

**‘The much-dreaded but little-known people called Female Detectives’: A selective study in detection of amateur and professional female sleuths prowling the 1860s.**

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks and wholehearted appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Carolyn Oulton, for her useful support and continued guidance during the dissertation research.

## Author Declarations

I hereby declare that the present work is the result of my own individual research and effort and that I have written it myself. The material included in this dissertation has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than for which it is submitted now. All elements borrowed from other writers are given their due credit.

Michèle Muller

January 2018

**Michèle Muller**  
**Professeur-candidate**  
**Lycée technique agricole**

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**Ettelbrück, 2018**

## Abstract

This *travail de candidature* investigates female detectives – both amateur and professional - in the works of (mainly) mid-Victorian authors. The overall goal of the study is not only to generate critical and popular interest in these works and the genre of crime fiction, but also to portray these female sleuths as unique and intriguing characters. These first female investigators went against the grain of the ‘Angel of the House’ – the standard ideology of the model mid-Victorian woman.

This study is unique as it spans several genres (Gothic, sensation and detective writing) to trace the history of the first female investigators in literature. Most studies deal either with the history of the detective genre as a whole - in so doing neglect other still significant works; or investigate female detectives in a feminist light – thereby starting their investigations with the rise of the ‘New Woman’ at the *fin-de-siècle*; or concentrate on female Victorian writers and their detectives - thus ignoring male authors and a multitude of fictional detectives. However, this study brings all these different strands together to advance expertise in a variety of fields such as class, nationality, setting and the professionalism of these early ladylike detectives, allowing for a new perspective. This dissertation gains new insights into areas otherwise overlooked or disregarded by scholars who adopt a pure feminist or historical approach.

Using a close-reading methodology and illustrating fictional aspects within the cultural, political or ideological context of the time, the dissertation recovers, on the one hand, forgotten works by various authors (male and female) and, on the other hand, examines well-known works from a new perspective (by exploring the female investigator in a variety of works). As such, this study furthers advance in the canon of academic work in the mid-Victorian period as it depicts how these works were influenced by earlier writings and in turn fashioned later works. More precisely, the focus period of this thesis are the interim years between two better-known periods.

The first part of the dissertation quickly sketches the origins of the detective genre via the Newgate Calendar, Newgate Novels, Casebook Novels and Edgar Allen Poe. Secondly, the study analyses examples of female amateur investigators in Gothic and sensation fiction. Furthermore, the paper looks at the first oeuvres, Andrew Forrester’s *The Female Detective* (1864) and William Stephens Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864), portraying professional female detectives. The conclusion summarises the main points of this study, compares the detectives (male/female, professional/amateur) stating their similarities and differences, and places them within the mid-Victorian socio-political and cultural landscape. Finally, the study demonstrates the legacy of these works.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	2
Author Declarations.....	2
Abstract.....	4
1 Introduction .....	7
1.1 General Introduction .....	7
1.2 Theoretical Basis and Methodology .....	9
1.3 The Female Detective? .....	18
1.4 Outline .....	23
1.5 Thesis Statement .....	25
2 The Socio-Cultural and Political Context of Investigating Crime Pre-1860 .....	27
2.1 The Bow Street Runners and Newgate Calendar Influences .....	27
2.2 The Metropolitan Police and the Newgate Novels .....	31
2.3 The Press and Semi-Fictional Memoirs.....	33
2.4 The Detective Police, Male Detectives and Press Coverage .....	38
3 Female Amateur Detectives in Gothic and Sensation Fiction.....	55
3.1 Gothic Novels .....	55
Ann Radcliffe's <i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i> (1794).....	57
Jane Austen's <i>Northanger Abbey</i> (1818) .....	60
Charlotte Bronte's <i>Jane Eyre</i> (1847) .....	64
Gothic Influences .....	69
3.2 Sensation Novels.....	70
Wilkie Collins' <i>The Diary of Anne Rodway</i> (1856).....	76
Wilkie Collins' <i>The Woman in White</i> (1860).....	81
Mary Elizabeth Braddon's <i>Eleanor's Victory</i> (1863) .....	86
Richard Doddridge Blackmore's <i>Clara Vaughan</i> (1864) .....	92
Sensation's Influences .....	96
4 Female Professional Detectives of the 1860s.....	99
4.1 The Basis for Female Detectives .....	99
4.2 The Authors .....	105
Andrew Forrester.....	105
William Stephens Hayward.....	107

4.3	Context and Publication History .....	108
4.4	Narrative Perspectives .....	112
4.5	Andrew Forrester's <i>The Female Detective</i> (1864).....	114
	Miss Gladden - The Detective.....	114
	Position in Society.....	117
	Appearance, Human Traits, Capabilities.....	120
	Class, Gender and the Setting of the Stories .....	124
	Miss Gladden's Cases .....	126
4.6	William Stephens Hayward's <i>Revelations of a Lady Detective</i> (1864).....	137
	Mrs Paschal - The Detective .....	137
	Position in Society.....	139
	Appearance, Human Traits, Capabilities.....	141
	Class, Gender and the Setting of the Stories .....	146
	Mrs Paschal's Cases .....	149
4.7	The 1860s Professional Female Detective .....	160
5	Conclusion.....	169
5.1	Interregnum Years? - No .....	169
5.2	Legacy.....	174
	Works Cited.....	189

# 1 Introduction

‘I think a woman is more likely to be successful in a thing of this sort, because men are thrown off their guard when they see a petticoat.’

Colonel Warner to Mrs Paschal (Hayward *Lady* 63)<sup>1</sup>

‘This was the state of things which I, as a detective, had a right to set right, and this was the work I intended to complete.’

Miss Gladden (Forrester *Female* 55)<sup>2</sup>

## 1.1 General Introduction

Merja Mäkinen writes in *Feminist Popular Fiction*:

there are two standard assumptions about detective fiction, that it is a male-based genre because of its ratiocinating puzzle-solving element, and that it is an inherently conservative genre because its resolution involves the reinstatement of a hierarchical status quo. Both assumptions are challenged by a detailed look at the history of the genre. (92)

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity’s sake, all references to William Stephens Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Lady* [page].

<sup>2</sup> For simplicity’s sake, all references to Andrew Forrester’s *The Female Detective* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Female* [page].

As such today's academia challenges the more traditional views that the genre is male and conservative. LeRoy Lad Panek explains the history of detective fiction: 'there are plenty of dark spaces in between all of the big names, and too often the impulse is to simply do them off as negligible and to assume that nothing really new or important happened in the interstices between all of the famous writers' (*Origins* 1). However, these dark spaces are interesting when it comes to writing a fuller history of the genre, allowing these lesser-known works to come to the forefront and show their importance in a wider scheme. Recent research advocates for the reworking of forgotten or neglected words. Yet, only a few scholars venture those grounds. Furthermore, Julian Symons in *Bloody Murders* points out that 'historians of the detective story have been insistent that it is a unique literary form, distinct from the crime or mystery story, not to be confused with the police novel, and even more clearly separate from the many varieties of thriller' (13). Symons studies later developments; however, the genre developed out of other traditions, feeding on fact and fiction, and merging various previous strands of literature. After all, female investigators, albeit all over today's pages and screens, are still regarded a rarity or oddity when it comes to the nineteenth century. Dorothy L. Sayers famously wrote in *The Omnibus of Crime* (1928):

There have ... been a few women detectives, but on the whole, they have not been very successful. [To] justify their choice of sex, they are obliged to be so irritatingly intuitive as to destroy that quiet enjoyment of the logical which we look for in our detective reading. (58-59)

As late as 1928, Sayers maintains that a 'really brilliant woman detective' (357) was yet to be created. Sayers acknowledges a gap in the study of literature; however, it is not that female detectives have not been created, they merely have not been thoroughly studied yet.



The following thesis aims to show that detective fiction<sup>3</sup> is not a conservative male domain and attempts to fill those gaps to a certain degree. Furthermore, it shows how the genre emerged from other traditions and how these fed the development of detective fiction in a variety of ways. The easiest way to attack these ‘problems’ is to look at the first female detectives in history, more specifically in the 1860s and their evolution leading up to that period.

## 1.2 Theoretical Basis and Methodology

The last thirty years have seen an increase in academic interest in detective fiction and writings which have crime as part of their (sub-)plots. However, Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle still take centre-stage in most critical Victorian studies, whereas other best-selling authors of the era are only slowly rediscovered today. A significant number of studies deal with the history of the detective genre as a whole; the focus of their works being male-orientated and concentrating on early male professional detectives (Knight *Crime*, Panek *Holmes*, Rzepka). Others investigate female detectives in a feminist light – thereby starting their investigations with the rise of the ‘New Woman’ at the *fin-de-siècle* (Reddy, Klein); or concentrate on female Victorian writers and their detectives - thus ignoring male authors and a multitude of female fictional detectives (Kungl, Watson). The reason for this disjuncture might lay in the fact that these scholars all use different literary theories in their investigations. This study attempts to bring all these different strands together; using the first part of the 1860s as a point of reference.

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<sup>3</sup> For simplicity’s sake, the term detective (synonymous with sleuth, investigator) will be used throughout even if the detectives work in an amateur capacity. Furthermore, this study uses the more neutral term of detective fiction or detective story even if it carries ambiguity, as Martin Priestman has correctly pointed out: “‘detective’ can be read as a noun or an adjective, thereby one can read it as fiction that detects or fiction with a detective in it” (*Fiction* 3). Therefore, the whole process of semantics has to be treated in a similar vein as the genre itself, in an adaptable and nebulous way to resonate with the frequent changes within the genre.

The 1860s are an interesting point in time for tracing criminal investigations, as they are almost twenty years after Poe established the genre, and also twenty years before Doyle created the iconic character of Sherlock Holmes. The period of the 1860s until the 1880s has been seen by some scholars as the ‘interregnum years’ (Symons 75) of crime fiction, as no further developments were apparently accomplished during this time. Kate Watson defines it as ‘a vacuous space; viewed in this light, women are doubly elided’ (5). George N. Dove explains, ‘the term detective story ... [as referring] to the kind of narrative originated by Poe in the Dupin stories, further developed and enriched by Doyle in the Sherlock Holmes stories, and later modified in the novels of Hammett and Chandler’ (10). However, the 1860s were important for the emancipation of women as bills were discussed and voted to give women more rights, and first attempts were made to change the highly conservative social order. The period under investigation was also one notable for its scientific changes. Even though the early to mid-Victorians were still a long way from the forensic science of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, first steps were undertaken all along. Finally, the 1860s also marked an end to early police reforms and the public’s dissatisfaction with them; since 1829, it had been a slow process of experiment, debate and compromise that ended only in the late 1850s. The 1860s are regarded as a more tranquil decade, following the upheaval of the previous ones. Therefore, the time span of this study allows for a thorough investigation into the early writings on crime with female investigators and their position within society as well as the general social condition of England and its people.

As early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did writers try to enhance the image of crime fiction which had previously been regarded as low brow, too popular and not in the least academic. G. K. Chesterton, famous for his fictional priest-detective Father Brown, writes in ‘A Defence of Detective Stories’ (1901) that even though:

it must be confessed that many detective stories are as full of sensational crime as one of Shakespeare’s plays, ... the first essential value of the detective story lies in this – that it is the

earliest and only form of popular literature in which is expressed some sense of the poetry of modern life. (118)

Cecil Chesterton, G.K.'s younger brother, in 'Art and the Detective' complements by stating that 'the detective or mystery story need not, of course, be primarily concerned with detectives' (505). He continues that an array of people can engage in the business of detection if there is a mystery at the core of the story, which is resolved satisfactorily in the end. He concludes, 'in an ideal detective story all the clues to the true solution ought to be there from the first, but so overlaid as to pass unnoticed' (506). He is also one of the first to mention gender: 'I fancy that the two faculties which the great Sherlock declared to be the prime necessities of a detective, observation and deduction, are feminine rather than masculine faculties' (508). Burton Egbert Stevenson summarises:

the detective story has always been held to be a man's story rather than a woman's. But times change; and women, certainly, are changing with them. They are still creatures of the emotions, and no doubt always will be, but they are coming to have their moments of intellectual detachment. Also, they no longer faint at the sight of blood. (49)

The two following decades engaged in discussions as to what a detective story was, and were spent on coming up with precise rules. These rules, however, were elaborated in hindsight, and forgot the earliest creations, apart from Poe. These rules defined patterns in detective stories that had to be incorporated and attempted to structure the tales in a specific fashion<sup>4</sup>. In contrast, Edmund Wilson in his 'Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?' attacked the genre in 1945, feeding the long debate of the value of crime stories. Lovers of the genre felt at times apologetic and guilty about their taste; while high-brow scholars fought hard to undermine efforts to allow popular literature in modern

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<sup>4</sup> Especially the British Detection Club, a society frequented by Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, G.K. Chesterton, E. C. Bentley and Ronald Knox, came up with 10 precise rules in *Ten Commandments for Detective Fiction*. S. S. Van Dine published his 20 rules in 1928 in *The American Magazine*.

culture to gain in status. This might be a reason why so much early detective fiction has been lost. Lilian Nayder summarises the latest discussions:

Long considered a suspect literary subgenre by scholars and critics – a low-brow form associated with the even more disreputable subgenre of sensation fiction – Victorian detective fiction has found its advocates in recent years, thanks largely to changes in the field of literary studies and in our understanding of literary value. (186)

However, the various strands of theory allow for very different outcomes in investigations and interpretations.

The importance of the genre can no longer be ignored. Poststructuralists, such as Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin, assign great importance to the socio-cultural context of the genre's development. They analysed the literary field to show that certain concepts and ideas often taken for granted are in fact the products of institutions, disciplines and power relations. For example, to them, the establishment of the police force in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a crucial factor in shaping the literary outpour. According to Heta Pyrhönen, 'detective narratives [become] parables of the modern policing power, which comes to rely less on spectacular displays of repressive force than on intangible discursive networks of self-regulating discipline' (*Mayhem* 95-96)<sup>5</sup>. As such, the Victorians could not escape the society they lived in, the knowledge and power that surrounded them, shaped them, propelled them further and these tendencies found their way into literature for scholars to depict. On the one hand, 'the [poststructuralist] discourse on detective fiction discarded the sensational lineage of the new genre, grounding its literary status on its association with scientific method and highbrow literature' (Ascari 1). On the other hand, poststructuralists allow looking at matters that are not directly uttered in dialogue, thereby showing what lies hidden beneath the apparent surface.

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<sup>5</sup> Pyrhönen is here drawing on Miller's *The Novel and the Police*.

From a historical standpoint, the genre was given rigid rules by looking at the interplay between literary texts and their contexts. As such, literature becomes a playing field of debate and contest looking at the relation between texts and socio-political contexts. In their attempt to define the genre, by adopting hindsight, academics mostly started with Poe, moved over Collins and ended with Doyle. Lesser-known writers, both male and female, were often ignored, as historicists often only look at a selection of 'histories.' Martin Priestman, in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, acknowledges that the genre is not 'a fixed set of rules' but an interplay of different strands that come together. As such, the evolution of crime stories should be regarded as an evolution in hybridity or as Patrick Brantlinger terms it, 'a genre, ... is in itself a mixture of sometimes contradictory forms, styles, and conventions' (3). Furthermore, Joseph A. Kestner's *Sherlock's Sisters* traces the female professional detective. He hints at the 'woman question' and property laws of married women. He regards these early female sleuths as 'fantasy,' introducing elements of the male gaze and rules of patriarchy. The notion of hybridity and the position of women within society will be further explored in this study.

In the 1980s and 90s, detective fiction became the focus of feminist investigations. These scholars analyse how women are represented in literary texts, investigate a female literary tradition and decipher if there is a form of writing that is uniquely feminine. They focus on the presence or absence of female figures and analyse how they are constructed within a patriarchal society. The recovery and appraisal of women writers are important to complete various genres' canons. Feminist scholars have actively worked against literature to be perceived as an all-male affair. Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) is a study that brought more than 200 largely forgotten British female novelists back into public view, among which some can be found who engaged in detection. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000) also deserves attention as it offers a rereading of nineteenth-century literature against Victorian expectations and notions of femininity – a woman was either an 'angel in the

house' or a 'madwoman.' They leave much space for a grey zone in which females were a bit of both. Maureen T Reddy explains: 'Feminism asserts that women may indeed be different from men, but that few of these differences are biologically determined and that different ought not to be used as a code word for lesser. [She] places women's experiences at the centre' (9).

Finally, detective fiction has been linked to psychoanalysis. Scholars still consider the life of an author as significant in understanding literary texts, basing their assumptions on a writer's mind, psychic condition and hidden motives for writing. As such literary art becomes a form of expressing repressed desires that only come to the forefront in an author's work. From its earliest methodological intervention, detective fiction was under investigation. For instance, Dennis Porter in *The Pursuit of Crime* describes the structural and thematic parallels between detection and psychoanalysis. As part of this strand of interpretation, nineteenth-century female investigators are often regarded as a threat to the social order. For example, Marie Bonaparte, in her extensive three-volume study on Edgar Allan Poe (1934), interprets his tales against his childhood experiences and sexuality. Moreover, early female detectives are interpreted as if they want to turn into men, as some psychoanalysts claim, and are in open competition with their male counterparts. The role of intuition, education and woman as woman are part of this investigation to see how female detectives operate in their sphere. Furthermore, the dissimilar roles they occupy ranging from role model to failed protagonist are studied.

This study is a blend of all the above theories. In itself, it is an investigation in hybridity, allowing to connect various strands when necessary, in the same vein as the genre is a hybrid of different influences. As such, the individual detective comes first and foremost and is regarded as an individual human being. The female investigator is at the heart of this study, but she can occupy separate roles and her representation is studied. The study does not concentrate on a single type of women, but incorporates conservative and modern women, victims, helpers, perpetrators, and investigators alongside. As such, new connections can be drawn especially concerning the relationship between men and

women within a social and political context. Not only their successes are studied but also failures in investigation. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gaps left by more one-sided theoretical approaches, allowing for a wider angle to tackle the texts by analysing textual pointers. Finally, it opens additional territory, seeks new connections and shows a more complete picture of a particular era.

Furthermore, the dissertation mainly concentrates on writings deriving from Great Britain. Even if ‘crime fiction developed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, around the world, ... more than ever before, there [was] the need for some expert to navigate this mysterious world, identify these strange people and bring some form to order’ (Knight *Crime* 18). The development of the genre was not done in a straight line and this study tries to highlight some of the steps taken, by adopting a close-reading strategy, like Martin Kayman’s *From Bow Street to Baker Street*, though different sources are consulted. Moreover, carefully selected gothic, sensational and detective fiction is contextualised to counteract the normative and at times restrictive views on the genre. Foreign sources are only analysed if they have a direct influence on British writing, for example, Edgar Allan Poe or François Vidocq. There are assorted reasons for such an approach. Initially, even though the emergence of detectives in the UK and the US roughly coincided with the establishment of a police force, the socio-historical factors shaping these two nations soon meant that the literary outpour took on slightly different directions. Firstly, in Britain, detectives remained with the police, whereas, in the United States detectives became more quickly independent and privatised their profession<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, public opinion towards the detective varied greatly: in the UK, they were initially regarded with disdain, whereas in America, the sleuths almost immediately gained public approval. Similarly, French writings following the aftermath of Vidocq’s have been eliminated from this study, as the public views on detectives, the police and the political landscape were very different to the UK. In a similar light, detective fiction coming from countries such as

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account of these differences, see: Gill & Hart 631-634.

Australia, Germany or Italy have not been considered to allow for a specific study of the interregnum years in the UK.

Even though scholars like Ian Ousby and John Scaggs have attempted to trace the origins of crime and detective fiction as far as the Bible and ancient Greece, these investigations are not detective fiction even in their loosest form. These stories only become crime stories if one element is taken out and analysed on its own, but the stories do not work within detective fiction in their entirety. For example, Scaggs analyses the story of 'Daniel and the Priests of Bel,' and writes:

[It] is an early prototype of the 'locked-room mystery', in which the priests of Bel claim that the statue of the Dragon of Bel eats and drinks the offerings that are made to him, while, in fact, they enter the temple by a secret entrance and, ... consume the offerings themselves. Daniel scatters ashes on the floor of the temple before it is locked and sealed, and the footprints left by the priests prove their guilt. (8)

Although Daniel uses his analytical skills to analyse the mystery and detect who enters the temple, the biblical story's message is to repress the worship of idols. The actual crime is merely a tool to teach religious followers. Therefore, the readers of such stories do not read them for pleasure or excitement, but for moral gratification<sup>7</sup>.

Scaggs writes on the revenge tragedy of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period that '[it] is situated at the cusp of the Enlightenment, and is structured by the overriding imperative of restoring the social order, as embodied in the act of revenge' (11). The repetitious injury and retribution create a narrative in which justice and order superficially prevail. The criminals are punished and are haunted by their wrongdoings. However, revenge is not justice; punishment is not detection. To carry out revenge, these characters

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<sup>7</sup> Another story that is mentioned by the same scholars is 'Susanna and the Elders.' It too could be read as having an investigator (Daniel) who attempts to solve a crime (Susanna's presumed adultery) to bring about justice. Via Daniel's questioning and the elders contradictory account of the tree, Daniel manages to exonerate Susanna. This story's message is about the triumph of virtue, not about crime or justice.



must resort to unjust methods in their attempt to restore order. Furthermore, these tragedies work on the basis that revenge is imperative as justice alone cannot beat criminality. Commenting on a different strand of literature of this era, Knight writes: ‘A popular form was the *cony-catching pamphlet*, describing neat ways of picking pockets or cheating at dice, even elaborate[ing on] instruments used for stealing goods through windows,’ and continues, ‘this interest in a range of crime, fatal or not, continued right through 19<sup>th</sup> century crime fiction, but the crucial feature of these early stories is that none of them includes anyone who could be described as a detective’ (*Crime* 3, 4). Even though these criminals eventually met a bad end, order and justice are only superficially achieved. Therefore, these stories were disregarded for this study as they mostly rely on divine guidance to expose the culprits’ guilt. Punishment and public execution represent the climax of these stories and there is no hint of a detection process or a figure acting in a detective-like capacity.

Furthermore, numerous 19<sup>th</sup>-century female sleuths had to be taken out of this study for various reasons. First, the selection process only allowed for female protagonists engaging in detection; therefore, at large, all minor characters were eliminated. Secondly, as the main period of investigation is the 1860s, the study only uses earlier works to highlight changes in literature. Thirdly, the study concentrates only on distinct genres when it comes to its female investigators, such as Gothic, sensation and casebook novels. Even though the 1860s have an abundance of females engaging in detection, this case study could only retain a handful due to its limited scope. Wilkie Collins’ *No Name* or Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* could also have been incorporated in this study. After all, this study proposes a case study analysis of individual works and does not strive to give a full account of the mid-Victorian century.

Finally, this study is a blend of different literary strands to fill the gaps left by previous scholarship. It allows for new connections between previously studied works, sheds new light on female investigators and concentrates on experiences and motives of these female investigators in a variety of roles. Well-known works are analysed in a more

thematic close-reading approach, whereas lesser-known works are analysed in a more chronological order to help the reader discover and understand the texts.

### 1.3 The Female Detective?

Defining the genre is difficult. It becomes even more problematic as this thesis analyses a genre that was not as yet born before the majority of the discussed works were published. Even if the term ‘detective’ first appeared in a British legal journal in 1843 (two years after Poe created Dupin), it does not mean that the public had a full understanding of detectives<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, there is today an abundance of different definitions that describe or discriminate the genre. Finally, the notion of the female detective compared to the male detective is often forgotten in 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholarship.

The *Merriam Webster's Encyclopaedia of Literature* acts as a starting point to define the detective story and its elements:

Type of popular literature dealing with the step-by-step investigation and solution of a crime, usually murder. The traditional elements of the detective story are: (1) the seemingly perfect crime; (2) the wrongly accused suspect at whom circumstantial evidence points; (3) the bungling of dim-witted police; (4) the greater powers of observation and superior mind of the detective; and (5) the startling and unexpected denouement, in which the detective reveals how he or she has ascertained the identity of the culprit. Detective stories frequently operate on the principle that superficially convincing evidence is ultimately irrelevant. (320)

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<sup>8</sup> The noun was originally short for *detective policeman*, from an adjectival use of the word in the sense ‘serving to detect’. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, ‘detect’ derives from Latin ‘detectus’, the past participle of ‘detegere’ meaning uncover or expose and was already in use in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

This definition is problematic in that it already establishes detective fiction as a popular genre. It gives a rather restrictive list of elements that this type of story should have and at its core a ‘perfect crime.’ The definition further assumes that the police are always involved, but that the detective takes centre-stage. Finally, it equates crime fiction with murder. However, a lot of crime does not necessarily involve murder, since numerous stories deal with theft, kidnapping, or mayhem. Furthermore, the plot structure does not necessarily work within this frame, which is especially true for the early stories.

Other scholars have used Poe’s short stories as a basis for defining the genre and its formula. According to Panek:

this formula includes: (1) the surprise ending; (2) the presentation within the body of the story of all or most of the facts which explain the surprise – or give the illusion of having done so, and (3) the manipulation of narrative elements – plot, point of view, tone, etc. – so as to obscure the facts and make the surprise possible. This is the pattern invented by Poe, domesticated by Doyle, applied to the triple-decker by Collins, and introduced to the twentieth century by E. C. Bentley. (*Introduction* 10)

Panek puts more weight on the elements of surprise and fact than *Merriam Webster*. The scholar emphasises the narrative schema to create suspense in the story by making distinct narrative elements the distinguishing factor.

So far, all of the definitions include two elements: a crime solved by an investigator and the treatment of such crime. However, having these two elements in a story does not automatically make it a crime story. Therefore, the secret lies in the structure of the narration. Pyrhönen in ‘Detective Fiction’ explains:

usually, the consequences of a crime are revealed well before the events that led up to it become known. This situation structures detective fiction – but backwards: the plot aims at establishing a linear, chronological sequence of events that will eventually

explain its own baffling starting point. ... The detective's reconstruction of the past includes the analysis of the human interactions leading to the crime. ... The backward construction of plot depends on a narrative presentation in which the story of the investigation embeds the story of a crime that has supposedly taken place prior to the beginning of the investigation. ... The desire to find out 'whodunit' combined with the suspension of the answer act together as the structuring force of plot. (103-104)<sup>9</sup>

The detective is implored to restore social order at the end of the story. Albert D. Hutter complements by stating, 'detective fiction involves the transformation of a fragmented and incomplete set of events into a more ordered and complete understanding' (191). As such the story of the investigation has to be presented orderly, allowing the reader to follow the methodical steps in the investigation, which is followed by the restoration of order. P.D. James in *Talking about Detective Fiction* is more open in her approach. She writes:

for a book to be described as detective fiction there must be a central mystery, and one that by the end of the book is solved satisfactorily and logically, not by good luck or intuition, but by intelligent deduction from clues honestly if deceptively presented. (10)

James continues, 'the central mystery of the detective story need not indeed involve a violent death' (11). More so, Sally Munt acknowledges that 'a genre is a dynamic paradigm, dependent on definitions which change over time, a cultural code in which meanings are consistently contested' and continues that 'the historic moment is an important aspect in understanding the appearance of a literary form which has managed

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<sup>9</sup> This definition strongly echoes Tzvetan Todorov's clarification on the structure of the detective novel. He suggests that there is not a single story but actually two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. He adds 'the first story, that of the crime, ends before the second story begins' (228). Todorov further suggests that the detective story is dependent on the reader's curiosity of, on the one hand, following a logical puzzle, and on the other hand, experiencing pleasure.

to be both comforting and challenging to readers' (201). Therefore, the mystery that is not necessarily murder comes to the forefront, and Munt allows for shifting definitions depending on the period of investigation. The definitions and their rules that can be applied to one set of literature deriving from a particular era cannot necessarily work to analyse literature from a different timespan. Furthermore, the time when these stories were written is important, according to Munt, as it sets them within a particular socio-cultural context. Thus, adopting a set of rules created in the 1920s makes it difficult to analyse stories predating the 1860s.

Some of these Victorian mysteries do not allow the reader to solve the mystery alongside the detective. George Grella explains:

the reader seldom possesses the detective's exotic knowledge and superior reason, the important clues often mean little to him. Since he doesn't know the killing distance for a South American blowgun, ... or the effects of an English summer on the process of rigor mortis, he cannot duplicate the sleuth's conclusions. (31)

Nevertheless, this kind of story was interesting to the Victorian masses interested in scientific advance. Modern readers can, of course, apply hindsight and their more advanced knowledge when reading these early literary ventures. As such, any willing reader can experience pleasure, desire, excitement in all accounts surrounding crime. However, the motivations for reading these texts may vary depending on the genre, the socio-political landscape, date of publication and time of reading. Over the course of a century, the spotlight changed from criminals and their lawbreaking to the process of investigation. The reader's mind shifted similarly. Furthermore, contemporary readers can draw parallels between different genres, and exert expertise and knowledge in their reading experience. Knowing a well-established genre, in this case detective fiction, also allows modern readers to interpret Gothic and sensation fiction differently, thereby shifting focus to its potential female investigators.

A final complication arises: all of the above-mentioned definitions are male-centred and analyse the history of detective fiction in a masculinist perspective, defining sleuths through conventions that are inherently masculine. These include rationality, intellect, arrogance, and aloofness, more so as Sherlock Holmes has become such a domineering figure in the public's mind. In these definitions, the idea that a detective could possibly be female is overlooked, omitted from consideration or treated as if all detectives are de facto male. However, the notion of female intuition, gossip to extract information from witnesses, failures and successes, or the visibility/obscurity of female detectives remains to be investigated more fully. Combining these different ideas, a fuller and more complete description of the female sleuth might emerge.

In *The Female Investigator*, Lisa M. Dresner labels her 'Introduction' 'the mystery of the missing theory' (1) and decries its lack when analysing female detectives in literary crime fiction, especially in mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. Even though she publicly acknowledges the lack, she does not propose a definition. Moreover, the authors of the three most important studies on female detective fiction do not seek to theorize the genre (Reddy, Klein and Munt) or define what a female sleuth is. As there is no definite definition on female detectives, this study proposes to investigate:

women who engage in detecting crime, apparent crimes,  
mysterious settings or events on a semi-regular as well as regular  
basis with or without seeking compensation for their efforts,  
working either in their own interests or in a more official capacity.

