s narrative as a kind of masculine bildungsroman, “remasculinizing” their artistic endeavours through the sportsman’s presence. Such an invocation, however, _______________________

33 That “The Flood” tells the story of the band’s reunion is an interpretation acknowledged by Robbie Williams, co-author of the song’s lyrics, and his fellow band members. In an interview in which Take That discuss the meaning behind the tracks from Progress, Mark Owen acknowledges that “it uses moments in history and time to tell our story, really” (Take That, “Progress”).
does not simply function in this singular way. Bearing in mind the complex web of meaning associated with the sportsman in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular imagination, when he is returned to us visually and aurally, so too are his more problematic associations.

“The Flood” establishes Barlow, Donald, Orange, Owen, and Williams as healthy and heroic sportsmen through the costuming and props used to imply a setting sometime in the indeterminate past. Throughout the video the five men wear a unique uniform of white, long-sleeved, crew-necked shirts with dark blue trim, paired with white shorts, socks, and plimsolls. Combined with their slickly parted hair, and the general sepia filter used in filming, these costuming strategies invoke the incarnation of the sportsman found on the pages of Victorian press publications such as *The Times, The Daily News, The Illustrated London News, The Sporting Life,* and *The Sportsman.* Indeed, as Richard Holt notes in his discussion of the visual representation of the amateur athlete in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the sporting flannels were a necessary manly accoutrement that carried specific connotations:

Sports clothes were modeled on a casual upper-class style which adopted chivalric forms, crosses and quarters, stripes and hoops, with badges and Latin inscriptions. The Victorian elite was not only fascinated with classical Greece but also with medieval chivalry. The sporting body was inscribed with both influences. This was associated with the wearing of white clothing, a symbol of purity and refinement . . . By the later nineteenth century wearing old or dirty clothes for sport, which had been common earlier, was no longer acceptable. Amateurs espoused a new style of dress, more informal than the ubiquitous dark business suit yet with a studied casual elegance. Flannel trousers with a colourful striped jacket or
‘blazer’ was the standard summer uniform. Along with blazers went the club tie and short, neatly parted hair. (“Amateur” 365)

In wearing white rowing kit with a shirt emblem that incorporates the standard Take That logo of an inverted capital letter T resting on a second capital T, the band purposefully recalls the Victorian heroic sportsman, a fact noted in the later press coverage of the video’s release which commented on the similarity between the men’s costumes and the clothing typically associated with those who participate in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. In his article with Neil Millard for the popular tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, Jamie Pyatt describes the costumes as “Oxford and Cambridge-style rowing outfits” that make the men look like “olden-day oarsmen” (Pyatt). Such costumes also help to create the illusion of athletic bodies that invoke classical ideals similar to those found in Greek and Roman sculpture and cherished by the Victorians. This illusion is assisted by the use of an experienced crew as a substitute for the band during most of the rowing scenes (Pyatt).

If the healthy heroic sportsman located in the pages of the Victorian press emerges through the costuming choices in “The Flood,” then the resilient sportsman found in Boucicault’s spectacular sporting melodramas – a figure whose manly physical and moral health is tested and reaffirmed – is revived in order to further dispel the spectre of the boy band’s “girlish’ masculinity” through working to figure artistic expression as a challenging physical task, born out of moments of conflict. References to the sportsman
help to equate the creative act of making music with the difficult labour of rowing, suggesting, through the song’s lyrics, that such creativity is born of adversity.

In reconfiguring the band’s musical efforts in this manner, the return of the sportsman replaces dancing – a feature of boy band videos which, as Paul McDonald discusses in his consideration of Take That’s early work, undermines their claims to heteronormative masculinity, even though it might attempt to configure “the muscles of the lean body as signifiers of . . . labour” (290) – with rowing. Perhaps the most striking way in which this executed is through the editing that intercuts footage of the band members singing with emotional intensity with footage of their strenuous group and individual efforts on the water. At a significant point in the video, the focus moves from the contemplative scene of the five sitting in the boathouse, singing, to shots of the upper bodies of the individual band members, manfully struggling with their oars, the pain of such effort clearly visible on their faces. That these latter shots are framed against a black background, with bright, surprising flashes of light popping at frequent intervals, only further underscores the physical toil in which each man is engaged (Take That, “Flood”). This strategy of representation reminds the viewer that the act of making music with sincerity and intent is no less difficult than the physical activity of sport.

