RECONSTRUCTING VICTORIAN "TRUTH"

by

Ian S. Stewart

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in English Education with Distinction

Spring 2013

RECONSTRUCTING VICTORIAN "TRUTH"

by

Ian S. Stewart

Approved: _____
Heidi N. Kaufman, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: _____
John F. Jebb, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Department of English

Approved: _____
John P. Montaño, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: _____
Michelle Provost-Craig, Ph.D.
Chair of the University Committee on Student and Faculty Honors

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee for their help in writing this thesis, especially Professor Kaufman, whose unyielding support made this process enjoyable and possible. I would also like to thank my family and Laura for their patience with me this past year.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship that fictional detective had with professional detective during the mid and late Victorian era as figures that helped to instill some form of "truth" after it had been broken down in the early 1800s. Prior to the introduction of the professional detective, scientific breakthroughs disrupted notions of religious truth, and technological improvements allowed the rapid growth of the modern city, which led to the rise of crime. Both of these situations caused anxiety for the Victorian public, and a much-needed source of social stability was sought after. Ironically, the very force that was initiated to create a safer environment for the public was the professional detective was received with disdain and distrust. In order to correct this, the professional detective joined forces with the press, which allowed each profession to rise in terms of public acceptance. Eventually, the fictional detective emerged, which, in turn, created an environment for the public to have social stability, and truth.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE SCIENCE OF SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Scientists, particularly those of the 1800s, are commonly stereotyped as mad, white lab-coated individuals mixing vials of noxious chemicals that perpetually emit thick, churning billows of fumes, softly muttering complex jargon addressed to no one in particular, meticulously jotting notes on hopelessly disorganized books that lay upon tables and chairs that serve as temporary shelves, and occasionally bursting with an exclamation of "Eureka!" upon the fruition of seemingly endless failed nights of experimentation. Such associations, however, are rarely, if ever, descriptive of a very particular type of scientist—one who rarely engages with poisons, who rarely worries about acids splashing on fingers, and whose scientific achievements rely on the mastery of language alone. In actuality, the nineteenth-century scientist is rather a biographer, poet, novelist, and dramatist—a writer. A "scientist" is identified as a possessor of expert knowledge of a science, and one who uses the scientific method.[1] Practicing the scientific method, "a method of procedure…consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses" (*OED*), the scientist and the writer appear to be quite different, however the proverbial tools of the trade are essentially the only distinguishing characteristic. A writer employs similar techniques in the practice of

---

[1] "science, n.". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 3 April 2013. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

producing a piece of literature as the scientist does in the laboratory, experimenting with style and theme, measuring the limitations of plot, and testing the fluctuating wishes and acceptance of readers. Most significantly, regardless of the writer's genre or the scientist's field, each individual strives to produce one quintessential result for the benefit of civilization—truth.

In order to examine writers as a parallel practice to that of scientists in terms of their primary objective—identifying and presenting conclusive truths—it is first important to determine precisely what "truth" is, and how it was perceived in the years leading up to the Victorian era. The unsettling realization about truth that Sir Francis Bacon explored in "Of Truth" (1625) during the seventeenth century was an early interpretation of what "truth" actually is, acknowledging it as superficial and inconclusive. Bacon goes so far as to address truth as an inconvenience that, once identified, separates humans from the bliss that once occupied truth's reality, stating that "it is not only the difficulty and labor which men take in finding out of truth; nor again, that when it is found, it imposeth [sic] upon men's thoughts, that doth being lies in favor; but a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself."[2] Bacon implies that "truth" is an illusion that humans attach themselves too that exists only as long as the "lie" is not corrected. John Young, an American philosopher and politician of the mid-nineteenth century, examined truth in 1835 as "the agreement of our ideas or words

[2] Sir Francis Bacon. "Of Truth." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed. Lawrence Lipking, and James Noggle. New York: W.W. Norton Company, 2006. 1552-1553. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

with the nature of things."[3] Even separated by the Atlantic Ocean and over two

hundred years, "truth" proves to be a concept that exists in any given context only as

long as it is collectively agreed upon by a society, and with the understanding there are

no other alternatives.

Still, "truth" proves to be an elusive term that seems only to exist as a

temporary classification—once the truth of any given circumstance is established, the

previous lie is disposed of, only to validate another "truth" that runs the risk of

eventually being deemed a lie as well. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "truth"

as being in "conformity with fact; agreement with reality; accuracy, correctness, verity

(of statement or thought)." Clearly, fact and reality are fragile constructions of

civilization, though, as Bacon acknowledges, can be well-loved lies by which humans

live. To entirely eradicate these lies would be traumatic to the human psyche. Bacon

adds,

> Doth any man doubt that if there were taken out of men's minds vain
> opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would,
> and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor
> shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing
> to themselves. (Bacon 1552)

However, Bacon does not allow readers to assume that truth is the downfall of

civilization. Instead, Bacon expresses that the eradication of these well-loved lies—

serving as crutches on which society limps—is the first difficult stage in the

progression towards clarity:

> 'It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and to see ships tossed upon the
> sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle,

---

[3] John Young. "Lecture XXXVIII: Truth." *Lectures on Intellectual Philosophy.* Ed.
William Cairns. Glasgow, Scotland: John Reid & Company, 1835. 382. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth' (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), 'and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale below'; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainty, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth. (Bacon 1552-53)

Therefore, only by purging society of the falsehoods that inhibit the public from truth can that society live in clarity with their surrounding natural world. The perception of "truth" is, as Young describes, a "general view of it as the immediate object of the understanding" (376), leaving it as only an interpretation of what is collectively known and accepted. Both Young and Bacon, however, agree that the misinterpretations of the natural world, regardless of the social discomfort that results, must be corrected. During the Victorian era, the task of identifying and purging falsehoods and reestablishing truth was put on the shoulders of the two aforementioned individuals, "scientists," whose work would tear down the veils that hid Victorians from truth, and writers, whose work would help to rebuild the walls that separate the factual from the false.

This thesis examines the specific stages in the progression of truth's collapse and re-negotiation towards stability during the second half of the nineteenth century, which was facilitated through the pages of detective fiction. Initially, truth was recognized as a stagnant concept that had no room for deviation. However, the technological advancements, scientific achievements, and explosion of London's growth as a city tore down the preconceived notions of what "truth" was. While "truth" maintained its position within society as a foundation of what is real and agreed upon, it was clear that the new notions of what was "real" were barely "agreed upon."

The first chapter of this thesis, "Victorian 'Truth' Within Culture," examines the cultural innovations, discoveries, and implementations that served as the vehicle for the breakdown of Victorians' preconceived notions of what "truth" was. Cultural changes that occurred during the early years of the Victorian era sparked a traumatic shift in social order that would ripple into the mid-nineteenth century. The first chapter identifies factors that initiated this swift sociocultural progression from Victorian culture's stability of "truth" to the cultural chaos that ensued after their "truths" had been shattered. Moreover, the cultural instability of this era was tested even further upon the initiation of the professional detective (1842), whose introduction into society aggravated the already anxious Victorian public. This appendage to London's previously installed Metropolitan Police Force was met with public disdain and would be over a decade before the detective force would be accepted by Victorians as a positive social change. The first chapter concludes with an examination of how this initially poor response to the professional detective figure was initiated by the introduction of detective fiction.

Twenty-one years after the introduction of the professional detective (1842), Charles Warren Adams published the first detective novel, opening the doors for a genre of literature that would continuously expand and develop into the twenty-first century. The second chapter of this thesis, "The Birth of a Genre," identifies exactly what this novel, *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1863) suggests about detection as a science itself. Scientific fields were undergoing dramatic changes during the beginning of the nineteenth century in order to determine what disciplines could be considered authentic and possess agency as a study. Among these competing sciences, the ambiguous practice of *mesmerism* was introduced to Victorians and labeled itself a

true science. *The Notting Hill Mystery* proposed that the art of detection should be considered as a valid scientific discipline, because it presents—through the execution of observation, inquiry, and deduction—truths about specific events that were otherwise impossible to determine. Within the novel, detection and mesmerism collide in Adams's fictional world to outline the proficiencies of each practice. This novel (as well as Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, which is featured as the cornerstone of the third chapter) also addresses the poor image that still surrounded the professional detective. Adams's critique of the Victorian public's perception of the detective figure presents readers with one of the first instances where a fictional text depicts the professional detective as a competent individual whose skill in the practice of detection provides answers to the many questions that surrounding the novel's mysterious plot.

Also published in the 1860s, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) delivers the detective fiction genre and Victorian culture an extraordinary critique of multiple facets of English life. Drawing from two infamous murders from the early 1860s, *The Moonstone* recaptures the disintegration of truth while simultaneously reinstating new notions of what truths Victorians were faced with after the crimes occurred. The third chapter of this thesis, "Criminal Influence in *The Moonstone*," serves as an evaluation of how Collins's *The Moonstone* addressed the Victorian public's fears and concerns after the murders of the early 1860s, as well as identifying why these murders were so influential in writing of *The Moonstone*, in which they each played an extremely significant role. Collins's address and critique of Victorian society, however, does not simply present the public with new notions of "truth" about the evolving civilization in which they lived. The novel also presents readers with an unsettling realization about

the ethics of the British Empire, specifically the events preceding and succeeding the Sepoy Uprising of 1858. This chapter will examine how Collins utilized these historic events as a presentation of new and alternative truths that Victorians had not yet been introduced to.

Finally, the conclusion of this thesis, "Cutting the Ceremonial Ribbon," will address where detectives figures, and the fictional vehicle that served to present readers with the truth, progressed to after *The Moonstone* by examining one of the most popular figures of detection—Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes will be examined as a representation of the progress that the Victorian public underwent in the eventual acceptance of the detective figure as a public defender and provider of the "truth." The conclusion outlines the slow progression that Victorian culture made from the introduction of the professional detective in 1842 to the publication of detective fiction's most well known figure with an evaluation of the overall impact that detective culture had on Victorians as a society.

Chapter 2

VICTORIAN "TRUTH" WITHIN CULTURE: CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS

> Almost every age of human history has either given to itself or received from posterity, some epithet marking, whether truly or fancifully, its distinctive place in the records of the world…One, which we cannot doubt that our own posterity will adopt, inasmuch as it affirms a fact equally obvious and certain, is, that we are living in *an age of transition*; —a period when changes, deeply and permanently affecting the whole condition of mankind, are occurring more rapidly, as well as extensively, than at any prior time in human history.[4]

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England were a time in which many cultural beliefs and ideologies were undergoing, as Sir Henry Holland describes, "*an age of transition*" (1). Philosophies that were an intricate foundation of society—cultural, religious, and moral—were being tested as the cusp of the Victorian era peaked over their historical horizon. This proved to be an exciting time for those who enjoyed or benefited from the explosions of print culture, industrialism, and scientific breakthroughs, yet for others the pace of change had terrifying consequences.

While the nineteenth century was a period of creation, innovation, and discovery, it was those very qualities that served to define the Victorians' paradoxical outlook of the period as being the age of destruction that Heather Henderson and William Sharpe articulate in their introductory essay to *The Longman Anthology of*

---

[4] Sir Henry Holland. "The Progress and Spirit of Physical Science." *Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews* (July 1858): 1. *Google Books.* Web. 9 Nov 2012. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

British Literature. English culture during the nineteenth century underwent great changes that would shape the country for generations to come, but it was that century's citizens who were subject to its unforgiving physical and mental toll. The boom of industry that expressed "the 'newness' of Victorian society"[5] was characterized by the invention of the railroads and trains. After its introduction in 1830, numerous commercial railways were laid in a matter of years, connecting the far corners of England. Transportation became an efficient, safe, and fast commodity that dramatically decreased travel times and facilitated the growth of even more industrial achievements. Soon, England reflected the "bigger is better" slogan of contemporary Texas as enormous ships, warehouses, and factories occupied cities' landscapes. Major cities like London were expanding at an astounding rate, but were sprinting downhill: some Victorians were unable to keep their balance. As Henderson and Sharp note, "at the beginning of the nineteenth century only one-fifth of the British population lived in cities; by the end of the century, more than three-quarters did," which created extremely poor living and working conditions (1057-58). Lower-class families struggled to keep up with the work demands that laborers faced during the period's fourteen- to sixteen-hour work day, six days a week—only to return to overpopulated and barely livable homes after work shifts. Sanitation was almost non-existent as water supply was tainted with industrial and human waste, and as an overreaching result, the poor, "the sick, and the aged fell by the wayside" (1058). As

[5] Heather Henderson and William C. Sharpe. "The Victorian Age." *The Longman Anthology of British Literature.* Vol. 2B. Ed. David Damrosch, et al. United States: Pearson Longman, 2012. 1052. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

industry boomed, England's economic and social stability faltered, resulting in depressions, scarcity in food, and a perpetual anxiety of livelihood.

Clearly, the nineteenth century's cultural structure was another facet undergoing (and in desperate need of) renovation and change. Industrialization led to the development of the term Social Darwinism—an adaptation of Herbert Spencer's coined phrase "survival of the fittest" (1057) from *Principles of Biology* in 1864—which proved to be an unstoppable evil for those who were not "the fittest" in terms of their economic position. With the unrestricted ability to pay low wages and demand high hours, factory owners, businessmen, and the upper class in general embodied and accepted the attitude that "one person's self-interest…[meant] another's exploitation" (1057). In short, the rich became richer, the poor became poorer, and a middle class emerged. Social classes during this era went through extreme changes as a result.

Ultimately, the economic distance between the once dramatically separate social classes of England shortened, which was facilitated by the industrial advancements made in the nineteenth century—creating the first stepping stone to what is contemporarily considered a modern city. Housing became more accessible within London's city limits, and industry factories began providing much needed jobs. Paradoxically, though, it was the explosion of population that created the economic problems that Victorian working and lower classes faced. In 1700, London was home to roughly 700,00 people, and by 1801, this number would grow to over 958,000. However, by 1861 London's population exploded to 2,803,989 inhabitants; an increase of roughly 30 thousand people a year for sixty years.[6] Unable to

---

[6] "Historical Overview of London Population." *London Online.* CSC, 1996. Web. 8 Nov. 2012.

accommodate such growth economically and socially, London was soon over crowded, resulting in a severe lack of employment opportunities, a scarcity in housing, and severe poverty. The social anxiety and unease that resulted forced many to reconsider their livelihoods; some immigrating to the United States (Henderson and Sharpe 1059) or British other colonies, while others were left waiting for a change— for better, or worse.

The downhill-sprint that describes the industrial boom in England caused many Victorians to lose their grasp on their livelihoods, as few were able to digest the constant barrage of social and technological innovations brought about in the early 1800s. Anxiety and social unease, which embodied industrial and commercial growth and the dramatic social changes in economic classes, was matched with scientific advancements that initiated the breakdown of religious "truth"—an ambiguous term in itself. Truth relied on the notion that, religion, for example, was collectively accepted as valid and acceptable, and in accordance with *fact* and *reality*. Christian scripture, for instance, was not viewed as an interpretation of religion, but as the literal definition of humanity and explanation of cosmic events. With this perspective, Biblical references were observed as concrete and factual, as opposed to the contemporary understanding of the Bible as an interpretation of Christianity.

The lines between scientific and religious fact and truth had been overlapped for centuries before, essentially considered to be a cohesive, unified realm of study in which scientific advancements and religious discoveries were essentially synonymous. However, discoveries in geology and cosmology (among other fields) shed new light on ideas about "truth" in science and religion. Ideas about "truth," or the authority of knowledge and products of knowledge, came into question in this time period. The

geological and cosmological discovery that humans inhabited a planet that was much older than they had previously imagined possible was especially frightening (Henderson and Sharpe 1055), shattering the Christian creation story's validity. Historian J. A. Froude expressed that "the very truths that have come forth [because of the nineteenth century's advancements] have produced doubts, and these doubts have produced distrusts"[7] (1841), implying the unfortunate result of the breakdown of truths that were once firmly established as they began to clash with new concepts and realizations brought about by scientific advancements and discoveries. Such scientific breakthroughs were anything but exciting for many Victorians, as they dismantled religious beliefs and literal translations of the Bible:[8] if scripture—such an intricate facet of Christian culture—was proven to be false, was there ever a God at all? Religious influences that once served as a means of explanation for many aspects of Christianity became the subject of social scrutiny.

Just as scientific discoveries and observations of the natural world disrupted formal notions of truth in terms of Biblical creation stories, Christian theology's validity was again questioned in the realm of biology. The 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* threw yet another cog in the workings of religious "truth." In 1802, natural theologian William Paley argued "natural objects show evidences of design, thus showing the existence of

---

[7] J. A. Froude. "The Age We Live In." *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 24. (1841): 5. *Google Books.* Web. 9 Nov 2012.

[8] Lawrence Frank. *Victorian Detective Fiction And The Nature Of Evidence: The Scientific Investigations Of Poe, Dickens, And Doyle*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 3. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

a designing God."[9] Darwin's work completely contradicted this notion, arguing that evolution—not divine design—was responsible for natural existence. It is clear that truth is a subjective societal agreement of what is fact; what is real. What constituted fact, reality, and truth in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was proving to be far from factual, provable, and "true" as scientific developments shook the religious foundations of Christian culture. Though truth was undergoing a desperate social reconstruction, it would not remain broken down for long. In 1842, detective culture would emerge as a driving force in the gradual restoration of Victorian society's notion of "truth."

The upheaval of what was factual in religion during the nineteenth century created a nation-wide unease, which merged with the social anxiety produced by the fast and furious pace of the industrial boom. This perfect storm of colliding cultural components that bred such anxiety and societal unease seemed to have no end in sight when, in 1829, criminal activity—an obvious byproduct of growing cities—was matched with the revolutionary implementation of governmental law enforcement. Initially, Victorian citizens despised it.