Each sleuth under investigation has carefully been selected against this definition and analysed in its light as the following pages will show. The female detectives are studied, by doing recovery work and using a close-reading methodology, but their standing in society, interaction with other figures and questions of professionalism are also examined within a wider hybrid context.

## 1.4 Outline

The following chapter outlines the direct influences of investigating crime and reactions against it – via the Newgate Calendar, Newgate Novels, Eugène François Vidocq's *Mémoires* (1829/30) and famous male detectives at the time, namely Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. These writings often deal with crime that happened outside the sanctity of the home, but started to bring crime into the home. People were fascinated by reading about these crimes and their, at times highly fictionalised, renderings. Thus, the ever-increasing reading public needed more diverse writings and as such allowed authors to become more creative in the process. Furthermore, there was a shift in readers' expectations: from the romanticised 'villain' to the hero 'investigator'. Finally, the real-life context of the era is scrutinised, taking a more profound look at the police, their work and responsibilities at the time.

Chapter Three looks at indirect influences originating from Gothic fiction – Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848) –; that became an integral part of sensation fiction – Wilkie Collins's *The Diary of Anne Rodway* (1856) and *The Woman in White* (1859/60), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Eleanor's Victory* (1863) and Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *Clara Vaughan* (1864). These books are explored in terms of their female investigators, their criminal investigations, and their overall context. Brantlinger defines the sensation novel as follows: 'it deals with crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes of bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings' (1), thereby echoing many of the ingredients of classic Gothic fiction. Even though women were often portrayed as the perpetrators of crime or victims in sensation fiction, this genre also brought to light a new type of woman, namely the female sleuth ready to investigate a crime to defend a loved one. Some of the above female detectives fail in their investigations as they are unable to pursue the opportunities for detection that arise, while others make conscious steps towards unravelling a mystery and are therefore more

successful in their quests. Additionally, the position of women in mid-Victorian England is discussed, especially in relation to the 'Angel of the House', social acceptability, norms and boundaries. As such, the approach adopted for this study allows focussing on strategy rather than a feminine status.

Chapter Four is the heart of this study as it is an in-depth analysis of Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (1864) and William Stephens Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864). These two books are exceptional and rare as they had been out of print for a considerable time and were only recently reprinted by the British Library. By having a female professional detective, they are revolutionary in nature as the sleuths are more adept at carrying out their investigations, have an intelligent mind, and show progress in professionalism and responsibilities. Michael Sims describes them as follows: 'Instead of chatting about fashion in the parlour while their men smoked after-dinner cigars, these women are out in the London fog, shadowing suspects, crawling through secret passages, and even fingerprinting corpses' (xxii). These women went against the grain of the 'Angel of the House' while trying to build a career for themselves. A central part of this study is to recover these almost-forgotten mid-Victorian works. The analysis takes into consideration the sleuths' motivation, methods and means of deduction, successes and failures, their place within society, their interactions with those surrounding them, and draws parallels with previous works and genres.

The Conclusion presents the findings of Chapter Four and compares them to Chapter Two and Three, attempting to see how they have taken inspiration from previous works. As such, a comparison between male/female detectives, as well as between female amateur/professional investigators, is drawn. The gaps I decided to focus on are more fully explained allowing for a broader image of the female detective at the end of the 1860s. Finally, the *travail de candidature* shows how these works have influenced later crime writing as part of a developing genre, and how this early literature essentially helped to shape future female sleuths.



## 1.5 Thesis Statement

The study assesses the early female investigator, places her within specific genres, examines her motivation, methods and means of investigation, and verifies the original work's value to later developments in crime literature, considering the socio-political and cultural landscape into which these books were published.

The questions at the heart of this study are:

1. How did previous works in literature shape novels and short stories, depicting crime and having a female investigator, in the 1860s and how have these works, in turn, contributed to literature in the long-run?
2. How do female sleuths – both amateur and professional - conduct their investigations in a rigid Victorian society?
3. How do these female detectives interact with other characters (male, female, colleagues, witnesses ...) and position themselves in society?



## 2 The Socio-Cultural and Political Context of Investigating Crime Pre-1860

‘I never liked to hear of a policeman exceeding his duty, which some of them are very apt to do occasionally.’

Mrs Paschal (*Lady* 185)

‘There can be no question about it, to those who have any knowledge of the English police system, and who choose to be candid, that it requires more intellect infused into it.’

Miss Gladden (*Female* 134)

### 2.1 The Bow Street Runners and Newgate Calendar Influences

The predecessors of the modern police force can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, crime flourished, and prosecuting crime was often detrimental due to the absence of a reliable policing system and methods of investigations. The first British city to think towards establishing early policing was London. In 1749, Henry Fielding became the chief magistrate of Bow Street and henceforth the Runners were established. When Fielding died in 1754, his work was taken over by his brother John. According to Clive Emsley, the Runners had two main foci. Firstly, they gathered and exchanged information; secondly, the reform called for specialists in criminal-catching (Emsley *Crime* 221). These thief-takers engaged in ‘patrols, both day- and night-time, and there was a separate branch on horseback to counter highwaymen, but their origin was as

mobile specialists to investigate reported crimes and pursue identified criminals' (Knight *Crime* 10). Henry Fielding wanted to dispense with payoffs and other corrupt practices that had previously been the norm. Therefore, he paid his new workforce and introduced more order and honesty. However, how recruitment was conducted was highly atypical as anyone could volunteer to become a part of his force by simply arriving at a crime scene and finding evidence. Bruce L. Berg elaborates:

The Bow Street Runners made a serious study of investigations and locating criminals and quickly became experts skilled in this area. Unlike more amateur peacekeeping predecessors ..., the Thief-Takers did not offer reluctant or only perfunctory police service. (26)<sup>10</sup>

Even though the Runners greatly advanced in their work and managed to decrease crime rates, their integrity and morals were soon questioned as they obtained rewards for solved crimes:

The Runners' basic pay was small ... They were permitted to work for private citizens outside their official duties and often received generous sums in return for solving cases successfully. Some fell from grace and became involved in scandals, sharing loot with the criminals they were sent to arrest or setting up innocent victims in order to collect rewards. (Peterson 4)

They were also better at recovering property than catching criminals. Even if cases of corruption were marginal, the people supposed that they were often in league with the thieves. Therefore, a new scheme had to be found to counter-act this public resentment. Bow Street operated until 1839, but first attempts had already been made to improve the Runners' policing. 'The most significant of these was in 1797 when John Harriott and Patrick Colquhoun created the Thames River Police, ... to protect property on London's

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<sup>10</sup> The author of this study wishes to point out that quotes deriving from factual and fictional writing have been left in their original form. Errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar have not been corrected or annotated to keep the original spirit of the works alive.

river' (Panek *Holmes* 20). Patrick Colquhoun became one of the leading figures calling for a police reform; a reform that took more than thirty years to be put into effect.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century, also known as the Age of Reason, brought forth narratives with an emphasis on awe and thrill, which Knight labels as 'the archetype of pre-detective crime stories' (*Crime* 3), and were inspired by the wrongdoings and policing at the time. This type of literature started to concentrate on notorious criminals like Dick Turpin, Spring-Heeled Jack Shepherd or Jonathan Wild. However, they focused more on sensation and religion than intellectual pleasure in the detection process. Scaggs explains, 'such collections were a response to the popular demand for bloody and shocking accounts of violent crime that spawned the tragedies of revenge in the seventeenth century;' furthermore there was 'the reliance on pure chance to apprehend the criminal in these stories, rather than on detection and organised police work' (14). Criminals' biographies began to flourish in the form of cheap pamphlets. The most common of these, the *Newgate Calendar*, inspired renowned authors such as Daniel Defoe, Alexander Smith, William Godwin and Edward Bulwer Lytton.<sup>11</sup>

London's Newgate Prison served as a basis for these biographies, initially compiled by the chaplain. By scavenging these documents, readers could satisfy their craving for sensation linked to crime. This new form of entertainment and excitement was feasible as suddenly readers had access to the criminal mind. However, the reading public did not identify with the criminal and the readership was small in numbers as these anthologies were expensive. The *Calendar* was only fascinating due to the intriguing twists and turns it offered. Each story had a moral preface that served as a warning to the reader not to disobey the prevailing social regulations and rules. Knight explains, 'The stories offered a moral warning to others ... All the Calendars claim to be fact. But they are often substantially rewritten in the process of republishing, and the stories have no stability' (*Crime* 5-6). Some individual cases were rewritten at times, suddenly presenting a different moral significance or presenting actions in a different light. Knight elaborates:

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<sup>11</sup> For further analysis, see: Murfin and Ray 101; Panek *Holmes* 5.

the Calendar stories are not about wicked oppressive lords or dangerous foreigners ... Set usually in and around small towns, the normal story will tell about a young man or woman who falls into bad company, ... and so develops bad habits which will lead eventually to theft or murder. (*Crime* 7-8)

The direct result of these writings was that it created fear and uneasiness in society. Readers were seemingly assured that the criminal world was fought, and the culprits brought to justice; hence re-establishing social codes acted as comfort. Worthington further illustrates:

The confession in the criminal's story served to validate the death sentence and demonstrate the efficiency of the penal system, reassuring the reader that crime could and would be contained and deterring the potential criminal with the apparent certainty of punishment. ('Newgate' 14)

A shift in perspective can be traced when reading early *Calendars* from as early as 1676 against later ones, for example, those of the 1890s, which can be read simultaneously to the shifts in policing. Crime and punishment were portrayed using a mixture of excitement, sensationalism and voyeurism. In the later *Calendars*, the emphasis is more on the trials depicting the investigation, listing clues and explaining the complexities of individual crimes. What these *Calendars* lack is a thorough investigation. The focus was on the actual crime and justice but not necessarily on the criminal or how he/she was exposed. However, they worked well within a world that had a 'firm trust in Christian values, feudal order, and social cohesion' (Martens 209). They enthused the authors of the time to use these criminal biographies as inspiration for their novels, more precisely, the Newgate Novels, which in turn illustrated further changes in policing.

## 2.2 The Metropolitan Police and the Newgate Novels

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by feelings of anxiety and unrest which were not only linked to the Industrial Revolution but also to the perceived increase in crime. The British government attempted to disperse these public fears and resentment towards the Runners by establishing the Metropolitan Police in 1829. Sir Robert Peel played an active role in its creation by eradicating gaps in criminal law. Peel's main aim was to establish a structured and efficient institution propelling trust and authority. He personally selected the first police recruits. Some previous Bow Street Runners later became well-known detectives, for example, Henry Goddard or John and Daniel Forrester. However, he did not guide them as to how investigations had to be carried out. The force's main aim was to ensure the public's safety, prevent crime, and decrease crime figures. Yet, the public continued to regard the Metropolitan Police disapprovingly and disrespectfully, as Knight explains:

the idea of a self-sufficient individual inquirer was [not] popular.

This was in part because in England the whole idea of inquiries into people's behaviour was unattractive: even before, but especially during and after the French Revolution, government-funded inquirers were regarded as spies – the word was used long into the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a synonym for detective. (*Crime* 10)

Public opinion gradually gave way to a more favourable view of the force, even though fears remained. Kate Summerscale analysed the public's trepidations to allow a detective to enter private homes by stating, 'he exposed the corruptions within the household: sexual transgressions, emotional cruelty, scheming servants, wayward children, insanity, jealousy, loneliness and loathing' (xii). Although these detectives unravelled crime and were successful in their work, the public sustained wariness as their 'conclusions helped to create an era of voyeurism and suspicion, in which the detective was a shadowy figure' (Summerscale xii).

In the aftermath of the *Newgate Calendar*, authors started to use crime content but presented it in a new format, the Newgate Novel<sup>12</sup>. On the one hand, as Richard D. Altrick explains, ‘the number of English readers, and therefore the productions of the press, multiplied spectacularly,’ and on the other hand, ‘the ability to read was acquiring an importance it had never had before’ (*Reader* 1, 4). People did not only read to be informed but they also read to be entertained. As Worthington states, the development of crime fiction is ‘inextricably linked with the rise of the novel’ (*Newgate* 16) in the 1830s and 1840s. These new narratives did not necessarily end badly and could have a happy ending. The step into pure fiction was thus completed. Up to this point, crime narratives were published retrospectively, meaning once the culprit was dead, chroniclers would engage in narrating his/her life’s story. The audience was also aware of the crimes before reading the stories which might explain why authors did not elaborate on detection or presenting an eloquent solution to the cases. Initially, any novel that ‘featured a criminal who came, or might have come from a Newgate Calendar’ (Worthington 19) was classified as part of this new tradition.

Furthermore, these novels seem to engage in glorifying criminal activities rather than follow in the suit of earlier narrative warning against them. They ‘represent an increasing interest in the construction and motivation of the criminal; they have an element of detection or feature a detective figure; they bring crime firmly into mainstream fiction’ (Worthington ‘Newgate’ 19). These novels ‘emphasise the indifference and cruelty of things as they were’ and their writers:

often describe highway robberies as capers rather than as felonies,  
and they portray thief-takers, magistrates, and judges as blind,  
indifferent, and cruel instruments of a perverse legal and social  
system. The writers also include a generous helping of romance  
material. (Panek *Holmes* 28, 29)

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<sup>12</sup> Examples include: Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832), William Harrison Ainsworth’s *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839).



Worthington summarises the elements of Newgate Novels:

they represent an increasing interest in the construction and motivation of the criminal; they have an element of detection or feature a detective figure; they bring crime firmly into mainstream fiction and so make possible the later genre of sensation fiction. ('Newgate' 19)

However, they were often criticised for portraying crime in an attractive light. They added to the public's anxieties and it would take other forms of writing to dispel the mood.

By the 1840s, when Edgar Allen Poe started writing his 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', the Newgate Novel had come to an end. Even though this type of writing did nothing for the advent of the detective or the evolution of the detective story, it is nonetheless important for the thought-processes evolving around crime and criminals. In the interim, before Poe started work, another type of writing emerged.

## **2.3 The Press and Semi-Fictional Memoirs**

In the 1830s, the press started to show an interest in crimes. At the same time, the number of newspapers multiplied, and the number of readers rose due to changes in education policies. This initiated a circle of productivity and crime sold well. Haia Shpayer-Makov compares the situation of newspaper journalists and detectives:

Both detectives and journalists struggled hard ... 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, ... before 1840 the reputation of the press was low [and] journalists themselves were regarded as hacks or as demagogues. ('Journalists' 965)

Initially, ‘moral panics, ... sometimes caused by a new way of categorising offences, or a spate of unsolved crimes played on and magnified out of proportion by the press, could all lead to criticism of the police’ (Emsley *Police* 70). Furthermore, ‘the Victorian press was thorough in its coverage of interesting bankruptcies and major crimes and trials, dwelling especially on the most unusual’ (Kent 56).

As detective policemen began to appear in popular literature from the 1850s on, the press started to shift its view on the police after a highly sensationalist and not-well-researched period. As detectives became further organised, so did journalists. The press also proved to be indispensable in feeding the public’s interest in criminal cases by reporting on court and legal proceedings, which in turn fed fiction.

Social developments from the 1820s meant that the time was ripe for a new body of popular literature. These works claimed to be authentic memoirs of Runners or police officers. They were largely fictionalised and a majority of them were ghost-written even if they had a real-to-life protagonist.

The first British extended work of fiction portraying the life and work of a professional Thief-Taker is probably Thomas Gaspey’s *Richmond: Scenes in the Life of a Bow-Street Runner* (1827). The first 80-odd pages recount Richmond’s early life in a rather picaresque light. As Richmond is on the look-out for recruitment, a friend persuades him to join the Bow Street Runners. ‘Richmond transfers skills learnt from his early life with gipsies to his Bow Street position’ (Watson 32). He eavesdrops and watches covertly, acting out a similar role as later detectives. In all five cases, the hero-narrator depicts crimes ranging from kidnapping to grave robbing. Richmond demonstrates how public opinion about crime changed in view of crime detection, even though it is less important than the next recollection, the *Memoirs* by Vidocq.

Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857) is considered to be one of the ancestors of crime fiction. His *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté, jusqu’en 1827* (1829-30) narrate the story of his life in four volumes. Knight explains this rise in ranks:

He, like other criminals, was brought into the Napoleonic policing system, rose to be head of the Sûreté [in 1812], and after retiring in 1827 produced his memoirs, with the aid of ghost-writers, whose efforts became so imaginative that Vidocq personally disavowed their fourth volume. (*Crime* 23)

The Brigade was the first plain-clothed investigative unit in Paris. France is quite exceptional because it had ‘a State-funded policing force since the seventeenth century’ (Worthington ‘Newgate’ 17-18). The move to the Brigade was only an improvement on an already-existing format with the French public in favour of policing and police methods. However, the British regarded this system with mixed feelings believing that government-controlled police might be an instrument of political repression.

The first volume concentrates on Vidocq’s numerous prison breaks and juvenile delinquency. Then, his years as a police informer are exposed, before he became a secret agent for the police. The remaining volumes illustrate Vidocq’s cases. He injects a moral theme into his narrative highlighting his desire to reform from a criminal to a respected citizen. Moreover, his stories do not engage in actual analytical detection. However, they mention taking impressions of footmarks to catalogue them. Vidocq also prides himself on his honesty and his adeptness at using disguises. Furthermore, he believes that his criminal background helps him to get into criminal’s minds to solve his cases. Some levels of irony are interspersed in the narrative as he not only shows the stupidity of criminals but also the inefficiency of the French law enforcement.

In terms of policing techniques, Vidocq was inventive and ahead of his time. When Vidocq was part of the Surêté, he started a card index system, detailing criminals and criminal activity. He also saw significance in using fingerprinting, ballistics and blood testing in criminal investigations. Furthermore, he held ‘patents on tamperproof paper and ink that reduced counterfeiting and forgery’ (Herbert 479). Some of his methods, however, were less scientific as he remarks that ‘many criminals are bow-legged’ (qtd in Symons 37). Vidocq explains, ‘I frequented every house and street of ill

fame, sometimes under one disguise and sometimes under another, ... till the rogues and thieves whom I daily met there firmly believed me to be one of themselves' (194). His capacity to use disguise to bring culprits to justice was considered with ambiguity, although it was a sure means for success making Vidocq's creativity in policing impressive.

Vidocq's *Mémoires* had a significant impact on British politics, as they were translated when Peel tried to get a bill through parliament establishing an English police system. Furthermore, they influenced later crime writings, as Peterson explains:

as a detective, Vidocq became a legendary figure, with his flamboyance, his genius at disguises, and his implacable dedication to tracking down the culprit. His *Memoirs* inspired in France such fictional detectives as Balzac's Vautrin and Gaboriau's Lecoq, [and] influenced Poe in America. (7)

Even though the stories might be highly exaggerated, they were successful. The English accepted the notion of 'convict turned detective,' which they used to have 'a moral aversion to' (Cox xiii). Following the English translation, a whole industry erupted in the vain of 'true' recollections or reminiscences.

One of these memoirs<sup>13</sup> that appeared in the years following Vidocq's *Mémoires* was William Russel's (1807-1877) writing. It was serialised under the alias 'Waters,' in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* from July 1849 to September 1853, and was marketed as a first-person account of a London detective. These short stories were later published in America in book form under *The Recollections of a Policeman* (1852), and in Great Britain as *Recollections of a Detective Police Officer* (1856). These books proved to be highly successful on both continents. However, the account was imaginative as 'their author, 'Waters', was not a policeman but a hack writer' (Cox xiv). Thomas Waters, a

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<sup>13</sup> Other examples would include: Charles Martel's *The Diary of an Ex-Detective* (1859) and *The Detective's Notebook* (1860); Robert Curtis's *The Irish Police Officer* (1861); James McLevy's *Curiosities of Crime in Edinburgh* (1861) and *The Sliding Scale of Life; or, Thirty Years' Observations of Falling Men and -women in Edinburgh* (1861).

gentleman fallen on hard times due to youthful follies, presents humility in his activities. He must work to support his family. Even though the stories resonate the 1830s, they are clearly based on the newly formed Detective Department. Russel's Waters is different from Vidocq and Richmond. First, he is not a reformed scoundrel. Then, he is presented as a model of middle-class respectability and integrity. Furthermore, his manners and speech are refined. Finally, he uses his worldly experience to solve cases rather than intellect or perspicacity.

Even though Waters' memoirs quickly move into a urbaner and mercantile context, his first case leads him to investigate a gambling fraud, the same deception which robbed him of his independence, thereby combining personal revenge with a newly-gained professionalism. In 'X.Y.Z,' Waters shows many of Vidocq's methods by watching, following and eavesdropping. In the end, he manages to clear a clerical worker who was wrongly suspected. Water's key methods are coincidence, surveillance and persistence in his work. He is a very plain and banal character, but becomes exceptional in his quest for truth. Detection becomes more than just collecting evidence. He declares, 'My duty ... was quite as much the vindication of innocence as the detection of guilt' (Russel 36). The author merged crime narratives with romantic touches. Waters supports his clients in finding a happy ending. Russel's 'protagonist, typical of the breed, solve[s] cases by a mixture of wit, cunning, subterfuge, and luck' (Herbert 411). Moreover, he adopts Vidocq's practise of using disguise, as 'Guilty or Not Guilty?' exemplifies. Here he pursues a criminal in a flaxen wig, broad-brimmed hat, green spectacles, and a 'multiplicity of waistcoats and shawls' (Russel 56). As such, Waters already shows more individuality and eccentricity in a detective. He also manages to 'combat contemporary prejudices against detectives as vulgar spies who threatened privacy and liberty, by making police detection a gentlemanly profession' (Kayman *Poe* 42).

Even though these memoirs by fictional police detectives were short-lived, their influence on crime fiction is nonetheless significant. Worthington observes that these chronicles 'introduced and made central the detective figure and they established the case

format which becomes an essential element of the genre' ('Newgate' 21). Water's oeuvre continued to be an inspiration for many imitators in the following decades, even as late as 1884 when Alan Pinkerton's *Thirty Years a Detective* was published. What all these detectives have in common are that they are intelligent and cunning in their work. They also have an intimate knowledge of the criminal world and insert high morals into their work when executing their duty. They act as professionals alongside the police. These qualities of a detective start to be accepted as the norm by contemporary Victorian writers. Furthermore, and moving away from the fictional sphere, the Detective Department welcomed this form of support as even the press presented their articles in a more favourable light as of 1849. Clues about this statement can be found in the kind of articles that were published following the arrest of Frederick and Maria Manning, in conjunction with Charles Dickens' articles on the force beginning in 1850.

## **2.4 The Detective Police, Male Detectives and Press Coverage**

In 1842, the shift from prevention to detection was finalised and the Detective Police Department emerged more distinctly. However, some portion of the public still reacted badly in the following years. There was widespread fear that the police were corrupt and individual cases demonstrate this. Emsley writes that 'Metropolitan PC Charles King was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation in 1855 for robberies committed with a gang of pickpockets' (*Police* 61). Furthermore, Sita Schütt explains the possible reason by stating, 'the English Detective Police Department, ... was made up of poorly trained detectives whose failure to solve crimes was much criticized by the press, anxious about soaring crime rates' (59). Shpayer-Makow further elaborates: 'the notion of plain-clothes policing, associated in the public mind with spying and the notorious French secret police, was even more widely opposed, and it took another 13 years before a small detective unit was set up' ('Explaining' 117). The Detective Department had difficulties in shaking off their perceived image as spies, but once this was completed,

they ‘acquired a reputation for honesty, remaining free for many years from scandal and corruption’ (Peterson 8). Peel believed in knowledge, science and reason. To entrench these with the Department’s practises, he established the first police records in Britain. Scaggs explains, ‘the invention of photography in 1839 allowed for effective policing by augmenting these generalised records, recording in photographic form the evidence of crimes, and ensuring the accurate identification of known criminals’ (18-19). Photography was later used in the process of fingerprint identification. In general, however, ‘by the 1850s, the new English “Bobby” was already acquiring an affectionate image in the perception of many of the respectable and propertied classes’ (Emsley *Police* 62); nevertheless, the lower classes continued to be wary of the force.

Outside the metropolitan cities, the policing system remained at a primitive level as late as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Peterson observes:

each local parish had a justice of the peace who served as magistrate, an unpaid position that rotated among citizens as a public service. Each justice had a constable to assist him, and since persons appointed as constable could hire substitutes, this function was often performed by elderly or incompetent persons.

(3)

Furthermore, spies and informers were often employed to find evidence against criminals. As these magistrates, constables and ‘bounty-hunters’ at times used unlawful methods, were corrupt and interested in obtaining rewards, the public sentiment was against them, and they were often despised by citizens. However, after much ‘internal disorder during the 1830s and the “Hungry Forties,”’ ‘in the 1850s, Victorian society was successful and stable; it was just entering that period described aptly as “the age of equipoise”’ (Emsley *Police* 54, 64). The police became intrinsically the societal backbone regarding the constitution and law. Philip Thurmond Smith summarises: ‘[w]ith the temporary cessation of the Fenian threat and the death of Sir Richard Mayne in 1868 the

mid-Victorian period symbolically came to an end for the police. London was to have a respite ... until 1886' (202).

Missing from the Metropolitan Police Department were women. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed first utterances raising awareness that women were needed in the force. Among these voices, the Women's Freedom League and various child care organisations claimed that female victims, prisoners and children should be handled by female officers<sup>14</sup>. Women first became engaged as prison matrons as Michele Slung points out in *Crime on her Mind* by writing 'there were no women actually attached to the Metropolitan Police in London until 1882' (xviii). Initially, these women were employed to take over menial jobs such as searching female and under-age prisoners upon their arrest. Only in 1905 was the first woman hired into a more respectable position. The first female officers were hired in 1918 by the London Police even if opposition remained and in 1924, the Joint Central Committee of the Police Federation of England and Wales stated, 'The very nature of the duties of a police constable is contrary to that which is finest and best in women ... it is purely a man's job alone' (qtd in Sims xii). General opinion either focused on the needs of female prisoners or the perceived status of female officers, opening two sides of the gender question. Most scholars regard fictional nineteenth-century accounts of female professional detectives as 'fantasies of female empowerment' (Kestner *Sisters* 15). In this instance, fiction was ahead of fact.

Overall, the three decades following 1829 saw great changes not only in policing and newspaper reporting but also in how fictional detectives were portrayed by their various authors. As a reference point, Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin takes centre stage in the development of detective work.

Regarded as the first 'proper' male detective, Chevalier Auguste Dupin appears in three short stories, the first of which was published in 1841. Dupin is an expert working with the Prefect of Police in Paris. The rivalry between Dupin and the Prefect resembles

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<sup>14</sup> For a full account of these early interventions, see: Jackson 20-51.



Vidocq's earlier struggles. The police seek the detective's advice whenever they have an unusual or baffling case. Dupin<sup>15</sup> is an amateur who uses analytical and rational thinking to solve his cases. Rosemary Yann explains, 'Dupin commands a range of culture and learning out of Vidocq's reach and uses it brilliantly to inform his investigations of material clues and the feats of reasoning and deduction based on them' (37). Dupin also belongs to the middle-class, rather than the working-class. Poe's stories brought together for the first time the Gothic melodrama with the concept of a clever detective, a character renowned for his superiority. Worthington states, 'Poe could not have set out to write detective fiction – the genre was not yet recognized – rather, his Dupin stories are concerned with how rational analysis combined with imagination can solve mysteries' ('Newgate' 22). Furthermore, as Munt explains: 'Poe also supplied the conventional foil whose relationship to the detective forms the narrative centre of the story in that its progression, and our response to it, is judged and mediated by a figure who reveres the hero and therefore concretizes his eminence' (2). Scaggs clarifies the function of a narrator recording the detective's exploits:

the first-person narrator in the detective story normally performs three functions: they act as a contrast to the abilities of the detective, emphasising in the detective's genius a difference in degree, rather than a difference in kind; they act as recorders, not only of the story, but also of the physical data upon which the detective's analytic ability depends; and they embody the social and ideological norms of the period. (21)

Right from its opening paragraphs, Dupin's abilities become clear in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' which was published in *Graham's Ladies and Gentleman's Magazine* in April 1841. Labelling it ratiocination, Poe emphasizes the importance of

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<sup>15</sup> Voltaire's *Zadig, ou la Destinée* (1748) may have influenced the tales. *Zadig* analyses factual signs of an animal on a road and manages to deduce the size, colour and trappings of a horse that escaped from the emperor's stable. *Mademoiselle de Scuderi* (1818) by E.T.A. Hoffman is another contender who may have influenced Poe as some of his tales have a romantic undertone.

analytical thinking and describes the unique satisfaction when effectively put into use.

Yann explains:

ratiocination celebrated the accomplishments of science in the age of Charles Darwin. As breakthroughs in geology and evolutionary biology challenged the adequacy of the older, biblical worldview during this period, science offered the alternative certainty of a world whose order was subject to law and accessible to human reason. (1)

Furthermore, Poe highlights the notion of imagination as part of the process of Dupin's work. As such, these first pages of the story function as a prelude to the detective story as it gives its basic characteristics. In addition to those listed earlier, he also includes new advances in research and imaginative power.

In 'Rue Morgue,' the detective sets out to investigate the murders of a mother and her daughter. Poe narrates the story in a backward fashion, as the actual story opens with the finding of the bodies in a room that appears to be locked from the inside. Furthermore, he uses gothic conventions, as the terror does not come from humans but from an uncontrollable beast, an orangutan, and portrays the bodies and the position of furniture in a shocking light. Moreover, Poe set his stories in France as he was directly influenced by Vidocq, mentioning him in 'Rue Morgue'. Also, the detective's endeavours are compared to a puzzle or a game, such as chess, where the protagonist uses his many faculties, adopting at times unconventional perspectives mixed with imagination, observation and memory to derive at his conclusions. Ultimately, 'Rue Morgue' served as the first locked-room mystery to later writers, and thereafter normalising backward narration. Various scholars, like Illana Shiloh, comment on its symbolism:

the locked room ... yields a wealth of metaphorical interpretations which point to the basic premises and characteristics of the genre.... It marks the disparity between appearance and reality, between the illusion of senselessness and

the underlying reality of order, and in this respect, this architectural paradigm shares the inherent dualism of the labyrinth. (157)

Poe's story presents the reader with an enclosed space that appears from the inside and outside to be impenetrable. However, the evidence left at the crime scene helps the detective to unravel the mystery, turning illusion into reality. The detective's self-reflexive nature solves the crime. He eliminates all other possibilities and regards the window as the only means of entry of the culprit. The evidence is spread out over the entire narrative. Yet Poe also engages in withholding the links until the very end of the story, such as the tuft of hair, to puzzle the reader. Thereby, the reader can engage and come up with numerous other possibilities of how the crime might have been committed.

