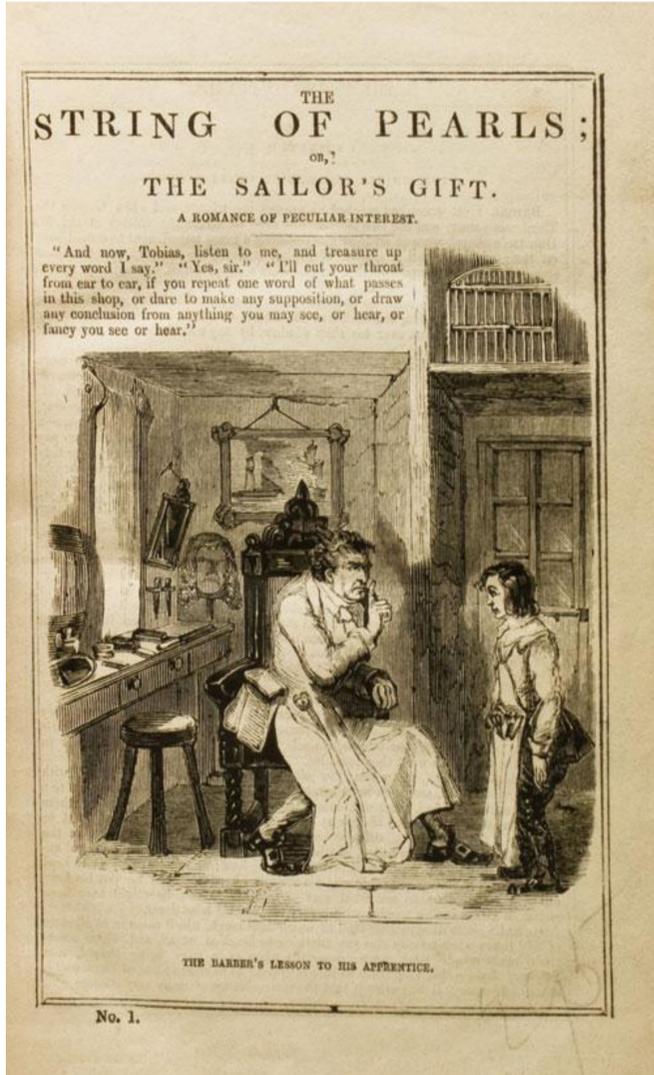


The Closest Shave: Sweeney Todd's Passing Through Class as Victorian Terror

Arts & Humanities
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Sarah Alexander & College of Arts and Sciences



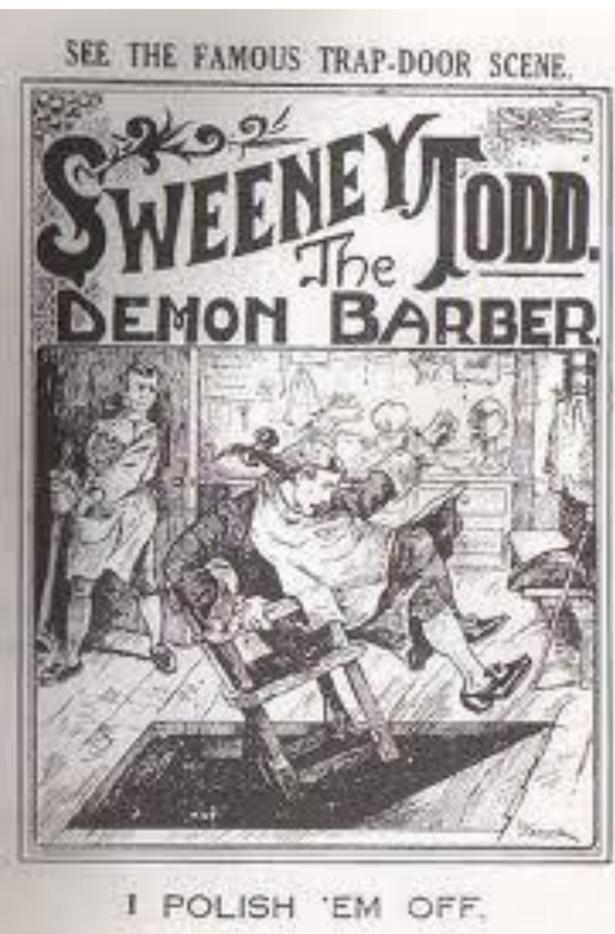
First edition book of *Sweeney Todd* published in 1850 under its original name *A String of Pearls: A Romance*



Phrenologist bust describing areas of the brain that can be measured by the shape of the skull



Lombroso's *Criminal Man*
Group A- Shoplifters
Group B,C,D, F- Swindlers
Group E-Murderers
Group H-Purse Snatchers



A later nineteenth century cover of *Sweeney Todd*

Project Description

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is famous for the closest shaves for his customers, but that is only part of why he should be feared.

Todd is not only a murderer, but has the ability to pass through class barriers including

- Criminals
- Working Class
- Aristocracy

Phrenologists and criminologists attempted to scientifically prove that physical characteristics could identify criminals.

Combining the theories of Phrenologists and Criminologists suggest that despite the best nineteenth century science, even an "ill-put-together fellow" such as Todd can be overlooked as a murderer.

Todd reveals the corruptness within insane asylums, by committing his assistant when the boy attempts to reveal his secret. Locking the just within the madhouse, allows the truly mad Todd to continue his crimes.

Victorian culture was immersed in science and this is reflected by their literature. *Sweeney Todd* is clearly influenced by Victorian scientific concerns regarding criminology.

Citations

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Ed. Robert Mack. Oxford University Press: NY, 2007.

Gould, Stephen. *The Mismeasure of Man.* W.W. Norton and Co: NY, 1981.

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