Though the Metropolitan Police Force, created by Sir Robert Peel in 1829,[10] was the first governmentally organized form of law enforcement, it was not the first

---

[9] George P Landow. "William Paley's *Natural Theology*." *The Victorian Web*. N.p., 15 Jan. 2006. Web. 16 Apr. 2006.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

[10] Ronald R Thomas. *Detective Fiction And The Rise Of Forensic Science*. Cambridge,
England: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 12. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

form of law enforcement in London's history. In the first half of the eighteenth century, thief-takers offered robbery victims shady and expensive assistance, and as Michael Sims states, "such an arrangement lent itself to chicanery. Some thief-takers acted as go-betweens, retuning goods that their partners had stolen."[11] In 1749, law enforcement evolved as novelist Henry Fielding created the Bow Street Runners (named after Fielding's office on Bow Street) (xi). They served as bounty hunter figures whose duty, "was to locate and arrest serious offenders, and they were entitled to claim the government rewards payable on conviction."[12] The Runners were in operation until 1839, ten years after the introduction of the Metropolitan Police Force (Sims xi). It is not until Peel's initiation of the first governmentally run and operated police force that law enforcement would become a true and recognized profession. Although a profession, it was not immediately accepted by the public and served to be yet another source of their unease.

Sir Robert Peel's introduction of the police force came about at a very appropriate time. With such drastic changes in population, it is obvious that the structure of society in London was forced to undergo major changes. In 1829, the Metropolitan Police Force of London was created to combat the recent rise in crime due to the sudden explosion of both population and industry.[13] While this

[11] Michael Sims. Introduction. *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime: Forgotten Cops and Private Eyes from the Time of Sherlock Holmes*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. xi. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

[12] Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard, and Robert Shoemaker, "The Bow Street Runners", *London Lives, 1690-1800.* N.p., Apr. 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

[13] "Crime and Punishment." *The National Archives*. *N.p. n.d.* Web. 11 Nov. 2012.

implementation of an organized means of public protection and crime management was a necessary addition to the growing metropolis, this mindset was far from that of Londoners. Society perceived the new force as a threat to their social autonomy, and, as Haia Shpayer-Makov notes, "the objection was [partially] directed at uniformed policing, associated with the military and the use of force against civilian populations."[14] In addition, the introduction of the new police force led to public "apprehensions that the proposed police would be intrusive and trample over the liberties of the people."[15] New governmental laws were effectively restricting the public's feelings of autonomy, and building apprehensions and anxiety of their present situation as citizens of London: they had already nearly lost their religion, and now they faced loosing their independence.

This perceived threat would be pushed even further in 1842, when the first professional detective force was installed into the Metropolitan Police Force (Makov, "Journalists and Police" 966). The detective, able to enter houses upon will and ask permission to search premises, clashed with the social structure of Victorian England's recovering class system. While the traditional political class structure of England had started to break down, there were still obvious social roles of class position within the country. Detectives were often members of the lower rungs of the middle class, which was problematic to the upper class public whom the professional detective aided

---

[14] Haia Shpayer-Makov. "Journalists And Police Detectives In Victorian And Edwardian England: An Uneasy Reciprocal Relationship." *Journal Of Social History* 42.4 (2009): 966. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 24 Oct. 2012. Subsequent reverences will be cited parenthetically.

[15] Haia Shpayer-Makov. *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 26. Print. Subsequent reverences will be cited parenthetically.

during investigations (Makov, "Journalists and Police" 966). The invasion of privacy that the detective was requesting in order to properly complete his or her duties was a preposterous idea to many of the upper class English. Kate Summerscale examines the public's apprehensions to allow a detective entrance into a home, stating, "He exposed the corruptions within the house hold: sexual transgressions, emotional cruelty, scheming servants, wayward children, insanity, jealousy, loneliness and loathing."[16]

Separate from the uniformed and general police force in both goals and tactics to accomplish these separate duties, the professional detective was even more frightening to the citizens of London than the police force from which they developed. These fears revolved around the possibility that a detective could roam streets and alleys unidentified, thus compromising citizens' freedoms and, more intimidatingly, Victorians' peace of mind. The uncertainty of identity and the mystery that the professional detective embodied upon emerging in 1842 would persist to be a major theme throughout Victorian culture. Before evolving as a fragment of Victorians' cultural identity, the detective's invisible presence in the streets of London ironically caused yet another social unease. Plain clothed and unidentifiable as a member of law enforcement, the detective's early years of roaming the streets—secretly practicing his skills of inquiry and observation in pursuit of criminals to create a safer environment—led to the perception of him or her as a possible spy-like figure in the

---

[16] Kate Summerscale. *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: A Shocking Murder and the Undoing of a Great Victorian Detective.* New York: Walker & Company, 2008. XII. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

presence of unaware citizens. This disturbing threat, as Makov describes, was the public's fear of the possibility of the Metropolitan Police Force acting as a government espionage network:

> [A] unified and highly regulated police force, accountable to the government, would utilize, or actually become, an espionage network, absorbed in the scrutiny of citizens of all ranks of society and meddling in their private as well as political affairs in order to advance the autocratic ambitions of the central authority rather than crime control. (Makov, *Ascent of the Detective* 27-28)

Again, Victorians' notion of "truth" is tested in a frightening manner: who could be trusted? Truth of one's identify would continue to be a major theme throughout Victorian culture, as can be seen by the later events of Jack the Ripper as an unidentifiable man tormented London's psyche; Robert Lewis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (which tapped into similar fears and the possibility of a monster being a seemingly ordinary individual); and, of course, the component that would prove to be the cornerstone of Victorian culture's anxieties, and its literary achievements—detective fiction. However, prior to the birth of the genre that would help to unite many facets of Victorian culture, an extremely significant historical event emerged, as well as an equally significant relationship.

The professional detectives' ability to fight crime had an effect that was in opposition with their intent, as their "conclusions helped to create an era of voyeurism and suspicion, in which the detective was a shadowy figure" (Summerscale XII). The professional detective was under extreme public scrutiny in the first few years of his creation for many reasons: the thought of a governmentally initiated militant force on the streets of London was both revolutionary and clearly disliked by citizens (Makov, *Ascent of the Detective* 26); the detectives' ability to intrude and undermine the

privacies of the people labeled them with an invasive connotation (Summerscale XII);

and their ability to remain unidentified in public created uneasiness in the minds of

citizens who felt as though they were being spied upon by an unseen governmental

figure (Makov, *Ascent of the Detective* 28). The detective's presence was effectively

growing to be severely disliked by the very city he or she was working to protect. In

short, professional detectives were in dire need of a change in public perception.

Positivity in public image would facilitate an improvement in not only their public

image, but also their ability to effectively do their job (if citizens were more trusting of

the detective force, they would be more willing to assist when possible) (Makov,

"Journalists and Police" 967). Due to its influential power, the press had the

capability to instill feelings of much needed trust towards detectives, thus changing the

social perception of them as a whole. Emerging as a legitimate occupation around the

same time as the professional detective, journalists also sought to change their public

image from the previous stage of their profession, when articles were more subjective

and biased than entirely truthful (965). Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, journalism

was observed as being far from professional, just as the detective was. Both fields, as

Makov states, suffered from public criticisms as attacks focused on their tactics and

their competence:

> Both detectives and journalists struggled hard during the nineteenth
> century to secure recognition and respectability. The detectives of the
> pre- and immediate post-1842 period may have earned praise from
> some commentators, but on the whole they suffered from a censorious
> public discourse. In a similar fashion, attitudes to press reporting
> during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected a mix of
> cynicism and an awareness that it was informative useful and powerful,
> though in general, before 1840 the reputation of the press was
> low…[and] journalists themselves were regarded as hacks or as
> demagogues. (Makov 965)

But, as journalism progressively became more organized and methodical, the public increasingly accepted the credibility of journalists and journalism. In an attempt to mend the public image problems the detective force of London and press journalists had (prior to their eventual social acceptance), they established relationships to improve their respective perceptions and establish their professions as credible in the ever critical eyes of the public: a relationship that proved to be very effective, as Makov states, "Indeed, there were few if any occupations then whose public image and self-image evolved so singularly from its interrelationship with the media" (*Ascent of the Detective* 8).

The Victorian era marked a prominent and distinct time period in which public interest in the criminal justice system was a growing pastime. The press proved to be a smooth transition between the passing of court and legal information from the detectives to the public, as "the press incorporated a diversity of journals, with different emphases on political orientations, all addressed the issue of crime and crime control" (Makov, "Journalists and Police" 966). Journalists who covered such subjects were able to call upon detectives to inquire about just that, thus evolving the mutual dependencies of the professional detective and the press. For the press, the detective was a perfect means to acquire information to enhance their journalistic capabilities, and for the detective, the press was a means to promote national popularity and exposure.

A major advocate of the professional detective was journalist, novelist, and editor Charles Dickens. His weekly magazine *Household Words* depicted numerous flattering articles of actual detectives. *A Detective Police Party* portrayed actual detectives in an anecdote of his meeting with them through a very bright light. In this

article, the detectives were portrayed as mysterious figures devoted to their duties as defenders of the peace. Serving as an introduction to the arrival of the many detective figures invited, Dickens sets the stage by describing a mysterious setting and an almost eerie scene, stating, "It is a sultry evening at dusk. The stones of Wellington Street are hot and gritty…Just at dusk, Inspectors Wield and Stalker are announced; but we do not undertake to warrant the orthography of any of the names mentioned here."[17] As the anecdote continues, the use of fine whiskey and cigars are added, which contributes to the investigators' mysterious entrance, followed by a sophisticated social gathering with the detectives. The result of this and subsequent meetings with other detectives helped to remove the veil of uncertainty that shrouded many Victorians, thus providing a sense of truth as to who the detectives were. Dickens and journalists like him helped to present professional detectives in a positive light, facilitating their emergence into Victorian culture as icons.

It is important to note that many literary texts written in any give time period reflect that contemporary society's fears and anxieties. Because of the extreme renovations that were accumulating during the cusp of the Victorian Era—the scientific developments shaking religious foundations, the industrial revolution, and the introduction of a new and militarized police force—it is fitting that the literature of that period reflect such social anxieties.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the high-speed printing press (invented by Fredrich Gottlob Koenig and Andread Friedrich Bauer in 1812, then sold to the London newspaper, *The Times,* in 1814) (The Victorian Web) and the

---

[17] Charles Dickens. "A Detective Police Party." *Household Words* I (1850): 8+. *Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Music, & Wayback Machine*. Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

production of significantly cheaper paper combined to prompt the media boom that would change London forever. Newspapers and journalism (now a commodity all citizens could enjoy) played a crucial role for both the professional detective, and his fictional counterpart.

Soon after journalists and professional detectives established a working relationship to effectively change the public's negative perspective of the detective, journalism was also perceived in a positive light. By the second half of the nineteenth century, as Henderson and Sharp express, "The public had faith in the press, regarding it as a forum essential to the progress and management of democracy" (1068). Moreover, soon after this cultural shift in perception, authors began to publish novels serially in newspapers and magazines, many of which went through Charles Dickens's *Household Words* (Makov, "Journalists and Police" 968) and *All the Year Round*.[18]

The first detective-style fiction was produced in 1841 by author Edgar Allen Poe, in the Philadelphia magazine, *Graham's Magazine* (Sims xvii). "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" would open the door for many following texts, and eventually the first true detective novel (not to be mistaken with novels that simply *involve* a detective within the plot), *The Notting Hill Mystery*, written by Charles Warren Adams under the penname "Charles Felix" (an interesting decision considering the ambiguity of truth behind identity!), appeared in *Once a Week* from November 1863 to January 1864 (Ashley viii), and would be followed by many more. Clearly, *The Notting Hill Mystery* evolved from previous shorter pieces of fiction by writers like Poe and

---

[18] Mike Ashley. Introduction. *The Notting Hill Mystery.* By Charles W. Adams. 1863. London, England: The British Library, 2012. viii. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

Dickens, whose works featured detectives or detective-like figures, but Adams created the first full-fledged detective novel. Over a decade later, Charles Dickens published *Bleak House* (between March 1853 and September 1853). Though the novel includes a detective figure, *Bleak House* does not actually classify as a detective novel because of the fact that the presence of the detective character in the plot makes up only a small portion of the full novel. However, in 1868, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* appeared in Dickens's *All the Year Round*. This novel is often considered the first detective novel, but those statements fail to remember *The Notting Hill Mystery*, which was published five years earlier.

These novels played an important role in Victorian culture because they reflected the very anxieties that England's citizens were encountering. The perpetual feeling of citizens' loss of control of their lives was depicted in novels by the presence of cases in which, until the detective gave his expert assistance, there was no solution or closure. Science, which in the decades before had been disrupting their theological beliefs, was now a tool that detectives utilized to make order out of the chaotic criminal situations he was investigating. Finally, the fictional detective's depiction in these novels (a person with answers, skill, and the keen ability to identify criminals) was far from the public perception that isolated him as a public disturber of privacy in 1842 and years after. What these examples have in common is the presence of a fundamental concept that Victorians were able to associate with: "truth." The detective novel incorporated the detectives' triumphs over the various sources of nineteenth-century stresses and anxieties, which provided readers with an opportunity to temporarily escape their reality, as the world of detective fiction had control enough to make order out of chaos. More importantly, the fictional detective was able to

create an established "truth" within the pages of the fictional crime he or she was a part of. Professional detective were faced with similar difficulties, but their triumphs over questions of reality and fact were real: their triumphs depended on *their* skills as detectives to reconstruct truth within Victorian culture, not an author. However, it is very important to acknowledge the similarities and connections between this reconstruction of "truth" that embodies detective culture, both fictional and professional.

By the 1850s, the professional detective was no longer observed by the public with apprehension, but was instead celebrated. The evolution of the Victorian detective novel has an established starting point (1863), but the sudden existence of this genre and the development of the professional detective is a connection that raises many questions. Between the initial introduction of the professional detective in 1842 and the introduction of detective fiction in 1863, what exactly caused such a change in heart in the perception of the public in only twenty-one years? How are the two related in terms of reconstructing "truth," and solidifying fact and reality? More importantly, how did truth emerge in both fields of inspection—the realistic and fictitious? To begin to answer this, it is important to acknowledge the complex relationship the professional detectives have with detective fiction.

As Makov has explained in "Journalists And Police Detectives," journalists and detectives were established as professions within a close historical time frame. Developing along side each other, they utilized their respective skills to assist each other in their respective duties. This professional relationship allowed them to accomplish three significant achievements from the time the detective was introduced

to London in 1842, to the time the first detective novel was published serially in *Once A Week* from 1863 to 1864.

Primarily, the relationship enabled each party—detectives and journalists—to grow in popularity within the public eye. On one hand, the professional detectives' installation into the Metropolitan Police Force left the public's opinion of them as being far from the eventual celebrity status detectives would reach. Utilizing the press as a vehicle for positive public relations—as can be observed in articles that journalists like Charles Dickens wrote for *Household Words*—detectives were able to be portrayed as mysterious and sophisticated figures of law enforcement.   On the other hand, the press too was suffering from poor public acceptance as they began to transition from an organization that, until the beginning of the nineteenth-century, often failed to present reliable and objective information, into an esteemed organization that delivered a much-desired "truth" to readers.

This deliverance of "truth" is a major component of the second accomplishment that the relationship between detectives and journalists resulted in, which was their ability to provide newspaper and journal readers with information about law enforcement. As Richard D. Altick points out in his 1986 study, *Deadly Encounters*, murder and crime was a staple of the English entertainment diet.[19] Victorians' appetite for murder and crime—which will be explored in depth in Chapter 3—was in many instances appeased by reading reports in newspapers and journals. Having close contact with detectives, journalists were able to provide readers with tantalizing information about crime, criminals, and cases—ultimately,

---

[19] Richard D. Altick. *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations.* Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. 131. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

this relationship helped to deliver to the public a desired truth about the immediate world around them. Professional detectives' ability to solve crimes with a particular set of skills including inquiry and observation provided Victorians with answers to what would have been otherwise unsolved mysteries. By providing the public with answers, the mutual efforts of the detective and the journalist fed the Victorian appetite for murder, helped to instill a trust between the two professions and the public, and effectively constructed a sense of "truth" within a very turbulent country.

Finally, the relationship between these two parties facilitated a third major achievement. This achievement, as I will prove throughout this thesis, is that the relationship forged between the professional detective and the press was the leading influence in the development of the detective novel. Detective fiction could have only been introduced as a genre if the primary figure in these pieces of literature were famous. By portraying detectives in a positive light, journalists' reports allowed detectives to rise to the eventual celebrity status they achieved in the mid nineteenth-century and the vehicle in which these newly formed celebrities were spread around the nation was the rapidly evolving press. As demands for information about detectives, the cases they were on, or the mysteries they solved grew, so did the public's appreciation of detectives through the artfully crafted anecdotes like Dickens' "A Detective Police Party." By 1863, the fictional detective emerged and provided readers with not only an entirely new opportunity to indulge in crime culture, but also provided a truth. The stories they read had concrete endings in which the culprit was captured through the extraordinary skills of a fictional sleuth. Such fiction became an ever-growing phenomenon that persists today, and can be traced even further than the innovative authors that published the first detective fiction serials. It can be traced to

the relationship between the emerging and struggling professions of detection and journalism.