Poe's second story featuring Dupin is 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', first published in *Snowden's Lady's Companion* in November 1942. This is a fictionalised account of the, at that time, unsolved murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers in New York. Her body was found on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1841 in the Hudson River. Poe merges real-life crime with a new narrative function and thereby sets a pattern for later writers. Dupin solves the case by working his way through newspaper reports describing the murder and the ensuing investigation. The solution points to a secret lover as Marie's murderer. This story is nowadays labelled as armchair detection and has been copied by many writers. From a historical and structural viewpoint, the story is intriguing. First, as previously stated, it is based on an actual murder case. Secondly, by using various sources to pin together a case, it anticipates later novels such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* in terms of a fragmented structure.

Symons further explains:

the cuttings are interspersed with the comments and conclusions of Dupin, who relies for his evidence wholly upon this sometimes-contradictory press information, [making it] the precursor of all those tales in which the detective solves a crime

simply by analysis of and deduction from the material with which he is presented. (43)

Through Dupin, Poe puts forward a solution for the real-life mystery. The detective puts his superior knowledge of men and the world around him to effective use. However, even Poe acknowledges at the end of the story that the clues could be interpreted in diverse ways, leading to various logical conclusions. Only after the story had been published, did evidence emerge that Mary died from a botched abortion.

‘The Purloined Letter’, published in *The Gift* in 1844, is the third and last Dupin story. Interestingly, it illustrates the dichotomy between the police and the detective in terms of investigating techniques. Poe may have based this argument on Vidocq’s real-life experiences. This story is about the theft of a compromising letter from the Queen of France. Dupin is employed to recover it from the thief, a high-ranking minister. Even though Dupin admires the care and resolve of the police force, he also stresses that their methods are too predictable and dull. Dupin shows his own brilliance by using close observation, enabling him to think like the criminal and enter the felonious mindset, thereby anticipating moves and unveiling motives. This unusual way of reasoning leads Dupin to apprehend the culprit. This story also propels the idea that the least likely solution is the correct one, and further pushes the image that a detective must think like a criminal, rather than analysing the crime from a victim’s viewpoint.

Another Poe story that is important in the evolution of crime stories is ‘Thou Art the Man,’ published in *Godey’s Ladies Book* in 1944. The narrator manages to free an innocent man, tricks the culprit and solves a murder mystery. Mr Pennifeather is accused of murdering his uncle Barnabas Shuttleworthy. His missing body is found by the unnamed narrator, who then proceeds to expose Goodfellow and free Shuttleworthy’s nephew of suspicion. The investigation draws on a variety of clues: a bloodstained waistcoat, a knife belonging to the nephew and a bullet found in a dead horse. The bullet is examined and compared to the nephew’s gun and bullets coming from that gun, thereby

depicting elementary ballistics<sup>16</sup>. Poe's story is remarkable as it leads the reader to believe in the many false clues. This concept becomes later known as 'red herrings'. The solution shows that the actual murderer was the least-likely person in the story, the man who set out to investigate the murder in the first place, another concept entering crime fiction.

Whereas previous crime writing has concentrated on moralistic retellings of crime or exaggerated accounts of true-life crime, these stories offer the reader intellectual pleasure. The author merges Gothic with determined rationalism. Poe is not interested in issues of justice or the social causes of crime. His stories are an exploration of innovative storytelling. Like the reader, Dupin is initiated in the first two cases via newspapers and investigates these murders based on the printed witness accounts. The reader is invited to the process of detection via his reading experience by deciphering the clues. At the end of these stories, the bibliophile can check if his solution matches that of Dupin. Poe managed to alter the form of detective narratives by raising the detective figure to new heights. As a result, his short stories served as a blueprint for later writings, even if the author himself was probably unaware of this.

Dupin can rightly be regarded as the first independent detective in short stories, as he took centre stage and unites various qualities of what a detective should be like. Symons summarises, 'Almost every later variation of plot in the detective story can be found in the short stories he wrote which, with a little stretching here and there, can be said to fit within the limits of the form. He is the undisputed father of the detective story' (41).

Most authors thereafter have been influenced by his narrative style, his portrayal of a detective and his means of investigation. Further attempts in narrative techniques

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<sup>16</sup> This fictional case may have been inspired by an actual investigation: The case of a robbery gone wrong in Southampton allowed for the first recorded ballistic investigation in police history in 1835. The butler to a Mrs Maxwell had fired his pistol at the thieves and as there was no police in Southampton, Sir Frederick Roe, the chief magistrate, immediately sent Henry Goddard, a Bow Street Runner, to investigate. Goddard took the statement of the butler, Joseph Randall, but he was suspicious. 'Goddard examined the bullet from the scene and some of Randall's own ammunition, and found that all of the bullets had a tiny distinctive pimple mark from the same ammunition mould' (Moss and Skinner 8). Thereby, Goddard managed to repute the butler's account who stated that he only wanted to get a reward from Mrs Maxwell.

were meant to add suspense and elements of surprise in the stories. Dupin is mostly regarded as the direct ancestor of Sherlock Holmes. However, traces of Poe's influence can be found in much earlier fiction, for instance, Charles Dickens's writings. Dickens is important in this section for two reasons. Firstly, as a journalist, he published various newspaper articles on the police force. Secondly, he also created one of the first fictional detectives in his novels: Mr Bucket.

To counter the negative public opinion towards the newly created Detective Force, various authors<sup>17</sup>, including Charles Dickens, started writing a series of articles on prisons, criminals and law enforcers. In this endeavour, they worked as journalists rather than as novelists. As Panek outlines:

the bosses of Scotland Yard could not have wished for better puff-pieces. 'A Detective Police Party,' for instance, begins with the assertion that the new detective police force "is so well chosen and trained, proceeds so systematically and quiet, does its business in such a workmanlike manner, and is always so calmly and steadily engaged in the service of the public, that the public really do not know enough of it, to know the tithe of its usefulness". (*Holmes* 65, Dickens 'Detective' 15)

Dickens started his accounts on the activities of real London detectives with 'Three Detective Anecdotes' in *Household Words* in 1850, portraying the detectives as very intelligent middle-class men, making them human and humble, and particularly stressing their respectability, good manners and high morals. Especially the narratives of 'A Detective Police Party' describe their intelligence at work. In 1852, Dickens wrote 'On Duty with Inspector Field.' Inspector Charles Field, who inspired Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House* (1853) is presented as a man in his mid-forties and a sharp mind. He 'uses his knowledge to pierce to the very heart of a labyrinthine city and identify that larger

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<sup>17</sup> Edward Bulwer-Lytton would be another one of these prominent authors.

disease which affects all levels of society' (Hutter 194). Furthermore, in 'On Duty,' Dickens comments on Field's status among the criminals: 'Every thief cowers before him, like a schoolboy before his schoolmaster. All watch him, all laugh at his jokes, all seek to propitiate him' (97)<sup>18</sup>.

Generally, newspapers and journalism played a crucial role in establishing both the professional and the fictional detective. Particularly Dickens had much respect for the various forces and used material he had collected in his various work. Peterson explains, 'Dickens exerted a powerful influence over public opinion, and no history of the British police is complete without its reference to the encouragement derived from Dickens' glowing accounts of the officers of the London Detective Department' (10). His fictional work had a similar influence on the reading public.

Dicken's *Bleak House* was initially serialised from March 1852 to September 1853. Doreen Roberts writes:

mystery plots were popular with Victorian novelists for several reasons: not simply for suspense, but as vehicles for exploring the effects of the past upon the present, and for contrasting a character's public face with his secret consciousness. The emergence of secrets was a possible threat to the settled order of things. (ix)

It introduces Inspector Bucket 'of the Detective,' who appears from chapter 22 onwards, and solves the murder in chapters 49 to 54. Though not a major character, he is important as the first professional detective. Closely modelled on Inspector Field, he observes, enquires and thinks before he acts. 'The ability to impersonate, to identify with,

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<sup>18</sup> Other newspapers soon followed in the same vein. In 'The Police and the Thieves' (1856), A. Wynter, writing for the *Quarterly Review*, also proclaimed the detective's abilities: 'The most trivial hint will suffice to put the detective on the right track: for, like men accustomed to work in the dark, things which to other persons are invisible, to them appear clear as noonday' (176). In 1853, *The Times* published 'A Detective in his Vocation,' and recited an incident when Inspector Field had to adopt the guise of an invalid lodger in a family home. He infiltrated the close-knit community and used an elderly female relative to get insider information to catch the criminal.

and to reproduce the idiosyncratic behaviour of the criminal, characterizes the way in which Dickens portrayed Bucket' (Hutter 194). Even though Bucket shows a notable presence in *Bleak House*, his investigation into Mr Tulkinghorn's death is only one of many sub-plots. It is not a detective novel, but merely a novel having a detective in it. Furthermore, 'Inspector Bucket lack[s] the deductive genius of Dupin or Holmes, and [is] more a model for the professional policeman, with his investigations comprising leg-work and sound knowledge of criminality' (Scaggs 23). The novel was regarded by Victorian readers primarily as a 'campaigning work addressed to social and institutional problems that were both specific and immediate' (Roberts xviii) and they regarded Bucket as just one of many characters. Contrarily, contemporary crime scholars esteem him as the first male professional detective in English Literature.

Generally, Dickens mostly presents his detectives as coming from a different class than his heroes and heroines. Even though they stress reason, are adroit in their manner, believe in practicality and have high work ethics, they often fail in their investigations. Scaggs further states, 'it is a fascination with criminality arising from a fear of the disruption of the social order that characterises both Dickens' journalism and his fiction' (23). Inspector Bucket, powerful, enigmatic and observational, manages to identify Madame Hortense<sup>19</sup> despite the fact that everyone else suspected Lady Deadlock. Dickens' Bucket is a pleasant and jolly character, who uses ingenuity and analytic skill in his detection. However, the mysteries inherent in the novel are puzzles, and 'Bucket's detection is not key to nor as important as the multiple expositions of social crimes that permeate this massive account of contemporary threats and values' (Knight *Crime* 47). Moreover, Bucket marks the first of the 'intruder in the home,' a theme that would become part of fiction for decades to follow; as Trodd comments, 'the fiction and journalism of this period yield ample proof of widespread middle-class fears of police intrusion and surveillance' (*Domestic* 11).

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<sup>19</sup> Victorian readers might have made the link between Madame Hortense and Maria Manning, the Swiss domestic servant who was convicted of murdering her lover.



Dickens introduces another detective in *Bleak House*. Though she is an amateur, she has been labelled as ‘the first female amateur detective in fiction’ (Haining 8). Mrs Bucket is described as a ‘lady of a natural detective genius, which if it had been improved by professional exercise, might have done great things, but which has paused at the level of a clever amateur’ (*Bleak* 604). Her husband acknowledges her as his ‘partner’ and shows high respect for her (*Bleak* 605). He also admits that without her help the case would not have been solved and regards her as ‘a woman in fifty thousand – in a hundred and fifty thousand’ (*Bleak* 626). She gives her husband the crucial information. Peterson explains:

Mrs Bucket sees Hortense both write and post the letters in which Hortense accused her former mistress of committing the murder. The wadding from the gun that killed Tulkinghorn was torn from a printed sheet belonging to Hortense and retrieved by Mrs Bucket to provide evidence of its source. (95-96)

The torn sheet was put together by Mrs Bucket and used as evidence. Moreover, the gun is found in the pond near the spot where Hortense and Mrs Bucket had refreshments on the day of the funeral. Mr Bucket clarifies:

at tea, my prisoner got up to fetch her pocket-handkerchief from the bedroom where the bonnet was; she was rather a long time gone, and came back a little out of wind. As soon as they came home this was reported to me by Mrs Bucket, along with her observations and suspicions. I had the piece of water dragged by moonlight ... and the pocket-pistol was brought up. (*Bleak* 628)

However, Mrs Bucket is limited in her endeavours as she acts the role of her husband’s assistant even though her ‘observations and suspicions’ make her a worthy contender. She is constricted by gender and class norms. Dickens writes almost as if the professional exercise of detective genius had been an option for Mrs Bucket. However, due to her class and status as a woman, she was limited in her endeavours. She had to

leave the conclusion of the investigation to her professional husband, as her investigation would only have been regarded as suspect.

*Bleak House* is a milestone in tracing the history of the detective, because ‘it was in the novel, not the short story, that the literary stereotype of the detective was defined, and in this process, the pivotal figure was Dickens’ (Cox xiv). Soon others followed in his light with more matured detectives coming into view in the 1860s.

One such example is *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1863) by Charles Warren Adams. First published in *Once a Week*, from 29<sup>th</sup> November 1862 to 17<sup>th</sup> January 1863, the serial was printed without author credit. Yet, the name Charles Felix was attached to its book form. Charles Felix had also written other work under this pseudonym. As Mike Ashley observes:

Various names have been suggested as to his true identity, but it wasn’t until early 2011 that the American Paul Collins, writing in the New York Sunday Book Review, drawing upon contemporary evidence, revealed that Felix was Charles Warren Adams (1833-1903), the sole proprietor of Saunders, Otley. (*Notting* xvii-xviii)

Charles Adams Warren, the now-acknowledged author, was a lawyer and owned Saunders, Otley and Co, a publishing company that had published another book by Charles Felix.

*The Notting Hill Mystery* is interesting from its starting point. Scholars, like Knight, see the text as ‘the first English murder mystery with detection throughout’ (*Crime* 210). Insurance Agent, Ralph Henderson is called in to investigate the suspicious death of a woman, who was insured for the sum of £25,000, in 1857. At the forefront, insurance fraud is investigated and becomes entangled in murder. Madame R\*\*’s husband, a Baron, is a dubious character, hence becoming the centre of the investigation. Interested in chemistry, and by profession a medical man and mesmeriser, he manages to show that no poison was involved, as had been suspected. A complicated plot develops, and the novel is presented in report form, listing various pieces of evidence to prove that

Madame R\*\* was murdered. Henderson also tries to illustrate how this was done in a chronological unravelling of Madame R\*\*'s life starting in 1832. He discovers that she had a twin and they were separated at youth. His report draws on a variety of facts, including statements from witnesses and police officers, thereby echoing Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*.

The novel is interesting when it comes to the thorough forensic analysis detailing antimony poisoning and the use of mesmerism. Victorians were fascinated with pseudo-sciences, such as phrenology, mesmerism, and spiritualism, which became cultural phenomena arising during a time of great social upheaval. If Darwin's theories are added to this equation, it becomes a battle between the old and the new world order, between religion and science. The Victorians engaged in a quest for meaning. Quite different to Collins, the author encourages the reader to piece the story together as it is presented in a quasi-epistolary style. However, all the evidence is meticulously analysed and assessed for its worth in the overall investigation. The conclusion of the novel is somewhat cryptic as the author does not advance a solution but leaves it to the insurance company to pronounce the final verdict. Henderson writes:

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.

(*Notting* 284)

Clearly, Henderson is reluctant to offer any certainty about the culprit and thereby echoes a mood at the time of crimes committed by poison. Two criminal cases linked to poisoning were widely discussed in the late 1850s and may have served as inspiration.

They were the Smethurst<sup>20</sup> and the Palmer<sup>21</sup> case. Both trials raised difficult questions in medical jurisprudence. In both cases, the jury had no doubt about the guilt of the accused, but brought forth different verdicts.

In terms of further inspiration for the novel, one could draw on Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Dickens wrote 'Hunted Down' (1859) published in the *New York Ledger*. In this short story, he tells the story of a girl who mysteriously dies. Later, it is uncovered that her life had been insured. Mr Meltham, an employee of the insurance company, attempts to investigate her death and manages to identify the perpetrator. Wilkie Collins' *Queen of Hearts* (1859) collection includes 'The Biter Bit.' It reconstructs a crime using extracts from police statements and various memorabilia to identify the criminal. It is told from the perspective of the main characters: Chief Inspector Theakstone, Sergeant Bulmer and Matthew Sharpin. It makes use of false clues, procedural details and the 'most-unlikely-person' concept. The detectives are outmanoeuvred by Mrs Yatman, and it is a piece of failed detection. Writers further combined new scientific advances with the crimes of the time<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> In the Smethurst case, chemists and other members of the medical profession had been called in to find evidence against Dr Smethurst, accused of killing his second but bigamous wife, formerly Miss Bankes. The problem arose as there was conflicting scientific evidence and the jury was at an impasse. At the time, slow poisoning had been applied but not enough residuum could be detected. Smethurst gave Miss Bankes either arsenic or antimony in small quantities making her ill over several months. The symptoms the patient had shown were similar to symptoms of a natural illness as had been observed by her doctors. In the end, Smethurst was initially sentenced to death but then following public outrage acquitted of the crime.

<sup>21</sup> The Palmer case has some similarities but also some differences to the previous trial. William Palmer had worked in his youth for a chemist, studied thereafter medicine and became a qualified physician in 1846. Palmer was accused of murdering his friend, John Parsons Cook, in 1855. Moreover, he was also suspected of having used strychnine to poison his wife, brother, mother-in-law and some of his children. He claimed insurance money after their deaths, and also defrauded his mother out of a large sum by forging her signature. The prosecution was able to show evidence that Palmer had bought strychnine from a surgery, linked it to Cook's bouts of illness when Palmer was present and allowed an autopsy, which was inconclusive. Palmer was hanged in public for Cook's murder solely based on circumstantial evidence; the other suspected murders could not be proven.

<sup>22</sup> Considering forensic science, Ian Burney in *Poison, Detection, and the Victorian Imagination* writes that: each decade produced its own celebrated poison trials that in their own ways commanded wide scientific and public attention. What does seem to have changed in light of the experience of toxicology in the 1850s, however, was the sense of heroic urgency of the battle between the modern, civilised, scientific poisoner, and his mirror opposite. Criminal poisoning, self-consciously built up in public discourse over the previous decade as the 'crime of civilisation,' after its apogee in the 1850s lost much of its coherence as a pressing cause for concern. (174)

What makes Adams' work exceptional is that it is free of sensational or gothic motives, he wrote the novel in a semi-detached, objective and observational mode. Ashley writes: 'There are no sensational chases, no battles with criminals, no undercover work. In that sense, the novel is remarkably modern in its presentation. It seems to grow in entirely new soil, with no relation to previous casebook reminiscences' (*Notting* xvi). If one can equal the detecting work of an insurance agent to that of a detective, then *Notting Hill* presents its readers with one of the first texts depicting a professional as a competent individual and using skill in his detection in successfully unravelling a mystery. The insurance agent does not act as the narrator, but he is more an editor, complementing the accounts with a personal memorandum, thereby moving away from the sentimental casebook histories. Overall, this type of narrative gives the impression of a realistic atmosphere. The reader is uncertain if the text is fiction or truth. To a modern reader, *Notting Hill* does not follow the conventions of classic detective fiction, but it incorporates murder, an investigation, a 'detective' and proposes a solution to the mystery. It bases the explanation on scientific evidence and progresses in a logical order. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to choose between 'guilty,' 'not guilty' and 'not proven'. Nevertheless, a multitude of diverse statements, facts and clues are used as part of the narrative of *Notting Hill*. The novel, therefore, should justly receive the status of 'first full-length modern English-language detective novel' (Ashley *Notting* xvi).

Overall, a new image of the detective emerges, that of an objective and rational mind, dedicated to his work, active in his pursuits, and who works either for or closely with the police. Before investigating the first professional female detectives, this study now turns to amateur female detectives, a strand that developed along-side the detectives described in this chapter.

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Nevertheless, the problem was still acute and Dickens via *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* continued to publish articles presenting the work of toxicological expertise.



### 3 Female Amateur Detectives in Gothic and Sensation Fiction

‘This was just justice, and justice, I have always said, is the true end of the detective’s work.’

Miss Gladden (*Female* 60)

‘When I found myself amongst friends and freed from the great danger which lately menaced me, I showed that I was a woman and swooned away.’

Mrs Paschal (*Lady* 90)

#### 3.1 Gothic Novels

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of Gothic fiction. James explains ‘gothic novelists [as] chiefly concerned to enthrall readers with tales of terror and the horrific plight of the heroine, and although these books embodied puzzles and riddles, they were concerned far more with horror than with the mystery’ (14). Worthington comments that Gothic crime literature found an outlet which allowed to move from the ‘ordinary’ to ‘apparently supernatural events that ... are often revealed to be mundane hoaxes concealing some criminal act or intention’ (‘Newgate’ 16). The first male quasi-detective within the genre can be found in William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794). The Gothic novel has a fascination with murder, intrigue and betrayal, and emphasises the themes of imprisonment, persecution and decay. Fred Botting criticises the genre for its apparent celebration of criminal behaviour. However, the horror Gothic celebrates is ‘a powerful

means to assert the values of society, virtue and property,' as it is used 'to reinforce or underline their value and necessity' (Botting 7).

Alison Young in *Imagining Crime* propels that women in this era:

exist[ed] only in relation to men: forever wives, daughters of greedy fathers, sisters of dead brothers .... The role of Woman [was] to be absent, to be unadventurous ... They experience[d] fear ... but [drew] on mental and physical resources to overcome any trepidation or actual threat ... liberating the woman from confinement in her home' (99-100).

According to Dresner, the Gothic novel is full of 'almost detectives' (9) – meaning women who attempt to solve a mystery but are only abstemiously successful. Delving into these novels allows investigating these proto-detection heroines. The mysteries solved are only partially due to the efforts of their female protagonists. Even the most intelligent and inventive women of that era have apparent fundamental lacks in their construct. These heroines use 'language, vision, interpretation, identity and [their] bod[ies]' (Dresner 9) to investigate. At first sight, the female sleuths appear strong, but her weaknesses are exposed in the end. A Gothic female is a desiring object with high dreams and ambitions; however, these attributes further prevent her from using her capabilities to fully detect and investigate mysteries. The Gothic genre limits the development of female characterisation by its very nature, thereby preventing its heroines to completely develop their inherent capacities and capabilities.

The next section of this study investigates Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. These Gothic books were chosen because they are prime examples with a mystery and introduced readers to a new experience. Furthermore, they show a heightened suspense, manipulation and sensational treatment of crimes. Finally, the investigators of crime are amateur women.



### Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)

Heroine Emily St. Aubert in Radcliffe's *Udolpho* demonstrates investigative skills using interpretation, language and her body. Radcliffe uses a third-person omniscient narration in her exploration of Emily's extreme states of mind to build up suspense in her narrative. Early on, Emily is presented as a person who has been raised by her father to be good at interpretation and responds in a thoughtful manner to unpleasant events. Emily gained this status after the untimely death of her brothers; therefore, she has been granted more privileges than the average female, becoming a substitute son. Jacqueline Howard states that 'Emily must summon all her fortitude ... because she is a woman of sensibility, of uncommon delicacy of mind, she must also quell the wild imaginings and terrors which threaten to overwhelm her' (viii).

She first notices the existence of a family secret when she sees her father kissing the portrait of an unknown woman, and he instructs her to burn his papers after his death. She is intrigued and her investigation is on its way. When imprisoned in the castle by Montoni, her evil step-uncle, Emily uses interrogation techniques to extract information about the castle's inhabitants from Annette, her maid. She feels, 'her present life appeared like the dream of a distempered imagination' (Radcliffe *Udolpho* 280)<sup>23</sup>. She sends Annette on errands around the castle to collect evidence. Annette becomes Emily's foil, even if she is at a lower level and not as quick as her mistress. Their relationship works on a similar basis to Sherlock Holmes treating John Watson in a condescending manner as Emily and Annette derive from different classes. Emily is daring in her approach to detect the surrounding mysteries and purposefully strives to solve them. For instance, she jeopardises her physical safety and tenuous position within the castle by exploring the towers when searching for her imprisoned aunt. Even if these searches turn out to be

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<sup>23</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Ann Radcliffe's *The Mystery of Udolpho* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Udolpho* [page].

unsuccessful, she oversteps the barriers of the conventional female. Later, when her aunt is dying following her husband's mistreatment, she defends her against Montoni.

Emily is portrayed as a strong character; however, the narrative also exposes her flaws that prevent her from solving the mysteries. Firstly, Dresner states, '[there] is a failure of language: while Emily shows great power over her social inferiors, like Annette, in her use of language, others who hold the same social status as she does, particularly men, use language to trick her' (11). Intrinsically, Montoni's scheme to marry Emily against her will to Count Morano in exchange for money is based on his skill at misleading her into believing that a note written to her uncle can be interpreted as her agreeance to the marriage. The dupe does not pay off<sup>24</sup>.

Secondly, Emily cannot interpret the evidence around her. 'Despite her father's careful attempts to train her in Stoic philosophy, Emily continues to leap to conclusions based upon insufficient evidence, and thus unfailingly misinterprets almost everything she sees and hears' (Dresner 11). She believes the body behind an arras to be real and thinks that the stranger in the castle is her long-lost love, Valancourt. She is wrong on both accounts.

Thirdly, even though she is apparently strong in mind, her body is not. At the most importune moments, she faints.

Emily must not allow her imagination to become distempered by giving in to baseless fears, illusions, superstitions. However, in spite of her best efforts at restraint, we find the wild imaginings engendered by the uncertainty of her situation still causing her to lose control. (Howard xvi)

As she repeatedly loses consciousness and subsequently control, she is unable to carry her investigations through. For example, she attempts to explore an apparently empty room which she believes is occupied by a stranger, but is overcome by terror as

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<sup>24</sup> On a side note, 'this was contrary to the real situation in eighteenth century England, where the law, which had been very slow to change to protect women in financial matters, would have made his acquisition automatic' (Howard xxiv).

she believes a dead body is behind a tapestry. When she wants to investigate a picture at Udolpho which she believes has ‘something very dreadful about it’ (*Udolpho* 220), her curiosity is aroused, and she promptly faints upon lifting the veil. She never continues that line of investigation; therefore, never finds out that it was a wax model. Moreover, when she comes across a dead body, she loses consciousness before she can unearth the person’s identity. All the above are inherently feminine ‘gothic’ flaws that hinder Emily from taking up a proper investigation and executing it until the very end.

Finally, she becomes convinced that the castle is haunted upon learning that Montoni was responsible for the Countess’s murder. In the end, Laurentini explains the crime of murdering the aristocrat, ‘which whole years of repentance and of the severest penance had not been able to obliterate from her conscience’ (*Udolpho* 623). Here, not only is Emily duped but the reader as well, as the suspense of the novel was geared towards casting Montoni out and he disappears from the novel after Emily leaves Udolpho; ‘he had become a clod of earth, and his life vanished like a shadow!’ (*Udolpho* 546). As such, Emily is not in control over the unravelling of the mystery.

Ultimately, all the mysteries that Emily sought to investigate are explained; however, Emily put in no effort to strive for a result. It is only through the efforts of other characters that she learns the truth. For example, at the end, it is the abbess who tells her parts of the story. Finally, the author offers only a few clues to the readers to help them in their interpretation and therefore they cannot arrive at an independent solution. Moreover, the readers are guided through the novel at the same pace as Emily, thereby sharing the same clues. Emily had the potential to develop in her investigations but remains a frightened girl rather than an active agent of truth.

### Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818)

Most of the above-mentioned skills and flaws can also be observed in Jane Austen's Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*<sup>25</sup>. The novel is a satire, narrated in the third person limited omniscient, parodying Gothic works by employing the same themes, conventions and setting.

Catherine, like Emily, is an intelligent, inquisitive and young female who is prevented from using all her abilities to solve the apparent mysteries. As a child, 'she could never learn or understand anything before she was taught' (Austen *Northanger* 16)<sup>26</sup>, hence foreshadowing her inability to becoming a natural investigator. Contrarily, she is portrayed as incomparable:

[she] had by nature nothing heroic about her, should prefer cricket, baseball, riding on horseback, and running about the country ..., [to] books of information – ... provided they were all story and no reflection, she had never any objection to books at all. (*Northanger* 17)

This passage highlights the fact that she is quite different to her female contemporaries in the way she approaches and manages life, adopting a careless and wild manner.

Her illogical reasoning becomes prominent when she first meets Henry Tilney, wondering about '[his] mysteriousness, ... and [it] increase[s] her anxiety to know more of him' (*Northanger* 35). Even before reuniting with Henry, her imagination runs wild thinking about him incessantly which stirs her fancy and delight. Moreover, when confronted with varying accounts on her brother's curriole, she:

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<sup>25</sup> Even though the novel was only published in 1818, it is thought to have been written during the 1890s in the wake of Radcliffe's masterpiece.

<sup>26</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Northanger* [page].

listen[s] with astonishment; she [knows] not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she [has] not been brought up to understand the propensities of a rattle, nor to know to how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead. (*Northanger* 64)

At this stage, she is unable to depict facts from fiction and comprehend even the smallest bits of information. However, she lets her mind run wild as she already sees her brother's curricule overturn in a fatal accident. Her imagination increases once invited to Northanger Abbey and Catherine is prepared 'to encounter all the horrors' that a building such as 'what one reads about, may produce' (*Northanger* 149).

Although the narrative presents her as a female guided by intuition and having wild thoughts, other characters, like Henry, comment on her inquisitiveness:

"You are a very close questioner."

"Am I?"

"I only ask what I want to be told."

"But do you only ask what I can be expected to tell?"

"Yes, I think so." (*Northanger* 143)

As such, she knows how to phrase questions, but is not sure how to interpret information. It is almost as if she is taken unaware of the answers she gets.