Lyrically, “The Flood” posits that such creative work is born of adversity, attaching to the band members the narrative of triumph over difficulty that is associated with the sportsman in Boucicault’s dramas. Nowhere is this more evident than in the
theme of conflict and opposition that runs through the song’s lyrics, a conflict that is settled, triumphantly, on physical terms. Throughout the song, an oppositional binary is established through the use of language that casts Take That as the “we” confronting an enemy, visually represented by the rival crew, referred to simply as “them” and “they” (Take That, “Flood”). The sense that the challenge presented by the oppositional force of the titular flood is both physical and metaphoric is communicated through the lyrics of the song’s middle eight and chorus:

We will meet you where the lights are
The defenders of the faith we are
And when the thunder turns around they’ll run so hard we’ll tear the ground away
You know no one dies
In these love drowned eyes
Through our love drowned eyes
We’ll watch you sleep tonight
Although no one understood
We were holding back the flood
Learning how to dance the rain
We were holding back the flood
They said we’d never dance again. (Take That, “Flood”)

Phrases such as “run so hard we’ll tear the ground away” and “holding back the flood” render the band’s career struggles in terms of physical actions of heroism, a construction that is further enforced by a depiction of Take That as “defenders of the faith.” Thus, the lyrics of “The Flood” work to establish that the heroic sportsman depicted visually is also a resilient figure that can meet and overcome challenges.
The most visible incarnation of the sportsman functions to reassert the heteronormativity of Take That. His presence helps to equate the creative act of making music with the difficult physical labour of rowing and suggests, through the lyrics, that such creativity is born of adversity. Along with this functioning, however, the revival of the sportsman also works to unsettle that affirmation, as his presence brings into play discourses of misbehaviour and a lack of self-control originally linked to this figure in his representation in magazine series detective fiction, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. It is in the reception of the video in the popular press that the suspect sportsman emerges. In response to the return of Williams to the group, newspapers such as The Sun, both invoke, and record the invoking by fans, of discourses surrounding Williams that remind viewers that there are reasons for suspicion. Just like the figure of the sportsman depicted in series detective fiction, Williams has associated with him meanings that run counter to the heroic and resilient. In her exploration of the “constitutive components of the Robbie Williams discourse,” and his “functional collage . . . of masculinity,” Tara Brabazon summarizes the meanings Williams conjures up in popular culture:

He has been prepared to not only age in public, but to discuss the crevices and cracks in the façade. Robbie Williams is a Dorian Grey for Generation Xers, without the decaying portrait in the attic. Surfing the simulacra, he is prepared to reveal paranoia, weakness and confusion. He strips, smokes, plays football, wears interesting underwear and drinks too much. (46)

It is this incarnation of Williams that lies just below the surface of his incarnation as sportsman in “The Flood.” In coverage of the video shoot in The Sun, this latent meaning
of Williams’s presence in the “crew” breaks through. Accompanying a slide show of photos of Take That rowing in their specially-designed shell on the river at Eton Dorney, looking every inch the Victorian sportsman, is an article that details the events of the two-day shoot, drawing attention to the combustible presence of Williams in the band. The report that “[a]t one point, 36-year-old Robbie stopped [rowing] for a ciggie before jumping into the water to cool off” is illustrated with two photos of Williams sitting in the rowing shell, cigarette in hand (Pyatt). This coverage is augmented with a photo of Williams taken from the back while he ungracefully rearranges his white shorts as well as a photo of Gary Barlow and Williams talking and laughing as they leave the boathouse in costume. The caption for the latter photo, “Old pals act . . . Gary Barlow and Robbie Williams share a joke during filming” hints nonetheless that beneath the apparently tranquil surface of the reunion, the long-acknowledged animosity between Barlow and Williams is always in danger of breaking through and that such moments of shared humour are to be welcomed as signs of rapprochement (Take That). In telling the story of Williams’s return to Take That and the filming of the music video for “The Flood,” both popular press publications such as The Sun and the video itself depend on these Victorian configurations of the sportsman – the heroic, healthy sportsman, the resilient sportsman, and the suspect sportsman – located in nineteenth-century popular culture forms to communicate to audiences the overt and latent meanings present. This is done in a way
that reminds us that such nineteenth and early twentieth-century conceptions continue to function as cultural currency.

It is in examining closely such reworkings of the spectrum of meaning associated with the figure of the sportsman as Take That’s “The Flood” that we can become aware of the way in which we view men and sport and the meanings that the sportsman still holds in the twenty-first century. Though by no means exhaustive of what Michael Oriard refers to as the “plurality of meanings” available to those involved in, or engaged with contemporary sport, such invocations of the Victorian sporting imaginary reveal that like the Victorians, we young Elizabethans want to be believe in the potential for sport to create healthy heroes with the same kind of fervor that certain demographics of Take That fans want to believe that Robbie is back for good and has sorted out his problems with drug addiction and Gary Barlow (Oriard 3). However, at the same time, much like our nineteenth-century counterparts, we also want to acknowledge the limitations of the sportsman and the suspicions and concerns he raises. I argue that by establishing the way in which the Victorians imagined the sportsman and the sporting sphere in nineteenth-century popular culture not only have we better determined precisely what this figure and this cultural space meant to the Victorians in all its complexity and contradiction, but we also provide ourselves with a key to a more self-reflexive understanding of contemporary sporting culture and the way in which it both effects and affects twenty-first century masculine identities.
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