Chapter 3

THE BIRTH OF A GENRE

After discoveries in biology, cosmology, geology and other scientific fields shook the foundations of religious beliefs, "truth" underwent a violent reassessment by Victorians, essentially breaking down the long-before established walls that separated fact and fiction. What was once commonly considered factual and believed to be concrete became riddled with doubt as Victorians' very notion of existence settled under the scrutiny of scientists, separating religion and truth. Ironically, scientists' primary objective was to discover and to establish "truths" about the natural world, but their achievements instead inspired frightening questions of faith.

This new order of study, however, was not immune to disarray. As scientific fields began to establish themselves as sources of authenticity, the very sociocultural concerns of Victorian society that the fields unintentionally disrupted—the disillusionment of "prescribed truths"—emerged within the practice of discovery. Because various scientific subjects were newly introduced to nineteenth-century culture, they presented their own problems within the scientific community in terms of agency. Determining what was to be considered legitimate scientific practice implied that, similar to realizations that created controversies about religion and faith, there were both authentic and inaccurate realms of science. In the early 1800s, the supernatural study of mesmerism contended for a position of agency amongst disciplines.

Within the branch of natural science, hypothesis' authenticity demanded visibly proven results that could be replicated by other individuals. Mesmerism, providing no visible proof, relies on an observer's acceptance of the feat, which, as this chapter will acknowledge, leaves the validation *and* dismissal of mesmerism as a true science to be extremely difficult. The lack of tangible and visible evidence of mesmerists' abilities was not enough to dispel mesmerism as a "science" any more than Heaven and Hell were to be dispelled as possible religious destinations. Essentially, the inability to prove the legitimacy of either concept is contradicted with the equally suggestive inability to prove either's illegitimacy, thus producing an unconquerable stalemate. Interdisciplinary fields, such as medicine, also had ambiguous zones of practice. The study of physiognomy as a determiner of psychological pretenses was already a long established "discipline," though the actual validation of this "science's" results were clearly arbitrary. Such chaos in deciding authentic practices of science made one point very clear—the exclusion of one field meant the exclusion of others.

The difficulty of establishing a consistent "truth" within scientific fields (which is ironically the study of "truth") was an unsettling notion for Victorians, leaving the already-hazy differentiation between fact and fiction even less clear. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century (over twenty years succeeding the initiation of the professional detective force in 1842) the shattered notion of truth would be revamped and rebuilt with the introduction of one significant sociocultural element of Victorian England. Feeding off the social unease that was created by the crumbled barrier between fact and fiction, the detective novel emerged to juxtapose two opposing scientific forces, ultimately allowing readers to come to their own

conclusions as to what differentiates authentic science and mesmerism in the initial

phases of the genre's reconstruction of "truth."

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

> The detective story is a kind of intellectual game. It is more — it is a
> sporting event. And for the writing of detective stories there are very
> definite laws — unwritten, perhaps, but none the less binding; and
> every respectable and self-respecting concocter of literary mysteries
> lives up to them. Herewith, then, is a sort Credo, based partly on the
> practice of all the great writers of detective stories, and partly on the
> promptings of the honest author's inner conscience.[20]

Under the pseudonym S.S. Van Dine, American art critic and author Willard

Huntington Wright (creator of the popular Philo Vance detective omnibus during the

1920s and 1930s) published "S.S. Van Dine Sets Down Twenty Rules for Detective

Stories" (1928) that prescribed a standard for how detective fiction should be written.

Many have followed his lead in developing their own set of detective novel standards,

especially Ronald Knox—another notable author and a member of the prestigious

Detection Club of the 1920s and 1930s in England who created the equally well-

known list of detective-novel-musts, "A Detective Story Decalogue" (1929)—but it is

clear that whatever list is used to determine whether a piece of literature is truly

detective fiction, there are certain qualities that are imperative for it to fall in this

prestigious category. As Earl F. Bargainner acknowledges, in reference to the creators

of these established lists of detective novel rules in his 1980 study, *The Gentle Art of*

---

[20] Willard Huntington Wright. "S.S. Van Dine Sets Down Twenty Rules for Detective
Stories." *The American Magazine* Sep. 1928: 129. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically, and article will be subsequently
addressed as "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories".

Murder, "most of their rules at first glance may seem commonsensical, they have all

been successfully broken…But it must be noted that no writer would break all the

rules in one work, for…if he did, he would be writing something other than detective

fiction."[21] Such structure for detective fiction was not established with the birth of the

genre in 1863. Instead, it was not until the 1920s that writers and critics began to

assess such literature and set boundaries for what constituted as detective fiction.

Dubbed "the first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels"

(qtd. in Symons 53) by T.S. Eliot, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) had long

been considered the original detective novel. Eliot's bold assertion about *The*

Moonstone has three significant components worth addressing. First is the claim that

it is a detective novel: undoubtedly true. The second is that it is "best," which is a

commonly agreed statement. It remains today as a popular piece of literature read for

both pleasure and literary critique, however this claim is purely subjective. Though

Eliot's description of *The Moonstone* as the "best of English detective novels" is

arguable, it has become clear that his third claim—*The Moonstone* as being "the

first"—is incorrect. Collins's novel had many preceding pieces of literature that

contained a detective figure, though only one is classified as being detective fiction. It

should be acknowledged, however, that even though Eliot was incorrect in his

statement of *The Moonstone* as the first English detective novel, "it does not," as

Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon point out in *Music and Orientalism in the British*

---

[21] Earl F. Bargainnier. *The Gentle Art of Murder: The Detective Fiction of Agatha Christie.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1980. 6. Print.

Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East (2007) "negate the significance of *The Moonstone* in literary history."[22]

According to Mike Ashley ("Seeking the Evidence"—introduction to the republished *The Notting Hill Mystery*), Edgar Allan Poe "can justifiably be credited with creating the first modern independent detective"[23] when inspector C. Auguste Dupin first appeared in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "but [Poe] did not write a detective novel" (Ashley, x). Over a decade later, between March 1852 and September 1853, Charles Dickens published *Bleak House* serially, which also features a detective. In the novel, Dickens's Inspector Bucket plays a major role in the investigation of Mr. Tulkinghorn's death, but the case itself is minor in comparison to the more significant subplots that construct the novel (Ashley, ix). Though *Bleak House* clearly classifies as a novel and indeed contains a detective figure (Inspector Bucket actually being the first English fictional detective figure),[24] it also falls short of being an actual detective novel. Interestingly, determining what novel did constitute as the first of detective fiction and who wrote it was a mystery in itself: it is only fitting that the late renowned detective fiction enthusiast Julian Symons would finally uncover what novel would be credited as being the first. In his 1972 study, *Bloody*

---

[22] Martin Clayton, and Bennett Zon. *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007. 257. Print.

[23] Charles W. Adams. *The Notting Hill Mystery*. Ed. Mike Ashley. London, England: The British Library, 2012. x. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

[24] Julian Symons. *Bloody Murder; From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History.* London, England: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972. 47. Print.

Murder; From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History, Symons identified

with certainty "that the first detective novel, preceding Collins and [French novelist]

Gaboriau, was *The Notting Hill Mystery*" (53). Published serially from November 29,

1862 to January 1863, *The Notting Hill Mystery* was released in *Once A Week*—five

years before *The Moonstone* was published in 1868—and was published in book form

in 1865 (still three years before *The Moonstone* [Ashley iix]).

It was not until 1972 that Julian Symons dubbed *The Notting Hill Mystery* as

the first bona fide detective novel, which solves the first part of this mystery. Symons

suggested that the listed author, Charles Felix, was a pseudonym, but was unable to

identify with assurance exactly who the true author was. This portion of the mystery

surrounding *The Notting Hill Mystery* would not be solved for almost a century and a

half after its publication in 1862 and 1863. In January 2011, bibliophile Paul Collins

wrote a review for the *New York Times* that finally identified Charles Warren Adams

as the author of the novel.[25]

Charles Adams presents his first novel in the form of letters, diary and journal

extracts, scientific reports, and witness accounts through the inquiry and collection of

the story's detective figure, Mr. R. Henderson. Because the novel is comprised of this

collection of separate accounts, there is not a narrator, leaving Mr. Henderson as the

editor; occasionally including his own memorandums to tie pieces of the mystery

together. Additionally, the novel includes a map, which Symons notes as being an

aspect of detective fiction that would not become commonplace for years after (53).

Together, these components—the collection of various accounts, the occasional

[25] Paul Collins. "The Case of the First Mystery Novelist." *www.nytimes.com*. 9 Jan.
2011. Web. 14 Jan. 2013.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

memorandum by the novel's fictional editor, and the inclusion of a map—help to
create the aura of reality within the fictional novel. This aura is an interesting facet
because it leaves the reader almost uncertain as to whether or not the text is actually
fiction and questioning the contents as being truth. Clearly this is a fictional novel,
however the subtle elements of the piece create a temporary distortion of authenticity
and literature due to Adams's cleverly disguised fictitious piece.

Mr. Henderson's objective throughout the novel is to determine whether or not
an attempted insurance fraud is being committed by the novel's villain, the mesmerist
Barron R**, after the mysterious death of his wife, Madame R**. The Barron's wife
is eventually—through the inquisitions by Mr. Henderson to numerous characters—
exposed as being the long separated twin sister of Mrs. Anderton, another woman who
strangely died within a year of Madame R**'s death. Mr. Henderson discovers that
the Barron R** had taken out five policies on his wife for the sum of £25,000, and he
suspects that the Barron R** had a hand in each of the strange deaths with the help of
his expertise in mesmerism. Concluding with a puzzling and cryptic final comment,
Mr. Henderson begs readers and the insurance company that employed him to answer
a final inquiry about the information he gathered throughout the novel, which he refers
to as the "entire chain" of events leading to the death of the two women:

> Is that chain one of purely accidental coincidences, or does it point with
> terrible certainty to a series of crimes, in their nature and execution
> almost too horrible to contemplate? That is the first question to be
> asked, and it is one to which I confess myself unable to reply. The
> second is more strange, and perhaps even more difficult still.
> Supposing the latter to be the case—are crimes thus committed
> susceptible of proof, or even proved, are they of a kind for which the
> criminal can be brought to punishment? (Adams, 284)

Clearly, Mr. Henderson is unable to come to any certainty about whether or not the Barron R** was guilty of any crime—from insurance fraud to murder—because of the strange ways in which the deaths occurred. As a reader, one is left with a comfortable assumption that the Barron R** is indeed guilty of the crimes, but Mr. Henderson's final question leaves one uncertain as to whether the evidence provided is enough to convict a man for murder. From a reader's standpoint, the evidence clearly puts the Barron R** in a position of guilt. However, that would also imply that the reader puts faith in the power of mesmerism, which is a crucial component of the novel. Although the novel leaves doubts about whether any murders actually took place, "the essential point," as Symons acknowledges, "is that *The Notting Hill Mystery* is a true detective novel, and the first of its kind" (53).

Being the first detective fiction novel, *The Notting Hill Mystery* raises many questions. First and foremost, what exactly about the novel classifies it as being a piece of detective fiction? Though the novel includes a 'detective figure', it is left unclear as to whether or not Mr. R. Henderson is actually a detective or if he is simply a citizen acting within the confines of detection. Furthermore, must a detective figure within a novel be an explicitly declared inspector or detective to conduct an inquisitive and observant investigation? To investigate these, among other questions that relate to the novel as fitting into the genre that it allegedly originated, this chapter will examine what qualities of *The Notting Hill Mystery* deem it the first detective fiction novel. In addition, this chapter will examine why the novel nearly fell off of the shelf of literary history. The novel was not addressed as the first of detective fiction for over a century after its publication, and even the author was close to being lost to history. What about the novel made it so easy to forget? To begin these endeavors, it is important to

examine the first and most important question: how does *The Notting Hill Mystery* fit into the category of being a piece of detective fiction?

In exploring *The Notting Hill Mystery* as being a detective fiction piece, it is necessary to identify the novel within the conventions of detective fiction itself by examining the specific characteristics of the genre. As Charles J. Rzepka expresses in *Detective Fiction* (2005), there are four major elements that help to define a detective story. The first three elements are the presence of a detective figure, an unsolved mystery, and a solution to the mystery through an investigation.[26] In addition to these qualities, Rzepka also acknowledges a fourth element—the "puzzle element," which will be examined in the second part of this chapter. While these elements (just as Wright's twenty detective novel rules) are not set in stone with each novel following Charles Adams's, they are, as Rzepka points out, "fairly consistent" (10) and offer a comfortable point of departure for the investigation of *The Notting Hill Mystery.* With these first three elements as a guide, the first part of this chapter will evaluate the ways in which *The Notting Hill Mystery* fits into the classifications of a detective novel that both Charles Rzepka and Willard Huntington Wright have helped to establish, and the evaluation of the fourth element will follow in the second part of this chapter.

Charles Adams presents readers with an unlikely figure to serve as the detective figure of his novel. Clearly, Mr. R. Henderson is not a typical detective or investigator. Instead, he is an insurance investigator whose organized findings (the novel itself) are directed to the Secretary of the —— Life Assurance Association. Though Charles Rzepka does not differentiate between detective novels and pieces of

---

[26] Charles J. Rzepka. *Detective Fiction*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2005. 10. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

literature that simply host a detective figure (such as the aforementioned pieces, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" or *Bleak House*), the qualifications of what constitute a detective figure is identical between the two. Willard Wright's rule number six of "Twenty Rules for Detective Stories," which states, "the detective novel must have a detective in it; and a detective is not a detective unless he detects" (Wright 129), also points to Mr. Henderson as being a detective figure, regardless of his position in life insurance rather than with the Metropolitan Police Department. Throughout *The Notting Hill Mystery,* the reader is led through dozens of diary and journal extracts, witness accounts, scientific reports, and interview correspondences that Mr. Henderson has purposefully collected to trace the steps of the novel's mystery. This method of detection, however, is worth evaluating in itself.

As detective fiction has evolved, so has detective culture in the eye of the public. Modern television shows depict detectives as being inquisitive officers who personally track individuals down for questioning, find and analyze clues with their trained eye, and then identify the culprit—often in a short amount of time. Unlike detective fiction's stereotypical detective figure, Mr. Henderson's method of inquiry and detection was done essentially from a chair in an office. Detective figures such as Wilkie Collins's Inspector Cuff and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes are well known for their "on-the-scene" investigating, where their sharp senses of observation, inquiry, and deduction are put to good use. These figures, however, evolved from the less glamorous detective efforts of Mr. R. Henderson. In the novel, Mr. Henderson's completed record of events was dated as 1858, but his efforts to prove the guilt of the Barron R** began with backtracking as far as 1832 when the twin sisters—the deceased Madame R** and Mrs. Anderton—were separated as children. From that

date, Mr. Henderson tracked the sisters' lineage through painstaking research and inquiry to numerous individuals up to the deaths of Madame R** in 1857 and Mrs. Anderton in 1856. Such findings would not have been accomplished by scouring crime scenes for clues, but instead by devoted research and written inquiry, just as it is presented in the novel as Mr. Henderson pieced together dozens of correspondences from individuals to solve the larger puzzle. In essence, Mr. Henderson truly does resemble a contemporary insurance fraud investigator. Paul Collins's review for *The Notting Hill Mystery* acknowledged the novel to be "both utterly of its time and utterly ahead of it" (Collins, nytimes.com). Considering that much of modern detective work is accomplished not with a gun in hand, but with a keen knowledge of research, Mr. R. Henderson truly was ahead of his time as a master of detection; though he was not the iconic figure one would likely consider to be traditional (such as Poe's Dupin or Collins's Cuff), Mr. Henderson truly was a detective.

Charles Rzepka's second necessary element for detective fiction is the presence of an unsolved mystery, though, as he acknowledges, the mystery may not necessarily be a crime (10). This proves to be complicated in analyzing *The Notting Hill Mystery*, which brings up two questionable crimes; each shrouded in mystery. Although the novel revolves around the deaths of Madame R** and Mrs. Anderton, the primary crime in concern—the one which prompted Mr. R. Henderson to investigate—is that of insurance fraud. Because the Barron R** took out five consecutive life insurance policies on his wife (totaling to £25,000) only a year before her death (as Henderson discloses in the first memorandum), Madame R** would have had to be the absolute last blood relative of her family. The novel goes on to reveal that Mrs. Anderton is Madame R**'s long lost twin sister, therefore her death

would also be necessary for the Barron R** to collect his £25,000 prize. With their

deaths being only a year apart, and each woman meeting an equally mysterious end,

Mr. Henderson begins to investigate the possibility of the Barron R** as a murderer.

While Mr. Henderson's initial involvement was spurred by insurance fraud, this

portion of the explanation will focus on the possibility of murder, because as Willard

Wright points out in his seventh rule of detective stories, "no lesser crime than murder

will suffice" (Wright 129) for the foundation of a detective novel's plot. Because the

novel concludes without overtly pinning the deaths of Madame R** and Mrs.

Anderton on the Barron R**, it is not clear as to whether or not there was even a crime

committed whether it be insurance fraud or murder. Clearly, this raises numerous

questions in terms of how *The Notting Hill Mystery* satisfies the second element of

detective fiction—an unsolved mystery, though not necessarily a crime. Considering

the complexities of this single element, it is necessary to combine this with the third,

which is the investigation through which the mystery is solved.

Just as the detective figure in *The Notting Hill Mystery* is resembled as outside

the traditional boundaries of a "detective," Charles Adams's novel again proves to be

very different than those that would follow in terms of the mystery at hand, and how

such a mystery is resolved. The second and third elements of Rzepka's detective

fiction formula include four significant aspects that must be first identified and then

evaluated within *The Notting Hill Mystery*: the crime itself (for analytical purposes,

this will focus on the two apparent murders); the culprit himself and his relation to the

novel; how the culprit committed the apparent crimes; and the methods through which

the mystery is solved.

