Exploring Criminology in Literary Texts: Robert Browning- an Example

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Abstract
The association between, literature, and criminology is undeniable and, yet for too long those studying crime and literature respectively, have failed to see the connection between the two, or dismissed it as being irrelevant. This study explores literary pieces which deal exclusively with murder in order to prove that the two disciplines: literature and criminology are intimately connected and essentially inseparable. Some literary pieces which deal with identifying the thought processes of murderers have been so insightful that crime experts applied them to certain high-profile cases. That so much violent crime is depicted in literature should stimulate further research into the links between criminology and literature. Robert Browning's "The Laboratory" (1844) is selected as a case study in order to demonstrate how criminological theories can successfully be applied to literary pieces. Browning's protagonist will prove to be a fictional manifestation of a female sadistic criminal as defined by psychiatrist/criminologist Paul De River in his criminology/sexology textbook for law enforcement personnel The Sexual Criminal (1949).

Keywords: interdisciplinary approach, literature, criminology, interchangeable, correlated, disciplines, fictional manifestation.

Introduction
The phenomenon of murder is usually aligned with the criminological, psychiatric, sociological, or psychological field. Rarely has connection been made between the phenomenon of murder and other unrelated academic areas such as— literature. Crime expert, Curt Bartol writes: “Over the years, the study of crime has been dominated by three disciplines—sociology, psychology, and psychiatry—but other disciplines or sub-disciplines are becoming more actively involved” (4). Julie Harrower in Applying Psychology to Crime supports this view when she stresses: "Criminology attempts to integrate the potential contributions of a wide range of disciplines in order to study criminal behavior and legal issues" (1). There is much truism to both statements particularly in relation to the literary field becoming actively involved. Homicide has been explored and analyzed in a plethora of literary works. The attempt to enter the murderer's mind in order to discover what lies beneath has preoccupied the literati for centuries. Ekbert Faas in Retreat into the Mind: Victorian Poetry and the Rise of Psychiatry writes: “murder, or the attempt at it, is the second most stereotypical event found in the history of English literature” (154).
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Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth are all literary works which portray psychologically tormented murderers. Moreover, they reveal outstanding insight into the criminal mind. Thomas De Quincey in the nineteenth-century picked up on this aspect in Shakespeare’s aforementioned plays. De Quincey’s dilettantism in murder led him to see an artistic, even aesthetic, side to murder. This in no way implies that he was advocating murder for the sake of art. What he was doing was recognizing in murder a topic worthy of psychological probing and analysis. In his famed essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" (1823) De Quincey uses the example of Macbeth, as well as, the real-life case of multiple murderer John Williams (a man responsible for the slayings of two families in London in 1818), in order to urge poets to treat murder "aesthetically." In his essay, De Quincey praises Shakespeare’s realism in his depiction of a murderer. He also praises John Williams for providing the connoisseur of murder with gruesome murders that can be discussed and analyzed. De Quincey refers to John Williams as a "great artist" and a "genius," and adds that writers in general, and poets in particular, should pay more attention to the murderer since he has something different, unusual, and worth examining (545). By contrast, the victim, whose only reaction when about to be murdered is to cling on to dear life, provides no challenge for the poet:

[The poet] must throw interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with him (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them—not a sympathy of pity or approbation). In the murdered person, all strife of thought and flux of passion and purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him "with its petrific mace." But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look. (545)

This fascination with the artistic side of murder led De Quincey to further write a series of three papers on "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" (the first was written in 1827, the second in 1839, and the third in 1854). All three papers are accounts of real-life murder cases and confirm De Quincey’s interest in criminology.

Criminology also proves interesting to George Orwell who in 1946 wrote an essay in which he lamented the decline of the English murder. Orwell expresses much regret over the lack of a thought-provoking murder in recent years. The "classic" cases such as "Jack the
Ripper," "Dr Crippen," and "The Brides in the Bath Murderer," have a gruesome or dramatic quality that touches the imagination of novelists. They are killers who are basically normal but are driven to kill by some negative or twisted emotion one can truly understand (Orwell 88). Nonetheless, similar cases cease to exist, according to Orwell, leaving the connoisseur of real-life murder stories bored and stunted in thought.