Failing as an interrogator does not prevent her from remaining active. Firstly, upon arriving at the castle, she is shown to her room where she spots an old chest. Intrigued, she asks herself, 'What can it hold? - Why should it be placed here?' and resolves, 'I will look into it – cost me what it may' (*Northanger* 155). Catherine asks the correct questions and strives to investigate. Twice she is interrupted by women, first the maid then Miss Tilney, leaving her annoyed and ashamed. Secondly, when Catherine sees a cabinet during a stormy night, she feels that 'she could not sleep until she had examined it' (*Northanger* 160). Finally, the door opens, and she searches the cabinet meticulously. She is glad to find a 'manuscript,' (*Northanger* 161) but lacks courage to investigate it

further. Later she discovers that it is a mere laundry list and is highly disappointed. The manuscript is evocative of *Udolpho* when Emily barely manages to get a glimpse of her father's secret manuscript.

Mrs Tilney's death is another mystery for Catherine. She feels deep empathy for Miss Tilney when she narrates the circumstances of her mother's demise; however, Catherine is intrigued that none of the family enters her rooms. She pesters Miss Tilney with questions and gets ominous answers fuelling her curiosity. She concludes, 'Here [is] another proof. A portrait ... of a departed wife, not valued by the husband! – He must have been dreadfully cruel to her!' (*Northanger* 171). She strives to see the artwork wanting more insight into the family's behaviour. She suspects General Tilney of having murdered his wife and confronts Henry. Being an excessive reader of Gothic fiction, including *Udolpho*, she automatically puts the general on par with Montoni. Henry immediately rebukes her:

And from these circumstances ... you infer perhaps the probability of some negligence ... or it may be – of something still less pardonable ... If I understood you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to – Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained ... we are Christians ... Dear Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?' (*Northanger* 185-6)

After this reprimand and humiliation, she flees in shame and drops all investigation, concluding that 'the visions of romance were over. [She] was completely awakened' (*Northanger* 187). Thereafter, she leaves her youthful imagination and female investigative intuition behind and opens her eyes to reality. She acknowledges the 'absurdity of her curiosity and her fears' and traces it 'to the influence of that sort of reading which she had there indulged' (*Northanger* 187, 188). Ultimately, Catherine's intuition about the General was correct, even though he is not a wife-murderer, he acts

like a tyrant. He is a Gothic villain in the sense that he patronises his family and evicts Catherine and Henry before their marriage.

To conclude, Catherine is unable to use her faculties wholly and fails to interpret the meaning and motives of other people, elements that were already foreshadowed in the opening chapter. Gothic heroines are prone to misinterpret events and people, and Catherine's interpretations have a direct impact on her demeanour, going from active involvement back to passive acceptance. Most often Catherine fails in interpreting the world around her, even though she clearly wishes to unravel the mysteries surrounding her. She has talent, intellect and resolve, but is unable to use detective skills to locate valuable information. However:

what happens when the ... detective attempts to read signs and signifiers that he or she does not entirely understand, that do not release to his or her own experiences and culture? What happens when these attempts result in ultimate failure rather than success?  
(Pepper 48)

These questions describe Catherine to the fullest, as she is a failed detective even if she is bold in her attempts to seek out the truth – the contents of the trunk, the cabinet, her secret expedition to Mrs Tilney's room – all her undertakings end disastrously or without any valuable result. She is also more than once interrupted in her investigations. In these instances, she feels ashamed and humiliated for her groundless suspicion and for being caught in the act. She is an utter disappointment as a detective as she does not even get her case right. Although she invents and investigates cases, she does so without any precise method. She is guided by intuition and her unruly imagination but prides herself on her observation and courage. As Ellis Hanson comments, 'Catherine arrives at Northanger Abby fully prepared to embrace a passionate destiny she has merely glimpsed in Gothic fiction, only to find herself set up at every turn as the dupe for Jane Austen's ironic jabs at the genre' (Hanson 174). Towards the end of the novel, any skill in deduction that Catherine might have possessed at the novel's opening is no longer

detectable, and it takes a man to take over her reasoning and logic. She thereafter stops her ‘odd behaviour’ in investigation and believes that she is at fault for her previous conduct. At the close of the novel, she marries Henry and leaves the operation of their lives to him.

### **Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847)**

Even though Maurice Lévy in *Le Roman ‘Gothique’ Anglais* declares the Gothic genre extinct in 1824, it was far from dead in 1847 when *Jane Eyre* was first published. *Jane Eyre* contains Gothic elements like the remote locations, a complicated family history, dark secrets and mysteries creating an atmosphere of terror and suspense. Furthermore, supernatural elements are included, for example, Jane’s Red Room experience or Jane and Rochester’s communication across the moor. These elements are, however, explained and Alison Milbank writes: ‘The explained supernatural works both like and unlike that of Radcliffe. Brontë’s heroine is not deceived by ghostly effects as Emily St Aubert’ (160). Overall, the novel merely follows in the vain of Radcliffe and Austen, as Brontë uses specific plot elements to anticipate and elevate the story’s mysteries as Jane investigates Thornfield Park. As such, it becomes a quest, a growing-of-age of the Gothic heroine, who uses observation and intellect to find answers; though slightly more successfully than Emily and Catherine.

The novel is narrated in the first-person, forcing the bibliophile to read between the lines. Jane gives detailed descriptions regarding the setting, her feelings, her life, societal rules dictating governesses and the gentry by adopting Gothic conventions. Jane is curious about the events surrounding her, yet she forces herself to be calmer and more composed than she is. She prides herself on her schooling, having had ‘the means of an excellent education placed within [her] reach’ and ‘a desire to excel in all’ (Brontë *Eyre*



80)<sup>27</sup> and wants to put her intellect into good practice. She compares women to men: ‘they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do ... it is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex’ (*Eyre* 107). Albeit following societal norms, Jane disagrees with common Victorian values labelling women as inferior to men. She readily engages in intellectual play. However, she regularly suppresses her innermost feelings and her state of mind can only be deciphered by other characters’ comments. Rochester recounts his first impression of Jane:

I found you full of strange contrasts. Your garb and manner were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, ... and a good deal afraid of making yourself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed, ... there was penetration and power in each glance you gave; when plied by close questions, you found ready and round answers. (*Eyre* 315)

Rochester acknowledges that Jane was brought up portraying a certain ideal in a woman. Her life at Lowood taught her to keep her thoughts and feelings hidden. Even in her writing, she mostly remains secretive about her actions and motives. It appears that she hardly knows and understands her own world. Rochester openly admits that she is intelligent and versed in conversation. He values her listening skills, a capacity important in an amateur detective, and says:

strange that [he] should choose [her] for the confidant of all this, [a] young lady; passing strange that [she] should listen to [him] quietly, as if it were the most usual thing in the world for a man like [him] to tell stories ... to a quaint, inexperienced girl like [her]! (*Eyre* 141)

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<sup>27</sup> For simplicity’s sake, all references to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Eyre* [page].

Her quiet disposition enables her to use her inert abilities, like intellect and observation. She is less guided by intuition than Emily or Catherine and believes in thinking situations through. Even though the reader notices her intelligence, her habits of repression are stronger in keeping her character in check, thereby making her also less adventurous.

Although Jane notices and contemplates strange happenings, her reasoning skills are like Emily's. Once she detects something, she makes an almost conscious decision to disremember it. For example, when she hears 'a demonic laugh – low, suppressed, and deep' close to her room, she gets up and asks herself 'Was that Grace Poole? And is she possessed with a devil?' (*Eyre* 146). She is curious and steps outside, thereby noticing smoke coming from Mr Rochester's room. When helping him, '[she] thought no more of Grace Poole, or the laugh' (*Eyre* 146). When Rochester returns to his rooms, he says 'I have found it all out ... it is as I thought,' Jane replies 'How, sir?' (*Eyre* 148), but he does not give her a reply and she drops the conversation. After her wedding veil is destroyed, she suspects Poole and confronts Rochester: 'I wish it more now than ever; ... [to] explain to me the mystery of that awful visitant' (*Eyre* 285), but he refuses. Later, he comments on her inquisitiveness:

When you are inquisitive, Jane, you always make me smile. You open your eyes like an eager bird, and make every now and then a restless movement, as if answers in speech did not flow fast enough for you, and you wanted to read the tablet of one's heart.  
(*Eyre* 312)

At this moment, Rochester downplays the seriousness of the conversation by comparing Jane to an animal and dismisses Jane's query as flighty. However, he later explains that the culprit was his wife Bertha.

Jane prides her observation skills as being superior to others. When she queries about her employer, Mrs Fairfax gives her an unsatisfactory account. She muses that 'there are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character, or observing and

describing salient points: the good lady evidently belongs to this class;' (*Eyre* 102); in fact, she is wrong here. She observes carefully to construct meaning. When the house party arrive, she states: 'Adèle flew to the window. I followed, taking care to stand on one side, so that, screened by the curtain, I could see without being seen' (*Eyre* 163). Thereafter, she is quite capable of interpreting the different guests; however, at other times her interpretation skills fail her.

Even though she knows how to phrase the correct questions for her investigation, she cannot fully comprehend situations. When investigating Grace Poole, she proceeds to find out Poole's routine in the household which she describes minutely, commenting that 'not a soul in the house, except [her] noticed her habits, or seemed to marvel at them' (*Eyre* 162). Moreover, during her second meeting with Rochester, Jane understands that he hints at his troublesome past. She later writes that she 'rose, deeming it useless to continue a discourse which was all darkness to [her]' and reasons that '[her] interlocutor was beyond [her] penetration' (*Eyre* 136). Jane concludes that she must wait until he wants to tell her more, rather than ask the pertinent questions which would give her more insight.

Furthermore, Jane's extreme politeness restraints her, unlike Emily's high level of inquisitiveness. Jane avoids pressing people for information. Firstly, Jane wonders about Mrs Fairfax's status and is intrigued to find out more, but resolves that 'it was not polite to ask too many questions: besides, [she] was sure to hear in time' (*Eyre* 93). Only later does she find out that she is a dependant like her. Secondly, when Jane asks Mrs Fairfax why Mr Rochester regularly evades the Hall, Mrs Fairfax does not answer satisfactorily. Instead of continuing her questioning, she concludes: 'the answer was evasive. I should have liked something clearer: but Mrs Fairfax wither could not, or would not, give me more explicit information ... It was evident, indeed, that she wished me to drop the subject, when I did accordingly' (*Eyre* 126). In this instance, she cannot even admit her desire to know more. Whenever she is baffled, she concludes, 'as I found it for the present inexplicable, I turned to the consideration of [other matters]' (*Eyre* 144).

Continuously, she is restricted and adapts a polite front, thereby hindering her investigation. She is also entrenched in her social status as being positioned between the servants and the upper echelons.

Intrinsically, Jane and Emily live in similar Gothic surroundings and are dictated by the same limiting characteristics. Brontë's supplementary Gothicism induces more than fear and excitement, as it also colourfully portrays a heroine's suffering, giving the novel a psychological depth. Quite different to Emily and Catherine, Jane does not take any physical or mental steps towards unscrambling the mystery. When the night is interrupted by a scream and Rochester blames a servant's bad dream, the other guests accept his explanation, however, Jane doubts it. She knows that Rochester is covering up the incident, even though she does not know why she readies herself. When Rochester comes to her room, instead of asking what happened, she merely asks, 'Am I wanted?' (*Eyre* 206). She wonders while watching over Mr Mason, 'what crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion ...? – what mystery, that broke out now in fire and now in blood, at the deadest hours of night?' (*Eyre* 209). Once Mason has left the manor, she does not further question Rochester. Although she ties everything together in her mind, she cannot ask the resulting questions because even characters evade her such as Rochester after the fire. She does not have the opportunity to speak to him for several weeks and once he returns, Jane has forgotten about her resolve. As such, the narrative restricts her examination multiple times, and she relies on time to do the unravelling.

Ultimately, all of Jane's questions are answered; however, she is not the one to strive for these answers. She waits until Rochester explains them to her once they meet again. At the close of the novel, when all the mysteries have been clarified, Jane allows herself to settle for marriage, experiencing a similar fate to Emily and Catherine. Like the two previous heroines, Jane has ample opportunity to turn detective but ultimately fails. This, however, is not due to her persistence, intellect or rationality, but to the overruling genre.

## Gothic Influences

The Gothic genre provides detectives with a chance for investigation, but they do not take it up. They remain passive women in essence. Even if they are intelligent and well-educated, their nature does not allow them to see an investigation through. ‘Some rudimentary investigation – in the form of domestic spying – is common in Gothic novels, but is usually restricted by the enclosed space in which the investigator is permitted to move, and characterized by mistaken inferences’ (Herbert 189). Jane, Emily and Catherine show curiosity about the perceived mysteries and use observation and their experience in their inquiries. Jane is more adept at seeing real mysteries and is not as much led by her intuition as Catherine and Emily. She does not carry a single investigation through, even though she has all the clues at her disposal. Catherine and Emily imagine clues and misinterpret them but actively seek solutions. Herbert comments, ‘In general, a concentration on atmosphere rather than on logical deduction distinguishes Gothic fiction from modern crime and detective fiction’ (189).

The three novels can certainly be interpreted as an exploration of women’s lives in the patriarchal society the heroines lived in. Gothic novels may strive to alter a conservative viewpoint even if their female protagonists always find a happy marriage at the close of each novel which ends their investigations. Whereas Emily and Jane’s sufferings are real, Catherine’s are less pronounced. Even though they are at times overcome with emotion, they can still be brave, calm, and intelligent. They initiate a deductive process – based on reasoning– via observation, questioning and inference. These female sleuths ‘are typically victims of crime and held captive, but also escape through proto-detective methods to triumph in the end’ (Gavin ‘Feminist’ 259). All three heroines overcome their troubles unharmed.

Kate Ferguson Ellis discussed Emily in relation to the cultural implications of gender portrayals in ‘Can You Forgive Her?’:

The Gothic heroine was working from the inside, as it were, as a participant in the debate about women as daughters, wives, mothers, rational beings, writers and readers in an emerging domestic formation, the affective nuclear family, working to destabilise the patriarchal underpinnings of this formation, albeit with the aim of reforming it. (264-5)

For Ellis, the Gothic heroine strives to undo patriarchal foundations that were prevailing at the time and propels women to use and own their faculties. Lucy Sussex further comments, ‘With the Radcliffe heroine can be seen a narrative model emerging, of women versus crime, woman conquering and explicating crime – even if only briefly on the way to matrimony’ (31). As such, these female detectives share some traits with women right’s campaigners; however, they are not feminist at heart. The next section of this study analyses female detectives that are more active in their investigations.

### 3.2 Sensation Novels

Sensation novels continue to use female agency. The remote location is replaced with a domestic setting. It inaugurated other changes as well, as Knight demonstrates:

What the sensation novel did was bring both Gothic sensibility and the energy of popular fiction into the domain of conventional respectable fiction – and so achieved a significant impact by suggesting that strange and terrible events could occur right within the respectable home, that shrine of Victorian Values. (*Crime* 39)

The genre added to the debate around Victorian society. Upon its emergence in the early 1860s, ‘Our female sensation novelists’ gave a definition:

sensation writing is an appeal to the nerves rather than to the heart; but all exciting fiction works upon the nerves, ... To use

*Punch*'s definition ..., "It devotes itself to harrowing the mind, making the flesh creep, causing the hair to stand on end, giving shocks to the nervous system, destroying conventional moralities, and generally unfitting the public for the prosaic avocations of life". (354)

Sensation fiction was heavily criticised as the *Quarterly Review* from 1863 shows:

A class of literature has grown up around us ... playing no inconsiderable part in moulding the minds and forming the habits and tastes of its generation; and doing so principally, we had almost said exclusively, by "preaching to the nerves." ... Excitement, and excitement alone, seems to be the great end at which they aim. (qtd in James 17)

For the first time in literary history, this new genre 'took crime right into the domestic sphere, the very heart of Victorian society' (Worthington 'Newgate' 23). The family was the highest of Victorian bourgeois values, at its centre the respectable home, and sensation fiction showed corrupted portrayals of families. Brantlinger explains, '[sensation novels] stripped the veils from Victorian respectability and prudery, exposing bigamists and adulterers, vampires and murderesses' (26). Thomas Boyle points out that 'the stories tend to suggest that the deterioration in the social fibre often occurs where things have the greatest appearance of propriety.' (40). This fascination with especially domestic crime and bringing to justice the least-likely suspect was ingrained in mid-Victorian minds. The fictional outpour was often accompanied by reports in the media on cases and trials. Existing expectations were turned up-side-down.

The 1860s were also a time of continuous and rapid change from a socio-cultural viewpoint. The literary outpour reflected this *Zeitgeist*, almost like a cultural-critical transcriber. It was not deemed proper for women to know about crime; however, they had ample opportunity to engage in it, via newspapers or novels, inducing shocks, thrills and excitement. The 1860s promoted the idea of the 'Angel of the house,' demarcating the

perfect woman a person cultivated in arts, with interests in nurturing, feminine in manners and looks, involved in charity, uninterested in business and politics, not overly educated and ultimately submissive when confronted with elders or males. Woman was defined in relation to man, as his ideal opposite. Jerome Meckier sees this restructuring as ‘increasing ethical uncertainty’ and points out that ‘[w]hat began as moral earnestness produced an age of observance rather than assurance’ (104-105).

Simultaneously, first voices could be heard calling for better education for women and allowing them to university<sup>28</sup>, promoting the idea that women could be more than daughters, wives, companions or governesses. Part of the reticence in allowing women into education was based on the differences between men and women, especially explained by women’s nature and their fulfilment of social roles. It also meant that traditional values were further questioned.

The position of mid-Victorian women was restrictive. Women were supposed to marry and were passed from their fathers to their husbands, not unlike property. In 1876, William Blackstone set the ground by stating:

by marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything. (1: 430)

The conservatives and the more liberal thinkers made marriage the core of their discussions. Rachel Ablow writes:

conservative commentators, ... usually understood female influence to depend on a form of marital sympathy that results

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<sup>28</sup> Katherina Rowold writes:

Gaining access to university education was one of the campaigns of the nineteenth-century women’s movement that gathered momentum in the 1860s in Britain, and it was one of the successful campaigns. The first women’s college, Hitchin, later Girton, was founded in 1869 ... and four years later, the University of London admitted women to its degrees. (10)



from women's natural propensity to mould themselves to others,  
... and from the identity of their interests with their husbands'.

(168)

This woman 'must, in a certain degree, be plastic herself if she would mould others' (11), Mrs Sandford writes in *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (1833). Sarah Lewis in *Woman's Mission* (1840) adds that 'woman, at present, [is] ... the regulating power of the great social machine' but allows that this power depends on 'the very exclusion contained, [which gives them] the power to judge of questions by the abstract rules of right and wrong' (46).

Contrarily, more liberal thinkers advocated for more equality in marriage and doubted common interests between husbands and wives. Moreover, they believed that the legal status of a married woman, considered to be under her husband's protection and authority, was not a successful model. William Thompson writes, 'The less of resemblance, or equality, the less there will be of sympathy; the less power to resist and the less of control, the greater will be the temptation to, the more infallible will be the certainty of, abuse of power' (12). J.S. Mill continues that 'even with true affection, authority on the one side and subordination on the other prevent perfect confidence' (141). He believes that wives conceal their true thoughts to avoid feeling ashamed or being open to intimidation.

Women experienced real disadvantages as wives, and this topic found its way into literature, as sensation fiction made the topic of 'unhappy' marriages its theme. Even if the heroines marry and experience a happy-ever-after, the leitmotif is nevertheless contextualised and serves as a basis for developing mysteries. The sensation genre allows women 'to seize control over their identities, and of the identities of the men who love them,' (Ablow 174) and takes women out of the general conception of being objects and vehicles for masculine proliferation. Brantlinger observes:

there is a strong interest in sexual irregularities, adultery, forced marriages, and marriages formed under false pretences. But rather

than striking forthright blows in favour of divorce law reform and greater sexual freedom, sensation novels usually tend merely to exploit public interest in these issues. (6)

Richard Fantina and Kimberly Harrison in *Victorian Sensations* further explain, ‘While the newly instituted divorce courts provided lurid content for the daily newspapers, a many sensation novels followed suit with narratives that questioned the sanctity of the family and the stability of middle-class mores’ (xii). The restrictive gender roles collide with women’s dissatisfaction and their novelistic portrayal.

These ‘new’ 1860s heroines have the possibility to shape their identities within the family unit, with each member having their distinct place in the household. However, Marina Cano-Lopez shows that Victorian society was not so uniform, and the notion of going against the grain was accepted in magazines, ‘provid[ing] [a] contradictory definition of womanhood’ and having stories that ‘defined women according to their domestic cares, yet at the same time, it implied that good domestic management was not natural ... and encouraged readers to participate in public discourse’ (257). As such a ratification of the ideal and the new possibilities are portrayed in these accounts. Domesticity was an essential part of mid-Victorian life, and women were its keeper. This concept was shaken by crime and investigation.

Panek explores the limits of detectives in sensation fiction:

A principal premise of the sensation novel is admiration for patient, even heroic suffering – the antithesis to using reason to solve problems ... but using a detective to solve problems was not entirely a safe proposition. ... in sensation novels, however, arrest, trial and judicial punishment rarely occur. Usually providence ... intervenes to re-establish justice, or sometimes, ... families are permitted to enact private justice before providence takes over.’ (*Holmes* 143)

Therefore, detectives in sensation novels, whether they are amateurs or professionals, can search, discover and evaluate evidence; yet, their hands are tied because alternative routes of resolution are pushed. Women fill the gap between justice – a male concept - and the desire for privacy – a female concept.

In terms of narrative techniques and content, the sensation genre draws much on Austen and Brontë. A common feature of these texts is that they use first-person accounts to construct an omniscient narration. Generally, sensation fiction relies on individuals' reports, letters, documents or diary entries to explain events that are of a perplexing, frightening or estranging nature. Sensation fiction strives to combine 'an unlimited use of suspense and coincidence with an almost scientific concern for accuracy and authenticity,' (Hughes 16) taking realism and romance to its limits within the home. The classic Gothic genre shares a lot of kinship with sensation in terms of plot, setting, tone and motif: gloom, castles or stately homes, aristocratic villains, vulnerable heroines, supernatural events, passion, monstrous crimes and madness.

Moreover, the role women play in sensation fiction becomes primordial, as they choose freedom and take on modes of behaviour deemed indecent by conventional society. First, they are put into extremely demanding situations for the plot to unravel<sup>29</sup>. They must suffer, and eventually overcome their difficulties. Geraldine Jewsbury remarks: 'If in after times the manners and customs of English life in 1864 were to be judged from the novels of the day, it would naturally be assumed that people were committing bigamy en masse' (qtd. in Fahnestock *Bigamy* 57). One of the reasons for such a heightened outpour might be women's issues. Finally, sensation fiction was:

innovative in its portrayal of strong-minded females ... many  
readers seem to have identified with them. Women were at last

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<sup>29</sup> In 1866, E. S. Dallas wrote:

The life of women cannot well be described as a life of action. When women are thus put forward to lead the action of a plot, they must be urged into a false position. To get vigorous action they are described as rushing into crime and doing masculine deeds. Thus they come in the worst light, and the novelist finds that to make an effect he has to give up his heroine to bigamy, to murder ... and to all sorts of adventures which can only signify her fall. (2: 298)

beginning to rebel against their subservient position in society and, above all, in marriage. The sensation novel provided an outlet for resentments. (Diamond 5)<sup>30</sup>

The novels hereafter discussed enlist strong-minded females acting as amateur detectives rebelling against the position they were put in, in their hope to seek justice for a loved person, either to prevent wrong-doings or in the case of murder, to seek revenge. These detectives' characters, motivations and ways of arriving at a conclusion of a mystery are all different, but they share similarities, especially when it comes to acting 'outside the box' and going against the conventional grain. The mostly female readership can observe crime from a discreet distance.

### **Wilkie Collins' *The Diary of Anne Rodway* (1856)**

The *Diary of Anne Rodway* was first published in *Household Words* and later reused under the title 'Brother Owen's Story of Anne Rodway' in the collection *The Queen of Hearts* (1859). Wilkie Collins manages to portray the seamstress's world effectively by giving lower-class Anne Rodway a unique voice to let the reader into her universe. As the title suggests, the proto-sensation novella is written in diary form, which should be treated very differently to other oeuvres due to its personal testimony. Collins uses this technique to tackle gender within a private format. It enables Anne to express opinions, manner and events, thereby establishing the social order of her world and her identity. It gives her the opportunity to tell her story, have control over how the text progresses and how she appears within the text even if men are around. The men involved are foremost the male police, portrayed as unobservant and dismissive, a friendly, but authoritarian doctor and later her fiancé. Anne wants to find out who murdered her friend, Mary Mallinson.

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<sup>30</sup> These resentments would come back again and be more openly expressed in the 1890s as part of the New Woman movement.

The events unfold one evening when two policemen bring a seriously-injured Mary home. At first, Anne has to resist common belief that her friend just had an accident and is overcome by the news, showing feminine behaviour by kissing and comforting her friend. The police have ‘no evidence to show how the blow on her temple ha[s] been inflicted’ and the male doctor also dismisses the case as an accident as he believes that ‘she must have fallen down in a fit ... and struck her head ... and so have given her brain ... a fatal shake’ (Collins *Diary* 16)<sup>31</sup>. The men in authority refuse to investigate Mary’s subsequent death. Moreover, these middle-class men’s opinion on lower-class women is prejudiced as they regard them to seek comfort in drink or drugs, thereby provoking accidents. As Emsley explains, ‘the poorer sections of the working class, who eked out a living with casual labour, were often equated with the criminal classes during the 1850s and 1860s’ (*Police* 74).

Anne refuses to accept their explanations and quickly discovers her first piece of evidence: a piece of cravat ‘torn off violently from the rest’ and deduces that Mary’s death was provoked ‘by foul means’ (*Diary* 18). Anne is presented as more perceptive in her observation and her knowledge than the men. Furthermore, she analyses Mary’s wounds and juxtaposes them with the police enquiry. She concludes that they do not match. Intrinsically, Anne gathers necessary prerequisites for her case. Summerscale explains that ‘testimony needed to be backed up by material proof. Only things would do: the button, the boa, the nightgown, the knife’ (216)<sup>32</sup>. Premonition grips Anne and she is fearful of the course of events.

After talking again to the doctor, she hands the torn cravat over to the authorities but remains ‘more firmly persuaded than ever that there is some dreadful mystery in connection with that blow on poor lost Mary’s temple’ (*Diary* 27). The ensuing inquest results in an unsatisfactory verdict for Anne by pronouncing ‘Accidental Death’ (*Diary*

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<sup>31</sup> For simplicity’s sake, all references to Willkie Collins’ *The Diary of Anne Rodway* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Diary* [page].

<sup>32</sup> Summerscale here echoes Jeremy Bentham’s advice in *A Treatise on Judicial Evidence* (9-12)

26). Even though the police say, ‘that they could make no investigations with such a slight clue to guide them,’ Anne withstands and is guided by her intuition, ‘I cannot give any good reason why I think so, but I know that if I had been one of the jury at the inquest, nothing should have induced me to consent to such a verdict’ (*Diary* 27). In a dream, she is reminded of the cravat days later, ‘I thought it was lengthened into a long clue, like the silken thread that led to Rosamond’s Bower’ and an angel tells her to ‘go on, still; the truth is at the end, waiting for you to find it’ (*Diary* 34).

Throughout her journal, Anne shows more conviction and rationality than any of the men involved. By chance, Anne finds the second half of the cravat in a rag bin. She schemes ‘to get possession of the old cravat without exciting any suspicion’ through ‘a little quickness’ on her side (*Diary* 36). Her interrogation of the shopkeeper enables her to trace the woman who brought the rags. Through her actions and by using interpretative techniques, she finds Mrs Horlick, the charwoman, who names the cravat’s former owner. Then, her courage falters but she motivates herself enough to speak in ‘bold words’ convincing him that Mary had ‘been telling ... a pack of lies’ (*Diary* 41, 43) about him. She confidently confronts a man she suspects of murder, ‘When your old neck-tie was torn, did you know that one end of it went to the rag-shop, and the other fell into my hands?’ (*Diary* 41). The man is not the murderer, merely a cab driver who drove the murderer on the night of the crime. This episode is colourfully detailed and shows that Anne gains in self-confidence as she manipulates the man.

Contrarily, at times Anne is so emotionally involved and upset by the unravelling of the mystery that she feels incapable of writing, reinscribing gender norms, for example from March 8<sup>th</sup> to March 10<sup>th</sup>. As such, she shows entirely feminine traits –grief, crying and shivering uncontrollably – and cannot continue her daily routine and the case. Here, her rationality retreats under the weight of her emotional reactions. She uses her last bit of energy to confront a driver who saw the murder. Immediately, she is out of her depths and glad to return home. Robert comes back from America, and she falls ‘on his breast’ (*Diary* 45) to seek comfort from a man she trusts. Even though feminist scholars interpret

this passage quite differently by stating that the case was forcefully taken from Anne<sup>33</sup>, she has actually willed him to return right from the start of her diary: ‘if he only returned’ (*Diary* 3) and throughout it, she repeatedly mentions Robert and her desire to marry him.

From now on, she resigns from the case and lets Robert take over, even agreeing with him that it is ‘best that he should carry out the rest of the investigation alone’ because her ‘strength and resolution have been too hardly taxed already’ (*Diary* 47). Robert leaves the next day to meet the cab driver, but he has more trouble obtaining information than Anne had. Obviously, Anne’s pertinent questioning did not threaten the man, however, Robert experiences high distrust in the man and he can only acquire information through bribing. While Robert brings the case to a satisfactory close, Anne resumes her feminine duty and ‘work[s] harder than ever at [her] needle’ (*Diary* 50). She leaves off her rational, powerful and inquiring mind and rejoices Robert by saying that ‘the hand of Providence must have guided [her] steps’ (*Diary* 49). She downplays her investigation and leaves the prosecution to the court and her fiancé. In the end, Anne marries Robert and she willingly accepts the social constraints society imposes on its wives.