Charles Rzepka acknowledges the subtle differences of types of detective novels within the realm of detective fiction. He begins by borrowing the term "archetype" (qtd. in Rzepka 9) from author John G. Cawelti's study *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (1976), which is used to structure types of popular literature (Rzepka suggests love stories, Westerns, science fiction, and spy tales as examples) into more broad categories. These categories, the "archetypes," Rzepka notes, "are convenient for making an initial distinction between two major kinds of detective fiction, [which Cawelti dubs] 'Mystery' and 'Adventure'" (9), with "Romance" as Cawelti's third and minor archetype. By analyzing the structure of the crimes in many pieces of detective fiction, classifying a piece into either "Mystery" or "Adventure" is simplified:

> Crimes…can appear in all three, while some detective mysteries do not, technically, involve crimes at all. In addition, many crime stories including a detective or similar character offer no mystery to be solved, but rather a difficulty to be overcome: making an arrest or eluding one, stealing something or retrieving it, taking or freeing a hostage. (Rzepka 9)

Rzepka goes on to identify suspenseful stories, "capers", as stories that identify the culprit from the very beginning, thus leaving the mystery as a problem that must be overcome.

> While gripping, they are not particularly mysterious, for the culprits and their schemes are known almost from the beginning. 'Caper' tales clearly belong to Cawelti's Adventure archetype, where the virtues to be displayed are ingenuity, daring, and resolve, not the decipherment of clues or weighing of evidence. (Rzepka 9)

The Notting Hill Mystery offers some difficulty in identifying the crime and the culprit, because neither is certain. While the identity of the alleged culprit is disclosed, his guilt is the mystery in question; as the novel progresses, the mystery is

extended to placing his guilt *and* the method in which he committed the crime into question. Therefore, the mystery at hand throughout the novel is to determine whether or not the Barron R** had a role in the death of his wife and Mrs. Anderton, and in turn whether or not the deaths were murders. Clearly, *The Notting Hill Mystery* falls into Cawelti's archetype of "Mystery," and the second element of Rzepka's formula—a mystery to be solved—is also satisfied. The novel's mystery is determining whether or not the Barron R** is guilty of murdering his wife and Mrs. Anderton, as well as determining how—if he is guilty—he went about doing it.

Even more perplexing than labeling the actual mystery of the novel is identifying how the Barron R** committed the crimes and the methods through which Mr. Henderson uncovered the truth. Because the novel deliberately alludes to the fact that the Barron R** is guilty, this portion of the chapter will follow suit, and suggest that he did indeed murder the women…but how?

In Willard Wright's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," he makes a deliberate effort to point out in his fourteenth that "the method of murder…must be rational and scientific" (130). His fourteenth rule seems to contrast with the method of murder in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, which was by the hand of mesmerism. This, a "pseudo-science" and "outside the bounds of detective fiction" (130), as Wright would likely argue, puts the mystery of the novel beyond scientific means of solution. But Wright is wrong. Although Alison Winter acknowledges in her 1998 study, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*, that "mesmerism's relative obscurity in the late twentieth century has encouraged the idea that it has always been

a "fringe" or "pseudo-" science,"[27] she also points out that mesmerism was a "ubiquitous" practice that had a significant role in scientific studies during the Victorian era, as it "influenced and was eventually assimilated into several major intellectual enterprises" (5). In contrast to the modern association with mesmerism, which generally places it within the realm of parlor tricks of smoke and mirrors, Victorians embraced this practice recreationally, and it was interpolated in both science and medicine. Therefore, in order to accurately analyze mesmerism, it is necessary to consider it within the historical context in which *The Notting Hill Mystery* was written.

Though Adams does not follow what may now be considered traditional conventions of detective fiction, his work is original in the sense that the methods in which the murders are committed and the way in which the mystery is solved (to the extent of Mr. Henderson's ability) are through fields of science. Adams presents readers with a battle of two scientific fields that were on one hand popular as the Victorian era progressed, and on the other hand relatively controversial fields that left many people very skeptical. These fields were detection and mesmerism.

The first chapter went into detail about the transition from concrete faith in religion, which was assumed as absolute "truth," to the more cloudy idea of what aspects of religion were factual as scientific fields such as cosmology and geology (among others) began to alter people's notion of what "truth" was with the introduction of scientific findings that were based in proof rather than faith. By the mid nineteenth century, science was becoming a popular feature in England, but even

[27] Alison Winter. *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 4. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

science itself was hardly concrete. Winter points out the disarray of academic cultures—identifying scientific, medical, and intellectual—and their relative lack of heterodoxy in establishing scientific authority:

> Definitions of science were malleable during these years. Individual luminaries were readily identifiable, but other aspects of scientific culture were less defined. Society could not agree about what could be said about natural law, nor was it obvious when, where, and how one could say it. There were many attempts to structure the sciences in the 1830s and 1840s, with the founding of new scientific organizations and the publication of works on the relations between different fields of study. But these did not, in practice, consolidate the sciences or define an authoritative community of practitioners. What counted as a proper science, or as a "scientific" practice, remained open to dispute. (Winter 6)

Mesmerism was well ahead of other forms of scientific fields in terms of popularity or public acceptance and its widespread awareness. By the 1830s, mesmerism was already well known when it came to England, and it was this very field that prompted the urge to identify "legitimate sciences," as mesmerism was met with skepticism, closely contested with cynics (Winter 5). Traveling demonstrations of mesmerists' abilities were met with suspicions that the mesmerized subject and the mesmerist were in cahoots with each other, which resulted in inhumane attempts to prove that the subject was faking, or, from the mesmerist's standpoint, to prove that the subject was indeed in a suspended state of mind and body. Firing pistols near the subjects' head, pricking skin with needles, electric shocks, and even driving knives under fingernails were done to prove one way or the other. However, such tactics were often done in vain. As Winter explains, "If the tortures produced a response, skeptics dismissed the experiment. If there was none, the trance was all the more plausible—or the fakery [of the subject was] all the more skillful and reprehensible" (Winter 3). Winter adds, "the question of whether the effects were natural or supernatural made experiments a

testing ground of faith and doctrine" (4). All attempts to arrive at the truth of the practice of mesmerism revolved around a different, and much more complicated question: how can any such controversy—from scientific, to medicinal, to religious—be either proven or disproven? Mesmerism was challenging the already thin lines between science and religion.

In the novel, Adams presents these two sciences—mesmerism and detection—as vehicles with which he addresses the strength of these two scientific fields, ultimately identifying one as more powerful than the other. He utilizes mesmerism and forensic science (including the various tools and methods of detection) to discuss the transition from religious to scientific means of identifying "truth." In the novel, mesmerism is depicted as a powerful force, one that Mr. Henderson is unable to actually identify as being the cause of the deaths of the women, but the novel covertly implies the deaths of Madame R** and Mrs. Anderton as a result of the Barron R**'s mesmerist powers. Even though scientific discoveries resulted in the revamping of what Victorians associated with "truth," Victorians' faith in God remained. Only the literal sense of religion was affected, as the existence of God can be neither proven nor disproven. This led to a religious transition from literal belief in scripture to a more spiritual faith in religion. *The Notting Hill Mystery* presents readers with a similar scenario. Mesmerism, as Winter notes, was a field that was heavily questioned by skeptics and cynics (3). Those that did not believe in the powers of the mesmerist went to great lengths to disprove the "spell" that the patients were under, just as the mesmerist attempted to prove its validity. This resulted in a stalemate between the skeptic and the mesmerist; the skeptic firmly believing that the patient was simply an

incredible actor. In short, mesmerism was neither provable, nor disprovable—just as religion is.

Throughout the novel, Mr. Henderson is in the difficult position of attempting to prove the Barron R**'s guilt of murdering two women in order to collect an enormous life insurance policy as a result of his mesmerist powers. This task, in consideration to my argument, is a monumentally difficult, and basically hopeless one. Consider this analogy: a notoriously agnostic man is struck by a tree and killed, and his wife suggests that a priest prayed to God to fall the tree on the man. For one to accept this conclusion s/he would have to accept the existence of God—a religious construct for which existence is impossible to prove one way or the other without faith in God's existence. If the resolution of the case left the priest guilty, that would imply that the case relied on the belief of something for which there is no evidence besides faith, which was enough for some. Mr. Henderson's situation is similar because he attempts to prove the guilt of a man with the knowledge that the scientific vehicle for which the deaths occurred—mesmerism—may or may not even exist, and he is attempting to do this with the science of detection. Here, Adams demonstrates the stalemate that existed in the Victorian era between sciences and religion. On one hand, Adams demonstrates the power of detection, as the reader is clearly aware of the Barron R**'s guilt, but on the other hand he demonstrates that the power of detection is not limitless. This stalemate is apparent in the conclusion of the novel, as Mr. Henderson both ponders whether or not he believes the Barron R** to be the murderer—simultaneously questioning the reader—as well as questions the existence of a fitting consequence for such a crime.

Through the meticulous nature in which Mr. Henderson comes to his conclusion of the mystery, Charles Rzepka's formula is well satisfied. Charles Adams presents readers with a novel that leaves readers with a puzzling question of what can and cannot be proven. The novel leaves readers at a point in which closely matches Willard Wright's introduction of his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," stating, "the detective story is a kind of intellectual game" (129), though the particular detective game Adams has presented is impossible to finish.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Following the three elements that Charles J. Rzepka acknowledged as necessary within Cawelti's "Mystery archetype" of detective fiction—the presence of a detective figure, an unsolved mystery, and an investigation to solve the crime—there is the "puzzle element," which Rzepka defines as "the presentation of the [novel's] mystery as an ongoing problem for the reader to solve, and…engage the reader's own reasoning ability" (10). Literary critics and authors, beginning in the late 1920s during the Golden Age of detective fiction, have described this element in a variety of alternative ways and it has grown as a significant component of many writers' conception of what constitutes a detective novel. Willard Wright's first rule of his 1929 publication, "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," states, "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described" (129). In 1944, Dorothy L. Sayers—a member of the prestigious Detection Club, founded in 1928 in England by Anthony

Berkeley[28]—also addressed this characteristic of the genre in her introduction to *The Moonstone*, in which she states, "no vital clue should be concealed…reader and detective should start from scratch and run neck and neck to the finish" (qtd. in Farmer 13[29]). The "puzzle element" of a detective fiction novel essentially boils down to a major theme of the genre that England's Detection Club labeled as 'Fair Play.'

The Detection Club's introduction of the concept of 'Fair Play' put restraints on the detective novel in terms of what is acceptable by the author, and has instilled an idea that there should be a connection between the reader and the novel. Being comprised of many influential writers of detective fiction (such as Julian Symons, Agatha Christie, and Ronald Knox), the Detection Club based their membership on taking, as John Scaggs articulates in his 2005 study, *Crime Fiction*, the "Detection Club Oath," swearing to obey the rules of Fair Play when writing a piece of detective fiction (36). In *Crime Fiction*, Saggs defines 'Fair Play' as "the notion that a mystery or detective story should, in principle, at least, be capable of being solved by a careful and observant reader" (36). It is important to keep in mind, however, that the urge to define and place limitations on what characterizes detective fiction did not occur until many years after the first detective novels were published.

It was not until the 1920s that writers and critics began to assess the genre and set boundaries for what constituted as detective fiction. Prior to the 1920s, notes Julian Symons in *Bloody Murder*, "there had been little consideration of crime stories

---

[28] John Scaggs. *Crime Fiction*. Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 2005. 36. Print. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

[29] Steve Farmer. Introduction. *The Moonstone*. By Wilkie Collins. 1868. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1999. Print.

as a particular kind of literature," much less assessing the genre "as something having rules which could be strictly formulated" (101). While it is important to acknowledge that the rules of Fair Play were originated in the late 1920s, roughly sixty-five years after Charles Adams's publication of the first detective fiction novel (*The Notting Hill Mystery* in January 1863), leaving Adams and other authors of the nineteenth century unable to adhere to the later established guidelines, it is also important to recognize that the rules have their roots in the origins of the genre. Rzepka expresses the early presence of fundamental aspects in *Detective Fiction*, stating, "the first three elements of detective fiction—detective, mystery, investigation—make a conjoint appearance quite early in the history of the genre" (10). Though Rzepka's second and third elements proved to be complicated in juxtaposing *The Notting Hill Mystery* with Wright's rules, it is clear that the novel does fall under classification of a detective novel. However, the essence of Willard Wright's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," Ronald Knox's "Ten Commandments of Detection," and the Golden Age of detective fiction as a whole is the concept of Fair Play. This idea is closely related to Rzepka's puzzle element, which he notes as being "conspicuous by its absence" in the early history of the genre (10).

Charles Warren Adams would likely have been considered by members of the Detection Club as not fulfilling his authorial duty as a detective fiction author, because many of the components of *The Notting Hill Mystery*—mesmerism, sleepwalking, and the mental connection between twins—stray from concrete scientific ideals that serve as the foundation of the rules of Fair Play. Adams's use of these qualities contradicts two very important components of the rules of Fair Play. The first is the Golden Age's unanimously approved exclusion of supernatural elements: Wright's fourteenth

rule states that "the method of murder, and the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific" (130); Knox's second "Commandment" states, "all supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of courses" (qtd. Haycraft);[30] and the Detection Club Oath demanded its members to promise they would "observe a seemly moderation in the use of" (qtd. Haycraft 198) supernatural aspects such as hypnotism. The apparent murders and consequent investigation in *The Notting Hill Mystery* are both fundamentally constructed on the presence of mesmerism and other inexplicable supernatural events. Therefore, many of the clues that Mr. Henderson accumulates in his investigation rely on the reader's acceptance that mesmerism and telepathy exist.

The Notting Hill Mystery's reliance on inexplicable events creates a problem in consideration to the second component of Fair Play, which is the notion that the rules of Fair Play allow for an ongoing interaction between the reader and text. Willard Wright describes this best when he associates detective fiction as an "intellectual game" (129) in which the reader is able to compete with the detective in solving the mystery. Scaggs points out that both Wright's and Knox's rules "refer at every point to the participation of the reader in the process of detection" (37); thus, detective fiction should place the reader in a position to compete with the detective figure in solving the mystery. Throughout *The Notting Hill Mystery*, the reader is given information and evidence by Mr. Henderson's investigation, however the reader's ability to predict eventual outcomes is hindered as a result of the intangible nature of the evidence. In her introduction to *The Moonstone*, Dorothy Sayers insists that if readers "examine carefully the first ten chapters of *The Moonstone*…[they] will find

---

[30] Howard Haycraft. *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946. 194. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

that practically every clue necessary to the unraveling of the mystery is…scrupulously set out in them" (qtd. in Farmer 14). *The Notting Hill Mystery*, in contrast, does not provide readers with concrete evidence with which to make educated assumptions.

When Adams presented readers with the background of twin sisters who were mysteriously separated by "gipsies" at a young age (29), one is later on able to comfortably assume that those two sisters are Mrs. Anderton and Madame R**. However, this assumption is based entirely on the strange connection that the two women seem to have in terms of sharing pain and offering each other an unspoken support in times of emotional distress. Such information is hypothetical. Consider the report by Dr. Watson referring to his in-house visit to Mrs. Anderton (80). In the statement, Dr. Watson expresses the strange characteristics of Mrs. Anderton's illness:

> I now began to fear that some deleterious substance had been
> swallowed, more especially as the patient had…been in unusually good
> health. I therefore made careful examinations with the view to
> detecting the presence of arsenic; and instituted…the strictest enquiries
> as to whether there was in the house any preparation containing this or
> any other irritant poison. Nothing of the kind could, however, be
> sound, nor were such tests…able to detect anything of the
> kind…Deliberate poisoning proved…entirely out of the question.
> (Adams 83-4)

This passage, amongst others, provides readers with the opportunity to infer that Mrs. Anderton's ailment is a reflection of the sickness that Madame R** was suffering, supporting an inexplicable phenomenon that suggests that twins possess telepathic abilities. (Similarly to mesmerism, the theory that twins may have extrasensory perception is under close (skeptical) scrutiny. Nancy L. Segal addressed the possibility of twins being able to telepathically interact or respond to each other's emotional and physical condition, regardless of their relationship spatially, in *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us About Human Behavior* (1999) by

49

stating, "there is *no evidence* that twins' similarities are caused by mental communication between them."[31] Again, readers are presented with a supernatural marvel that, like mesmerism, is neither scientifically proven, nor truly dispelled as a phenomenon.) While Mr. Henderson did utilize scientific methods of investigation, including Dr. Watson's and four more similar scientific accounts, his investigation revolves around the fact that the crimes were committed under supernatural circumstances. As a result, the reader's ability to participate with the novel's investigation is limited to only what evidence (and the respective causes of such evidence being available, such as the strange way by which Madame R** met her death) the reader accepts as possible. Though Adams's novel does beg readers to accept the power of mesmerism as possible, it takes away the reader's ability to interact with the case. Instead, the mystery is in the hands of Mr. Henderson as he evaluates a variety of supernatural events, and sorts out what "is" and what "may be" factual.

For a reader to accept the notion of supernatural events being the cause of the murders in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, the reader's ability to then actively participate in the "intellectual game" (Wright 129) that is the investigation is prohibited. Again, Adams presents readers with two fields of science that battle for validity in the novel—mesmerism and detection. Though mesmerism, as Alison Winter points out, is rejected contemporarily as a valid scientific field, it was widely practiced in the nineteenth century and helped to spur a desire to identify various levels of authority amongst scientific fields. Adams mimics this struggle to define what can and cannot

---

[31] Nancy L. Segal. *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us About Human Behavior*. New York: Dutton, 1999. 314-15. Print.

be deemed science in his novel. Just as Victorian intellectuals attempted to put labels of authenticity and authority on scientific fields, identifying evidence within *The Notting Hill Mystery* as either valid and tangible or supernatural and possibly disposable becomes a complicated matter for Mr. Henderson. He is constantly the mediator between these two types of evidence. The tension between evidence that is constructed to be factual and rooted in reason (such as the account by Dr. Watson) and evidence that is both derived from and points to pseudo-sciences creates a sense of confusion in terms of what is discernable as plausible from Mr. Henderson's perspective, as well as the reader's. All pieces of concrete evidence that Mr. Henderson collects—from witness accounts, to scientific reports, to his employment of his deductive abilities—eventually point to an inexplicable supernatural element for which there is no worthy evidence to either support or dismiss.