Orwell raises a very interesting point. Highly publicized murder cases do in fact stimulate thought and play on the imagination of novelists, playwrights, and poets. In 1925, an aged Thomas Hardy was to recall an incident he had witnessed as a youth of sixteen in Victorian Dorset. The incident which was to haunt the novelist/poet for the rest of his life involved the hanging of a woman for the murder of her husband. Hardy reminisces: "I remember what a fine figure she showed against the sky as she hung in the misty rain, and how the tight black silk gown set off her shape as she wheeled half-round and back." Later adding: "I saw—they had put a cloth over her face—how, as the cloth got wet, her features came through it. That was extraordinary" (qtd. in *The World's Worst Murders* 166-7). The woman engraved in Hardy's memory was Elizabeth Martha Brown, hanged on the 9th of August 1856 for butchering her husband to death. Hardy never forgot the incident and "there is no question that the image of the condemned woman was with him as he planned his Tess [Tess of the D'urbervilles]" (*The World's Worst Murders* 168).

Criminal psychology is at the root of fiction concerned with crime. This point is supported by J.A. Cuddon, who writes in *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* of this type of fiction: "Often the identity of the criminal is known from the outset and the suspense and interest of the narrative depend on the psychological state of the criminal" (205). This is revealed in a plethora of literary works detailing murder. Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s speaker in “A Last Confession” reveals his disturbed psychological state when he confesses to stabbing his beloved to death simply because her laughter struck him as being too suggestive. Edmund Ollier’s “The Wife Slayer” presents a similar case of a man wrestling with a guilty conscience due to the slaying of his wife. Other works which deal with the psychiatric, sociological, and psychological aspect of homicide include: C. M. Eddy’s “The Loved Dead,” H. P. Lovecraft’s *The Call of Cthulhu*, Emile Zola’s *The Human Beast*, George Bernard Shaw’s “On the Entirely Reasonable Murder of A Police Constable,” Ormond Greville’s “The Perfect Crime,” Stephen Crane’s “The Blue Hotel,” James T. Farrell’s “The Fastest Runner on Sixty-First Street,” Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Thomas Harris’ *Red Dragon*, Joyce Carol Oates’ *Zombie*, Robert Bloch’s *Psycho*, and many, many more. The outstanding number of practitioners in this form of fiction confirms the appeal of criminology to professional writers. The study in hand highlights this appeal. Furthermore, it proves that criminology and literature have a history of an interrelated relationship and mutual contact and influence. Both disciplines deal with human motives, emotions, and personality. Thus, exploring criminology
in literary texts, as well as, applying criminological theories to literary works concerned with murder, will prove that some literary figures are indeed the true brethren of criminologists.

**Literature's Influence on Criminal Theories**

The interest literary figures show in the criminological aspect of crime is reciprocated by crime analysts. In *Criminology in Literature*, Paul E. Dow provides an anthology of short stories in order to assist the student of criminology in understanding the causes of crime “by relating the plight of the protagonists and antagonists to the particular theory under discussion” (vii). Fiction is employed to clarify certain criminal theories. Each short story is used as exemplar of a particular crime theory. For example, George Bernard Shaw’s "On the Entirely Reasonable Murder of a Police Constable" and Ormond Greville's "The Perfect Crime" are employed to demonstrate the classical school of criminology. Both works, Dow explains, "describe criminal events easily rationalized by their perpetrators. The acts of violence seem logical, even natural, to the criminals because they have more to gain by committing them than by refraining from the criminal behavior" (2). On the other hand, Stephen Crane’s "The Blue Hotel" illustrates "the positive school concept that behavior is affected by environment" (Dow 24).

Using the representation of criminals in literature as guidelines to illuminate certain criminal theories is not a new phenomenon. In truth, crime experts have used this approach for decades to reach a better understanding of certain high profile cases. Some literary theories have been so insightful that not only criminologists, but also psychologists and psychiatrists, applied them to real-life cases. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, introduces in an early work called *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* a term which he calls “magical thinking,” an attempt to pretend that something does not exist or that it is not what it actually is. Bartol theorizes: “This type of magical thinking is typical of the necrophile, who finds a corpse more satisfactory than a living woman” (239). Vronsky also refers to Sartre’s theory. In *Serial Killers: The Method and Madness of Monsters* he declares: “Sexual murder is the most extreme form of Sartre’s ‘magical behavior’” (103).