Overall, even though Anne starts the investigation into her friend’s death, finds and interprets clues correctly, discusses the value of judicial proof with the doctor and her fiancé, she does not bring the investigation to a close. Even if Robert, her partner in detection, had not appeared at the most opportune moment, the outcome of the case cannot be credited to her. The narrative is sentimental at its core, the actual murder or inquest act as framing devices. Anne constantly switches between feminine feelings of despair and agony to feelings of courage and wilfulness in her investigation. Anne’s unique character and her dire circumstances in life play as much a role as her investigative methods, as contemporaries were ready to comment on.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For further details on their arguments, see: Nayder 180, Watson 27.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Dickens comments on the novella:

I cannot tell you what a high opinion I have of *Anne Rodway* ... I read the first part at the office with strong admiration, and read the second on the railway coming here ... My behaviour before my fellow-passengers was weak in the extreme, for I cried as much as you could possibly desire ... I think it excellent, feel a personal pride and pleasure in it, which is

*Anne Rodway* can be regarded as the antithesis of the ‘lady’ detectives of the 1860s. She is an amateur detective not working for personal gain or regarding detection as a form of employment. Anne merely seeks justice for a dear friend, stating, ‘A kind of fever got possession of me – a vehement yearning to go on from this first discovery and find out more, no matter what the risk might be’ (*Diary* 39). Anne’s achievements are more based on chance and perseverance than on having particular detection skills. Finally, she is ‘brought back into the reality of appropriate gendered placements before the close of the narrative’ (Watson 28). This pattern prevails in sensation fiction for years to come. As the next section of this dissertation demonstrates, multiple other females were infected with the ‘fever’<sup>35</sup>. ‘*Anne Rodway* was an important development in Collins’s exploration of the detective move’ (Trodd ‘Early’ 29). Ultimately, Anne is what Kelly Gardiner terms ‘Plucky Heroine’:

she is a character who doesn’t accept police findings, will not stay home safe after dark, who argues with the bad guys, sniffs out evil-doers, and frees herself from every predicament. She is intelligent and resourceful and observant; ... more trusting, perhaps, initially more innocent, certainly unarmed, and in great danger in those shadowy laneways or spooky houses. (8)

Gardiner’s characteristics illustrate Anne’s detection, even if she is cured of her ‘fever’ in the end. Furthermore, ‘Collins’s stories share many qualities with his novels – an interest in detection, documentary evidence and the instability of identity,’ (Bowen 37) which is analysed in the context of the next female sleuth, Marian Halcombe from *The Woman in White*.

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a delightful sensation, and I know no one else who could have done it (Dickens to Collins 13 July 1856, qtd in Panek *Holmes* 113).

Dickens also highlighted the narrative’s force by stating ‘the admirable personation of the girl’s identity and point of view, it is done with an amount of honest pains and devotion to the work which few men have better reason to appreciate than I’ (Dickens to Collins 13 July 1856, qtd in Peterson 36).

<sup>35</sup> Term anticipating Gabriel Betteredge ‘detective fever’ in *The Moonstone*, also written by Wilkie Collins.



### Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860)

Collins's *The Woman in White* was serialised in *All the Year Round* and published in book form in 1860. It is a landmark work when it comes to sensation fiction and has also been labelled more a mystery than a detective novel. Robert Ashley explains:

Collins was not trying to write detective fiction; he was not aware that such a genre existed ... He was writing standard mid-Victorian melodrama ... employ[ing] many situations and devices which have since become the detective story writer's stock in trade. ('Detective' 60)

Like many Victorian novels, it was inspired by earlier work on crime. Maurice Méjan's *Recueil des Causes Célèbres* was the source for Collins' plot, as Peterson clarifies, 'in the case of the Marquise de Douhault, Méjan recounts that the lady's brother had seized her estates in 1787 and had then detained her in an asylum under an assumed name' (41). Collins explores crime and mystery by employing various narrators. As such he attempts to control the information given to the reader and uphold a high realistic atmosphere. The novel has repeatedly been labelled 'a novel with a secret' (Brewster xx).

Like Anne, Marian Halcombe keeps a diary which outlines her investigation and shows emotions when searching for truth and justice. She relies on her feminine intuition and prides herself on keeping to facts. For example, whenever she is in disagreement with her sister, she uses the diary to present the events in the rightful light. Tamara Heller, however, rightfully points out that Marian's diary has been subject to Walter Hartright's editing, thereby, the reader is fed exclusive pieces of insight and can only guess at what has been edited out (115).

Collins portrays her as a reasoning and resourceful woman; however, he gives her a masculine facial physicality to match her 'masculine' rationality. When Hartright first meets her, he is 'struck by the rare beauty of her form and by the unaffected grace of her

attitude' (Collins *White* 24)<sup>36</sup>. At first sight, she is utterly feminine. Only when she turns around does he notice that she has 'dark down on her upper lip ... almost a moustache' (*White* 32). He describes her mouth as 'masculine' and the rest of her facial features are 'prominent, piercing [and] resolute' (*White* 25), all descriptions emphasising her manly air. Later, Walter remarks that she is an exceptional woman 'whose quick eye nothing escapes' (*White* 36). Walter notices her potential as a powerful investigator by her minute observational skills. Marian comes across as a consolidation of the sexes, thereby able 'to transgress and destabilise a range of cultural and material norms and boundaries' (Birch 142). In features and manners, her sister, Laura, is her opposite. She is pretty, meek in manner and passive. Collins, in his portrayal of the two female protagonists, uses their bodily descriptions to assign them roles in society. Atypical Marian can act more freely and invest her time in non-feminine ventures as Dresner further explains:

[she] is notable for her androgynous physical qualities, qualities that apparently give her the license to set herself up as an investigator. Though she may occasionally belittle her own detecting abilities, the narrative presents Marian as a decidedly strong investigator,'

and this becomes notable in 'her powers of observation and deductive reasoning skills, and her mastery over language' (20). Whenever Marian is hindered in her detection, she laments, 'If only I had the privileges of a man' and states:

if I had been a man, I would have knocked [Sir Percival] down on the threshold of his own door ... Being, however, nothing but a woman, condemned to patience, propriety, and petticoats for life ... [I] try to compose myself in some feeble and feminine way.  
(*White* 220, 268)

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<sup>36</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* will hereafter follow this pattern: *White* [page].

As such, she remains womanly aware of the constraints of propriety but mentally deliberates her potential.

When Marian hears Walter Hartright's account of meeting the mysterious woman in white, she shows interest and exclaims, 'We must really clear up this mystery, in some way, ... I am all aflame with curiosity' (*White* 28). In quite a direct and aggressive fashion, she finds her mother's old letters and identifies the woman as Anne Catherick. Moreover, she confronts Walter with his love for Laura, 'I have discovered your secret – without help or hint, mind, from anyone else' (*White* 54). She reassures him that he has 'a woman for [his] ally. Under such conditions, success is certain' (*White* 77). Later, she explores her new home with the same spirit and concludes that it was 'a day of investigations and discoveries' (*White* 157). Moreover, she is highly protective of her sister Laura, and wary of her husband, Sir Percival Glyde, and his friend, Count Fosco, keeping them under watch.

Marian uses her deductive reasoning and couples it with her skill for observation. When Laura does not come back from her meeting with Anne Catherick, she goes to investigate: 'I detected the footsteps of two persons – large footsteps like a man's and small footsteps, which by putting my own feet into them and testing their size in that manner, I felt certain were Laura's' (*White* 227); however, she loses the imprints in the sand. Relying on her intuition and deductive reasoning, she finds parts of a shawl at an intersection taking her back to the house. She feels 'great relief' (*White* 227) once she is certain that Laura is safe. Furthermore, she knows how to use language to gain insight into baffling events. When she interrogates Laura as to who was outside her door, she manages to deduce the person: "'Was it a man or a woman?' 'A woman, I heard the rustling of her gown.' 'A rustling like silk?' 'Yes, like silk.' 'Madame Fosco has evidently been watching outside'" (*White* 240).

Moreover, Marian uses her reasoning, her intellect and intuition on Laura's behalf. She overhears a conversation between Glyde and his lawyer unnoticed and applauds her investigative skills. When she wants to investigate Fosco and Glyde further, she has to

climb out onto the veranda roof. She is hindered by her feminine clothes and decides to shed them:

A complete change in my dress was imperatively necessary for many reasons. ... In my ordinary evening costume, I took up the room of three men at least. In my present dress, when it was held close about me, no man could have passed through the narrowest spaces more easily than I. The little breath left on the roof of the veranda, ... made this a serious consideration. If I knocked anything down, if I made the least noise, who could say what the consequences might be?' (*White* 250).

Here Marian shows that she is not only willing to undertake the investigation, but she also goes to great length to succeed. From this moment onwards, Collins lessens her importance in the novel, her limitations in investigating are shown and she is hindered by her 'feminine' weaknesses as she succumbs to illness after this mission. As such, the veranda scene becomes a shift in the narrative. It is also the only instance in the novel when Marian leaves all propriety behind and is severely 'punished' by this act.

The main reason for Marian's investigation is to guard her sister's safety. She strives to educate herself by seeking the help of legal professionals. She finds a sanctum for her sister and herself after she freed Laura from Percival's attempts to embezzle her money. She shows wilfulness to act against the institution of marriage if the union proves to be unhealthy and detrimental<sup>37</sup>. When Marian first discovers how viciously Sir Percival treated Laura, her immediate reaction is one of crying. She regards her outburst as passive, though she wishes to be more rational and active. She still sees the need for further

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<sup>37</sup> Collins may have indirectly commented on the *Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act* of 1857 which allowed divorce under certain conditions. He hints at the possibility of a breakdown of the traditional female role.

As such Marian counter-acts the status-quo as 'for much of the nineteenth century, married women in England had no legal identity of their own. Unless a legal settlement was drawn up to protect her, everything a bride had – her body included – became the property of her husband' (Salah 32).

investigation but states her ‘courage was only a woman’s courage, after all; and it was very near to failing’ (*White* 250).

Marian is intelligent enough to know that she must keep on friendly terms with Fosco even though she finds him attractive. In these instances, she has no control over her actions and experiences inner turmoil. After discovering that the Count opened her letters, she connives a plan to ensure a safer delivery. She becomes more womanly as the novel progresses, leaving her masculine courage behind and therefore also her investigative skills. Furthermore, her near-fatal illness allows the count to explore her diary. Dresner explains:

By reading her diary, Fosco accordingly reads of Marian’s attraction to him; investigated by the one whom she would investigate, she stands incriminated by her own hand. Fosco compounds the violation of her secret writing not only by reading it, but also by having the temerity to write an entry in her diary himself. (26)

After this, she resumes herself to being a ‘true’ Victorian woman; her diary entries stop and she is not permitted to voice her opinion as regards the mystery again. Due to Fosco’s reading of her diary, she is observed by society at large, loses her power and unique identity. The consequence is that she drops her investigation and complies with societal rules. Collins keeps a close check on how far he lets his heroines develop, always keeping patriarchal mid-Victorians in mind, as Dresner writes, ‘Collins is noted for his depictions of strong, intelligent women, yet his most courageous heroines are not allowed to reap the fruits of their investigative labour directly’ (20). Marian, thereafter, observes orthodox gender roles and leaves it to Walter to save Laura. However, Marian is probably the first female sidekick to a male investigator as she helped Walter to establish the chain of events.

*The Woman in White* is notable as it works on a similar level to *Anne Rodway*; the heroine, even though intelligent, inquiring, and confident is not allowed to see her

investigations through to the end. As Worthington rightly points out, this novel was ‘not yet fully-fashioned detection and detective fiction, but the themes and patterns are beginning to coalesce’ (‘Newgate’ 25). Furthermore, some critics have suggested that Collins ‘was a feminist before his time’ (Ackroyd 104). Robert Ashley writes:

he deserves particular credit for his resolute heroines, unique among Victorian fictional females both for their strong-mindedness and for their undisguised sex appeal. In his recognition of the unjust restrictions imposed on women by Victorian society, ... Collins was ahead of his time. (‘Reconsidered’ 271)

By adopting a wider theoretical basis, *The Woman in White* shows that independent and traditional female characters can be studied alongside. Insight in the different shifts in perspective as the mystery progresses comes to light. Marian underwent changes from active to passive, from inquisitive to accepting, from forceful to submissive. Though Collins killed off his female detectives’ careers, he was not the only author to use strong females to investigate mysteries and crimes. Mary Elizabeth Braddon is another novelist renowned for her sensationalist tales and her female sleuth can take the investigation yet a step further.

### **Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Eleanor’s Victory* (1863)**

Braddon’s<sup>38</sup> *Eleanor’s Victory* was first published by Tinsley in 1863. Eleanor Vane’s story starts in 1853 when the heroine travels to France to meet her dissolute father after finishing school. She is fifteen and ‘an animated, radiant and exuberant creature, who [creates] an atmosphere of brightness and happiness about her’ (Braddon *Eleanor* 1:

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<sup>38</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon had already achieved fame at this stage in her life with the publication of *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863).

4)<sup>39</sup>. Her father has high hopes on an inheritance should his friend Maurice de Crespigny die before him. One evening, Mr Vane and his daughter stroll Paris's streets and are interrupted by two men who persuade Mr Vane to accompany them, leaving Eleanor alone. On her way home, she meets her childhood friend, Richard Thornton. Eleanor waits for her father's return, but it is Richard who goes out to investigate. At the Morgue, he learns that 'there had not long been brought the body of a gentleman, ... A murder, perhaps, or a suicide' (*Eleanor* 1: 128). Richard does not break the news to Eleanor but asks her to recite the fatal evening. She remembers the two men and describes them minutely: 'One of them was a little Frenchmen, stout and rosy-faced, with a light moustache and beard;' the other man, she pronounces, 'a disagreeable-looking man, ... [she] scarcely saw his face, ... and [she] fancied he was an Englishman' (*Eleanor* 1: 137, 138).

Eleanor is overcome by premonitory dreams, echoing Gothic conventions. At this stage, she does not yet know of her father's death, but the returning dreams become 'a slow agony of terror and perplexity' (*Eleanor* 1: 148). She falls severely ill and the doctor recommends that she should be told immediately about her father's death to avoid further mental damage. Eleanor cannot accept her father's suicide and scrutinises his final letter: 'never forget Robert Lau- ... murderer of your helpless old ... a cheat and a villain who ... someday live to revenge the fate ...' (*Eleanor* 1: 171). She concludes, 'my father tells me to revenge his murder' (*Eleanor* 1: 172). The neighbouring Signora wants to prevent Elena's quest for revenge by asking, 'Is this womanly? Is this Christian-like?' but Eleanor is not deterred and says, 'I know that [finding my father's murderer] is henceforward the purpose of my life, and that it is stronger than myself' (*Eleanor* 1: 172, 173). She dedicates the rest of her life to finding her father's murderer.

Eleanor returns to London with Robert and his mother seeking employment. Eleanor is unhappy as it means momentarily giving up her search in London. Robert

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<sup>39</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Eleanor's Victory* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Eleanor* [vol: page].

declares her endeavour as ‘unwomanly,’ the chances of meeting the murderer unrealistic, and advises her to ‘abandon all thought of an impossible revenge’ (*Eleanor* 1: 228, 233). Eleanor leaves for her new position at Hazlewood but not before getting Robert’s promise to contact her when new clues emerge.

Even two and a half years later, she is convinced that ‘if [she] met that man some instinct of hate and horror would reveal [his] identity to [her]’ (*Eleanor* 1: 280). As such she relies on her intuition on recognising the murderer upon sight. Her intuition proves her wrong when she meets a young man called Launcelot Darrell. Weeks later, she sees him with two other men. A thought flashes, ‘This man [is] the sulky stranger, who had stood on the Parisian Boulevard ... waiting to entrap her father’ (*Eleanor* 2: 51).

She is disappointed in her own capabilities as she has lived with the man for months and ‘no instinct in her own breast has revealed to her the presence of her father’s murderer’ (*Eleanor* 2: 55). She thereafter doubts her intuition and concentrates on finding facts. She tracks Launcelot’s movements during the time of her father’s death and finds out that he supposedly travelled to India. She doubts this and checks the passenger list of the *Princess Alice* with Robert. They find out that ‘the ship sailed without Mr Darrell’ as his name was crossed out (*Eleanor* 2: 83). Upon hearing the news, Eleanor is overcome with emotions and faints at the shipbroker’s.

At this stage, Robert is cautious of the success of her investigation. He reminds her of her limitations as a woman-detective:

Supposing you can prove this; by such evidences as will be very difficult to get at; by such an investigation as will waste your life, blight your girlhood, warp your nature, unsex your mind, and transform you from a candid and confiding woman into an amateur detective? Suppose you do all this ... what then?  
(*Eleanor* 2: 87)

However, Eleanor is not deterred even if the righteousness of Robert’s words troubles her. ‘What shame and degradation I must wade through before I can keep my



promise,' she thinks (*Eleanor* 2: 96). She returns to Hazlewood by becoming Gilbert Monckton's wife. She regards her husband lawyer as useful in her quest to watch the Darrell's and de Crespigny's. Eleanor does not confide in her husband about her investigation. Her newly gained status allows her to question the suspect, asking, 'have you never done base things for the sake of money, Launcelot Darrell?' (*Eleanor* 2: 175). The man's face darkens but he is evasive. She continues her investigation by watching and interrogating people. As always, she strives on planlessly relying on Robert's guidance. Sarcastically he says, 'You go cleverly to work, Mrs Monckton, for an amateur detective!' and advises her to search Launcelot's rooms (*Eleanor* 2: 213). He patronises her by stating, 'The science of detection, Mrs Monckton, lies in the observation of insignificant things' (*Eleanor* 2: 214). He implores her to leave detection to professionals, 'detective officers; they are the polished bloodhounds of our civilised age, and very noble and estimable animals when they do their duty conscientiously, but fair-haired young ladies should be kept out of this galère' (*Eleanor* 2: 215). Still, he promises her to find further proof and they access Launcelot's travel drawings. Robert notices on one of the sketches the monogram 'R.L.' which Eleanor connects to her father's mention of 'Robert Lan-' in his final letter. Furthermore, they find a Parisian sketch signed 'Robert Lance' showing men playing écarté, drawn on 12<sup>th</sup> August '53, incidentally the day of Mr Vane's demise. Hereafter, Eleanor and Robert deduce the motive for murder as both Mr Vane and Launcelot were competitors for de Crespigny's inheritance. Robert muses that 'the science of detection is, after all, very weak and imperfect; and that the detective officer owes many of his greatest triumphs to patience, and a series of happy accidents' (*Eleanor* 2: 253).

When Eleanor and Robert's investigation arrives at an impasse, a new arrival in the novel livens matters up as Launcelot's 'old acquaintance,' Monsieur Bourdon, is no other than 'the talkative Frenchman who persuaded George Vane to leave his daughter alone upon the Boulevard' (*Eleanor* 2: 279). Eleanor finally enrolls her husband, who does not support her. Once de Crespigny is dead, the testament reveals Launcelot as the sole

heir, and Mr Monckton attests that the will is no forgery. Eleanor is unsuccessful in her quest of bringing the murderers to justice or preventing Launcelot from inheriting. When the investigation is at another stalemate, Mr and Mrs Monckton are estranged as Eleanor cannot accept the state of the affair. She decides to leave her husband and takes up employment as Mrs Lennard's companion in Paris. She meets Mr Bourdon who blackmails her by claiming that he is in possession of the true will. Bourdon criticises Eleanor's detective skills by stating, 'when young and beautiful ladies mix themselves with such matters, it is no wonder they make mistakes' (*Eleanor* 3: 246). Eleanor and Major Lennard search his room and find the will that might serve as 'the proof of Launcelot Darrell's guilt at last' (*Eleanor* 3: 276).

In the right will, Eleanor inherits from de Crespigny. Launcelot, when faced with his crimes, pleads innocence. Eleanor, unable to carry out her revenge, declares, 'I have tried to keep my oath; but ... I cannot carry out the purpose of my life' (*Eleanor* 3: 305). Mr Monckton knows that he cruelly wronged his wife by not believing her and seeks harmony. In the end, he acknowledges her 'victory' and applauds her decision to let Launcelot go. He concludes that 'this is the only revenge Providence ever intended for beautiful young women' (*Eleanor* 3: 306). Quite different to Anne and Marian, Eleanor is part of the investigation until the very end. Even though she faces criticism, she is supported by Robert, the Major and ultimately her husband. Her status as a woman allows her to be forgiving and held in high regard for her efforts, unlike the previous investigators.

Eleanor's character has an impact on her investigation. She is described as 'a woman of a thousand – in all that there is of resolute – in all that there is of impulse – in all that there is of daring – a woman unapproachable, unsurpassable; beautiful to dam the angels! (*Eleanor* 2:308). This passage summarises her methods, her impulsive and daring nature and her resolution to find her father's murderers. She uses her womanly charms to enlist Robert, the Major and ultimately her husband's help. Moreover, she uses subterfuge, secretive observation and disguise. As Lyn Pykett explains, 'the heroine

engages in concealment in order to carry out the covert detection that will enable her to avenge the death of her father' (*Novel* 88). Repeatedly, she shows initiative using her wits, before she proceeds. She does not give up and is more successful than her Gothic counterparts as she pulls her investigation through, based on facts and clues she collects. Still, in moments of hardship, she cries, doubts and faints. Even though she experiences downcast 'female' moments, she never gives up. This brings her above Marian and Anne, as she remains with the investigation until the very end, the narrator reasons that:

after all, Eleanor's Victory was a proper womanly conquest, and not a stern, classical vengeance. The tender woman's heart triumphed over the girl's rash vow; and poor George Vane's enemy was left to the only Judge whose judgements are always righteous. (*Eleanor* 3: 312)

The story still echoes the gothic especially in its portrayal of the emotional heroine, somewhat stronger in characterisation than Anne or Marian. This 'superb Nemesis in crinoline' (*Eleanor* 3: 259) is Braddon's only novel in which she presents a central heroine-detective motif. Even though the heroine is repeatedly told that she engages in 'unchristian' and 'unwomanly' undertakings, she is not deterred from her investigation. Although luck and coincidence are part of Eleanor's quest, she manages to find clues and piece them together with her male sidekicks. The setting and plot no longer draw on terror and supernatural devices; yet how suspense is built up within the plot gains territory. Most importantly, Eleanor is a more capable detective than the previous investigators. Despite sharing the same prerequisites, she is not as easily deterred from her course by men or her femininity.

### Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *Clara Vaughan* (1864)

Written in 1863, *Clara Vaughan* was published anonymously in 1864. The novel was publicly well received, and some readers aligned it to Braddon. The 1872 edition finally acknowledged Richard Doddridge Blackmore as the author.

In 1842, when Clara Vaughan is ten, her father is murdered in his bed. Like Eleanor, she strives to clear up the crime and vows to bring the murderer to justice: 'How that deed was done, I learned at once, and will tell. By whom and why it was done, I have given my life to learn' (Blackmore *Clara* 4)<sup>40</sup>. She depicts herself as an emotional being, which might influence her narrative: 'my tale will flow perhaps more easily, until I fall again into a grief almost as dark, and am struck by storms of passion' (*Clara* 6).

Her first clue was left at the crime scene: 'in [her] mother's left hand strongly clutched was a lock of long, black, shining hair. A curl very like it, but rather finer, lay on [her] father's bosom' (*Clara* 4). Right after her father's funeral, she starts her investigation by searching the house and interrogating the servants:

Soon I found out all they knew, and when the first tit and horror  
left me, I passed my whole time, light or dark, in roving from  
passage to passage, from room to room, from closet to closet,  
searching every chink and cranny for the murderer of my father.  
(*Clara* 6)

When her father's half-brother takes over the estate, Clara casts him as the murderer. Thereafter she falls ill from her overtaxed brain and only awakens months later. Several years pass by, and she still wants revenge. To keep her occupied and prepare her for detection, she spends hours in her father's library and 'exhume[s] all records of the most famous atrocities ... the legends of midnight spirits, and the tales of blackest crime, shed their poison on [her]' (*Clara* 9). When she is 15, she inspects her father's room

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<sup>40</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *Clara Vaughan* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Clara* [page].

again. The way in which the light enters the room allows her to make out three letters, drawn in her father's blood, 'L-D-O', on the headboard (*Clara* 12). She takes an imprint and vows once more to do her 'duty to him and [herself]... the death of [her] father's murderer' (*Clara* 16).

In 1849, by coincidence, she finds a dagger in a man-made pool. Light helps her again to spot the glittering object. She deduces that it is 'the tool of murder' and describes it as 'a treacherous, blue, three-cornered blade, with a point as keen as a viper's fang, ... and tenacious as death' (*Clara* 21). Upon closer inspection, she reasons that it is of foreign manufacture. Then, she unsuccessfully investigates her uncle's office hoping to find evidence. Later, she conjures the murderer through a ceremony, however, it fails. She confronts her uncle with the dagger, who recognises it but withholds its owner's name. Her body fails her again, resulting in a prolonged illness.

Once Clara and her mother leave for Devonshire, she wonders if she can ever do her father justice:

all hope of ever detecting and bringing to justice the man, for  
whose death I lived, might seem to grow fainter and fainter. ...  
what prospect was there, ... that I a weak unaided girl, led only  
by set will and fatalism, should ever overtake and grasp a man of  
craft and power, and desperation? (*Clara* 38)

Like Eleanor, Clara fears not to be able to carry out her vow of revenge and justice. After an accident, her mother is fatally injured, and, on her deathbed, tries to discourage Clara but she cannot comply with her mother's final wish. At her mother's funeral, she receives a letter via her uncle, stating: 'The one who slain your brother is at 19 Grove Street London' (*Clara* 61). The letter carries no date, signature or other distinguishing marks. Clara decides to go to London to investigate Grove street. At the first possible address, she asks herself, 'What good am I? Is this my detective adroitness?' (*Clara* 80). Nevertheless, her courage rises, and she tactfully interrogates the mistress of the house. Mrs Elton recognises the handwriting on the letter, and gives her details about a Polish

lady; however, the investigation is at an impasse as the Polish couple left for America. As Mrs Shelfter, her landlady, is worried about her young charge, she calls her uncle John Cutting: ‘a very high-class man, first-rate, [who] has been forever so long in the detective police’ (*Clara* 84). Inspector Cutting carefully listens to Clara’s story; at the close, he promises to catch the criminal but refuses to explain the procedure. He applauds Clara for providing information ‘as clearly as ever [he] knew a female give it’ (*Clara* 86).

Further eight years elapse and Clara is frustrated by the process of having discovered ‘nothing,’ but the past does not leave her as ‘at long dark intervals some impress of the deed itself, more than of the doer ... influences [her]’ (*Clara* 112). Finally, Cutting contacts her to confront her with suspects. They set out to Whitechapel, and Clara is armed with ‘a very keen stiletto’ (*Clara* 114). The Inspector hides her in a back room, and upon leaving advises her to ‘leave it to [her] instinct, or [her] intuition’ (*Clara* 117). However, the visit ends abruptly no nearer to a solution.

Years later, Clara is called to her uncle’s deathbed. He cries out, ‘my fault, ah me, my fault’ (*Clara* 178). Hearing his words, Clara bursts into tears. However, her uncle is slowly nursed back to health. Clara looks ‘forward to the time when [her] poor uncle should be strong enough to tell [her], without risks, that history of himself’ (*Clara* 194). Clara returns to London to investigate the dagger further, but she is unable to ascertain much. Again, at home, she visits her father’s bedroom, and writes, ‘scarcely had I been there ..., when between me and the central light, ... rose a tall gray figure. I am not quite a coward, for a woman at least, but every drop of blood within me at that sight stood still,’ then she realises that her bloodhound has picked up a scent and deduces ‘that he ha[s] smelt the ghost to be a thing of flesh and blood. It might be my father’s murderer ... The supernatural horror fled; all my life was in my veins’ (*Clara* 215). She overcomes her fear and pursues the intruder.

The faithful dog leads her to Mrs Daldy, her aunt, attempting to steal legal documents. Clara interrupts her but takes no action, ‘to avoid the scandal’ (*Clara* 218) and returns the documents to her uncle. He explains the contents of the papers: a feud

between his wife's family and another family in Corsica. Her uncle fled after his wife had been killed and the opposing clan's leader, Lepardo Della Croce, vowed that '[nothing] shall protect [him] from [his] dagger' (*Clara* 263). Clara understands that Lepardo travelled to England with her uncle's children and mistook her father for his brother. Her uncle agrees and states, 'by some instinct, you knew from the first that the deed was mine, although I was not the doer,' and implores her to 'leave [her] revenge to God' (*Clara* 273, 274). However, Clara feels that she is close and is supported by Cutting, who remarks, 'for although [she] is just a female, [she is] doing [her] best to make everything as clear as if told by a male' (*Clara* 275).

Clara reunites her uncle with his children. Their 'adoptive' father turns out to be Professor Lepardo. Clara confronts the Professor and tells him, 'I judge you not at all. God shall judge and smite you. In cold blood you murdered a man who never wronged you' (*Clara* 318). Still seeking revenge, Lepardo takes her prisoner. In a desperate attempt to free herself, she sets fire to the cell's door. She is reunited with her sweetheart, Conrad, and returns home only to learn of her uncle's death. In a final attempt, Lepardo enters Clara's home unlawfully and she shows first doubts, 'what right ha[s] an ignorant girl like me to play judge and jury, or more, to absolve and release a crime against all humanity?' (*Clara* 342). She cannot carry out her revenge, but providence intervenes as Lepardo is killed by his own dog. The remaining mysteries surrounding her uncle's children and the inheritance are cleared up. Ultimately, Clara marries Conrad, and muses 'is it to be suspected that I was more forcible and pronounced in the days of my trial and misery, than now when I am the happiest of all the young mothers of England?' (*Clara* 352). As all the mysteries have been cleared up, she can settle into her domestic duties as wife and mother, leaving detection behind.

*Clara Vaughan's* narration is not as straightforward as *Eleanor's Victory* is, as it is lined with manifold sub-plots: family secrets, romances, a feud and inheritance, that are not necessarily related to her father's murder or the detection process. In structure, it is like *Udolpho*, borrowing many Gothic conventions, such as setting, themes and the

portrayal of characters. Especially the villainous Professor equals Montoni, and the novel lacks all sense of rightful justice. Furthermore, the novel's language is much more colourful, flowery but dark, and appeals to the senses. Clara is highly emotional and states: 'When I hate, I loathe and abhor. I never hate anyone lightly and hardly ever am reconciled, or suppress it' (*Clara* 167). Whenever she finds another clue, she is overcome by the excitement, resulting in faints or illnesses. At other times, she is hysterical and unable to keep a rational thought. As such, her investigation is mostly dictated by light and darkness, which is also reflected in the heroine's emotional states. Most of her clues are found by accident and not necessarily because she is a brilliant investigator. Her father's murder is solved as Clara incessantly worked towards her goal, stringing clues together, using observation and interrogation methods. She is supported by several characters in her quest. Like Eleanor, she cannot act out her revenge and settles down to married life.