The conclusion of the novel leaves readers with just as much information as Mr. Henderson, but also leaves the mystery unsolved. Although the reader is able to engage with the text in *The Notting Hill Mystery*—hypothesizing the correlation between the two separate murders as well as how they were committed—it is clear that Rzepka's "puzzle element" and the concept of Fair Play are not truly applicable to the novel because the reader can *only* hypothesize. However, this does not imply that *The Notting Hill Mystery* is any less of a detective novel than its many subsequent additions to the genre, regardless of Adams's lack of the Golden Age rules. As Howard Haycraft points out in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1946), "it is the common failing of such codes that no two authorities can agree in all details, and further that virtually every precept laid down has been breached at some time by one or more detective stories accepted as great" (187). On

the contrary, the novel's constant utilization of mesmerism and telepathic abilities between twins is a critique by Adams that addresses the level of uncertainty that existed in England during the Victorian period in terms of scientific authority. Mesmerism was a practice that was essentially immune to being proven as either a legitimate practice or a hoax considering the fact that disbelievers in the nineteenth century went to great lengths to disprove mesmerists' abilities and usually came to one of two conclusions: mesmerism is clearly not real, or that the mesmerist and subject are simply incredible actors (Winter 5). In each case, the disbeliever's opinion of mesmerism was not swayed. The reverse, proving mesmerism was real, was equally impossible. Adams's representation of this struggle is apparent through the detective methods of Mr. Henderson, who remains open-minded throughout the novel about the possibility of mesmeric powers having been employed, but it is clear that Mr. Henderson is not a believer himself. In the opening statement he makes to his insurance agency, he alludes to the fact that he is indeed skeptical of mesmerism, though he also cannot altogether ignore the fact that the evidence in favor of such practices is compelling and deserves a proper investigation (Adams 8-9).

As a reader, one cannot assume whether or not Adams himself put any faith in the practice of mesmerism, but one can accept the argument that he presents. This argument, considering the open-endedness of the novel's conclusion, is that the science of detection is clearly more tangible (physical, and provable) than that of mesmerism, but detection is limited by the boundaries of science in rationalizing the inexplicable. When such a supernatural element is involved, there is no Fair Play. However, the "puzzle element" that Rzepka expresses is very present. Readers are able to participate and engage with the text—interacting with what Mr. Henderson

52

delivers as evidence—because everything that Mr. Henderson encounters is as foreign to him as it is to the reader. Haycraft condensed the many variations of rules of Fair Play into two simple characteristics of detective fiction—"the detective story must play fair" and "it must be readable" (Haycraft 188). Clearly, playing fair is a subjective quality, and is above all malleable and open to interpretation. Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery* provides readers with an argument about the limitations that science—a unanimously accepted vehicle through which truth can be delivered—has in taming the inexplicable nature of a phenomenon. Truth, in the case of *The Notting Hill Mystery*, is left for the reader to declare, as even Mr. Henderson is unable to find any resolution. While the novel may not "play fair" in the sense that it does not allow the reader to solve the crime with the detective, it is quite fair in the sense that the novel demands the reader to come to the final decision and ultimately solve the mystery.

Chapter 4

CRIMINAL INFLUENCE IN *THE MOONSTONE*: HOW CRIME PAVED THE ROAD FOR FICTION

> 'Now,' said the *Sunday Times* a fortnight after the disturbance in
> Northumberland Street, 'Let a powerful writer of fiction take those
> facts, and work them up into an elaborate story, retaining the situation
> and the time of the event, and not exaggerating its manner in the
> slightest possible degree; and the critics of the country will denounce
> his work for the monstrous improbabilities on which he had relied for
> effect. Yet about the reality of the case there unfortunately is no room
> whatever for doubt.' (Altick 131)

In 1860 and 1861, two shocking murders gripped Victorian England's

attention. The first occurred on June 30, 1860 in Road Hill, where a child was taken

from his bed and killed in his sleep. A year later, in the afternoon of July 12, 1861, a

man was bludgeoned into a state of comatose in his home on Northumberland Street,

and died in his hospital bed less than a week after being admitted. The utterly

incomprehensible nature in which these crimes were committed left the nation

stunned—and with an appetite for information about the crimes. This appetite for

murder, as Richard D. Altick explains, "was a staple of the English entertainment diet"

(6-7). Interestingly, Altick quotes William Wordsworth's preface to the second

edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth expresses his disapproval of society's

"craving for extraordinary incident" which he claims is a dangerous side effect of "the

accumulation of men in great cities" (qtd. in Altick 3). London's geographic and

population growth in the nineteenth century was explosive, and as citizens struggled to

catch up with rapid development, crime within and around London gradually

increased in occurrence and severity of violence.

  After the Road Hill murder in 1860 and the "Northumberland Street Tragedy"

(as it was frequently referred to as) in 1861, respectively, spent successive months in

the pages of newspapers across England, fragments of these murders eventually

transitioned from sensationalistic articles to the pages of detective fiction. Seven years

after the Road Hill murder and six years after the murder on Northumberland Street

specific details of each murder and investigation played a crucial role in the

development of Wilkie Collins's 1868 publication of *The Moonstone*. Aspects of the

crimes' settings, clues, suspects, evidence, and detectives became significant

components of inspiring Collins's novel, and upon close observation, it is clear that

many crucial elements of his novel reflect events that were drawn almost seamlessly

from the press and media coverage of these two murders that shook England in the

early 1860s. In order to demonstrate that the popularization of detective fiction was a

result of a growing professional relationship between the press and the professional

detective, it is important to first determine exactly why the murders were so

tantalizingly interesting in the early 1860s to make them so appealing to Collins

almost a decade later. Because of the importance of the historical background in terms

of making cohesive connections between history and detective fiction, the first part of

this chapter will provide an introduction to the murders themselves, the historical

contexts that provide some explanation for the dramatic reaction by the English public,

and will conclude with a synopsis of *The Moonstone*. The second part of the chapter

will contain a critical analysis to connect significant historical events to *The

Moonstone*—identifying what roles the two crimes of the early 1860s and the rapidly

progressing press played in the novel's publication—as well as identifying the subtle messages that Collins expressed to England in terms of professional detectives' competence. The third and final part of this chapter will examine Collins's critique on British Imperialism by addressing the ever-evolving notion of "truth," as well as how the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street Tragedy played instrumental roles in Collins's delicate exposure of British hypocrisy as an Empire.

Early in the morning of June 30, 1860, the murder at Road Hill (roughly 120 miles west of London) caught the full and undivided attention of London as a four-year-old child named Saville Kent was taken from his bed and viciously killed in the middle of the night. Saville's murderer, his sixteen-year-old half-sister Constance Kent, would not be convicted until she confessed in 1865 (Summerscale 298). After being found in an outhouse, stuffed down the well with his throat cut so deep that his head was almost severed from his small body, the family asked for assistance from a professional investigator to lead the case. The initial detective on the case was Superintendent John Foley of Trowbridge (roughly eleven miles south of Road Hill), who's ineptitude would soon leave him dismissed from the investigation when it became obvious to both the Kent family and the ever-attentive press that a more proficient individual was needed to run the case. An article from *The Morning Post* on July 10, 1860, ten days after the murder, helps to articulate this change of detective leadership, as the unnamed author states, "the extraordinary circumstances of the case require the employment by authority of the acutest discerners of probabilities and the most experienced of detectives,"[32] referring to the inadequacy in inquiry and detection

---

[32] "Multiple News Items." *The Morning Post* 10 Jul. 1860: 4. Gale. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

that Mr. Foley embodied. Soon after this plea was published, Inspector Jonathan Whicher of London, a highly respected detective with an impressive professional record as an investigator of Scotland Yard, took the stage. Though Inspector Whicher quickly came to his own conclusions about the case, arguing that it was Constance Kent who murdered Saville, his claim was rejected in court.

Whicher's career was crippled by this failure to deliver a guilty verdict, and he was never able to truly revitalize his status as a prominent detective figure. Five years after his allegedly incorrect assertion, Constance Kent admitted her guilt. However, even her personal submission was not conclusive enough for authorities, who were convinced only that Constance's psychological health compelled her to confess with the intention of clearing the stain upon her family's name (Summerscale, 298). Though it would take years for his conclusions to be proven to be true, and though it was well after his apparent failure to solve the case had crippled his career, Whicher's initial judgment was correct.

The public's attention to the murder at Road Hill relied heavily on the fact that the crime occurred within the confines of a seemingly respectable home. While London was not *unaccustomed* to brutality, as Altick acknowledges, the English home was a coveted amenity, and was considered seemingly-invulnerable to such violence—a place that murder, it seemed, had no place in. This "sanctity of an English home" was a convenience that "every Englishman [was] accustomed to pride himself with more than complacency," and a place that one may have a "thoroughly innate feeling of security that every Englishman feels… [about] …the inviolability of his own house" (*Morning Post*). Prior to the early 1860s, Altick expresses, London was the stage for numerous homicidal incidences:

The previous half-dozen years had witnessed a series of well-publicized murders that were distinguished from the ordinary run of contemporaneous homicides by their occurrence in middle-class families, a realm of Victorian society that had always been assumed to be exempt from such catastrophes by virtue of its much-vaunted "respectability." (Altick 7)

After the Road Hill murder took place, the perceived inviolability of the English home was tainted. Newspapers like *The Morning Post* pointed out the incredible nature of the crime, considering it occurred within a seemingly safe and respectable home, bringing attention to the fact that not only was England evolving, but also that such an occurrence could happen anywhere.

Many aspects of the Road Hill murder made their way from the newspapers and gossip to the pages of Collins's novel, but his criminally based inspiration does not rely solely on the murder at Road Hill. One year and thirteen days after the Road Hill murder, London's appetite for brutality was again exercised on July 12, 1861 when a man who introduced himself as "Gray" invited Major William Murray (an apparent stranger) up to his office—Number 16 on Northumberland Street—and proceeded to attempt to kill his guest by firing two shots to his head (Altick 19-20). Incredibly, this was not the scene of the crime, and the victim was not Major Murray. Six days later, on July 18, 1861, "Gray" died in a hospital after slipping into a coma as a result of the injuries he received July 12 (40). Incredibly, after being shot twice in the back of the head from close proximity Murray was severely injured, but alive. Taking advantage of the opportunity to save his own life, Murray grabbed a pair of fire tongs, catching his distracted assailant off guard. In a ferocious struggle, the two fought hand to hand with bottles, fire tongs, and fists. Finally, after gaining control of the fire tongs while lying on the ground, Murray was able to strike Gray with several blows to his head and hands with the makeshift weapon, all of which after breaking a

bottle over Gray's head. Unable to leave the room because of a series of locked doors, Murray was forced to exit through one of the windows overlooking the back yard, and was initially identified by witnesses as the attacker as he attempted to flee the scene (15-21). Major Murray's statements, that he was asked to come up to the room, were proven to be true upon an examination of the apartment, which also proved who exactly "Gray" was. His real name was Mr. William John Roberts, who would ironically become the victim of his own attempt at murder, dying less than a week after his attack on Major Murray. It was quickly established that the two men had never met before that day, creating a stir within London and the rest of the country.

This stir, however, was not entirely due to the brutal nature of the attack. Instead, England was enticed by the possibility that the entire explanation of the series of events may have been completely false. Newspapers attacked the validity of Major Murray's statements from numerous vantage points, questioning the many holes in the apparent story.

> What had been the issue between the two men that had erupted into a life-and-death fight…? Which had been the assailant, and which the intended victim? Was it humanly possible to credit the major's story that he and Roberts had been perfect strangers until he was lured—was he?—to the premises? …If Roberts had really meant to kill Murray, why had he used 'two delicate little ivory-handled gewgaws' instead of the large pistols he had at hand? How could Murray, with a bullet in his cervical vertebrae, have managed to batter in Roberts's head, sever his temporal artery, and break one of his fingers, shattering a pair of fire tongs in the process? Why did he not cry for assistance…as Roberts attacked him? Why did he drag Roberts's limp body by the legs into the front room? (Altick 28)

Such issues were the major cause for alarm in terms of actually believing Murray's story, but the most prominent issue was a very complicated one: there was only one side to the story. Roberts was unable to do more than utter a few grunts in his hospital

bed, leaving an enormous gap in the investigation. Journalists constantly asserted that Murray's story was "preposterous…utterly incredible…[and]…utterly incomprehensible" (28), and an eventual revealing of a possible connection between the men's quarrel and a woman—Mrs. Murray—fueled the firestorm of press coverage. Readers grew increasingly interested in the events of Northumberland Street, and attached themselves to the excitement.

Along with the scandalous nature of the crime—from the questionable series of events to the possibility of Mrs. Murray committing adultery with Roberts—the sensationalistic methods in which the press described the crime scene grabbed readers' attention. By the beginning of the 1860s, Altick argues, Victorians of English society were overcome by sensation fiction. The idea that a middle-class family could be subject to such criminal activity as did the murders of and preceding 1860 and 1861 was simply unheard-of: serving as one of the major reasons that these cases had such a lasting impact on Victorian society. The press was the vehicle by which the public became aware of the brutal events, and dozens of new articles were being published daily, all of which were reporting the progress of the crime. Furthermore, it was the presentation of these articles that likely had much to do with the public's interest. Because of its occurrence in the heart of downtown London, the Northumberland case was, in particular, an extremely significant event in terms of press coverage. Altick exposes many of the gruesome journalistic reports that were available to the public, leaving no question as to why and how the case's press coverage had such a strong immediate impact, as the *Morning Chronicle* so vividly discloses the scene of the crime:

> In Parts fragments of the usurer's scalp seemed to have flow from his
> head under the blows of Major Murray's pair of tongs, and adhered to

the paper hangings; in one spot a stream of wine had soaked into a mass of gore; in another the maddened belligerents seemed to have writhed together…while the one, with almost supernatural animosity, was endeavoring to master the other. (Altick 27)

Quite noticeably, the descriptions that the press employed had a dramatic shock-and-awe factor, and as the case continued, there were less answers and more exciting questions to be asked, from who the real victim was to the possibility that everything that Murray described could be completely false.

The Northumberland Street tragedy and the murder at Road Hill captured the nation's attention, exciting Victorians while the press played the ringleader from behind the paper, expressing their disbelief with the "facts" that the case had gathered. As Altick states, "The press could speculate, report rumors, assess character, decide guilt untrammeled by law or any canon of journalistic ethics, and at the same time piously assert its single-minded devotion of truth and justice" (28), which is an obvious contrast from contemporary professional journalism. Resulting from this chaotic assembly of variables—the horrific murders of both Road Hill and Northumberland Street only a year apart; the circumstances under which the two events occurred; the excited uproar of London over their newly formed, murder-driven entertainment; and the extensive involvement of the press and their sensationalism depictions of events—was, for the "horrified, but excited" (113) public, a generous addition to their growing buffet of criminal scandal to help appease their appetite for murder.

In 1868, eight years after the Road Hill murder of 1860 and seven years after the Northumberland Street Tragedy, Wilkie Collins published *The Moonstone.* The novel appeared at first serially in Charles Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round* and then in volume form in the same year, *The Moonstone* embodies the Victorian's

obsession with crime and criminals. Much like Charles Warren Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1863), the novel is written in the form of testimonies by a wide range of characters that Mr. Franklin Blake collected in order to bring a close to the mystery of the Moonstone Diamond—a family heirloom passed down from his uncle, John Herncastle. The novel is introduced with a letter written in 1799 by a relative of Mr. Blake—an unnamed cousin of John Herncastle—who was fighting alongside of Herncastle during the 1799 storming of Seringaptam (the fortified palace on an inland island, north of Mysore, India) under the leadership of General Baird. After hearing stories of an invaluable yellow Diamond—the Moonstone Diamond, an extremely significant religious relic told to have been the "forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon,"[33]—John Herncastle forced his way into the stronghold where the Diamond was kept, stabbed the three men who were protecting it from looting during the siege and stole it.

Roughly forty-eight years later the Diamond makes its way into the hands of Mr. Franklin Blake, who, by instruction of his uncle Herncastle, gives it to Miss Rachel Verinder. Suddenly, Miss Verinder woke one morning to find the Diamond had been stolen. Living up to the ominous words that one of the dying Indian protectors of the Diamond shouted to Herncastle almost half a century before—"The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!" (Collins, 57)—Mr. Blake, Miss Verinder, and other characters of the novel would be subject to the wrath that the Indian had predicted as theft, murder, suicide, and conspiracy haunted those involved throughout the duration of the novel. As the novel progresses, however, readers

---

[33] Wilkie Collins. *The Moonstone*. Ed. Steve Farmer. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1999. 53. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

become aware of exactly how the Diamond disappeared. During the same night that Miss Verinder received the Diamond, Mr. Franklin Blake, unknowingly under the influence of laudanum—an opiate mixed into an alcoholic solution—rose in his sleep and took back the gem from Miss Verinder's room in order to protect her from the doom that was said to be associated with it. This simple act of reclaiming the initially stolen Diamond is extremely significant to the historical context of the era, and will be addressed in full in the third part of this chapter.