In *True Crime*, leading criminologist, Colin Wilson, examines the patterns of criminal behavior down the years. Through his survey of the history of murder and its motivations Wilson highlights the literary parallel which he declares “is more significant than it appears on the surface” (427). He uses Tolstoy’s short novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* written in 1889 as an example of how sex crime had been anticipated by literary figures years before psychiatry, psychology, and criminology understood it. Wilson declares of the novel “it is an amazingly perceptive analysis” (420). Also an insightful literary work which Wilson refers to is Emile Zola’s novel *The Human Beast*. Wilson notes, Zola was “the first to describe a man in the grip of an abnormal sexual compulsion” (421). “Eighteen years later,” Wilson writes, Henri Barbusse “created a sensation with a novel called *Hell* (L’Enfer), which was based on a
contemporary case of a peeping Tom whose illicit activities progress into homicide. He notes: “In The Human Beast and Hell, literature was merely reflecting the increasingly ‘feverish’ attitude to sex. But art is always a catalyst, and within a decade, attitudes to sex were being mutually influenced by literature” (421).

True-crime writer, crime analyst, and journalist Brian Masters, like Wilson, recognizes the interchange between literature and the criminal field. In his compelling narrative Killing for Company, based on real-life necrophiliac Dennis Nilsen, a man responsible for the deaths of fifteen men, Masters explores the parallels between literature and true crime. When discussing Nilsen’s case, Masters resorts to literary echoes throughout. At one point he writes: “Like Raskolnikov in Dostoievsky’s Crime and Punishment, Nilsen was a criminal pondering his own crimes and hoping by relentless examination to dispel bewilderment” (241). Another literary parallel occurs between Nilsen and James Hogg’s protagonist Robert Wringhim in The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner. Masters finds parallels in other literary works. These include George Meredith’s “Modern Love,” Iris Murdoch’s The Philosopher’s Pupil, C. M. Eddy’s “The Loved Dead,” Dostoievsky’s A Raw Youth, and Marie Corelli’s The Sorrows of Satan.

Criminology’s Influence on Literature

Whereas Masters compares a real-life murderer to fictional ones, the nineteenth-century poet Robert Browning (1812-1889) does the reverse. He fictionalizes real-life offenders and thus proves that literature and criminology are indeed interchangeable. Michael Mason has suggested that aspects of "Porphyria's Lover" (1836) are very similar to John Wilson's tale of terror “Extracts from Gosschen's Diary.” This tale appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in August 1818. It told a real-life story of a man who had murdered his mistress due to his insane jealousy. On the eve before his execution, the murderer had decided to confess to a priest about his brutal slaying:

I grasped her by that radiant, that golden hair—I bared those, snow-white breasts,—I dragged her sweet body towards me, and, as God is my witness, I stabbed her with this very dagger, ten, twenty, forty times, through and through her heart. She never so much as gave one shriek, for she was dead in a moment. . . . My joy, my happiness, was perfect. I took her into my arms . . . and there I lay with her bleeding breasts prest [sic] to my heart . . . which none were ever to kiss again but the lover who murdered her. (19-20)

Wilson, through this tale, provides a case of sexual jealousy. Bryan Procter, a friend of Browning's, depicted a similar case in his narrative poem "Marcian Colonna" (1820). In his poem, Procter exaggerates the original story by having his murderer sit up all night next to his
decaying lover's body. Browning appears to have been inspired by both life and art, by "Gosschen's Diary" and "Marcian Colonna" when he wrote "Porphyria's Lover" in 1836. There is a striking similarity in all three works notably that a murderer takes great pride in his crime and joyfully indulges the corpse.

"Porphyria's Lover" is not the only poem by Browning inspired by a real-life case. "My Last Duchess" (1842) which examines serial murder was also based on an actual case. R. J. Berman contends that the poem was based on the real-life events of Alfonso II (1533-97), Fifth Duke of Ferrara and the last of the Este family (73). Other works by the poet which were based on actual murder cases include: "A Forgiveness" (1876), "The Laboratory" (1842), "Ivan Ivanovich" (1879), "Pippa Passes" (1841), and "Cenciaja" (1876). Interestingly, even Browning's epic poem The Ring and the Book (1868-69) is based on a real-life murder case. The case presented by the poet details the Fracheschini case. Browning came across the large volume of written statements relating to the 1698 murder case in a bookstall in Florence (the volume was later termed the Old Yellow Book). The book contained a gathering of testimony and court records, compiled by Cenini, a Florentine lawyer, of the seventeenth-century murder trial of Guido Franceschini, a Count accused of stabbing his child-bride twenty-two times with a Genoese dagger. James F. Loucks' Robert Browning's Poetry speaks of Browning's enthusiasm over the infamous murder. He adds that friends discouraged him from pursuing it any further, especially Carlyle who called the murder trial "an old Bailey story that might have been told in ten lines and only wants forgetting" (267). Nevertheless, Browning proved them wrong when The Ring and the Book became one of the most celebrated epic poems of the Victorian age.