### **Sensation's Influences**

Sensation novels portray the first strong women, who are aware of their position and intelligent. As they lead investigations, a change can be detected when compared to the Gothic novel. These females are more pro-active using their skills, have grown in professionalism and subterfuge patriarchal society. Eventually, they dismiss the business of detection in favour of marriage. Overall, they accept responsibility for their actions, while only partially being supported by men. In sensation novels, all the above heroines show privileged knowledge. Knight concludes that the genre 'remains politically conservative,' by explaining:

As a whole [sensation fiction] recognises threats to order, including ones based on gender, sexuality, race and class, but it will find consoling resolutions in sound moral responses, varying amounts of thoughtful detection and a great deal of well-



organised and sometimes vertiginous plotting, ... [and] in female fidelity and endurance. (*Crime* 47)

By 1870, the sensation genre lost its status in literary history. However, within the development of crime fiction, it holds value as a transitional milestone in the creation of the female detective. The move across genres is best summarised by Pykett:

Sensation novels drew on the Gothic novels ... which employed a variety of devices to instil fear and terror into their readers, and whose plots often involved dynastic ambition and intrigue, and the persecution and imprisonment of women. They also owed something to the Newgate novels. ... Many sensation novels derived their plot situations from newspapers, ... and they sometimes borrowed the techniques, character types, and plot situations of lower-class literary forms such as popular melodrama and penny dreadfuls. (*Collins* 87-88)

‘Sensation novels are frequently seen as taking part’ in discussions about women’s roles, ‘either supporting reform or reflecting cultural unease with shifts in separate spheres’ (Fantina and Harrison xvi)<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, these texts have the potential, via their portrayal of strong, intelligent and willful women to subvert Victorian gender ideologies. Collins is credited with creating female characters who defy the Victorian ideal and Braddon is labelled a feminist writer. Both author’s work critiques the conventional system and their female investigators rebel against the norm, Blackmore follows a similar strategy. The threat of unhinging the façade of mid-Victorian families was painful and troubled the Victorian reader greatly.

Furthermore, the cyclical nature of sensation novels demands that amateur lady detectives eliminate the obstacles that prevent their nuptials or continuing their marriages successfully. Once they are wedded or reconciled in their marriages, the need ceases to

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<sup>41</sup> For example, the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, or the first women’s suffrage bill to Parliament in 1869 were highly discussed at the time.

be a detective. Intrinsically, novelists portray a brief feminine liberation from societal norms while still appeasing the reader in the end that conventions have been obeyed.

Slung maintains:

the authors themselves never seem to be quite certain of their creation, intent as they are on playing up the novelty of such a peculiar figure, often abandoning her in mid-career and finishing her off, ... at the matrimonial altar, in order to reassure the Victorian public of her ultimate femaleness. (*Crime* 17)

Collins, Braddon and Blackmore portrayed their heroines in a semi-conventional mode as they all return to their domestic spheres and end their amateur detection for good. The concept of an independent female, working in detection outside the home in an official capacity, seeking compensation, had yet to come into existence. It would not be long. Essentially, sensation fiction eased female detective's paths towards more maturity<sup>42</sup>, and most literary devices were even more attuned to propel the plot and decipher crime.

In the long run, 'the ways in which sensation fiction began to subvert stereotypes of femininity eventually lead into the New Woman fiction at the end of the nineteenth century' (Palmer 111). In the meantime, a different class of detectives arose. These heroines are no longer suddenly and without their doing entangled in dark situations. They carry out their commissioned investigations outside of their own homes. They merge femininity with entrepreneurship. The next chapter fills the gap by looking at the first professional female detectives of the 1860s.

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<sup>42</sup> For a similar point of view, see: Cox xv.

## 4 Female Professional Detectives of the 1860s

‘Indeed it may be said the value of the detective lies not so much in discovering facts, as in putting them together, and finding out what they mean.’

Miss Gladden (*Female* 33)

‘I have heard of the Lady Detectives of London, and you may be aware that old birds are not easily limed.’

Zini to Mrs Paschal (*Lady* 82)

### 4.1 The Basis for Female Detectives

The period leading up to the 1860s saw a cult of domesticity. The Victorian middle-class put a high emphasis on respectability and rigid morality within the household<sup>43</sup>. Remembering the Angel in the House, Lynda Nead describes this ‘perfect ideal of an English wife and mother’ (19) quoting Dr William Acton’s work<sup>44</sup>:

[she is] kind, considerate, self-sacrificing, and sensible, so pure-hearted as to be utterly ignorant and averse to any sensual indulgence, but so unselfishly attached to the man she loves, as to

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<sup>43</sup> Several authors published books, for example, Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1861) and Sophie Ellis’s *The Women of England* (1843) advocating the ideal woman. Ellis, for example, equates female happiness with domesticity. Even if these manuals were highly popular, it did not mean that suddenly all women became tame angels.

<sup>44</sup> Acton was a leading researcher on prostitution and women’s sexuality in Victorian times.

be willing to give up her own wishes and feelings for his sake.

(qtd in Nead 19)

However, tales portraying a dysfunctional or shattered domesticity were simultaneously on the rise. Boyle explains:

everywhere in the period, one finds a kind of double-vision: on one hand, a confident assertion of a perfectly seamless system in which everything is in its place; on the other hand, an absolute terror at the prospect of discovering rents in the fabric of the system's internal logic. (136)

Boyle further states that Victorian society encouraged orderliness, morality, and decency but simultaneously was aware of the hypocrisy in its beliefs.

The 1860s also saw the publication of John Stuart Mill's *The Subjugation of Women*, which derived from and fuelled a larger societal debate. Moreover, women's writing became respectable and fully recognised, allowing female writers to have economic freedom. Through their writing, they could point at issues and problems in Victorian society and present a woman's level of capability when in full capacity of her intellect and in control of her life. Women started to venture out into the public rather than stay at home. The Angel in the House concept was, however, not fully rejected by these more modern-thinking women as Philippa Levine illustrates in *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*: 'for many women committed to the fight for women's rights, the most effective weapon was not the total rejection of that ideology, but rather a manipulation of its fundamental values' (13).

Playing with these fundamental standards makes Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* and William Stephens Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* 'ahead of [their] time' (Ashley *Female* vii). Especially Klein states that these 'novels apparently led to neither imitators nor followers' (29). The idea that women were paid for their investigative work, in a young male-dominated sphere seems at first preposterous, or an 'anomaly' (Klein 29). Previously, class determined what kind of occupations a woman

could engage in: governess, shop girl, charwoman, actress or prostitute. Some of these occupations were respectable for women from a specific class, others were regarded with disdain or viewed in a near-criminal light. These new efforts in elevating women's status fought for admittance in more diverse professions, though it took until the 1880s for them to materialise.

Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan in *The Lady Investigates* write, 'the general idea behind the use of a female detective is bound to appear progressive, irrespective of how it is worked out,' further commentating that these books are 'firmly escapist' (12, 15). Furthermore, other scholars label these female sleuths as 'fantasies' or 'freaks' (Irons 4), even belittling their efforts as 'honorary men' (Klein 30). Moreover, these detectives have been aligned to the absence of women in the police, resulting in the fact that 'these two yellowbacks [are seen as] imaginative feats, the pot-boiling of two hack writers cashing in on the success of the detective casebook genre' (Bredesen *First* iv). Reddy states that 'the [Victorian] woman detective in crime fiction remains relatively rare,' however, she believes that this is due to 'the whole notion of a woman in charge, and especially a woman presumably dedicated to ideals of law and order, works against traditional expectations' (6). The value of female detectives as competent human beings and in control of their lives is often academically undervalued.

Although Victorian society is regarded as exemplary in its manifestations of conservatism, the truth was a bit different. Real female detectives became suspect because they were 'prostituting' their female perceptions, and were confronted by the public with a similar level of wariness as true prostitutes. Therefore, their work often remained secretive and from the public's eye to uphold high values. Mary Hamilton, New York's first policewoman, hints at this in her autobiography:

long before anyone thought about employing policewomen,  
women detectives were engaged in the work of ferreting out crime  
by applying their intuition, versatility, and natural feminine guile

to cases whose solution demanded these qualities rather than the methods of the male sleuth. (77)

Even though Scotland Yard remains silent about this statement, Hamilton points out that ‘in several important murder cases it was [women] who secured information which proved the most important clues’ (79). Hamilton remains vague in her account; however, she may have had Kate Warne in mind.

Alan Pinkerton established his private-detective agency in the United States in 1850. Among his staff was 23-year-old Kate Warne, who started working for him in 1856 and became the first professional woman detective in America<sup>45</sup>. Even though it was not custom to employ women, widowed Warne argued her case successfully by pointing out that women could access places men could not, and had a better eye for detail. She was hired the following day<sup>46</sup>.

Pinkerton describes her as ‘a commanding person, with clear-cut, expressive features, and with an ease of manner that was quite captivating at times’ (75).

Warne took to undercover work easily, eliciting information from views of suspected criminals in embezzlement and security cases, ... she also served during the wars as a Pinkerton field agent. She helped break up a spy ring in Washington. (Janik *Pistols* 21-22)

Warne gained prominence for investigating the Adams Express Robbery in 1858 and reputedly saved President Lincoln from an assassination attempt in 1861. Warne, who oversaw Pinkerton’s Women Detective Bureau, always defended her profession by stating that women could, at times, achieve more than men. This may well have made the news in Great Britain.

In France, the concept of employing female spies goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> The States only engaged the first official policewoman, Lola Baldwin, in Portland, Oregon in 1908.

<sup>46</sup> For a full account of her job interview, see: Pinkerton 70-76.

<sup>47</sup> Sussex gives examples: ‘Female spies were hardly an innovation: the writer Aphra Behn had been a spy for Charles II. She is known as the first professional female author, and that she had also undertaken paid

Covert female employees were employed in many missions, especially during the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. In his posthumously published memoirs in 1824, Joseph Fouché, Minister for Police, elaborated on his network of informers stating that he ‘had salaried spies in all ranks and all orders; [he] had them of both sexes’ (275).

Furthermore, advertisements published in *The London Times* in 1875 prove that female detectives were then at work. Leslie and Graham from Holborn’s Confidential Agency note that they employ ‘men of 20 years’ experience, and female detectives.’ Another announcement by Arthur, Cleveland, Montagu and Company in Cornhill enlists ‘a large staff of experienced detectives, male and female.’ Even if these ads date from the mid-70s, they nevertheless highlight that female detectives were around and stress their experience – at a much earlier date as previously assumed<sup>48</sup>.

The press has at times hinted at women’s detective work. For example, *The Times* in 1855 reported on a criminal conversation case, *Evans v. Robinson*, Bredesen explains:

a Mr Evans employed ex-Chief Inspector Charles Frederick Field to collect evidence of his wife’s adultery. Field, in turn, employed several women to infiltrate the house that Mrs Evans and her lover frequented; he gave them rudimentary training in spying and a special gimlet with which to bore holes in a door so that they could spy on the adulterous pair. (*First* v)

Furthermore, these investigative women gave evidence at the ensuing trial. Moreover, the case of a female detective was published in *The Morning Chronicle* in 1855. Elizabeth Joyes investigated luggage theft from first-class passengers in the waiting room. She was hired by the Eastern Counties Railway (‘John’ 115) and ‘worked at a local police station as a searcher of female prisoners’ (Bredesen *First* xxii).

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espionage can be seen as only one aspect of a life lived beyond the conventional feminine domestic, dependent upon the masculine’ (75).

<sup>48</sup> For a further elaboration on these ads, see: Sussex 72-75 and Bredesen *First* vi-v.

Even the colonies employed female investigators to solve cases. In 1859, *Lloyd's Weekly* reprinted an article from the *Bombay Gazette*:

Two female detectives have been added by the Deputy Commissioner to the Police force ... they wear the Police belt, but under the saree ... It certainly involves a refinement of espionage not yet thought of in England. (qtd in Bredesen *First* v-vi)

Even though these newspapers treat these female investigators as novelties, they are nonetheless proof that women already undertook covert missions to solve crimes, in a private capacity and for the state. Therefore, the basis of creating a fictional professional detective is no longer that far-fetched as authors could read up on them in the press.

However, social change was difficult, as Erika Janik writes:

The advent of the female detective depended on social and economic changes that allowed people to conceive of a woman in this role, even if respectable society still deemed it improper for a woman to have an actual profession beyond that of governess, teacher, or nurse. (32)

From a literary viewpoint, Watson writes, 'The inclusion of a female detective is perhaps an attempt to refresh the police anecdote sub-genre and boost sales and conceivably also, in a similar vein to the sensation novel, an attempt to shock the reader' (29). Slung links their rise to commercialism:

actually, the notion of the female detective got off the ground in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century more as a capitalization on the public's desire for new and novel kinds of sleuths than it did out of any real urge to give equal time to women and their intuitive talents. ('Women' 140)



Writers used these above foundations as part of their depiction of crime and coupled it with inventing new types of detectives, among them – the female professional investigator.

## 4.2 The Authors

### Andrew Forrester

The identity of the author of *The Female Detective* is still somewhat mysterious. From what he wrote, Andrew Forrester was a well-educated man, probably trained in or practised law, and read French and American literature. Over the course of his five books<sup>49</sup>, he changed in style and form. He was directly influenced by Vidocq's *Mémoires* and Water's *Recollections*. He uses the casebook format, informal reminiscences, and a clear narrative voice to transform the stories into well-organised, plot-driven narratives that evolve around deductive methods. 'Arrested on Suspicion', a story in *Revelations of a Private Detective* proves that the author read Poe's tales of ratiocination. Here, the narrator investigates a Poe-esque crime where a sister is wrongly accused and deciphers a multi-coded letter<sup>50</sup>. The pseudonym may have been inspired by the Forrester brothers, who both served for the City of London Police and were pioneers in scientific methods of deduction. These former Bow Street Runners disclaimed the accounts as relating to

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<sup>49</sup> He first published *The Revelations of a Private Detective* (1863), then *Secret Service* (1864), followed by *The Female Detective* (1864). The other two books, *The Private Detective* and *Tales by a Female Detective* are reissues of his previous work.

<sup>50</sup> Even though 'The Gold Bug', published in the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1843, is not a Dupin story, it is valuable to mention it here as it presents the first case in cryptology. 'The crime occurred many years prior to the action, which centres on recovery of the pirate's treasure through decoding a set of directions written in a cipher' (Herbert 332). The story is a puzzle-story, investigating the mystery behind a Scarabaeus. The protagonist William Legrand regards it as a 'a bug of real gold.' By noticing the invisible ink on a scrap of paper, he finds a cipher. Using letter frequencies, he manages to extract the location of the treasure left by 'Captain Kidd'. However, the other crimes listed in the story, the theft of the treasure and the murder of accomplices are not solved in this story. The story is reinforcing Poe's motif of ratiocinative principle, and that every detail contributes to the solution of the mystery. Forrester actively reuses important components from 'The Gold Bug' in his story.

their work and that ‘no such person as Andrew Forrester’ was known to them (qtd in Ashley *Female* ix).

In *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, Kate Summerscale first established the link between James Redding Ware and Forrester in 2008 (341). Ashley explains Ware’s authorship in his introduction to *The Female Detective*:

[It] contains a story ‘A child found dead’ which had appeared as a separate pamphlet in 1862 under the title *The Road Murder* by J. Ware. Apart from the two versions of the story having a slightly different form of opening words, they are basically the same. (x)

However, in the first version, the female investigator is not part of the narrative. Only with the compilation of *The Female Detective* did the author propel Miss Gladden to the literary scene<sup>51</sup>. Ware, who was a writer and editor, produced books on assorted topics: the Isle of Wight, card and board games, famous centenarians and English slang. He also compiled *Before the Bench: Sketches of Police Court Life* (1880) which he had collected over an extended period. As part of his research, he may have come across real pioneering female detectives.

Other scholars, like Knight, believe that *The Female Detective* was penned by a woman, stating, ‘Forrester’s stories present G’s attitudes and interests, and the woman characters in general, so convincingly that it seems quite possible they were written by a woman’ (*Crime* 36). He states that an as-yet-unidentified Mrs Forrester produced three novels: *Fair Lady* (1868), *From Olympus to Hades* (1868) and *My Hero* (1870). He cements his argument by comparing ‘The Unknown Weapon,’ to a story included in *Fair Lady*, titled ‘Drawing the Arrow Head,’ here a man is killed while poaching<sup>52</sup>. Ware seems at this stage to be the most likely candidate.

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<sup>51</sup> Judith Flanders has offered a persuasive account to claim Ware as the rightful writer by further studying both texts, see: ‘Way’ 14-15.

<sup>52</sup> Watson agrees with Knight, and points in her writing to more specific clues in the narratives (33-35).

## William Stephens Hayward

The authorship of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* is even more uncertain than *The Female Detective*'s, as very little is known about the creator of Mrs Paschal's tales that first appeared in 1861 under the nom de plume 'Anonyma.'

Commonly, two authors have been aligned with *Revelations*. They may have known each other and even worked alongside. First, Samuel Bracebridge Hemyng received an education at Eton, then studied law and was called to the bar in 1862. He often faced the law due to his wrongdoings. When writing 'London Prostitution' for Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, he showed insight into lower-class London. He was certainly knowledgeable about crime even though he had a middle-class upbringing. However, in 1868, he refuted a claim by *The Bookseller* that he was the author of the Anonyma books.

Secondly, William Stephens Hayward also studied law and worked in publishing. He was a profligate character as he was charged with rape in 1857 and soon afterwards arrested for debts. He was sent to debtor's prison even though he came from an affluent family. His first known work, *Hunted for Death, or Life in Two Hemispheres* (1862) is a Civil War romance. He had also published novels using the pseudonym Esther Hope in 1863 and penned some of the Skittles series.

However, Sussex doubts the masculinity of the author. She writes, "'Anonymous was a woman!'" is the famous feminist graffito, and it was also how many nineteenth-century women ... entered the literary world. One major clue to the authorship is that other books were ascribed to the unknown writer,' even though she acknowledges that, 'the contemporary sanctions on female sexuality meant a woman would have been very brave, hack and secretive, to pen Anonyma' (76, 77). Most scholars regard Hayward as the most likely author meeting the British Library view.

The question why Forrester and Hayward invented professional female detectives is difficult to answer. Frances DellaCava and Madeline Engel note in *Sleuths in Skirts*

that female protagonists often ‘reflect a writer’s alter ego’ (xi). At this stage, it is not clear whether the authors wanted to show wish-fulfilment, female empowerment or cause controversy by creating their heroines. It may have to do with dramatic effect, unorthodox methods in detection, or highlight intuition as an inherently female trait. The context and publication history of these casebooks give some hints.

### 4.3 Context and Publication History

Since the early nineteenth century, the publication context and circulation of books had changed: from being extremely expensive to more affordable items, from exclusive to popular, from high to low brow. Furthermore, magazines increasingly published small articles, advertisements, advice columns and fiction within their pages. Finally, their handling changed as booksellers, circulating libraries and small shops had them<sup>53</sup>. Altrick states that ‘popular books had to be portable, for an ever-increasing amount of reading was done in railway carriages and buses, and they had to be small enough to find room in the cramped households of the lower-middle and working classes’ (*Writers* 187-88). ‘They sold at a shilling or one and sixpence, which was within the price range of those who ... ignored the free library’ (Symons 52). However, ‘with the fading of the moral concern, the problem of the mass reading public became predominantly one of literary culture’ (Altrick *Common* 368). Furthermore, the distinct look, especially of the yellowbacks, meant that they were easily recognizable, almost like proto-branding. The reader knew what type of book he was buying by looking at its cover:

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<sup>53</sup> Pykett further elaborates:

In December 1848 George Routledge issued the first volume in the Routledge’s ‘Railway Library’ series ... This series was much imitated in the 1850s and 1860s, as several publishers adopted the small format ..., and the distinctive yellow-glazed boards with a racy illustration on the front and advertisements on the back. The growth of railway reading was also associated with the rise of the sensation novel in the 1860s and other ‘*fast*’ novels, sold on railway bookstalls, which offered ‘*something hot and strong*’ to grab the attention of ‘*the hurried passenger*’ and relieve the dullness of the train journey. (*Collins* 83-4)

Collins called [them] the Unknown public: a new generation of readers possessing literacy and some leisure, and with a vague but pressing need to read for amusement books which would in some degree confirm their permanence of their own newly won position in society. (Symons 53)

These unknown consumers, often from the lower or middle class, were the readers of *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1864, *The Female Detective* was released as a yellowback, easily affordable but not destined to last physically. It is still a rare object, even though the British Library brought it back into print. Originally published by Ward and Lock, *The Female Detective* contains an introduction and seven cases by Miss Gladden or G- of the Metropolitan Police. In subsequent publications, Forrester's novel was often broken up, with only three stories being retained for the 1868 edition ('Tenant for Life,' 'Georgy,' and 'A Mystery'); another compilation from the same year only included two stories ('The Unraveled Mystery' and 'The Unknown Weapon').<sup>54</sup>

*Revelations of a Lady Detective* introduces ten cases by Mrs Paschal of the London Detective Police. The book was originally published by George Vickers<sup>55</sup>, a rival publisher to Ward and Lock in October 1864. Anonyma's *Revelations* is part of a body of work that features 'dogged and resourceful heroines fighting the odds' (Ashley *Lady* 13). 'Anonyma' can also be an intentionally used female alias to illustrate a text with a female investigator doubly, as it alludes to women of the demi-monde. Subsequent editions followed soon, for example, in 1868. Then again in 1870 under the title *The Lady Detective: A Tale of Female Life and Adventure*, which was followed by another printing

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<sup>54</sup> For a complete publication history, see: Bredesen *Detectives* ii

<sup>55</sup> Vickers is also notable for the kind of other books they published as part of their yellow book series. Often listing 'Anonyma' as their author, they included multiple accounts of notorious women, such as the fictional biography of London's most noted courtesan, Catherine Walters, nicknamed Skittles. These books 'repeat[ed] the plot of the gothic heroine, but with a rather more intimate subject' (Ashley *Lady* 10).

with a different cover in 1884 and bearing the title *The Experiences of a Lady Detective* published by C. H. Clarke.

There is great dissonance among scholars as to which of the two female detectives came first. Kestner and Slung believe that Mrs Paschal was first, however, Bleiler, Craig and Cardogan see Miss Gladden as having first appeared on the literary scene. Slung retraces Ellery Queen's investigative steps in *Crime on Her Mind*, concluding that Miss Gladden was first<sup>56</sup>. The whole confusion may derive from Craig and Cadogan's claim that a copy held in the British Library has an 1861 book stamp. However, the possibility of an earlier publication or partial publication of either may exist, as these yellowbacks were often issued having single stories, or a collection of stories from various authors or reused previous stories and presented them slightly differently. As their cheap production values mean that they were not incorporated into valuable libraries, many have just simply been lost, eroded, and disappeared. Who can say that not more of these scarce formats will resurface in cellars or attics? Rather than taking sides in this debate, this study analyses the novels independently, then compares the two works. The matter of 'who was first' is disregarded.

Both covers are interesting for a quick inspection. The yellowbacks were notorious for their outraging and racy depictions, and were designed to attract the busy railway traveller in a beat. The interplay between book cover and text is a reminder that readers are directed to interpret characters in certain ways, but these interpretations are provisional or opportunistic. The covers lured the public.

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<sup>56</sup> Slung writes:

Queen argues that the 1861 date for Mrs Paschal's appearance is taken from a possibly inaccurate listing in Scribner's Catalogue Number 98, titled 'Collection of Detective Fiction' and issued in 1935. Entry 48 in this catalogue describes the copy offered, with the title *The Experiences of a Lady Detective*, simply as 'an early edition' of a book first published in 1861. Queen considers that *The Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864) is actually the original collection of Mrs Paschal stories – though it is referred to by most historians as a sequel to *Experiences* – and that the title *The Experiences of a Lady Detective* exists only on the title page of an 1884 reissue of *Revelations*. He cites British Museum records to support this claim, and also to show that *The Female Detective* appeared in 1864 six months before Mrs Paschal. (xvi-xvii)

Miss Gladden in *The Female Detective* is seen entering a room with a male figure lying on the floor. She can immediately be identified by the red scarf she is wearing reflecting the background red of the title. Another woman kneels close by, seemingly distressed by slapping her hands and showing horror at the apparent murder. The setting is domestic, portraying crime at the heart of the home. The mirror on the wall is empty of people, only showing a bare bedroom. This imagery, the story within the story, emphasises the horrendousness of the crime scene, yet order will ultimately be restored. The gothic-inspired cover depicts the revulsion of the crime, a body and a distraught woman. However, Miss Gladden's calmness and seriousness as she surveys the crime scene make the cover melodramatic. She remains standing and glances at the body in a slight forward motion. The detective is one of three people in the cover, thereby it works on diverse levels. Both women's attention is drawn to the body lying on the ground. The stripy wallpaper underlines the motion of the onlooker's gaze. *The Female Detective's* cover anticipates a scene from 'Tenant for Life' (91-92).

Mrs Paschal in *Revelations of a Lady Detective* appears lively engaged, and the racy cover positions her within the Anonyma tradition. The cover anticipates Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's Moulin Rouge posters, though painted much later. She is the only person portrayed, suggesting an intimate atmosphere. The setting is probably a bar as the background shows a table with drinks and the floor has wooden planks. This non-domestic setting suggests that the detective operates in public rather than in homes. Her behaviour on the cover is shocking to rigid Victorian society. She draws attention to herself. She is fetchingly dressed and smoking a cigarette. With her other hand, she is lifting her skirts seductively, thereby showing off her quilted petticoat underneath the red-and-black dress. She shows her ankles and lower calves, and comes across as a prostitute. She wears flowers on her head, signalling her femininity in a pre-Frida Kahlo style. The colours are full, and the lines are boldly drawn. Red is prominently used to signal danger and sexuality. Mrs Paschal's confidence and extrovert nature as a detective come alive as she directly gazes upon the reader. As such the onlooker becomes Mrs Paschal's voyeur.

Even though the jacket design bears little connection with the actual detective, it is a successful marketing strategy. The attention of those passing bookstalls might have been enticed by the detective's provocative gaze.

As both covers are so different, even though they both employ lithography (basic colour palette and similar style), they probably advocate that no coherent image existed in Victorian's minds as to what a female detective was. However, both covers portray strong, independent and daring women that master un-womanly situations. Both writers and illustrators probably knew their railway audience well and attempted to convince both female readers, previously engaging in Gothic or sensation fiction, and male readers, attracted by these unconventional representations, of this new outlet in fiction.

#### 4.4 Narrative Perspectives

Like previously studied novels, *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* were written in the first person, from the protagonists' viewpoint. The detective-narrator becomes a re-teller of lived and witnessed events. This mode of storytelling allows the readers intimate access to the narrator's fictional universe.

Often, first-person accounts address themselves to the reader by explaining their narrative as autobiography, instruction manual or selected personal reminiscences. Both sleuths are on a mission to tell their stories to an audience. 'The fictional representation of the detective's power and pleasure seems a reflection of the author's own anxieties about both the significance and authority of his own narrative, and the value of the investigative role into which he casts the reader,' (149) writes Peter Thoms. Therefore, they stimulate an informational but intimate reading experience, inviting the reader to solve cases alongside the detective. Michael Cox writes:

the establishing of a credible and engaging narrative voice is essential to a successful crime short; flamboyance of invention and a certain leisureliness in the teller must co-exist with



economy of style, compression, and a well-paced plot; characters must be sketched out swiftly but decisively; every incident must carry its share of relevance to the main idea, which itself needs to be simple and surprising. (ix)

However, the narrator's selective experience and awareness of events limit the reader's pastime experience. First-person narrations can be unreliable as the reader is only confronted with one perspective of events. Therefore, the conscious narrator becomes an imperfect witness and could be accused of not fully comprehending or listing events in the progression of the case. The narrator becomes the propaganda machine of his own doings, as Thoms explains:

detection served the detective's egoistic need to display his power, which derives from his storytelling skill. As a storyteller, he defines his superiority, ... defeating his rivals by presenting a convincing narrative of explanation, and even, at times, disempowering his fellow characters and figurative readers by subjecting them to artfully contrived moments of shock and sensational revelation. (3)

Moreover, concerns about objectivity can be raised and the hidden agenda questioned. Such narrators might withhold evidence or clues from their readers for their own goals.

In both narratives, the question of time is obscure. None mention how much time has passed between the actual events and their retelling. The character's motivation for telling her story is also relevant, as this can have a direct effect on the narrative technique. Therefore, these narratives become semi-autobiographical witness accounts. Moreover, these first-person narrators can report others' narratives at times. These framed narratives are often labelled armchair detection in crime stories. Generally, such a convention is employed to show that the detective would have done better than the initial investigator of the crime.

What finally makes these first-person narratives so interesting is that by making a woman a narrator and a detective, readers may easily forget the fact that a female is narrating. Both *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* rely heavily on dialogue. Only when reciting some discourses does the notion of a female narrator come to the forefront; this is often coupled with surprise of meeting a lady detective. However, the titles of the casebooks clearly make the detectives female, therefore the specific nature of these narratives gives power to these women in executing their professional duties. These narratives followed the Police memoirs and sensation fiction incorporating gothic conventions, thereby working within and following specific traditions.

#### 4.5 Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (1864)

##### Miss Gladden - The Detective

Starting with an Introduction, *The Female Detective* writes, 'Who am I? It can matter little who I am' (*Female* 1). As such Miss Gladden's narrative voice frames what is to come<sup>57</sup>. She begins her narrative in an almost self-negating way nearly withdrawing her female presence from her work. Her name is mentioned for the first time in the middle of her first case, and later she states that it 'is the name [she] assume most frequently while in [her] business' (*Female* 65). Furthermore, her narrative voice is observant and even ironic. She addresses the reader directly, asking not to be judged too harshly. Furthermore, she promises that, '[she] shall take great care to avoid mentioning [her]self as much as possible' (*Female* 3) once she depicts individual cases. She does not want to 'disfigure' the content of her book, not out of modesty but in a quest for truth, telling her 'tales in what [she] believe[s] is called the third person, and in what [she] will call the

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<sup>57</sup> Quite interestingly, almost all scholars use 'Mrs Gladden' or 'Mrs G' when referring to the sleuth, even though she labels herself as 'Miss'. The author of this study cannot ascertain where this confusion may have derived from.

plainest fashion' (*Female* 3, 4). Therefore, she is aspiring a detached and more legalistic register, like the lawyer in *Notting Hill*.