Clearly, the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street Tragedy were two well-publicized events that instilled a nervous excitement in England, providing an opportunity for the public to feast upon the incidences with an insatiable appetite for both the sensationalistic press coverage, and the scandalous nature of each crime. Also very evident is that Wilkie Collins utilized specific aspects of each crime in the development of *The Moonstone*. However, exactly why were these crimes chosen as such influential components of his novel? The answer lies in the examination of the cultural impact that the crimes had on Victorians. Naturally, the brutal nature of the murders assisted in the public's obsession and excitement with crime culture. However, this excitement was mixed with social unease as the general impression of what differentiated a *victim* and a *victimizer* began to blur and become less distinct—a blurring that few were ready to acknowledge.

Victorians' appetite for murder and crime culture was the root of what is contemporarily observed as an almost normal societal practice. Murder and death are nearly commonplace in modern culture, considering the availability of news coverage on any given murder in any given area, as well as the ever present fictional representation of blood and gore on print and non-print media. This collective

63

desensitization, however, is the product of decades of exposure to murder and death through the plethora of fictitious mediums available at any given moment. During the early- to mid-nineteenth century, this modern notion of culture began to emerge as a simple intrigue in response to the sudden availability of information about brutal crimes through the press. It was during this period that the public not only grew a fascination for murder and crime culture, but also grew an emotional interest—giving way to the horrifying realization of exactly whom a victim and victimizer could be.

The Road Hill murder of 1860 can be considered a turning point in Victorians' conception of crime, and an introduction to the Everyman-murder-story. Unlike their common conception of a killer—a bearded sociopath stalking the dark corners in the outlying slums of London—the murder at Road Hill exposed an even darker realization about the true nature of crime. In this instance, the victim was three-year-old Saville Kent, and the victimizer—his sixteen-year-old half-sister, Constance Kent—was part of the same wealthy family. Such a scenario was enough to bring one to question *The Morning Post*'s aforementioned "sanctity" of one's home, but even more frightening is the idea that the crime could occur *from* within and *by* someone within. England's wealthy was once considered immune from such incident, but the Road Hill murder shed light upon a much more sinister possibility as even the social elite were vulnerable to such attacks—even by members of their own families.

In 1861, Victorians were reminded of the unpredictability of murder as two alleged strangers engaged in a vicious life and death battle in apartment number 16 of Northumberland Street. While the resulting death of Mr. J. Roberts was not by the hand of one in his nuclear family, the incident did raise many questions about *who* and *what* a murderer is. Again, a definitive differentiation between victim and victimizer

became hazy for Victorians. In this instance, there was only one individual who was able to provide an explanation of the battle that ensued in Mr. Roberts's apartment, which lead many to question his innocence—essentially, was Major Murray telling the truth? It was impossible to determine, considering Mr. Roberts was left unable to provide his version of the story, dying days later in a comatose state and leaving Victorians questionable about the series of events. The most unsettling quality of this murder was the randomness in which it occurred. Though many people (both journalists and members of the general public) speculated that it was a crime of passion that Major Murray enacted on his own will as a result of an affair between his wife and Mr. Roberts, this theory never came into fruition (Altick 29). Instead, the fact remained that bloody meeting was between two complete strangers with no apparent provocation. This conclusion was frightening to Victorians because it implied that such an evil deed could simply occur without any reason. For one of the first times, English society was introduced to the possibility of an individual acting on a pathological drive, as a complete stranger beat a man to death within his own home in the middle of Friday.

Lines between the victim and the victimizer broke down, and the two categories melded into a single group—humanity. The sudden realization of the unpredictable nature of violence was a major influence in Collins's work, as *The Moonstone*'s plot revolves around many instances that violate the once common notions of crime and criminal. Readers eventually discover that Mr. Franklin Blake, a member of Verinder family, stole the Moonstone Diamond from within the Verinder home. Miss Drusilla Clack brings attention to an incident between Mr. Ablewhite and three men who assaulted him in her provided narrative—the men were complete

strangers who lured him into an apartment building on Northumberland Street. These two incidences are clearly interpretations of events from the two sensational crimes from the early 1860s, and are used for two primary purposes. The first is to recreate the chilling actions of both the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street Tragedy to bring attention to the newly arbitrary definition of who a victim and a victimizer are. In addition, the recreation serves to address the hypocrisy of British Imperialism by begging readers to ponder the ambiguity of victim versus victimizer during the British rule of India and the ensuing revolt (this will become more evident in the third part of this chapter).

The novel draws almost seamlessly from the infamous murders of 1860 and 1861, and by utilizing these historical sensations, Wilkie Collins was able to not only recreate factual events in the pages of fiction, but to also make statements about the effectiveness of professional detectives. Upon investigating the public's response to Inspector Whicher's apparent failure during the Road Hill murder, the general consensus of the citizens of England was clearly lacking in confidence about professional detectives' abilities, as he was cast from the limelight that was once shining so brightly on him. By analyzing the novel, it is clear that Collins utilized actual events to play roles in the inspiration of the novel, and was able to make statements about the aptitude of detectives—contradictory to the assumption of Victorians—while also introducing criticisms of British rule in India, and finally asserting claims about of the developing notion of "truth" within Victorian culture. It was during the early 1860s that Victorians were faced with realizations about humanity that forced them to assess blame—a notion that Victorians were often all to eager to place on others, including detective figures like Inspector Jonathan Whicher,

and oppressed revolutionists in India. Collins utilized the Victorian public's emergence from naivety during the 1860s to address the collective need for a revamped social network—one that was able to assess events objectively rather than from the subjective and emotionally attached perspective that was so simple to assume. The catalyst of this wave of public and historical scrutiny that Collins provides readers, however, begins with an evaluation of the roles that professional detectives and the rapidly developing press play in the inspiration of *The Moonstone.*

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Many aspects of the 1860 and 1861 murders made their way from the newspapers and gossip to the pages of Collins's novel, but his criminally based inspiration does not rely solely on the murders. It was the combination of the crimes and the detective figures involved, as well as the distribution of the events through the press that caught Collins's attention—specifically the way in which the Victorian public perceived these detective figures. The public essentially generalized their capabilities—the inability of one (Superintendent Foley, for example) represented the inability of the profession as a whole. Much of this distrust resulted from the improved ability of the press to spread news around the country in record time, however it was ultimately Victorians' relatively irrational and impulsive judgment of detective figures as a collective group (rather than as individual) of ineffectual and intrusive investigators.

With the perpetually growing railroad system and the "formidably expanding daily press," as Altick states, news "had the capacity to spread [word] of the latest homicides to the remotest part of the British Isles within hours" (7). Immediately, the

nation's undivided attention was given to the Road Hill murder (1860) and the

Northumberland Street Tragedy (1861). In 1860, it was the press that provided

information and (subjectively) brought insight to the eager readers. In 1861, the press

again jumped on the bandwagon to deliver precisely what the public craved.

However, this obsession with scandal did not simply begin, and even if it did 'simply

begin,' it was well before the Road Hill murder. Altick supports this claim, as he

states within the opening pages of *Deadly Encounters*:

> Although one cannot say with absolute certainty that a single event
> ignited the sensation mania of the 1860s, a pair of mysterious,
> murderous attacks in and near London in the summer of 1861, covered
> by the energetic press with almost unprecedented thoroughness and
> excitement, occurred in a gathering atmosphere for with they were
> providentially suited. (Altick 3-4)

At any rate, the finer details of these two cases became a major source of influence for

Wilkie Collins's novel, so a question remains unanswered: what roles did the press,

professional detectives, and the actual crimes themselves have in the development of

The Moonstone? Clearly, the press played a significant role (though overly dramatic,

it helped to instill the sensationalistic qualities of the early 1860s). By creating such a

public stir over the murders, London's population and those beyond the city were

awarded coverage of the events unfolding day by day. The sensational articles written

over the course of the investigations of both the Road Hill murder and the tragedy at

Northumberland facilitated the widespread consciousness, and the even more

prominent excitement. It is important to acknowledge that in addition to the

melodramatic tendencies of the 1860's journalism, it was the press (*The Morning Post,*

July 10, for instance) that urged the replacement of the incompetent officers on the

Road Hill case in 1860. Collins adopted this public outreach for more experienced

assistance in *The Moonstone* by including the frustration of those present in the Verinder estate. After Superintendent Seegrave's incompetence was clearly hindering the progression of the investigation, Mr. Franklin Blake sent for help from a more experienced investigator. Here, Collins makes a very important decision, which ultimately influences his address to the Victorian public about professional detectives. The realization of one professional's incompetence did not lead to the termination of the case, but instead proved to be enough for the Verinders and those present to enlist in the aid of a more seasoned detective figure. This critique on irrational judgment is not entirely observable until the conclusion of the novel, but it is this decision by Mr. Blake that initiates Collins's statement about both the lack of faith that Victorians had in their crime investigation system, as well as the true competence of detective figures.

Again, the close ties between the press and the professional detective proves to be an instrumental influence on detective fiction. The Road Hill murder case has a more prominent place in Collins's novel, which can be seen extensively through the detective figures present. Incompetent, arrogant, and naïve, Superintendent Seegrave provides readers with a perfect complement to the bumbling Mr. Superintendent Foley, which serves as a major factor in the development of *The Moonstone*. Farmer outlines Seegrave's reflection of Mr. Foley's incompetence as a detective, noting that, "[Collins]…modeled…Superintendent Seegrave of his own novel after Mr. Foley, the very real local policeman whose ineptitudes caused innumerable problems for later professional investigators" (27). Seegrave's initial mishandling of the case of the stolen Diamond creates nearly unconquerable obstacles for Inspector Cuff, who is also based upon a very real figure—Inspector Jonathan Whicher, whose presence in the investigation of Saville Kent's murder began after he took over for the clumsy and

ignorant Superintendent Foley. This historic allusion is very significant to the development of *The Moonstone*'s plot, because it is in this instance that—just as the Road Hill murder investigation came to a halt—the search for the Moonstone Diamond also took a fatal detour. Collins addresses the ability of detective figures here by exposing the fact that there are clumsy and ineffectual individuals within the detective profession whose poor investigatory skills can severely hinder the progression of a case, just as Superintendent Seegrave's decisions put Inspector Cuff in a position of nearly insurmountable odds.

The connection between these two figures is very significant. It was not uncommon, as Haia Shpayer-Makov acknowledges, for members of Scotland Yard to venture outside the confines of London when "communities with and without police detectives applied to the Yard for aid in serious and unsolved cases" (*Ascent of the Detective* 45). However, this interfered with the local authority. Superintendent Foley's position in the Road Hill murder investigation was terminated when Inspector Whicher took over, and like other provincial officers, Foley "resented the aura of the Yard detectives" (46). The overstepping ability that the London professionals exercised in these situations was regarded by local police as belittling to "their own professional standing and prestige," and was especially demeaning "when in certain well-publicized cases the London investigators attained results where they had failed" (46). Collins's inclusion of this similarity was not subtle.

Resulting from Seegrave's clumsiness, Inspector Cuff's investigation was prolonged because of his inability to convince Miss Verinder to talk about the disappearance of her Diamond. Similarly, Inspector Whicher's investigation was also put on a hold because of Constance Kent's refusal to meet with him. Initially, Cuff

had suspected Miss Verinder to be the culprit, just as Whicher suspected Constance. Of course, the actual thief in *The Moonstone* was not Miss Verinder, but she did eventually disclose the fact that she had vital information to the case, information that would have been a tremendous help for Inspector Cuff.

One of the most significant aspects of Miss. Verinder's refusal to disclose information to Inspector Cuff or even speak with him is the relationship between the lack of trust that she and other characters of the novel display toward the detective and the public's opinion of Inspector Whicher's intrusion into the Kent residence of Road Hill. As Summerscale points out, "many felt that Whicher's inquiries culminated in a violation of the middle-class home, an assault on privacy, a crime to match the murder he had been sent to solve" (XII). Professional detectives were simultaneously considered exciting and invading individuals, as "the scene he uncovered aroused fear…at the thought of what might be hiding behind the closed doors of other respectable houses" and "his conclusions helped to create an era of voyeurism and suspicion" (XII). Collins adopted this negative aura that surround detectives in his novel, closely reflecting the realistic public relation problems that Inspector Whicher experienced. In Whicher's investigation of the Road Hill murder, it was the socially accepted practice to deny support to a probing detective. As Summerscale expressed, the possibility of an outsider uncovering aspects of family life that they would prefer to keep hidden was enough to create a void between a professional detective's intent and the truth. *The Moonstone* incorporated this distrust by incorporating undisclosed secrets within the Verinder household that would have been extremely beneficial for Inspector Cuff. This family's distrust and refusal to disclose information (especially by Miss Verinder) to Cuff was a significant obstruction to the investigation. Collins's

attempt to dismiss the Victorian public's lack of trust toward detective figures is very evident here. Readers are clearly aware that Miss Verinder is concealing valuable information because of her refusal to speak with Cuff, leaving them aggravated with her lack of assistance as a character, and anxious to determine the identity of the criminal and the location of the missing Diamond. This can be observed as a subtle role reversal that Collins strategically included in the novel (putting readers in the position of acknowledging the frustration that such noncompliance can create) as a statement of exactly why detective figures—like Inspector Whicher and Cuff alike— should be trusted to practice the skillful art of proficient detection.

In terms of their competence, Inspectors Cuff and Whicher displayed their keen sense of intuition, regardless of their predecessors' ineptitude, by arriving at the correct conclusions long before their eventual dismissal from their respective cases. Cuff's reappearance in the novel reflected that of Whicher, when after five years of Constance's assumed innocence, she turned herself in and pled guilty for the murder of her younger half-brother—thus reestablishing Cuff and Whicher in the eyes of the public years after the crimes. Collins's inclusion of such a return from apparent failure is again leading readers to consider the fact that each figure was correct long before the general population was able to see or accept it. The authentic, yet criticized, detective work that each figure conducted was initially observed as intrusive, inappropriate, and inconclusive. However, their instincts and ability to arrive at their respective conclusions were ultimately correct. Again, Collins begs readers to reconsider their discrediting impression of investigators and their effectiveness.

The crimes themselves were also prominent factors in the development of Collins's *The Moonstone*. Again, the most blatant reflections of the two historical events—the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street tragedy—to appear in the novel were facets of the Road Hill case. Playing a crucial role in both the realistic and fictitious investigations was the presence of (or, more appropriately, the absence of) the nightgown. Whicher's proof of Constance's guilt revolved around the never-retrieved nightgown. Superintendent Foley had in fact found it at one point, which Farmer points out from a newspaper article that further expresses just how incompetent Foley was, as Farmer states, "The testimony of Sergeant James Watts, followed by comments from a befuddled Mr. Foley, suggests a conspiracy of dunces unwilling to or incapable of making appropriate decisions concerning potentially important evidence" (qtd. in Farmer 569). Sergeant Watts had actually found the nightgown folded next to the boiler-furnace of the Kent home, but after handing it over to Superintendent Foley, it was never again seen. This information was not disclosed until months after the murder took place, leaving the nightgown lost forever, and Foley as an even more incapable investigator. In comparison, Superintendent Seegrave had also mishandled the case in terms of the nightgown, as he assumed the nightgown was not a crucial piece of evidence, but was instead contaminating the scene of the crime by smudging a recently painted door. Later in the novel, Mr. Franklin Blake becomes aware of the fact that Rosanna Spearman (one of the Verinders' maids) had taken and hidden the nightgown from the investigation. In both instances, the nightgown was at one point found, but was not available at the most necessary times. Collins adopted this mismanagement of the case in order to further express his claim that the professional detective was not at fault. Similarly to

Inspector Whicher, Inspector Cuff was unable to fulfill his duties as a detective due to the contamination of the crime scene. Had each individual been the first responder on the case (as Collins suggests) the results may have been drastically different.

Just as aspects of the Road Hill murder investigation were translated from fact to fiction, the Northumberland Street tragedy also inspired many of the historic allusions in Collins's *The Moonstone*. Foremost, and serving as the foundation for all the reflections the crime has in *The Moonstone*, was scene of the crime itself, and the manner in which it occurred—in an enclosed apartment building on Northumberland Street between apparent strangers. In *The Moonstone*, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite was lured into a Northumberland Street apartment "which he had never had occasion to enter before" (Collins 260) after receiving a letter from an unknown person and was attacked from behind by the three Indians in search of the Moonstone Diamond. It is interesting to note the similarities between the two: both instances involved two men meeting by chance, and for the first time; a man is unknowingly brought up to an apartment on Northumberland Street; and the same unaware man is attacked from behind. Though Mr. Ablewhite was not murdered, nor was there an attempt on his life in his first encounter with the Indian Brahmans, it is very clear that the development of *The Moonstone's* plot heavily relied upon these actual instances of criminal activity because of the questions they prompted. One of the most pressing of these in the early 1860s was exactly who was the victim and who was criminal. Interestingly, Collins's adaptation of the case in his novel begs just that question. Readers eventually discover that Mr. Ablewhite was the criminal in possession of the Moonstone Diamond (after Mr. Franklin handed it to him in an opiate induced sleepwalking incident) when Ablewhite's body is found in a hotel room on Northumberland Street. He was

attacked and killed by the three Indians who are repeatedly mentioned throughout the novel, who escaped through a trap door with the Diamond. The question that Collins's proposes to readers is who exactly was the victim in this incident? Was it the man being attacked (the same man who had been in possession of the Diamond, yet refused to disclose this vital information to anyone), or the men committing the offence (the same men who had their Diamond stolen in the first place)? Unlike the actual event, there is no side of the story presented. Instead, readers must come to their own conclusion about the guilt, placing it on either the Indians who retrieved their stolen property, or the individual who essentially created the entire Diamond theft dilemma. In this instance, as with Seegrave and Ablewhite's strategically created names, Collins is providing subtle clues for his readers about his ulterior motive for writing *The Moonstone*. Clearly, it was with intent to create a novel and gain some financial comfort, however it was also with the intent to provide readers with an opportunity to question the significant sociocultural components of the mid-nineteenth century—specifically British Imperialism, and exactly who was the victim; the British, or the native Indians?