Case Study: Robert Browning's "The Laboratory"

Browning produced a plethora of works based on actual murders. Nonetheless, the poem selected for exploration and analysis at this point is "The Laboratory," since it shows more than all else, the extent to which the nineteenth-century poet was the spiritual brethren of the criminologists. Norton B. Crowell in A Reader's Guide to Robert Browning quotes De Vane as saying of the poem, "the woman who has been driven mad with hate and jealousy is modeled upon Madame de Brinvilliers, a notorious adept at poisoning" (qtd. in Crowell 92). Marie Marguerite de Brinvilliers (22July1630-17July 1676) was a French serial killer thought to have been responsible for as many as fifty-five murders (Lane 74). The poet, although unaware of the term "serial killer," recognized in her case a topic worthy of criminological exploration via dramatic monologue. The poem in its entirety presents a fictional episode in the poisoner's life and shows the poet's pre-scientific insights into the criminal mind.

Browning's poem paints a superb portrait of obsession, of a woman scorned who will do anything to restore her wounded pride—even murder. The subject harbors intense feelings of anger and aggression directed at the human race in general, her lover and his newly found
paramour in particular. She is a professional criminal, devoid of a conscience, with an incapacity for love, who plans with sadistic satisfaction not only the murder of her lover’s mistress *per se*, but also that of others, to satisfy her sadistic urge for power and control. The lack of maternal feeling and the streak of masculine virility in the structure of her personality, typifies the female sadistic criminal as defined by psychiatrist/criminologist Paul De River in his criminology/sexology textbook for law enforcement personnel *The Sexual Criminal* (1949).

Literary critics and reviewers perceived the poem in terms of failure in love and revenge. Although this is a plausible interpretation, still, there is much more to "The Laboratory" than the obvious. The poem proves to be a deep and profound study in criminal psychology. The speaker of the monologue uses failure in love and her paramour’s supposed infidelity as an excuse for murder. This urge to murder undoubtedly has deep-rooted psychological origins. Crowell also notes a psychological aspect to the poem when he declares in his chapter entitled “The Laboratory” that the poem “is a dramatically conceived study in the psychopathology of vengeance” (92). However, instead of elaborating on this point, he dismisses it altogether and centers on the soul of the speaker.

The medico-psychoanalytic position assumes that one must delve into the abysses of human personality to find unconscious determinants of human behavior, including criminal behavior. Crime expert, Curt Bartol, in *Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach*, writes: “Every criminal is such by reason of unconscious forces within him” (6). The fictional character Browning presents is so enraged by her sense of abandonment that she ends up plotting murder to avenge herself. In trying to understand what motivated her to desire to kill, it is plausible and indeed likely that her urge, like that of most killers, was precipitated by personal crisis or extra stresses in her life. As her feelings of powerlessness heightened, her mind tried to compensate by converting those feelings into a desire to exert control over other human beings.

In his chapter “The Female Sadistic Criminal” De River notes some common characteristics found in killers of the sort. He begins with: “CRIME AMONG female sadists is usually premeditated and not as a rule the result of heightened impulse”, continuing with “the sadistic female usually treats crime more lightly than the male” and that she is “cunning and conniving, excessively neurotic and fickle” (185-6). These characteristics transpire through Browning’s protagonist, who, from the onset of the poem makes her intent very clear as she dons the mask “tightly” and asks the apothecary flat-out: “Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?” (1, 4). One senses that this is not her first visit to the laboratory. Her evident familiarity with both, the place and the person, suggest that her visits have been frequent, thus confirming De River’s point about premeditation and planning. Furthermore, crime is taken lightly by this woman who derives much pleasure from watching the apothecary prepare the deadly poison. This is evident when she urges: “Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste / Pound at thy powder, -- I am not in haste!” (9-10). And, when she inquires:
That in the mortar – you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly, -- is that poison too? (13-16)

Although she appears fascinated by the "gold" and the "blue" emerging from the mixing bowl and the phial respectively, still, her interest appears insincere. With her, it is not so much about colors, as it is about perfecting the art of poisoning. Her allusion to colors is most likely a form of diversion. If she feigns interest in trivial things such as color, she can encourage the apothecary to reveal more information about the deadly potions. This point in particular is in accordance with De River’s assertion that the female sadistic criminal is “cunning and conniving.” Crowell opposes this view when he writes of the protagonist:

She is in the earliest stage of her apprenticeship as a poisoner, for she is not adept. Rather she is the merest novice, displaying the fullest ignorance of poisons and their effects. The apothecary’s shop is filled with ‘strange things,’ of which she is ignorant. Clearly she has never before purchased a poison for felonious purposes, for her questions are uniformly uninstructed. . . . It is important not to assume that she is a poisoner of experience and fame, for the whole tone of the poem is destroyed if one assumes that she is hardened in the technique of murder, especially in poisoning without detection and discovery.