Furthermore, she underplays all family ties, stating, 'It may be that I am a widow [or] an unmarried woman' (*Female* 1). Overall, she does not provide the reader with insight into her background, but points out that she is a good person:

[W]hether I work willingly or unwillingly, for myself or for others – whether I am married or single, old or young, I would have my readers at once accept my declaration that whatever may be the results of the practice of my profession in others, in me that profession has not led me towards hardheartedness. (*Female* 1)

Moreover, she keeps her profession hidden further establishing a sense of personal mysteriousness, by stating, 'My friends suppose I am a dressmaker' and 'suppose me so very innocent' (*Female* 2). Fahnestock explains: 'Nineteenth-century novelists often wanted to tell readers about a character before showing the character in action. They could always digress in the narrator's voice and summarize a character's personality' ('Heroine' 325). Mrs Gladden's introduction helps the reader to get into her frame of mind.

She does not share her class rank. She does not refer to her education, nor label herself a gentlewoman. Considering various points in the narrative, she might be educated lower middle-class. For example, she states about a friend, 'He was one of the lower classes. Perhaps there are many such men as he amongst the lower classes. I hope there are' (*Female* 138). Thereby, she clearly did not grow up in a working-class milieu. Furthermore, she avoids dealing with the upper-class clients, which is why she may not belong to that class either.

Her reasons for becoming a detective remain vague. Miss Gladden declares: 'It may be that I took to the trade, ... because I had no other means of making a living; or it may be that for the work of detection I had a longing which I could not overcome' and later writes, 'I have retired from the practice of detection' (*Female* 1, 73). As such her tales function as memoirs. Furthermore, she gives a motive as to why she pens, 'I have a

chief reason, ... I may as well at once say I write [to] show, in a small way, that the profession to which I belong is so useful that it should not be despised' (*Female* 1-2). As such she positions herself within the casebook tradition and memoirs. However, she takes it a step further defending vehemently her profession – that of the detective. She has accepted that her work and her private life cannot be coupled, 'My trade is a necessary one, but the world holds aloof my order (*Female* 2). Thereby, she reflects the Victorian's attitude towards not only working females, but especially detectives. Later she writes, 'my trade is a despised one I am not ashamed of' (*Female* 3). She portrays herself as a confident woman who believes in the worth of her work, 'I know I have done good during my career, ... and I therefore think that the balance of the work of my life is in my favour' (*Female* 3). Finally, she seems it fit 'to make some of [her] experiences known to the world' (*Female* 4), even though she doubts their value in the long run.

Whenever she needs a new case, she goes 'down to the office,' and discusses news with her 'fellow-workwomen' (*Female* 152), hinting that she is not alone in her profession. She also waits for 'advertised' cases to claim 'government reward[s]' (*Female* 153). She has made a decent living as she writes, 'I am not extravagant; ... I had for some years earned good money' (*Female* 42). In some cases, however, 'without being sentimental,' she declined money, as she has 'conscience, and deal[s] in points of honour' (*Female* 64, 65). Ultimately, she remarks, 'detectives rarely make fortunes' (*Female* 73). She is a self-consciously idealistic woman. Merely the fact of her earning money was in some Victorian circles regarded as suspect.

Overall, Miss Gladden remains a mysterious and shadowy figure. Klein further comments, 'these omissions and evasions deny the character's definition in societal terms. In refusing to clarify her identity as a woman, the author redirects attention to her position as a detective' (18). She does not enlighten the reader much about her private self; she concentrates on her work, referencing her love for it and a need to defend it.

### Position in Society

Miss Gladden positions herself as regards society, the police, her friends and foes. Considering society, she views her memoirs as a quest to elevate detectives and more particularly women detectives, and writes: ‘Nor do I blame the world over much for its determination. I am quite aware that there is something objectionable in the spy’ (*Female 2*).<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, here, she aligns her trade with ‘spy’ rather than ‘detective’. However, she proclaims:

I am quite aware that society looks upon the companionship of a spy as repulsive; but, nevertheless, we detectives are necessary, as scavengers are called for, and ... [have] some demand upon the gratitude of society. (*Female 2-3*)

She tells society that detectives are beneficial, compares them to hunters, and hopes that a future society might react differently. She cautions, ‘if this world lost all its detectives, it would very soon complainingly find out their absence, and wish them, ... back again’ (*Female 42*). She views her work realistically, writing:

Roughly it may be stated that if no clew [clue] is obtained within a week from the discovery of a crime, the chances of hunting down the criminal daily become rapidly fewer and fainter. (*Female 135*)

Comparing herself to her male counterparts, she states, ‘I am aware that the female detective may be regarded with even more aversion than her brother in profession’ (*Female 3*). Intrinsically, she draws a familial relationship with her male colleagues. She also echoes Dicken’s essays when defending the police. Moreover, she points out that, ‘the woman detective has far greater opportunities than a man of intimate watching,’ and explains, ‘that [female detectives] can get into houses outside which the ordinary men-

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<sup>58</sup> This echoes reality: ‘The power of the police in the streets, and their use of this power, probably contributed to the belief among many members of the working class that there was one law for the rich and another, harsher, law for the poor’ (Emsley *Police* 78-9).

detectives could barely stand without being suspected' (*Female* 4, 34). However, she acknowledges that 'a little accident' and 'chance' have helped many cases to be solved (*Female* 285). Therefore, she engages in detection, uses subterfuge to collect clues her male brothers could not while relying on more female traits such as intuition and luck.

She only presents herself as a detective when a true need arises, bringing about mixed reactions. In 'Tenant for Life,' she recites this conversation:

'I am a detective' ...

'A detective?' she said, evidently not knowing what such an officer was, and yet too unerringly guessing.

'Yes,' I continued, 'one of the secret police.'

She started, and muttered something to herself. She uttered no cry, no exclamation of fear; ... shock rather stupefies than excites.

(*Female* 78).

Miss Gladden does not hold the police in high regard, as in 'Tenant,' when the police only find the first clues, 'by a wonderful series of fortunate guesses and industrious inquiries' (*Female* 8). Furthermore, she criticises their inadequacy, 'leniency and patience' (*Female* 9) rather than being thorough, just and fair. However, she perceives that the public is blinded by positive police articles, stating, 'the detective force experiences no desire to publish its failure, while in reference to successes, detectives are always ready to supply the report with the very latest particulars' (*Female* 115). She labels the 'police failures' as 'atrocious,' and 'that the detective force is certainly as far from perfect as any ordinary legal organization in England' (*Female* 115).

In 'The Unraveled Mystery,' she comments on the forces shortcomings: 'there was little or no intellect exercised ... Facts were collected, but the deductions ... were not made' (*Female* 117). She concludes, 'that more intellect should be infused into the operation of the police system' (*Female* 135). This becomes clearer in 'The Unknown Weapon' when she has to rely on a police constable for information: 'He was too stupid to be anything else ... I believe that ... he never comprehended that I was a detective. His

mind could not grasp the idea of a police officer in petticoats' (*Female* 240). Her various cases take her outside of London; even in remote places she 'recognise[s] one of the officers as that of a policeman known to [her]' (*Female* 90). Her officer-acquaintances endearingly call her G. She is respected by those who have worked with her but faces disbelief and scrutiny from new colleagues.

Miss Gladden has friends from all classes. In 'Tenant for Life,' she spends her Sundays with the Flempsies, a lower-class family. Furthermore, she 'can make acquaintances very quickly' (*Female* 99). Sean Purchase suggests that, 'Victorian class distinctions were often less rigid than is generally supposed, and there does seem to have been a limited degree of flexibility and class movement, upwards and downwards' (23). As a detective, Miss Gladden uses this to her advantage.

Her enemies regard her suspiciously, '[they] are in a great measure convinced that [her] life is a very questionable one' and 'believe [her] to be not far removed from guilty' (*Female* 2). Like respectable society condemning her work, the criminal world does too. Some criminals call her 'my dear creature,' well-knowing that she is a detective, and salute her with 'Good night, detective' rather than a 'ma'am' (*Female* 71). She occasionally becomes a genderless entity in her work. She comments on the necessity of having female detectives:

Criminals are both masculine and feminine – indeed, my experience tells me that when a woman becomes criminal she is far worse than the average of her male companions, and therefore it follows that the necessary detectives should be of both sexes.

(*Female* 3)

Intrinsically, Miss Gladden suggests that a female detective is much better at overturning a female criminal and understands the workings of female criminality more. Finally, her overriding motivation is that her female perspective gives her an advantage.

### Appearance, Human Traits, Capabilities

Miss Gladden is never physically described in the casebook as she consciously hides her appearance from the text. Her interlocutors also make no mention of her looks. She denies the reader insight to draw conclusions about her appearance and character. Victorian readers knew how to decode physical descriptions. Nayder explains, ‘a heroine with a square chin, an aquiline nose, and a broad, high forehead was more wilful, more energetic and firm, and more intelligent than women were expected to be’ (229). By eliminating the physical side, she puts much more weight on her cases. From a theoretical viewpoint, her hidden personality and appearance are yet another way to complicate the issue of feminism and conservatism. However, through her cases, the reader can still glimpse her character.

Being a good observer is important for Gladden, as the narrator, the ‘I’ in the stories, becomes the ‘eye’ of the investigation. She acknowledges, ‘that a female detective ... in one’s own family is a disagreeable operation’ (*Female* 4). Observation in her eyes starts with listening. She labels herself a ‘talking companion,’ (*Female* 9), who admits engaging in gossip for investigative purposes. In ‘Tenant for Life,’ she recalls the introduction to the case by Mrs Flemps, ‘I listened only, and rarely opened my mouth except to ask a question,’ as Mrs Flemps ‘was a worthy woman, who loved to hear herself talk, a failing it is said with her sex’ (*Female* 11). As such, Miss Gladden positions herself outside of her sex by being able to listen carefully without interrupting and she hints that she is above her ‘sex,’ thereby countering the traditional Victorian gossipy woman. She does not regard herself ‘an ordinary listener’ (*Female* 12).

Without going into particulars, ... the woman detective has far greater opportunities than a man of intimate watching, and of keeping her eye upon matters near which a man would not conveniently play the eavesdropper. (*Female* 4)



Gossip becomes a purely feminine undertaking of passing time, as ‘women are in the habit of talking scandal’ (*Female* 9). Technically, gossip is an activity to entertain, amuse or relax the listener; however, Miss Gladden sees gossip as an interincisal part of investigative methods. The detective does not use it to form stereotypical ideas but to prove the true value of these stories. When investigating, Miss Gladden deciphers speech, and explains, ‘the uninitiated would be surprised to learn how many ways we have of identification ... by the unnumbered modes of speaking, ... and above all the impediments or peculiarities of speech’ (*Female* 25). She acknowledges that a person, ‘may change dress, look, appearance, but never his mode of speaking – never his pronunciation’ (*Female* 25).

Moreover, she uses language as ‘part of [her] profession to bring people out’ (*Female* 144). In ‘Tenant for Life,’ she explains that Mrs Flemps talks more freely whenever the detective speaks ‘after the manner of her class’ (*Female* 12). She states, ‘I may say that half the success of a detective depends upon his or her sympathy with the people from whom either is endeavouring to pick up information’ (*Female* 12). She also knows when to pause her inquiries, especially when an informant becomes unsettled. From experience, the story will be continued once the informant feels comfortable again. She observes when questioning a reluctant housekeeper, ‘the old lady ... began to speak again; and ... became more communicative than [before]’ (*Female* 45). However, she is more confrontational with men. When questioning a suspect, she reports: “‘What I wanted.’ He put ‘the’ and a strong word between ‘what’ and ‘I’, but I refrain from quoting it” (*Female* 50). She is not affronted by the language the man uses but thinks the reader might be.

She is organised and meticulously documents her cases. Like Watson’s diary for Holmes’ cases, she ‘fix[es] down every word [she] hear[s], as closely as [she] can remember it’ (*Female* 11). Furthermore, she re-evaluates her findings; in ‘The Unknown Weapon,’ she is logical and rational in her approach to phrase questions that need answering and juxtaposes them with her evidence. She labels these as ‘interferences’

(*Female* 47) and they illustrate thought processes the detective runs through before solving the case. She regards herself as ‘a serpent of detection’ and believes ‘evidence is what detectives live upon’ (*Female* 28). She comments, ‘detectives never give up cases; it is the cases which give up the detectives’ (*Female* 31). She also knows that the outcome of cases depends on ‘risk and audacity’ rather than ‘cautiousness’ (*Female* 41). She ‘never will believe in luck’ but in her ‘corkscrew-like qualities as a detective’ (*Female* 114, 240). However, she has not become hard-hearted and cautions the reader, ‘don’t suppose we detectives have no soft places in our hearts because we are obliged to steel them against the daily wickedness we have to encounter’ (*Female* 86).

She also acts professionally when dealing with witnesses or suspects. In ‘Tenant for Life,’ she returns for a follow-up investigation and writes:

the housekeeper welcomed me with a cheerfulness which went to my heart, but I told myself I was to remember that I had to deal with justice, not pity. The end of the detective’s work is justice, and if he knows his place, he must not look beyond that end.

(*Female* 55)

Nevertheless, at times she is touched by people’s helpfulness and insightful comments, stating: ‘I may be a detective, I am still a woman’ (*Female* 56). She switches from ‘he’ when generally talking about her profession, to ‘woman’ whenever making a personal statement, gliding across gender lines as befits her. Furthermore, when investigations do not go smoothly or when failure looms, she worries, ‘I think I went back to the house a little ashamed of myself, and ... I might have blushed for Miss Gladden and her work’ (*Female* 63). In this passage, she equates her presumed failure as a detective to gothic and sensation heroines’ undertakings.

Miss Gladden is good at changing her appearance and manner to suit a case. She can play a servant, a mutual friend or a criminal character. At times, she fuels clandestine activity for her own good. Kayman writes:

the figure who, with her capacity for disguise, pretence and deceit, embodies both the cultural stereotype of the promiscuous, mendacious and hysterical woman and the troubling spy-like activities of traditional detectives as they infiltrate private spaces and gain people's confidence. The lady detective can only operate if her acting is made respectable – at the same time re-validating both the stereotype of the woman and the practices of undercover police. ('Poe' 52)

Miss Gladden shows knowledge of legal proceedings, especially concerning police undertakings. She is not afraid to ask for legal help, for example a lawyer, to help her navigate the juridical side of her cases. The relationship is amiable but professional, as 'neither of [them] complimented the other on his discoveries, each being aware that the other had but put in force the principles and ordinary rules of his business' (*Female* 38). The lawyer, in turn, shows respect for her line of work. Gladden comments, 'I think I noticed ... surprise that I showed some independence, satisfaction by virtue of the intimation my words conveyed that I did not mean to abandon the case' (*Female* 41). She also lectures the reader on the constitution: 'to the detective all people who by any chance may be guilty, are not considered innocent till they have been proved guiltless' (*Female* 170)<sup>59</sup>.

She has medical knowledge, and knows, that opium is not only administered against fever but also in euthanasia. Furthermore, she knows that 'the blood circulates through the whole system of veins and arteries in about three minutes,' and by cutting an artery, a man would die from 'exhausting the body of its blood' (*Female* 120, 121). Additionally, she is supported by a doctor in some of her cases. Worthington has commented on this connection, 'as the physician seeks out the agent of disease, so the

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<sup>59</sup> This is a reversal of notions, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 11, states: "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence."

detective will seek out the agent of crime; and the relationship between medicine and crime will develop into the discipline ... [of] criminology' (*Rise* 30).

Moreover, she has knowledge of forensics. She writes about footprints: 'boot-marks have sent more men to the gallows, as parts of circumstantial evidence, than any other proof whatever; indeed, the evidence of the boot-mark is terrible' (*Female* 229). She even advises criminals to be more careful in their work by telling them 'to take a second pair of boots in [their] pocket ... then the boots [they] wear will rather be a proof of [their] innocence than presumable evidence of [their] guilt' (*Female* 229). She aligns herself with the criminal world as a woman-detective.

She prepares for all eventualities, carrying introduction 'cards' and a 'skeleton-key' (*Female* 35). She subscribes to *The Times* and uses an 'almanack' (*Female* 269). She takes meticulous notes and summarises her cases in mid-investigation by listing all the relevant points, and 'weigh[ing] facts, and trac[ing] out clear meanings' (*Female* 22). As such, she brings the reader up to speed as a fellow observer. Reasoning has become a natural process for her. She is quicker than others, and comments, 'it may be said the value of the detective lies not so much in discovering facts, as in putting them together, and finding out what they mean' (*Female* 33).

Gladden lives for the excitement of a case. Furthermore, she never loses 'her presence of mind' (*Female* 302) when she is in a dire situation, such as the fire in 'The Unknown Weapon'. She compares her skills and capabilities to Poe's, 'the great enigma-novelist' (*Female* 294), re-enacting 'The Purloined Letter'-trick as part of her investigation. By analysing her actions, character inferences can be made.

### **Class, Gender and the Setting of the Stories**

Miss Gladden integrates social commentary in her memoirs. She frequently reflects on Victorian society, as in 'Tenant for Life,' after hearing that a couple has bought and sold children. She comments that she is, 'as much ashamed as pained to admit that

there is not a night passes in this large city of London during which you are unable to find wretched mothers ready to part with their children' (*Female* 19). She continues her lament of pregnant single women, who, 'are under the influence of that horror of their position, and consequent fear or dread of the child, which is the result of their memory of a time when they were free and respected. ... Poor things!' (*Female* 20). She also hints at child prostitution and child labour.

Furthermore, she picks up on the public mood regarding the Police Department, 'It had appeared as though the English detectives were in the habit of prying into private life,' and she continues:

[They] as a body are weak; they fail in the majority of the cases brought under their supervision; and frequently their most successful cases have been brought to perfection, not by their own unaided endeavours so much as by the use of facts, frequently stated anonymously, and to which they make no reference in finally giving their evidence. (*Female* 116)

She suggests the existence of people greater in investigative work than the force. She compares the French Regime of Terror with England, stating, that 'the public ... need have no fear that such a state of things municipal can ever exist in ... English society ... it would be detected at once as unconstitutional, and resented accordingly' (*Female* 116-117). Moreover, she comments on the police's reluctance and neglect when investigating cases involving foreigners. She remarks on the influx of foreign refugees and the fact that they 'are ready to assassinate' (*Female* 124). She mentions the presence of secret political societies in operation in London.

In 'Stolen Letters,' she decries the plight of working women in mixed environments. Two other females have been engaged to give her cover in a post office, so as to protect her from the prevalent workplace harassment. Furthermore, in 'Fifty Pounds Reward,' she openly comments on marriage pointing out that most men dominate

their wives, restrict their friends and reading to shield them from potentially dangerous situations.

Miss Gladden remains mostly neutral in her observations about the detective force, often writing ‘us detectives’ or whenever she sets out a best practice, she uses the third person ‘he’. At times, she points out her gender, ‘I believe it is admitted that we women detectives are enabled to educate our five senses to a higher pitch than are our male competitors’ (*Female* 90). However, she generally downplays her gender.

Miss Gladden does not provide detail to the setting of her cases. She explains, ‘There is no need to say whither [she] went, because places are of no value in this narrative’ (*Female* 13). However, she knows London well and works out distances between districts. ‘Victorian cities and urban areas were designed with one eye on the separation of classes’ (Purchase 20) making Gladden’s travels across the labyrinth of London also a traversing into different classes. Similarly, she knows what different bridges look like, for example, that Suspension Bridge, probably referring to the first Hammersmith Bridge, has no recesses. She frequently uses her ‘Bradshaw (a book with which the library of a detective is never unprovided)’ to consult train times (*Female* 76). Making travel essential to her work, the modernity of Miss Gladden’s enterprises become prominent.

### **Miss Gladden’s Cases**

The next section illustrates how Miss Gladden uses her position as a woman-detective and puts her traits, capabilities and methods into practice.

#### *‘Tenant for Life’*

Even if ‘Tenant for Life’ is the memoir’s opening case, it is ‘one of [Miss Gladden’s] later more remarkable cases’ (*Female* 24). Explained in detail and at great length, it is the second longest tale in the casebook. Miss Gladden is introduced to the

case when she is 'least expecting business' (*Female* 9). The Flempsies relate the 'best' but also 'most dissatisfactory case in which [she] was ever engaged'; the story is 'appetizing ... to a detective ... [as] it [speaks] volumes' (*Female* 11, 14).

Mr Flemps, a cabman, narrates that one day, 'there wretched young woman gave me up the baby, and I gived her the fourpence' (*Female* 16). Forrester uses street language, slang and dialect to illustrate the Flempsies' social standing and class. As such, he portrays characters realistically and gives insight into a broader Victorian society. Even though Mr Flemps's wife was initially not pleased with the baby, they came to love her as their own daughter though the child later died. Mr Flemps bought another baby but instantly 'sold that there child o' that there woman afore I'd left that there milestone a mile behind' (*Female* 18). As the price for the infant was £30, Miss Gladden reasons that the woman who bought the child was in dire need of an infant and from a higher class. She lists her questions: 'Who was she? Why did she act as she did?' and sees 'crime in the whole of this business' (*Female* 23). She questions the Flempsies more closely as a good detective is 'devoted to identification' (*Female* 25). The woman had a speech impediment, pronouncing a 'th' for an 'f'. As the case stood, Miss Gladden deduces that the child was bought for deception purposes.

The next morning, she sets to work soon finding out that the mother's child was dead. She arrives at an impasse and comments, 'it is death which foils us [detectives] and frequently stops a case when it is so nearly complete' (*Female* 31). Her next line of investigation is finding the child by searching registers and bribing the deputy. She finds a household matching her criteria and gains access to the manor. She is shown to its lady, whom she recognises by the speech impediment. Thereafter, she consults her lawyer and investigates the deceased mother's, a Mrs Shedleigh, resting place. The lawyer deduces it to be a complex case of inheritance fraud, whereby the father acted as trustee, a tenant for life, to the estates his wife inherited, and which passed on to the child once the mother was dead. Even though the case seems clear, Sir Nathaniel Shirley was robbed of his rightful inheritance by Mr Shedleigh's supposed interference.

Miss Gladden enters the Shedleigh's household posing as a dressmaker. While working in the house, she learns that Mrs Shedleigh had died when nobody apart from her sister, Miss Catherine Shedleigh, was in attendance. Gladden unearths the doctor and his apprentice's surprise after being told an heiress, Shirley, had been born, though they had attended the fatal birth. At this stage, she shares her findings with Sir Nathaniel, the rightful heir to the estates. The more she uncovers about Sir Nathaniel, the more she is in favour of the Shedleighs. She is overcome by doubts as the results of the case would mean incriminating a noble character, Mr Shedleigh, and a rise to power of Sir Nathaniel, a person 'of the worst side of humanity' (*Female* 60). She resolves that 'the true end of the detective's work' is 'justice' (*Female* 60).

However, Mr Shedleigh cares well for his substitute daughter and does not profit from the exchange, making Miss Gladden suspicious. When she meets Sir Nathaniel, she is surprised by his reaction, as she '[sees] him visibly shrink in his chair' (*Female* 66). She presents her findings, and Sir Nathaniel wants to prosecute. They return to the Shedleigh's residence to confront its inhabitants with the case. When Sir Nathaniel confronts the two women, he requests a private interview with Miss Shedleigh. A shrill scream makes Miss Gladden enter the room again. A dead Sir Nathaniel is lying on the floor after a heart attack, while Miss Shedleigh is kneeling close-by. Providence saves a good family from ruin, and as such this tale is highly moral. Here, Gladden's moral 'authority' relates solely to the protection of children and domesticity. The detective also regrets that she worked in the interest of a degenerate character.

This story's writing style is close to sensation novels, especially Mary Braddon's. However, the inspiration may have come from Water's case 'The Twins', whose tail involves stolen property and the abduction of a rightful male twin and heir. Forrester employs concealment, delay and deferral to tantalize the reader by not divulging all the information at once<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> For a more detailed account, see: Pykett 'Sensation Novel' 5; Brantlinger 'Sensational' 2



*'Georgy'*

Miss Gladden's second tale is about a 'cunning' and 'generally brilliant' boy-criminal (*Female* 97). She integrates this story because she was deceived by George Lejune, commonly known as Georgy. She describes him as 'bright-eyed, bright-lipped, laughing, clever, earnest and upon the whole gentlemanly, he was rather a superior kind of kid' and 'fairly modest' (*Female* 98). Being neighbours, she befriended the mother. Gladden does not see the clues, ignoring that Lejune might be a criminal. Here, her inner naivety comes to the front; her intuition proves her wrong. She does not doubt the young man of moderate means when he comes home with a diamond ring and is lulled in by his comment that it was given to him.

One Friday morning, Georgy leaves his mother 'singing, not because he had a light heart, but because he was cunning enough not to show the least suspicion' (*Female* 101). By careful plotting, Georgy manages to get 'leave' from Friday until Monday morning, 'nearly three day's clear start before he was missed at the office' (*Female* 103). Before Monday is out, the firm has noticed the embezzlement of £300, which was carried out by Georgy.

The police are ineffective at finding him, as Georgy's deception was 'wonderful' (*Female* 104). Even though the detective, 'for the sake of the mother' has made 'some inquiries' (*Female* 112), she is deceived by appearance and good manners. She justifies why she includes this tale by stating, 'I have given this narrative as an instance of the error of the absurd belief that young men when they are guilty can be neither cunning nor cheerful, and the farther mistake which lies in the belief that a detective is never hoodwinked' (*Female* 112-113).

Although Miss Gladden sees all the clues, she is unable to interpret them professionally. As she is linked privately to the family, she is unable to turn detective and led by feeling rather than rationality. Thereby female neighbourliness is a disadvantage to Miss Gladden. As such, the case is a personal failure, but she relativizes this by stating that Georgy managed to deceive everyone.

*'The Unraveled Mystery'.*

Miss Gladden is consulted in her next case 'The Unraveled Mystery' to come up with an 'elucidation' (*Female* 117) as the police are at an impasse. They have found clues but could not decipher them. A doctor asks for Miss Gladden's help in the 'Bridge mystery' (*Female* 118).

The case, reminiscent of Poe's armchair detection, is as follows: 'One morning, a Thames boatman found a carpet-bag resting on the abutment of an arch of one of the Thames bridges. This treasure-trove being opened was found to contain fragments of a human body – no head' (*Female* 117). The head was removed 'with some knowledge of anatomy,' and the 'mutilated fragments showed that the murder had been committed [using] a knife' (*Female* 119, 120). Adopting statistics, Miss Gladden concludes that the murderer is foreign as knife murders are uncommon in England. She explains, 'mysteries ... are ... solved ... by accepting probabilities as certainties' (*Female* 121). She also believes the victim to be foreign after having considered the slightly-built man's large pelvis and his skin, which was covered with 'long, strong, straight black hairs' (*Female* 122). She further reasons that the man was educated and refers to the recent influx of exiled refugees. She concludes that 'we have here in London foreigners who are ready to assassinate' (*Female* 124). Even though she does not know if these foreigners are 'selling their secrets to [their] home-police' or 'actual police sp[ies send] by [their] government' (*Female* 128), she feels certain that they are part of a conspiracy.

She comes back to the missing head, and how the body was disposed of, concluding that it was reckless and extremely dangerous. This high-risk strategy of the murderer shows Miss Gladden that they were lodgers. She draws a parallel with Frederick and Maria Manning who hid Patrick O'Connor's body under the flagstones in their kitchen. She further lists the improbability of refugees becoming house owners, thereby legitimising their disposal of the body in the Thames. She uses 'deduction' (*Female* 133)

and logical reasoning to form her statement for the authorities. However, ‘the inquiry, as all the world knows, failed ... miserably ... It could not be otherwise’ (*Female* 133-134).

Even though Miss Gladden unravels the mystery, the case of the Bridge murder is not cleared up and her official statement is rejected. As a woman she inspects this gruesome case from a distance, drawing conclusions but ultimately does not bring it to a close. The case is reminiscent of a crime from 9<sup>th</sup> October 1857 when human remains were found on an abutment of Waterloo Bridge. The Waterloo Bridge murder was never solved and became a *cause célèbre* in later years, thus explaining Forrester’s reworking of the case.

### *‘The Judgement of Conscience’.*

Miss Gladden learns of this case via reading a governmental advertisement. As the attached reward is interesting, she inspects the body of a Mr Higham at the local police station and immediately recognises the face even if she ‘could not identify it’ (*Female* 153). The sergeant informs her that the only piece of evidence is the wadding used to fix ‘the charge in the barrel of the firearm’ bearing parts of ‘Johnston’s Chemistry of Common Life’ (*Female* 154, 155)<sup>61</sup>. The detective remembers John Kamp, a shoemaker, and his sister, Johanna. Having met the dead man on one of Johanna’s rounds, she decides to pay Kamp a visit ‘to use that past friendship as the means of prosecuting [her] profession’ (*Female* 156). She learns that Joanna was dead, and had broken her engagement with Tom Hapsy. Joanna had then taken up with the dead man shortly before her death. Gladden inspects Kamp’s chemistry book noticing some missing pages. She realises that Kamp is ‘a murderer,’ yet she ‘pitie[s] him,’ and wonders ‘What [is she] to do?’ (*Female* 165).

Just before she leaves, he tells her ‘I’m going to give myself up to the police’ (*Female* 165). Outing herself as a detective, she interrogates him. She proceeds to ‘How

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<sup>61</sup> Judith Flanders comments that ‘reality only caught up with fiction in 1884, when John Toms was convicted of murder on the evidence of a piece of wadding recovered from the body of his victim, which was identified as matching a broadside in his possession’ (*Invention* 87).

did you do it?’ whereby the man produces ‘a common rusty pistol’ (*Female* 167). She brings him to the office where he is ‘charged with wilful murder’ (*Female* 169). However, Miss Gladden has her doubts and further investigates.