Just as Collins tactically selected plot components for the novel, it is interesting to consider the reason in which Collins may have cleverly named the characters in *The Moonstone*, including Superintendent Seegrave and Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. Superintendent Foley is infamous for his mishandlings of the Road Hill case, and many insinuate a play on word with his name—Foley and *folly*. Perhaps Collins had a similar intent by naming the Superintendent Seegrave. Foley neglected to inform anyone about the bloody nightgown that he found (later proving to be an incomprehensibly important piece of absent evidence), and Seegrave also blundered

by not acknowledging the importance of the nightgown in *The Moonstone*. In this example, Collins strategically selected Seegrave's name by cleverly using wordplay as an insinuation as to where the nightgown was stashed—in its own grave (also proving to be Savannah Spearman's grave) in the sea.

Similarities between fact and fiction in observing *The Moonstone* are often very overt, but clearly some of the similarities are much more discrete. For instance, Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite's name is too suggestive of England's Imperial guilt to be coincidentally chosen by Collins. Ablewhite serves as the protagonist of the novel, which becomes clear in the epilogue when he is found murdered in a hotel room as a disguised sailor, but his name urges readers to observe one of Collins's major critiques on Victorian society because of name's suffix, "-white". Reflecting Collins's opinion of the treatment of Indians during the British Empire's reign, Mr. Ablewhite was ultimately the lying and sneaky culprit of the Moonstone mystery, which cleverly projects Collins's perspective upon readers of who is to blame for the brutal events leading to and after the 1858 Sepoy Uprising (which, again, will be addressed in full in the third and final part of this chapter).

The 1860s began with murder and a horrifying excitement that gripped England in a suspenseful hold. Newspapers documented events in an overly dramatic fashion, paving the way for an age of sensationalism that would persist to the publication of Wilkie Collins's serially released novel, *The Moonstone*. By drawing from such vivid memories of Victorians, Collins provided readers with a nostalgic excitement of their recent past that unfolded once again in the weekly installments of *All the Year Round*. Due to the joint involvement of the press and the detective, the combination of two terribly famous murder sensations inspired a literary sensation,

birthing the second addition to the detective fiction family years after the events.

Because of the Victorian obsession with murder, the press's ability to 'appropriately' exasperate journalistic events, and the developing professional detective figure, Collins was able to create a work of literature that served to combine sociocultural factors from seven and eight years earlier to make his début into the still expanding world of detective fiction. *The Moonstone* serves as a significant example of the influence that reality had on literature, as Collins explores the new boundaries that detective fiction was creating. Authors such as himself and Charles Adams began to demonstrate that detective fiction is not so fictional, as they deliberately included actual facets of Victorian culture (crime and scientific dilemmas of authority, respectively) in their fictional worlds. This inclusion ultimately blurred the lines between fact and fiction, and imagination and "truth" in order to establish new grounds upon which these notions could be addresses, examined, and finally separated once again.

*   *   *

Similarly to Charles Warren Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery*, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* presents readers with the occurrence of sleep walking as a significantly symbolic attribute to the novel. Baroness R** of *The Notting Hill Mystery* meets her death in the act of sleepwalking from her bedroom to the downstairs laboratory of Barron R** where she drinks a fatal poison. Her death was representative of the powers of the supernatural abilities that mesmerists, such as the Barron R**, possessed, which offers readers insight into the issues in acknowledging legitimate scientific practices. Mr. Henderson, the novel's detective figure, utilized

the scientific devices of detection in order to attempt to pin the crime on the Barron R**, but was ultimately unable to prove his guilt.

This clash between sciences is symbolic of the struggle to establish truth in the Victorian society, as faith in the power of mesmerism was the only means of convicting the criminal. Therefore, Adams put readers in the position to either discredit mesmerism and accept the death as an unfortunate accident, or to elevate the agency of tangible sciences—from detection to geology—over that of supernatural practices, essentially creating their own "truth" for the case by deeming the death as *not* accidental. While both Charles Adams and Wilkie Collins utilized sleepwalking as crucial components of the crimes they present in their novels, Collins's intent was not to depict the struggle between the supernatural and the certified sciences. Collins supported sleepwalking in *The Moonstone* with a perfectly plausible explanation: Mr. Franklin Blake was under the influence of laudanum. Instead, Collins employed sleepwalking as a means to address a social issue, generating a symbolic representation of his disapproval with imperialism.

Gaining control of the world to "spread British order and culture" (Henderson and Sharpe 1064) was, to borrow Kipling's words, perceived by many Victorians to be "the White Man's burden" (qtd, Longman 1064). Generally speaking, British ideologies of their superiority over the rest of the world were paired with decades of racism towards those under their rule, and led to an inability to see less technologically advanced peoples as anything besides in-need-of-English-aid. Queen Victoria, among other leaders of British society, justified imperialism by claiming Britain's forceful rule over dozens of countries, spanning every continent (save Antarctica) was geared toward the protection of "poor natives and [to] advance civilization" (qtd. in

Henderson and Sharpe 1063). In accord with Victoria's rationalization, Cecil Rhodes's borderline narcissistic assumption that the English "are the first race in the world, and the more of the world [they] inhabit, the better it is for the human race" (qtd. in Henderson and Sharpe 1063) exemplified British convictions that imperialism was not only necessary, but also rewarding to usurped nations.

Such beliefs, however, were not established with the intent to promote bigotry, nor did they stem from racial abhorrence. On the contrary, it was the fundamental perception that imperialism promotes modernity that initiated the British Empire. As P.J. Marshall notes in *British Empire* (1996), imperialistic movements were rooted in the notion that—regardless how biased or false their views may sound— technologically undeveloped nations *desired* intervention in order to become more modern, rationalizing the imperial domination with the assumption "that the peoples of the world all have roughly similar ambitions."[34] The theory of modernity is subjective by nature, and the British Empire correlated it directly to technological and industrial innovation. However, what began as the British Empire's goal transformed into their problem as their determination to modernize the dominated peoples coincided with the very force that is instrumental in creating a civilized body of people—culture. Ironically, it was the English advancements in technology that— combined with their failure to acknowledge the social significance of ideological and cultural import in India during the late 1850s—nearly destroyed the empire.[35]

---

[34] P.J. Marshal, ed. *British Empire.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1996. 370. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

[35] Tapan Raychaudhuri. "British Rule in India: An Assessment." *British Empire*. Ed. P.J. Marshall. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 359. Print.

Britain's driving force in this empire-building operation was to take the

world's trade market by storm, and in turn, allowed for the expansion of the British

military, as naval fleets sped up industrial productivity across borders (1063).

Growing to such an insurmountable power, however, was extremely costly, and as

Henderson and Sharpe acknowledge, the cost was often both monetary and moral.

From 1857 to 1859, the East India Company, controlling a majority of India, met

retaliation during the Sepoy Rebellion (native Indian troops under British rule that

accounted for 96% of the 300,000 British troops (Farmer, 24))—"described

inaccurately [by Victorians] as the Mutiny" (359). Initiating this rebellion was the

British failure to acknowledge Hindu and Muslim culture. As Farmer describes:

> [T]he Ordnance department in India issued cartridges for the army's
> newly acquired Enfield rifles. The cartridges, which had to be bitten
> open to be used, were heavily greased with fat from cows and pigs,
> causing tremendous problems for the Hindu and Muslim troops alike.
> Their complaints ignored, the sepoys rebelled, rampaging in certain
> military outposts, killing their British army supervisors. (Farmer 24)

As Mia Carter corroborates in *Archives of Empire* (2003), the reluctance to regard

social practices as significant was recognized as an instrumental element to the

uprising by critics of the East India Company, who "believed that British rule of India

was doomed to fail if Indian rituals and linguistic, legal, and cultural customs and

traditions were not respected."[36] Clearly, the British Empire did not collapse as a

result of this single, though traumatic, event. However, the Indian uprising of the late

1850s did send a shockwave through England that created mixed emotions for

Victorians in terms of their perspective towards imperialism.

---

[36] Barbara Harlow, and Mia Carter. *Archives of Empire Volume I: From the East India Company to the Suez Canal*. Durham: Duke UP. 2003. 391. Print.
Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

Soon after the rebellion, Victorians took a stand on either side of the bloody culture class in India. Many felt the "mutiny" was a barbaric and savage response to the British's attempts to improve their society, such as Charles Dickens who expressed his aversion towards the Indian rebels in his 1858 novella *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*. It is important to acknowledge that in some instances, the Sepoys extended beyond their attacks of British troops by killing British civilians (Farmer, 24). The murder of British civilians was a major catalyst for the disgust that was an overt theme of Dickens's novella, however not all Victorians laid blame exclusively on the Indians. In the same year as *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*, Wilkie Collins published "A Sermon For Sepoys" in Dickens's *Household Words*, six months after the rebellion, creating a short story that reflects a spiritual and philosophical allusion to Indians, which greatly contrasts with Dickens barbaric interpretation (The Victorian Web). This short story not only portrayed Indians as being philosophical and spiritual beings—a far cry from the common conception in England—but also went as far as to address the root of the issue as being the materialistic thirst of the British Empire and the result of British desire for expansion, wealth, and an affirmation of cultural supremacy. In many instances within the short piece, Collins weighs the preservation of humanity more heavily than the accumulation of material wealth. The philosophical and religious insinuations that Collins's piece is based around is an assessment of not only British rule in India, but the British Empire as a whole.

In "A Sermon for Sepoys," Collins introduces readers to an allegorical evaluation of the Empire through the admired government official, Vizir, district ruler of Morodabad, who, while in power, "was gratefully acknowledged by the people

whom he governed as the period of the most precious blessings they had ever enjoyed."[37] This can be observed as an allegory for the British Empire's opinion of themselves. As the story opens, however, Vizir requests that he be relieved of office in order to "prepare [himself] for the approach of eternity" (245), desiring to become religiously enlightened and not burdened with the meaningless monotony of leadership. The leader replies that "if [he] thought as [Vizir]…if all men capable of doing good followed [his] example, who would remain to guide the faithful?" (245). Clearly, this short story is a reflection upon the British reign over India, but Collins has adopted the inverse perspective of what many English had. In "A Sermon For Sepoys," Vizir represents the British in India, who assumed themselves as being just and well loved in their attempt to civilize India, however Collins creates an alternative scenario where the British in India—Vizir—decided to step down from power in order to lead a more fulfilling life. Vizir's leader, representing the British Empire as a whole, asks him what would happen if all good leaders attempted to follow suit and pursue such an existence. Here, Collins addresses the perspective that he implies the British Empire has, which not only rationalizes the Empire's cause, but also placed emphasis on the fact that the British Empire was fully aware of their actions and of the ever-present alternative, which was to relinquish power back to the native Indians. This was Collins's first address to the Victorian public about the events in India, and it would return a decade later with his publication of *The Moonstone.*

Material and monetary growth was one of the leading contributors to the British Empire's insatiable appetite, as British businesses aimed to control the world

---

[37] Wilkie Collins. "A Sermon For Sepoys." *Household Words Vol. XVII* 27 Feb. 1858: 244-47. *HathiTrust Digital Library*. Web. 1 Apr. 2013.

market. As Collins points out in "A Sermon For Seopys," Vizir's aim is to escape the materialistic environment he rules, presenting a "what-it" scenario to Victorian readers. This short story is effective in the sense that it begs readers to consider Indians as separate from the racial and violent stereotypes that surrounded them in England after the uprising of 1858. However, it was not until 1868 when Collins published *The Moonstone* that readers were presented with an actual representation of the British Empire and its effect, rather than an alternative scenario that aimed to lessen the raw hatred that some Victorians, such as Charles Dickens, held on Indians. *The Moonstone* presented readers with a representation of imperial guilt by juxtaposing English rule over India with the two infamous murders of the early 1860s.

India was long considered as the jewel of the British crown, which is the first instance of Collins's incorporation of material desire in *The Moonstone*. The first chapter of the novel is written by a family member of Mr. Franklin Blake, with the aim to explain the apparent theft of the Moonstone Diamond from a Hindu shrine by John Herncastle, who murders three of the gem's protectors in the process. This in turn represents the forceful and bloody acquisition of India as a whole—the Diamond itself clearly symbolic of the "jewel" of the British crown, which was acquired with the price of native blood. Collins's critique of the Empire's possession of India, however, goes much further than simple acknowledgment. By using the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street Tragedy, Collins strategically presents readers with the task of reassessing the blame for the events during and after the Sepoy Rebellion by resurrecting the crimes' revamped notion of a victim and victimizer. Each of these murders presented Victorians with unusual circumstances that Collins translated into fiction to not only address the conception of crime that was random and

able to occur within the previously assumed untouchable homes of the wealthy, but to also critique the subjective nature in which Victorian society placed blame.

The Road Hill murder of 1860 opened the door to a new wave of crime; one that was not necessarily any more dangerous than crime before the 1860s, but was less secluded. Instead of murders occurring in poor and underdeveloped parts of England, the Road Hill murder took place in the home of a wealthy factory inspector's home and was committed by one family member upon another. This incident forced Victorians to reassess their previous notion of exactly who was vulnerable to such violence. Considering the venue in which it took place, it was clear that no longer was murder an exclusively blue-collar-targeted crime. It also forced a reassessment of who a murderer could be. Preconceived stereotypes of a murderer being a disheveled adult man clashed with the realization that the criminal in this situation was a sixteen-year-old girl, the daughter of the owner of the Road Hill house. One year later, the Northumberland Street tragedy of 1861 raised another list of concerns. In this instance, the crime was committed between two complete strangers. This highlighted the random nature of violence, breaking down the notion that murder occurred with some sort of rationale. In addition, the Northumberland Street murder raised the question of the identity of the victim—was it the attacker, or the person being attacked? Because there was only one side of the story available, Victorians had no choice but to give Major Murray the benefit of the doubt—however suspicious they might have been.

In each of these occurrences, the differentiation between victim and victimizer was put under strain, blurring the lines between the two and ultimately melding the categories together. Many Victorians considered native Indians as the culprit of the

deaths that ensued from the uprising in 1858, yet Collins's use of these two murders in *The Moonstone* provided an opportunity for the public to reevaluate the circumstances from a more objective perspective, considering the Sepoy Uprising took place well before either of the murders.

In the novel, Mr. Franklin Blake's unsettled attitude toward both his and Miss Verinder's possession of the Diamond is evident through his conversations with Mr. Gabriel Betterage (the house-steward). The very night that Mr. Blake presents Miss Verinder with the Diamond, he later takes it back during his opium-induced sleepwalking incident. This scene is representative of the guilt that Mr. Blake has about the Diamond itself. In the prologue of the novel, John Herncastle was cursed by one of the dying Hindu protectors of the Moonstone, whose last words were "The moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!" (Collins, 57). After Herncastle met a mysterious death—decades after the theft—Mr. Blake was apprehensive to turn the Diamond over to anyone else, fearing that a similar fate may follow. By sleepwalking, it is clear that Mr. Blake felt subconsciously guilty about putting Miss Verinder in harm's way, exposing an important recognition. Mr. Blake—like Vizir of "A Sermon For Sepoys", who acknowledged his desire to engage in a more spiritually fulfilling lifestyle—realized that he must reclaim the Moonstone, thus accepting the "truth" that his actions were ethically wrong.

Collins utilizes this scene to be representative of the guilt that England should have about the Empire's reign on the "jewel" of the British crown. Mr. Blake's realization in *The Moonstone* is parallel with the core message that Collins presents in his allegorical short story, "A Sermon For Sepoys," as it invited Victorian readers to tread an alternative and new road; a road that urges the public to reevaluate the guilt

they placed on the native Indians after the Sepoy Uprising by accepting the "truth" that the victimizer was possibly the Empire. Collins's adaptation of a troubling awareness that the Victorian public was exposed to after the Road Hill murder forces readers to once again come to terms with the notion that a murderer (in this case, the victimizer of the deaths succeeding the Uprising) can be far outside the confines of the preconceived stereotype, blurring the lines between the victim and victimizer. Instead, as apparent with Constance Kent, a victim and victimizer can reside within the alleged sanctitude that was an English home. In addition, the Road Hill murder countered the once concrete "truth" that the wealthy were sheltered from being on either side of these blurring counterparts. In terms of the guilt of the Sepoy Uprising, Collins argues the that victimizer was not an outsider, but an insider who, as Carter points out, refused to respect native culture and traditions (392)—this insider of the quintessential English home being none other than the immensely wealthy British Empire and the English themselves who were too close to the problem to see (much less accept) the unsettling "truth."