(A Reader’s Guide to Robert Browning 92)

This is refutable. The protagonist is certainly no “novice” in the art of poisoning, nor is she an amateur at murder. She displays no signs of nervousness or hesitation. She is a hardened criminal who simply wants to perfect her trade.

De River adds of the female sadistic criminal: “The motives for the offence may be many. . . . There is usually slow inner tension which produces an outburst of willed cruel acts which have been carefully thought out and planned as to details” (185). Browning’s criminal states her motive as soon as she enters the laboratory:

He is with her; and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here. (5-8)

Sexual jealousy appears to be the primary motive of the intended crime. She feels betrayed and humiliated, hence her saying: “While they laugh, laugh at me.” The word “laugh” is repeated twice in order to emphasize her feelings of humiliation. Nonetheless, to
desire to annihilate the life of another human being simply because she feels she has been wronged seems extreme. More importantly, it hints at a disturbed psychological state.

It is generally assumed that self-esteem flourishes alongside sexual confidence (Giles 53). When self-esteem is thwarted, it can lead to bitterness and failure. This is the case for Browning’s protagonist who experiences the latter emotion due to her paramour’s infidelity, and the former, due to her rival in love being much more alluring. Saying: “She’s not little, no minion like me” (28) hints at much resentment towards the woman who supposedly “ensnared” (29) her lover. Moreover, it confirms her lack of self-esteem. English psychiatrist Anthony Storr in Human Aggression explains: "When rebuff, however mild, is interpreted as insult, withdrawal or murder may seem the only alternatives" (87). Bartol supports this view when he states that: "Hostile aggression . . . occurs in response to anger-inducing conditions, such as insults, physical attacks, or personal failures" (182). Wilson in Serial Killer Investigations also refers to this point when he explains that "the sexually inadequate man may revert to his grim dark prison of frustration and anger, lowering at the world outside which denies him his 'right' to self-assertion" (159). For Browning’s protagonist, this "frustration and anger" is directed at her lover and his mistress. Murder becomes necessary as a means of asserting self-esteem and compensating for real or imagined humiliation.

Interestingly, after stating her primary motive for purchasing poison, she moves on to imagine poisoning others with the deadly mix. The trance she enters as she watches the apothecary prepare the poisonous mix leads to an obsessive desire to annihilate. This behavior is also in accordance with the profile De River builds. De River contends that this criminal type is “excessively neurotic and fickle.” He adds: “Revenge, hatred, and jealousy are the very essence of [the female sadistic criminal]” (186). Browning’s protagonist demonstrates what De River means when she imagines eliminating all those who have wronged her, most notably, “Pauline” and “Elise”:

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!
...........................................................................
Soon, at the King’s, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead! (17-24)

There is much resentment towards the human race. She wants to wipe out all of humanity. De River explains that the female sadistic criminal is: “lacking in affect towards mankind” and “towards humanity in general” (185). Browning’s criminal exemplifies this point.
De River writes: “Antipathy towards anyone whom they feel has ill treated them (hate complex) such as husband, lover, friend, or a member of the family, will bring on a desire by the sadistic female to avenge herself” (185). Browning’s criminal wants to kill her lover’s mistress as well as “Pauline,” “Elise,” and numerous others who have mistreated her. The hate complex is strongly felt in her character make-up particularly when she says:

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,  
Shriveled; she fell not; yet this does not all! (32-35)

And:

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!  
Let death be felt and the proof remain;  
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
He is sure to remember her dying face! (36-39)

She desperately wants her rival in love to suffer before she dies. De River explains: “In watching the suffering and slow death of [her] victims [the sadist] receives the utmost stimulation for [her] ego appeasement” (187). Browning’s protagonist wants to administer the lethal dose of poison most probably in a secret and masterly fashion. She then wants to watch her intended victim die, her slow and tortuous death giving her aggressive and sexualized fantasies which restore a sense of control back into her life.

According to De River, it is not only “the will-to-power element, which often leads to the desire to kill in order to demonstrate superiority,” but also the sexual element of the crime (246). Even this aspect of the female sadistic criminal manifests itself in the character of Browning’s protagonist. To begin with, the pleasure she gains from watching the apothecary in action, hints at sex and sexuality. She is aroused by the sight of various poisons being mixed. Her saying, “Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste, / Pound at thy powder, -- I am not in haste!” (9-10) indirectly allude to foreplay. Her pleasure heightens when she begins to imagine poisoning masses. Urging: “Quick – is it finished?” and asking, “Is it done?” (25, 40) allude to the act of coitus itself. It is as if she has reached the heights of ecstasy, and physical gratification is nearing. The gratitude she shows the apothecary whose poison mixing has triggered her sexual frenzy hints at much relief and satisfaction. She has finally climaxed, hence her saying: “Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill, / You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!” (44-45).

De River continues his profile with: “She [the female sadistic criminal] is overly conscious of material things, such as money and finery” (186). Browning’s protagonist exposes her obsession with wealth from the very beginning of the poem when she says: “That in the mortar—you call it a gum? / Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!” (13-14). Her use of the word “gold” exposes a subconscious interest in all things material. This
interest is emphasized when she refers to “gold” once more: “Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill” (44). The fact that she is fully aware of the value of fineries such as jewels and gold proves that her character make-up is in full accordance with the profile De River builds.

The protagonist’s act of kindness towards the apothecary appears genuine on the surface still one cannot help but sense that he is merely a puppet for her to play with. Her sole interest is in the self or the “I element” as De River calls it (258). Therefore, it is unlikely that her acts of kindness towards anyone are sincere. De River elaborates on this point:

Contrary to what might be expected, her [the female sadistic criminal] personality pattern may be tinged with elements of kindness and consideration (masochistic element) but these phases are transient, and may serve as a cover-up or as acts of overcompensation, behind which her true nature reveals itself. In general, sentimentality is wanting or is feigned in an attempt to disguise the inner feeling of jealousy and hatred. (186)

Browning’s protagonist showers the apothecary with fineries. She also offers him a kiss. Her saying: “Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill, / You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will” exposes the elements of kindness De River mentions (44-45). Her excitement at finally purchasing the poison drives her to “spoil” the apothecary so to speak. Referring to the apothecary as “old man,” however, indirectly reveals the true nature of the sadist.

Conclusion

The protagonist in Robert Browning’s “The Laboratory,” proves to be a fictional manifestation of psychiatrist/criminologist Paul De River’s profile of the female sadistic criminal, made all the more terrifying and dangerous by her apparent normality and capacity for intellectual thought. The poet’s wonderful powers of intellectual analysis truly emerge in this short poem. He provides the reader with a deep and accurate pathological examination of this criminal type proving that criminology and literature are intimately connected and essentially inseparable. In the future, one hopes, literary criticism of crime pieces in literature will emerge as an active participant in the field of crime since poets such as Robert Browning certainly make this possible.
References


إسكتشاف علم الجريمة في النصوص الأدبية
روبرت براونينج

عرفا صالح الشبيان

ملخص
لايمكن إنكار العلاقة بين الأدب وعلم الجريمة، ولكن لفترة طويلة جدا أخفق الخبراء في رؤية العلاقة بين الاثنين، أو صرفوا النظر عنها باعتبارها منفصلين. تشير هذه الدراسة أوراق القلم الأدبية التي تتناول القتل فقط لتره من الصلا الوريقة بين هذين الفرعين: الأدب وعلم الجريمة. بعض القلم الأدبية التي تتناولت تحديد العمليات الفكرية للقتلة كانت نافذة وثيقة حتى أن خبراء الجريمة طبقوها على بعض الحالات البارزة. ينوي أن ترفع الجرائم العنيفة الكاملة المصورة في الأدب على إجراء المزيد من البحوث في الروايات بين علم الجريمة والأدب. وقد أخبرت فصيدة "المختبر" لروبرت براونينج بأنهما ظهور خليجي لمجرمة سادية كما عرفها الطبيب النفسي وخبير علم الجريمة بول داي رايفر.

الكلمات الرئيسية: أساليب المجالات المتعددة، الأدب، علم الجريمة، متبادل، مترابط، التخصصات، مظهر وهمي.