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION: CUTTING THE CEREMONIAL RIBBON

The Moonstone has prompted extensive studies long after its publication. The novel allows researchers to consider Wilkie Collins's assessment of the British Empire, providing insight into the drastic differences in perspective that the English had towards Imperial expansion—however, the novel serves a much larger sociocultural purpose. For decades, the concept of "truth" had been an elusive notion that was being patched back together by citizens of all professions. Yet, it was importantly, writers of fiction who helped with this process. Although they were quite hands off, writers of detective fiction reminded the public that detection—the search for the truth—was nothing les than a narrative. It contained questions, searched for answers, developed characters, sought motives, and finally, assembled these components together into a coherent plot. Ultimately, these facets lined up, made sense, and revealed what truly happened within the fictional product. The paradox is that this form of closure occurred in the fictional arena. Working from behind closed doors with paper and ink, writers additionally provided the public with an alternative lifestyle by delivering these compelling narratives. On paper, issues did not seem so dire, problems were not so insurmountable, and detectives did not seem so incompetent. Though readers were not actually present in these settings, it was the simple act of reading about the progression of humanity in the right direction that prompted the popularity of detective fiction. The novels were fictional, but these stories alleviated or eased concerns about rising levels of crime in the Victorian

period. Most significantly, the novels served as a mending of perspective toward the detective figure, whose position under the scrutiny of the public created an initially unanimous disdain and distrust. Through the critiques and addresses of writers, whose social commentary demanded an alternative outlook on English life, Victorians were able to recognize their present situation as an outsider, and obtain one of the most important components of "truth's" reconstruction—peace of mind about modern cultural problems that they could not control.

The fictional detective figure's position as a discoverer of the truth had evolved dramatically from the introduction of the detective novel in 1863, and even from the rudimentary figures of the short stories published years before Mr. Henderson of *The Notting Hill Mystery.* In the second half of the nineteenth century, the professional detective had been in operation for eight years (emerging in 1842), yet inspectors were seldom popular figures on Victorian streets. As detective fiction gradually became more popular, the public's acceptance of professional detectives began to improve. Detective fiction provided Victorians with an opportunity to escape the stresses that had emerged after scientific discoveries had shaken the foundations of "truth," ultimately tearing down the preconceived notions of reality and faith, after the progression of the modern city had created problems faster than individuals were able to mend, and after the introduction of a militarized police force had seemingly stripped Londoners of their autonomy. Within the pages of detective fiction, readers were able to escape these causes of anxiety and read about—rather than live through—anonymous characters fighting through the very same issues, essentially allowing readers to live vicariously through the experiences of fictional characters in order to re-gain faith in their own safety. In other words, fiction helped them to see the world

not as chaotic, but as ordered—a place where criminals would be caught and where right prevails over wrong.

As the first chapter of this thesis acknowledged, truth's seemingly firm foundation took a traumatic hit in the first half of the nineteenth century, and then again in the early 1860s after the murders at Road Hill and Northumberland Street. Stereotypes had been shattered, leading to the blurring of lines between fact and fiction, and a challenged notion of "truth." Resulting from these situations was chaos, which, as it ensued, demanded some sort of order to reinstate the Victorian public's sense of security. Fiction was called upon to comfort anxieties surrounding actual crimes, and detective fiction came forth to fill this important role. However, it was not until many years after the introduction of the detective novel in 1863 that the genre was able to reflect from within its pages the progression from social pandemonium to stability onto the public.

Previous pieces of literature had outlined the issues of the Victorian era, such as the scientific agency concern addressed in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, which prompted an alternative look at the power of detection and deductive reasoning. *The Moonstone* reassured the public of the competence of the detective figure, while simultaneously addressing the new realities about victims and victimizers that were conjured up after the Road Hill murder and the Northumberland Street Tragedy, *and* serving as a plea to reassess the "truth" behind the Sepoy Uprising and the British Empire as a whole. These two pieces have one essential factor in common, which is their purpose. This purpose was to provide readers with an alternative perspective of their livelihood and an alternative perspective of their negative opinion about what the detective figure and his skill-set had to offer Victorian culture. However, neither

novel truly captures the progress that the public experienced from their unsettled and doubtful nature in the early years of the introduction of the professional detective to the eventual acceptance of inspectors as civil defenders and public servants. It was not until 1887 that Victorians were provided an allegory of this entire progression in—arguably—the most commonly read and studied detective figure of all time—Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle holds little significance in the minds of the contemporary public. His work has become so well known that the originator of the world's most famous detective figure has gone by the wayside. Consider these parallel instances where a piece of literature has essentially taken a course in history that leaves significant aspects of the work behind. The word "vampire" conjures up distinct stereotypical ideals that are common throughout the imaginations of many, and are also associated with one single figure—Dracula. However, one could argue that many who know what or who "Dracula" is, are likely unfamiliar with Bram Stoker or what *Dracula* (1897) is as a piece of literature. Frankenstein has become an equally popular name, and has likely inspired just as many Halloween costumes as his blood-sucking counterpart, Dracula. However, Frankenstein is commonly assumed to be synonymous with the monster, rather than the monster's creator, Victor Frankenstein. That leaves Mary Shelly—which is who? This is not a critique on the lack of familiarity with literature in contemporary society. Instead, it serves as an example of how influential certain literary characters are to a given society. Sherlock Holmes, being amongst the most well-know detective figures in history, provided Victorians with much more than an oddly interesting character whose peculiarities provide readers with amusement.

Sherlock Holmes served as the cornerstone of Doyle's fifty-six short stories, and was featured in four novels. Holmes's grandeur, however, can be observed in Doyle's first detective figure presentation, which is *A Study in Scarlet* published in 1887. This piece serves as an allegory of Victorians' eventual acceptance of the detective figure from the period in which the detective emerged as a professional to the time in which the profession was finally accepted as an important addition to Victorian culture. Most significantly, *A Study in Scarlet* proves to be an essential addition to the slowly growing acceptance of detective figures in the eye of the public as an individual whose ability to piece together the components of a crime scene comes to an eventual conclusive "truth."

As *A Study in Scarlet* begins, readers are introduced to Dr. John H. Watson, who had just returned from being a surgeon in the British Army. After searching for a new residency, Dr. Watson found himself in London, England, which he referred to as "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained."[38] This "cesspool" offered him no sure sign of an apartment, leaving him no choice but to eventually accept an offer from an old acquaintance, Stamford, who proposed that Dr. Watson meet a scientist who had just recently expressed his annoyance that he was unable to find a suitable roommate—Sherlock Holmes. The initial meeting between Dr. Watson and Holmes can be observed as a representation of the professional detective's introduction to Victorian London, which was prompted by the rise in criminal activity. London was left with no other alternative than to initiate a

---

[38] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. "A Study In Scarlet." *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* Vol. 1. Ed. Kyle Freeman. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003. 7. Print. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically.

department that essentially served to satisfy the need for societal improvement, just as Dr. Watson needed suitable lodging.

After the first weeks of living together, Dr. Watson began to express his annoyances with Holmes by transcribing Holmes's "limits" as an individual, including his "knowledge of Literature…Geology…Chemistry…[and] Philosophy" (15). All of the these "limits" produced even further frustration as Dr. Watson reflected on Holmes's random assortment of talents and lack thereof, stating, "If I can only find what the fellow is driving at by reconciling all these accomplishments and discovering a calling which needs them all…I may as well give up the attempt at once" (15). Dr. Watson's irritation with Holmes, however, was propelled into a fit of disgust upon reading an article entitled "The Book of Life." Dr. Watson's found the piece to be absurd, and expressed his reaction to be less than flattering toward the writer, as he narrates:

> …[The article] attempted to show how much an observant man might learn by an accurate and systematic examination of all that came in his way. It struck me as being a remarkable mixture of shrewdness and of absurdity. The reasoning was close and intense, but the deductions appeared to me to be far fetched and exaggerated. The writer claimed by a momentary expression, a twitch of a muscle or a glance of an eye, to fathom a man's most inmost thoughts. Deceit, according to him, was an impossibility in the case of one trained to observation and analysis. His conclusions were…infallible…So startling would his results appear to the uninitiated that until they learned the processes by which he had arrived at them they might well consider him as a necromancer. (Doyle 16-17)

Dr. Watson was later astonished to find out that it was Holmes who had written the article that prompted Watson to react in such a way. Quickly, however, Holmes was able to put his claims to the test, resulting in a dramatic reversal of Dr. Watson's perspective of his strange roommate. This scene is crucial in examining *A Study in*

Scarlet as an allegorical representation of the professional detective's introduction to Victorian society. Initially, the professional detective was met with disdain by a public body that ridiculed the figure's purpose and apparent abilities. Like Dr. Watson, Victorians observed the professional detective as absurd and ineffective. However, just as Holmes provided Dr. Watson, the professional detective would eventually display their keen abilities in observation, inquiry, and deductive reasoning as imperative to solving criminal cases. Though the short story's series of events was dramatically less extensive in terms of time duration—the introduction of Holmes and Dr. Watsons shift from disbelief to amazement taking only a few pages in comparison to the decades of slow progression for the detective—the essential point is quite similar. Doyle provides readers with a fast-paced representation of the professional detective's introduction and eventual display of competence in Victorian society.

As a whole, cohesive piece, *A Study in Scarlet* plots the series of events of Victorian culture in a remarkable way, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle provides an allegorical representation of the progression of the professional detective figure. Emerging from a war environment, Dr. John Watson is left with no other choice than to become part of a bustling and dirty city with uncertainty as to what he is to do next. This forces him to accept the accommodations of a strange, and initially disliked detective figure—one whose identity is seemingly anything but that of a detective figure, representing the breaking down of stereotypes during the nineteenth century. Dr. Watson's perspective of Holmes, doubtful of his abilities and in the ethics of his actions, is eventually reversed as Holmes displays himself as an extremely competent and capable individual. Like Victorians, the uncertainty of life was complimented with the introduction of a disliked individual. However, over the progression of time,

this individual, the detective figure, began to present the public with proof of the professional detective's ability to piece the seemingly hopeless pile of once firmly-established truth back together. The professional detective essentially mended the public's fragile sense of security as questions of trust and competence began to find positive answers. Whether or not professional detectives were able to solve complicated crimes, or if these figures were to be trusted gradually found positivity in comparison to the previous and unanimous pessimistic perspective that the public had.

After the traumatic crumbling of truth that Victorian England experienced in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was left up to the detective figure—both professional and fictional—to reconstruct the broken walls that once separated fact and fiction. "Truth" became a less daunting term as detectives' achievements began to patch back together the notions of reality, dispersing the unease and anxiety that was once so prominent. As detective fiction emerged, questions of faith, agency, and "truth" were littered throughout the pages. *The Notting Hill Mystery* in 1863 provided readers with commentary on the power of detection, and the painstaking process that detective figures underwent to find the minutest piece of the mystery's puzzle. This instilled readers with a sense of appreciation for the detectives' abilities, and began to turn the powerful tides of doubt that had kept the detective figure from being accepted by the public. Five years later, *The Moonstone* resurrected crimes that occurred in 1860 and 1861 that had shaken Victorians' notion of crimes and criminals, essentially tearing away the walls that separated victims and victimizers, leaving one ambiguous population. This fear was addressed in Collins's piece, as he sought to further improve the detective figure's image in the public. Going one step further than Charles Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery*, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* provided

a critical analysis of guilt and blame to corroborate with his address of the new "truth" behind the realities that Victorians must face in terms of crime. Finally, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presented readers with an analysis of exactly how far society had come between the introduction of the professional detective in 1842 to the presentation of the world's most loved detective figure in 1878. Within these thirty-six years, the professional detective's status as a professional figure—one who was not necessarily embraced or loved, but one who was accepted as a defender of the public—was raised dramatically. Their position as discoverers allowed them to reconstruct the previously demolished foundation and walls that separated fallacies from fact, and once the public was able to see this, detective figures were finally considered competent and were trusted in their ability to solve crimes. With the aid of detective fiction, Victorians were finally able to come to terms with their new realities, as the professional and fictional figures alike helped to reconstruct the much needed notion of "truth."

REFERENCES

Adams, Charles W. *The Notting Hill Mystery*. Ed. Mike Ashley. London, England:
    The British Library, 2012. Print.

Ashley, Mike. Introduction. *The Notting Hill Mystery.* By Charles W. Adams. 1863.
    London, England: The British Library, 2012. Print.

Altick, Richard D. *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations*. Pennsylvania:
    University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. Print.

Ashley, Robert P. "Wilkie Collins And The Detective Story." *Nineteenth-Century
    Fiction* 6.1 (1951): 47-60. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 1 Nov.
    2012.

Bacon, Sir Francis. "Of Truth." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed.
    Lawrence Lipking, and James Noggle. New York: W.W. Norton Company,
    2006. Print.

Bargainnier, Earl F. *The Gentle Art of Murder: The Detective Fiction of Agatha
    Christie.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1980. Print.

Clayton, Martin, and Bennett Zon. *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire,
    1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited,
    2007. Print.

Collins, Paul. "The Case of the First Mystery Novelist." *www.nytimes.com*. 9 Jan.
    2011. Web. 14 Jan. 2013.

Collins, Wilkie. "A Sermon For Sepoys." *Household Words Vol. XVII* 27 Feb. 1858:
    244-47. *HathiTrust Digital Library*. Web. 1 Apr. 2013.

- - -. *The Moonstone*. Ed. Steve Farmer. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1999.
    Print.

"Crime and Punishment." *The National Archives*. *n.p. n.d.* Web. 11 Nov. 2012.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "A Study In Scarlet." *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* Vol.
    1. Ed. Kyle Freeman. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003. Print.

Dickens, Charles. "A Detective Police Party." *Household Words Vol. I* (1850): 8+.
    Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Music, & Wayback Machine.
    Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

- - -. "On Duty with Inspector Field." *Household Words* III (1850): 265-70. *Internet*
    Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Music, & Wayback Machine. Web. 24
    Oct. 2012.

- - -. "The Modern Science of Thief-Taking." *Household Words* I (1850): 368-72.
    Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Music, & Wayback Machine.
    Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

- - -. "Three 'Detective' Anecdotes." *Household Words* I (1850): 576-80. *Internet*
    Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Music, & Wayback Machine. Web. 24
    Oct. 2012.

Farmer, Steve. Introduction. *The Moonstone*. By Wilkie Collins. 1868. Ontario,
    Canada: Broadview Press, 1999. Print.

Frank, Lawrence. *Victorian Detective Fiction And The Nature Of Evidence: The*
    Scientific Investigations Of Poe, Dickens, And Doyle. Basingstoke, England:
    Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.

Froude, J. A. "The Age We Live In." *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 24.
    (1841): 5. *Google Books.* Web. 9 Nov 2012.

Harlow, Barbara, and Mia Carter. *Archives of Empire Volume I: From the East India*
    Company to the Suez Canal. Durham: Duke University Press. 2003. Print.

Haycraft, Howard. *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*.
    New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946. Print.

Henderson, Heather, and William C. Sharpe. "The Victorian Age." *The Longman*
    Anthology of British Literature. Vol. 2B. Ed. David Damrosch, et al. United
    States: Pearson Longman, 2012. 1049-73. Print.

"Historical Overview of London Population." *London Online.* CSC, 1996. Web. 8
    Nov. 2012.

Hitchcock, Tim., Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, "The Bow Street Runners",
    London Lives, 1690-1800. N.p., Apr. 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

Holland, Sir Henry. "The Progress and Spirit of Physical Science." *Edinburgh and*
    Quarterly Reviews (July 1858): 1. *Google Books.* Web. 9 Nov. 2012.

Landow, George P. The Victorian Web. N.p., 15 Jan. 2006. Web. 16 Apr. 2006.

Marshal, P.J., ed. *British Empire.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.

"Multiple News Items." *The Morning Post* 10 Jul. 1860: 4. Gale. Web. 28 Jan. 2013. <http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.nss.udel.edu/bncn/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=DateAscend&prodId=BNCN&tabID=T012&subjectParam=Locale%2528en%252C%252C%2529%253ALQE%253D%2528da%252CNone%252C8%252918600710%253AAnd%253ALQE%253D%2528jn%252CNone%252C14%2529%2522Morning%2BPost%2522%2524&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchId=R4&displaySubject=&searchType=PublicationSearchForm&currentPosition=34&qrySerId=Locale%28en%2C%2C%29%3ALQE%3D%28da%2CNone%2C8%2918600710%3AAnd%3ALQE%3D%28jn%2CNone%2C14%29%22Morning+Post%22%24&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&subjectAction=DISPLAY_SUBJECTS&inPS=true&userGroupName=udel_main&sgCurrentPosition=0&contentSet=LTO&&docId=&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=&relevancePageBatch=R3213133731&contentSet=BNCN&callistoContentSet=BNCN&docPage=article&hilite=y>.

OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 3 April 2013.

Raychaudhuri, Tapan. "British Rule in India: An Assessment." *British Empire*. Ed. Marshal. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 357-369. Print.

Rzepka, Charles J. *Detective Fiction*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2005. Print.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 2005. Print.

OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 3 April 2013.

Segal, Nancy L. *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us About Human Behavior*. New York: Dutton, 1999. Print.

Shpayer-Makov, Haia. "Journalists And Police Detectives In Victorian And Edwardian England: An Uneasy Reciprocal Relationship." *Journal Of Social History* 42.4 (2009): 963-987. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 24 Oct. 2012.

- - -. *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

Sims, Michael. Introduction. *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime: Forgotten Cops and Private Eyes from the Time of Sherlock Holmes*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.

Summerscale, Kate. *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: A Shocking Murder and the Undoing of a Great Victorian Detective.* New York: Walker & Company, 2008. Print.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder; From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History.* London, England: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972. Print.

The Purdue OWL. Purdue University Writing Lab, 2010. Web. 14 Nov. 2012.

Thomas, Ronald R. *Detective Fiction And The Rise Of Forensic Science*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.

Winter, Alison. *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. Print.

Wright, Willard Huntington. "S.S. Van Dine Sets Down Twenty Rules for Detective Stories." *The American Magazine* Sep. 1928: 129-131. Print.

Young, John. "Lecture XXXVIII: Truth." *Lectures on Intellectual Philosophy.* Ed. William Cairns. Glasgow, Scotland: John Reid & Company, 1835. 376-85. Print.