At the inquest, a medical man elaborates on the ‘bullet he had extracted from the body of the dead man’ (*Female* 170) using basic ballistic skills. Gladden then proceeds to load the pistol Kamp gave her with the bullet from the medical man, only to find out that the bullet does not fit. The inquest is adjourned. While Gladden is still at the police station, a suicide is brought in. Hapsy, who shot himself in Kamp’s rooms, has left a letter of confession exculpating Kamp. Even though relieved, Kamp exclaims that he ‘was a murderer in intention’ (*Female* 174). She pities the man and helps him to set up a new life in Australia.

Even though Miss Gladden investigates a body, finds clues, interrogates suspects and helps to bring a criminal down, this story also shows how ‘normal’ people can be motivated into committing a crime, and it illustrates the atrocious work and living conditions of the lower classes.

*‘A Child found dead: Murder or no Murder’.*

Miss Gladden starts by pointing out that ‘strictly speaking, it is no experience whatever of mine’ (*Female* 176), thereby the case is another example of armchair detection. The case is ‘the mystery of that murder, if murder it was, in the house of that Mr Cumberland, in the North of England’ (*Female* 182). The father is most anxious to find the killer of his child. There is a lack of ‘motive’ and the child’s body was found ‘below the seat of the servant’s closet’ (*Female* 185). One of the drawing-room windows was open and the body wrapped in a blanket from the house. The boy’s head was, ‘nearly sever[ed] from the body’ (*Female* 187). The doctor testified that the child was smothered before other wounds were inflicted.

At first, an outdoor servant was suspected as he had been discharged the previous day. Then one of Mr Cumberland’s daughters was arrested as one of her nightdresses was

missing, then the nurse. Even though, ‘the lawyer who conducts the case points out many valuable facts,’ he believes ‘the nurse is most likely to have committed it’ (*Female* 190). The Doctor deduces that the murderer must have committed the crime while sleeping ‘under the influence of murderous monomania,’ concluding that it ‘is a female murderer who destroyed this child’ (*Female* 194, 197). However, ‘nobody in the house betrays the least guilt’ (*Female* 201). The last entry by the doctor, who sought Miss Gladden’s help, is that he will go to the Cumberland’s to investigate. Miss Gladden wonders if she ‘should obtain its sequel ...[but] she never learnt [her] informant doctor’s address’ (*Female* 204). The case remains open, with none or almost no detection done in its process. Miss Gladden would have liked to engage in the case but is hindered by not having the doctor’s details.

This story barely disguises the fictional reworking of the Road Hill Murder of 1860 that became a turning point in Victorian’s perception of crime. The Victorians were both fascinated and appalled by this mystery. No longer was it an unknown entity that prowled the streets at night, crime entered the sanctity of the middle-class home. The victim was three-year-old Saville Kent. His older sister Constance was one of the suspects. It forced the public to reassess who could be a murderer. In previous decades, the public believed that a criminal should look criminal, but in this case, a sweet, sixteen-year-old girl supposedly killed her brother. Forrester acknowledges a surprising similarity, but also points out the differences between the two cases, as in his tale the perpetrator is a visitor. Nevertheless, he uses true crime as the basis for his writing and calls the daughter of the Cumberland household Constance. He also points out that in 1864, the case is not as yet closed and that still everyone is under suspicion. As such, he does not make Poe’s mistake of using an ongoing murder case to propel a solution. Therefore, he avoids the criticism Poe faced after ‘The Murder of Marie Roguet.’<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Wilkie Collins would later use the same case and fictionalise it in *The Moonstone*.

*'The Unknown Weapon'*

Miss Gladden labels her next tale as 'one of the most remarkable cases which have come under [her] actual observation' (*Female* 205). In 'The Unknown Weapon,' she is first introduced to the case via a newspaper article describing an inquest of a seemingly accidental death. Graham Petleight, the squire's son, was found outside the great hall-door. The doctor concluded that 'the young squire had died from a stab caused by a rough iron barb,' and the 'jury gave a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown' (*Female* 213, 237).

Even though the reward is only minimal, Miss Gladden is fascinated by 'several peculiar circumstances' (*Female* 238). She wants to unearth why the father has not offered a reward, why Graham Petleight had a household key, and what the box mentioned by Dinah, a servant, meant. While travelling by train to Tram, she starts a list of proceedings: interview the constable, Dinah, examine the crime scene. She describes the constable as 'a greater fool [she] never indeed did meet. He was too stupid to be anything else than utterly, though idiotically, honest' (*Female* 240). Like Dupin, Miss Gladden describes the local constable as incompetent in solving the crime. At the constabulary, she manages to examine the key – a 'complicated and more than ordinary valuable lock' that bears the number 13 (*Female* 241). She then proceeds to investigate the man's belongings, and notices 'fluff' on the man's clothes and a small 'bright crimson scrap of silk braid' (*Female* 245, 251). Finally, she examines the barb.

By train, she travels to Little Pockington, Dinah's village, to question the servant. The girl's interrogation is difficult as the girl has constant fits. Miss Gladden finds out that a box had been delivered the day prior to the murder and deposited in the great hall. The detective goes to the manor pretending to be interested in employing Dinah for her sister. She notices that the housekeeper, Mrs Quinton, is a bit too eager to see the girl in a new employment. As Mrs Quinton needs a new servant, Miss Gladden offers her help. She telegraphs police headquarters, requesting 'to plant one of our people as serving woman at Petleightcote' (*Female* 264). Her next line of investigation is to send the 'fluff'

she gathered on the dead man's clothes, 'to a microscopic chemist' (*Female* 271) to use early forensics. His report states that the 'fluff' was from 'bed-tick' (*Female* 276). She starts doubting Mrs Quinion's statement and regards finding the box the solution to the mystery.

Martha, her 'confederate' (*Female* 281) reports that Mrs Quinion received an upsetting letter. The police-woman 'made a mental copy of that communication' (*Female* 289). The crucial piece of information is that the writer, Joseph Spencer, the butler, requests a key with the number 13. Miss Gladden knows that she has to secretly access the manor and places an advertisement in the *Times* to lure the housekeeper away. Martha and Miss Gladden search the house and finally find the box disguised as Mrs Quinion's dressing table. Bed-tick covers the bottom of the box and the detectives attempt to reenact the crime. Eventually, Miss Gladden solves the case, deducing that the young squire hid in the box attempting to enter the house unlawfully to steal his father's valuables<sup>63</sup>. However, his quest was noticed by Mrs Quinion who stabbed him through the box, only later to discover her victim's identity. In the search for more corroborative evidence, she locates parts of the murder weapon inside a drum. Mrs Quinion returns and sets the house on fire to get rid of the two detectives and the evidence. Even though the two detectives emerge unharmed, the murderess escapes.

This story is interesting because Miss Gladden enlists Mrs Green and Martha in her quest to bring down the murderer. In a collaborative effort, the case is solved with Gladden being the executive detective. Three methods of investigation are shown in this story: interrogating witnesses and the constable, using knowledge derived from previous cases, and controlling the small portion of luck she has. Miss Gladden shows high independence and a very methodical approach to detection. Her emotions are never engaged in the cases – she is not overcome by feminine wiles. In terms of its writing style, 'Weapon' sticks out in Forrester's work, as it uses a French *feuilleton* style (short

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<sup>63</sup> The notion of using a box to hide a body is reminiscent of Mary Braddon's *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860).

paragraphing and short declarative sentences). The detection is based on character-revealing dialogues, especially during the interrogation scenes, and finding crucial clues stringing them together. Stephen Knights further comments on 'Weapon': 'a well-developed and interesting investigation ... The detective makes ethical judgement ... it is G's finest case, combining the investigations of Waters with a moral critique and narrative control not unlike that of Elizabeth Gaskell' (*Crime* 35).

*'The Mystery'.*

The final story in Miss Gladden's casebook is a locked-room mystery. A father, Mr Bang locks his daughter, Nelly, in her room as she refuses to marry a man chosen by her father. She is in love with Jack Wilson and disappears at night even though her bedroom and window were locked. For 24 hours, the family and the police try to find out what has happened to her, when Nelly's letter arrives stating that she is to return home. The mystery of the locked-room is solved as Jack, her now-husband, had engaged the fire-escape to help him open the window from outside, get Nelly out and once the window was closed, the latch fell into place, sealing the room once more.

The final story is a very humorous retelling and shows people's stupidity more than any detection skills. The parents and the police are useless in their search for an answer. Ultimately, love trumps detection, and the case is reminiscent of Poe.

In all, the casebook presents seven of Miss Gladden's cases. However, 'The Mystery' is a mere retelling. She is consulted in two cases: 'The Unraveled Mystery' and 'A Child Found Dead' but she cannot come up with an adequate solution to the mystery. She solves the cases of 'Tenant for Life,' 'The Judgement of Conscience' and 'The Unknown Weapon.' 'Georgy' represents a failure for the detective.

The next section looks at Mrs Paschal's investigations which is followed by a comparison of both detectives' strengths and limitations.



## 4.6 William Stephens Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864)

### Mrs Paschal - The Detective

The title of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* is important, as Leonore Davidoff explains, 'class designations came to carry gender overtones' (88) in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, she stresses that 'lady' carries important signs as to the economic and social standing of an individual. Especially Mill lists the needs and desires of individuals, claiming that an individual has a right to be heard in society. However, the problem of 'how to reconcile the ethos of individualism with the individual's requirement to participate in the construction of a better society for all underlined his statements' (Purchase 82). Like Mill, Mrs Paschal laments the rules of a too rigid society while being a part of it, and wishes for more liberty in thought, feeling, expression, and opinion. Mrs Paschal is 'well born and well educated' (*Lady* 19). She had the educational and domestic privileges of a lady. At times she quotes Latin such as 'dolce et decorum est pro patria mori' from Horace's *Odes* or converses on Paul Feval, Alexandre Dumas and the classics. She is versed in several languages but not German.

Regarding her persona, Mrs Paschal says, '[i]t is hardly necessary to refer to the circumstances which led me to embark in a career at once strange, exciting, and mysterious, but I may say that my husband died suddenly, leaving me badly off' (*Lady* 18). Mrs Paschal derives from the gentility and has fallen on hard times after her husband's death. She is close to forty, making her a middle-aged widow. As a middle-class widow<sup>64</sup>, she 'is not sexually interesting' and can be 'ignored, being of no value to those active in society; she is a busybody, ... [and] has no affairs of her own' (Irons 5).

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<sup>64</sup> Widows had a special status in Victorian society:

Victorian society, working with historically entrenched notions concerning widowhood, allowed, however grudgingly, an agency to widows that was discouraged in other women. The loss of a husband created conditions that necessitated a woman's acting on her own behalf. (Bredesen 'Conformist' 21)

She does not forward any further familial information. Unlike Miss Gladden, she does not elaborate on private relationships.

Mrs Paschal was approached ‘through a peculiar channel’ (*Lady* 18) and started to work for the Detective Department within the Metropolitan Police. She occasionally works independently, explaining that, ‘many detectives have more than one piece of employment on their hands at one time because they are tempted by the rewards’ (*Lady* 95). She enters the profession with middle-class widowhood giving her respectability and moral strength. ‘Outraged readers could see [Mrs Paschal’s] transgressions beyond Victorian norms as nobly heroic efforts to preserve the sacred family’ (Sims xiii). At times, she feels envious of other widow’s station and wealth having herself, ‘experience[d] more blows and buffets than ... occurrences of a more gratifying nature’ (*Lady* 26).

At the start of the casebook, she has not been in employ for very long, and is ‘anxious to acquit [herself] as favourably as [she] could, and gain the goodwill and approbation of [her] superior’ (*Lady* 18). She shows a willingness and determination to succeed in her new profession. Mrs Paschal explains why she was recruited by Colonel Warner, her superior.

It was through his instigation that women were first of all employed as detectives. It must be confessed that the idea was not original, but it showed him to be a clever adapter, and not above imitating those whose talent led them to take the initiative in works of progress. (*Lady* 18)

She further elaborates that Colonel Warner got this idea from ‘Fouché, the great Frenchman, [who] was constantly in the habit of employing women to assist him in discovering the various political intrigues’ (*Lady* 18). Mrs Paschal continues, [Fouché’s] petticoated police were as successful as the most sanguine innovator could wish; and Colonel Warner .... [was d]etermined to imitate the example of [Fouché]’ (*Lady* 18).

She is ‘always happier in harness than out of it,’ and glad to be ‘one of the much-dreaded, but little-known people called Female Detectives’ (*Lady* 114, 18). Colonel Warner knows how much she likes her profession and forwards cases to her he believes are ‘congenial to [her] feelings’ (*Lady* 49). At times, she can even take ‘a holiday for a fortnight,’ but is always ‘anxious to be on active service again’ (*Lady* 49).

### **Position in Society**

Unlike Miss Gladden, Mrs Paschal places herself only as regards the police and her enemies. Refusing to cower before Colonel Warner, she writes, ‘I met [his] glance and returned it unflinchingly; he liked people to stare back again at him, because it betokened confidence in themselves, and evidenced that they would not shrink in the hour of peril’ (*Lady* 19). By responding by a strong glance, Mrs Paschal pre-dates Laura Mulvey’s enunciation<sup>65</sup> on power relationships. Mrs Paschal has high respect for her employer, and states, ‘he performed the difficult duties of an arduous position with untiring industry and the most praiseworthy skill and perseverance’ (*Lady* 17).

Similarly, the Colonel is full of praise of Mrs Paschal. ‘[He is] aware that [she] possess[es] an unusual amount of common sense’ (*Lady* 19). As such, he values her as a woman of reason and intuition. She can even decline a case if ‘it involves a duty which is repugnant to [her]’ (*Lady* 20). Rewarded for her endeavours, she also accepts cases outside of her ‘official’ work. At times, Warner even consults her in a case knowing her ‘superior sagacity’ (*Lady* 50). She constantly evaluates her worthiness, by explaining, ‘if I were not, I should be unfit for the position I hold, and unworthy of the confidence that Colonel Warner places in me’ (*Lady* 146).

Mrs Paschal is ‘instantly admitted’ to the London Detective Police office whenever she visits (*Lady* 17). She is respected by her colleagues, for example, she

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<sup>65</sup> Even though Mulvey writes about the male gaze and links it to sexual voyeurism, she also explains how the ego is formed as part of a character’s identification. The questions of who is in power is at the core.

observes, '[a]t the entrance at Hyde Park Corner, a policeman was stationed; talking to him was an inspector, who politely raised his hat to me' (*Lady* 268). In her work, she resorts to help from superintendents, 'whom [she] invariably intrust[s] the consummation of arduous enterprises which require masculine strength' (*Lady* 45). She firmly believes that 'the end justifie[s] the means, and detectives, whether male or female, must not be too nice. The unravelling of a crime is always a conflict of wits' (*Lady* 147). When commenting on the force, she often uses the subject pronoun 'we' rather than 'I' or the more generic 'he'. She writes, 'We were accustomed to see respectable men ... brought into the station on charges of skittle-sharping' (*Lady* 220). Therefore, she sees herself as an integral part of the force.

When it comes to her foes, she compares criminals to 'savages,' and even states that she knows 'some of them ... by sight' (*Lady* 59, 270). Furthermore, she regards herself as 'a keen sportsman' on the hunt for her 'quarry' (*Lady* 77). The criminal world has 'heard of the Lady Detectives in London ... Political foxes are often as cunning as their brethren of the field' (*Lady* 82-3). When a criminal is set free, he vows that if he 'essay[s] a similar affair [he] shall be more on [his] guard against female detectives' (*Lady* 112). Another male criminal exclaims, 'Why, I should as soon have thought of seeing a flying fish or a sea-serpent with a ring through its nose [rather than a female detective]' (*Lady* 236). As such, male criminals mostly show surprise or disbelieve at being caught by a woman.

However, she experiences more difficulties in her work when dealing with female criminals, as she feels 'the force of a remark' (*Lady* 162) coming from a nefarious abbess. The cunning criminal knows that the detective is 'labouring under many disadvantages' and takes advantage of this (*Lady* 162). Upon meeting a 'clever fisherwoman,' Paschal states that she was shrewder than first anticipated making her a 'worthy antagonist' (*Lady* 262-3). She regards actresses and prostitutes as 'a blot upon her sex' (*Lady* 273). This enunciation is important as the female detective was often regarded in a similar, negative light by the public.

Her clients, co-workers and her enemies do at times have problems placing her in the social sphere, as she writes:

I have met people who have turned up their noses at me for being a female detective ... but I never forgot the insult, and have had my eye upon them, and have caught more than one tripping. (*Lady* 244)

She wants to act as a moral surveyor of misdeeds.

### **Appearance, Human Traits, Capabilities**

Mrs Paschal is never truly physically described in her memoir, as she ‘always makes a point of being very quiet, civil and obliging’ and seen as ‘innocent, simple and hardworking’ (*Lady* 44). Her hands are those of a middle-class woman who does not have to work. This becomes clear when she knocks on a rough door’s surface and damages her skin. Her brain is ‘vigorous and subtle’ (*Lady* 18). She feels a ‘strong curiosity’ and is ‘animated with so firm a desire to know what the end would be’ of her investigations (*Lady* 34). She describes herself as having ‘nerve and strength, cunning and confidence, resources unlimited, confidence and numerous other qualities’ (*Lady* 19). She is ‘never hasty or precipitate,’ realistic about her work by stating that ‘no one can be infallible’ and has ‘been tolerably successful in [her] endeavours’ (*Lady* 187, 63). She does ‘not mind undergoing privations when [she is] required to hunt down noble game worthy of much care, trouble and endurance’ (*Lady* 54). Her motto is that ‘opportunity must be seized when it is close to you’ (*Lady* 65). Contrarily, she is religious, appeals to a Higher Power and sees lucky escapes as miracles.

She relies on her intuition when meeting people for the first time. She uses her detection skills to unravel a person’s status and appearance, but also her instinct to decipher if a person is good or bad. Thus, she couples her observation with intuition. ‘Stringently, if idiosyncratically, she assesses anyone within range of her detective eye:

the wellborn, the nouveau riche, the working poor, as well as the criminal elements that she barely outwits' (Bredesen 'Conformist' 24). Historically, women had more opportunity, expertise and time to engage in decoding multiple signs as they were meant to remain silent or were limited in their speech when in society. Mrs Paschal openly engages in a conscious act of surveillance. Regularly, she feels surprised about how well a case proceeds; exclaiming, 'I had not expected to be so successful as I had been' (*Lady* 69). She notes that her work is often 'dictated by chance or accident,' (*Lady* 247) but other methods come into play as well.

Mrs Paschal is very active in her investigative role. She can track criminals down secret tunnels, through London's alley-ways and she is not terrified to eavesdrop on a murderer. She is not afraid to 'crawl' or to spend time 'in darkness' (*Lady* 32). She can also 'recourse to stratagem' (*Lady* 243) if needed. However, she sometimes feels emotional and shudders, or her heart palpitates when she is in a stressful situation. However, these encounters with peril have made her 'unusually hardened for a woman' and she says, 'I made up my mind to brave the danger as well as I was able, and do my best to bring a desperate criminal to justice' (*Lady* 70). Even though her account is subdued in tone, at times she is emotionally over-wrought, and her imagination runs wild as she experiences fear or feels unsettled by her work. Her experiences haunt her tremendously in her dreams.

However, it is not only in her dreams that she suffers. When she is in an underground tunnel, she trembles violently 'for a suspicion arose in [her] breast that [she] might be shut in the vault' (*Lady* 37). On another occasion, she is taken prisoner by a secret organisation, 'the shock emanating from so sudden a discovery completely prostrated [her]' (*Lady* 78-9). At instances like that she has to take 'a moment to think' and attempts to relax before taking the next step (*Lady* 37). Even though Mrs Paschal is aware that she is an emotional woman, most of the time she controls and manages her feelings adequately.

She shows compassion in her work. Firstly, she has a high moral drive and is tough in bringing criminals in. Secondly, she can still feel pity for those who come under her care. For example, she picked up a street-urchin, Jack Doyle, when he was about to steal from a gentleman and rather than turning him in, she taught him a more honest life by giving him the odd commission. Thirdly, when a suspect feels ill after being inculcated in a swindle, she notices that the man looks faint and ill and she takes 'a tin cup under a tap ... [and] filled it with water and presented it to him' (*Lady* 222). Finally, she feels sorry for suspects, as in 'Incognita,' she writes:

I felt sorry for [Fanny]. I was sure that there was some secret grief gnawing at her heart ... she was more sinned against than sinning. However that might be, I had my duty to perform, and driving all my sentimentality back into my breast, I was once more the cool and crafty female detective. (*Lady* 267).

Mrs Paschal has humour, and this becomes clear in her interactions with Colonel Warner. When introducing her to a new case, he does not give her the particulars straightaway but teases:

'Has she been robbed?' [the detective enquires]  
 'No. Guess again.'  
 'Has she lost anything?'  
 'Not a halfpenny that I am aware of.'  
 'What on earth, then, brought her to you?'  
 'I thought I should make you curious.'  
 'Pray enlighten me.' (*Lady* 242)

Furthermore, she notes down her account with a humorous penchant. For example, when she comments how a villainess has come down hard, she states, 'Procumbit humi bos' (*Lady* 216). She describes the advantages and disadvantages of her watch as, 'generally addicted to accuracy, and seldom took erratic fits into its mechanical head except on Sundays, when its Sabbatical proclivities became apparent' (*Lady* 241).

She shows her capabilities on numerous occasions. Whenever she starts on a new case, she comes well-prepared. For example, she possesses numerous references should she seek employment, thereby regularly crossing class barriers. She explains that she has friends:

in a respectable position, who were in the habit of recommending [her] whenever the necessity for doing so arose, which it often did, as gaining access to people's houses in the capacity of a domestic servant was a favourite plan of [hers]. (*Lady* 250)

She has a 'Colt revolver,' her Police 'credentials in [her] pocket' (*Lady* 38, 41) and always carries her Benson (a watch). She uses her good relationship with various police offices to obtain information and searches their database to propel her investigations. She makes use of photographs when searching for culprits.

She is conscientious in her work and writes in retrospect, 'I concentrated all my energies upon the proper fulfilment and execution of those duties which devolved upon me' (*Lady* 18). Creativity and imagination are important as she states that she 'was usually fertile in expedients' and 'was not a woman of one idea, and if one dart did not hit the mark [she] had another feathered shaft ready for action in [her] well-stocked quiver' (*Lady* 38). Mostly she 'never did things in a hurry. [She] always deliberated, so that by reflection [she] should be able to hit upon the right path' (*Lady* 95). Clients compliment her on her ways by stating, 'It is clever ... worthy of a Lady Detective,' and add that she 'must be courageous beyond the average run of women' (*Lady* 145, 146).

Mrs Paschal frequently works undercover. Whenever such spying occasions arise, she 'watch[es] all her movements with the greatest care and closeness' (*Lady* 21). As a spy, her foremost preoccupation is studying her surroundings by investigating every nook and cranny in a household or reconnoitring the position of places. She has a wardrobe for this purpose that is 'as extensive and as full of disguises as that of a costumier's shop' (*Lady* 23). She can 'play [her] part in any drama in which [she is] instructed to take part,' 'like an accomplished actress' (*Lady* 19). She uses her voice to enhance her various



disguises. For example, as a lady's maid, she replies 'in the monotonous, parrotlike tone ... when talking to those who have authority over [her]' (*Lady* 28). At other times, she can act the married love-sick woman to gain access to a criminal circle. She writes, 'I brought all my histrionic talent into requisition. He was my lover, and I pretended to be by no means shy' (*Lady* 232).

She feels entertained whenever she can lure criminals and pens, 'I laughed in my sleeve when I thought that he little knew who he was entertaining' (*Lady* 57). However, when she is in captivity she does 'not allow [her] features a play' and calls 'all [her] versatility into action, and bring[s] [her] histrionic powers into prominence' so that the criminal 'should discover nothing but innocence, or at least the meritorious affectation of it' (*Lady* 79). As such, she 'never allow[s] appearances to have any weight with [her]' (*Lady* 220), meaning that she can see behind her foe's disguises.

She also rehearses in a deliberate and thoughtful way for future cases to be 'prepared for everything' (155). She practises her capabilities, so she can 'glide stealthily along with care and precision ... in order that [she] might become well versed and experienced in an art so useful to a detective' (*Lady* 30). Her knowledge about crime grows over the course of the novel. However, she is also realistic that she cannot undertake just any endeavour and therefore 'employ[s] a boy to discover minute and pretty details which it was inconvenient for [her] to investigate [her]self' (*Lady* 100). She has a good knowledge of legal proceedings as she is often in consultation with her superior, fellow policemen and prosecutors. Furthermore, she uses police methods when she tries to find a suspect by interrogating witnesses as she describes: 'the prisoner was conveyed into the yard of the station-house and placed in a row with nine other men. It was intended that the witnesses we had sent for should identify the prisoner from amongst a number of others' (*Lady* 220-1).

She puts a high value on her deductive skills. She explains that she 'had seen a few things in [her] life which appeared scarcely susceptible of explanation at first, but which, when eliminated by the calm light of reason and dissected by the keen knife of

judgment, were in a short time as plain as the sun at noonday' (*Lady* 29). This statement resembles Sherlock Holmes' rational strategy in 'The Sign of the Four': 'When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth' (Doyle 111).

### **Class, Gender and the Setting of the Stories**

As Hayward included 'lady' in his title, he positioned his heroine within a specific class. He also hints at her unusualness, suggesting the 'unladylike' work she does. However, 'her gender is acknowledged intermittently throughout the book although it is conventionally treated; the ramification of her untraditional behaviour and employment are never specifically explored' (Klein 24). Mrs Paschal knows how society is run – from the upper echelons to the lower classes. When she tries to gain employment in a household as part of her detective work, she knows that she has to bribe the housekeeper. She writes, 'Servants in gentleman's families are generally engaged in making a purse, upon the proceeds of which they are enabled to retire' (*Lady* 24). She has 'armed [herself] with a thorough knowledge of the class[es]' (*Lady* 25). Upon seeing Mrs Paschal, an Italian spy says, 'it is rather unusual for ladies to be employed about matters connected with the police, is it not?' (*Lady* 51). The detective only comments, 'I don't know how it is in Italy, but in this country, it is not so uncommon a thing' (*Lady* 52). Montuani replies, 'Indeed, you surprise me, but I have seen many astonishing things since I have been in England' (*Lady* 52).

How Mrs Paschal came into Colonel Warner's employ is never fully stated. Colonel Warner repeatedly makes comments that he prefers women to be on some specific cases rather than men, especially when 'a service of so delicate a nature would stand more chance of success if confided to a woman than it would if put in the hands of the regular police' (*Lady* 51). Mrs Paschal continues, 'men are less apt to suspect a woman if she plays her cards cleverly, and knows thoroughly well how to conduct the business

she is instructed to bring to a successful termination' (*Lady* 51). These utterances hint at her gender, class and educational background to successfully bring cases to a close.

She is on good terms with most policemen and sees them as 'birds of [her] own feather' (*Lady* 96). Colonel Warner compares her to 'a gold digger at Ballarat who is in luck' (*Lady* 243). A client equates her with 'a Jonathan Wild in petticoats' (*Lady* 244). She compares herself with 'Tartuffe' (*Lady* 268), thereby alluding to Molière's imposter. She is critical of the police force and believes that greed is often 'the cause of their failure' (*Lady* 96), hinting at the reward scheme still used in the 1860s. However, she lives from these rewards and states that if she 'ever achieved a triumph ... [she] did not like [her] laurels be shared by anyone else' (*Lady* 98). She has no problem with exclaiming, 'I must warn you not to say anything that may incriminate yourself, because it will be used against you afterwards in evidence' (*Lady* 191).

Furthermore, she likes to work with other people on her cases, especially when her gender, age or class might prevent her from doing so. Whenever she needs assistance, she can 'name several officers with worth' (*Lady* 103) and shakes hands with them. As such they do the man's work, such as raids or carrying out arrests, every time her gender prevents her from doing so. At times she is helped in her undercover work by other women 'for the sake of appearances' (*Lady* 114). Her fellow workers regard her as their 'chère amie' (*Lady* 230). Cranny-Francis writes, 'the female detective can rarely outmatch a male opponent on the grounds of brute strength, so she must rely on more sophisticated means' (167). For example, she works with a former thief and Frenchman, called Pegon, who is regularly employed by the police. Mrs Paschal values his usefulness in numerous cases, comparing him to Vidocq. In all her cases, Mrs Paschal 'sets her own schedule, requests and organises police information or backup assistance, [and] plans the pattern of the investigation' (Klein 25).

Mrs Paschal comments on society, especially education. She states that Robert Owen's<sup>66</sup> theories are true, 'that children are what you make them, and that the man is but the result of education.' (*Lady* 129). She also points out a discrepancy between the higher class and the middle-class. She does not believe in the dissection of wealth. Moreover, she comments on marriage, especially in 'The Lost Diamonds,' where she highlights that the Duke only married his wife to get his hands on her dowry to buy gems and use her as an exhibition model for the stones. She thereby hints at most Victorian men's neglect of their wives. Furthermore, in 'The Mysterious Countess,' she immediately suspects the Countess as she has not observed mourning conventions, leaving them after six months and thereafter appearing joyous and opulent in society. Therefore, the Countess's behaviour almost acts to prove the woman's criminal trait<sup>67</sup>. Finally, Hayward's narrative objects The Angel in the House concept, as in 'The Secret Band.' Here a criminal is married to a dependent and unintelligent wife and the detective is actively contrasted against the passive and doll-like woman.

Mrs Paschal is against animal cruelty, a feminine activity. Firstly, she comments on 'the work of disfigurement and mutilation' when 'two dogs tearing, worrying, and biting the life out of their miserable carcasses' (*Lady* 197). She comments on the 'callous nature' and 'indifferen[ce] to the suffering of others' (*Lady* 197) while men engage in this type of sport. Secondly, when she watches a circus performer eat a rat alive, she wants to call for 'officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (*Lady* 174). She reasons that they are given large sums each year, yet are never on the spots where these atrocities take place.

The setting in the casebook changes continuously. Mrs Paschal is always on the move, thereby showing greater mobility and agency than Miss Gladden who is more of

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<sup>66</sup> Robert Owen was a Welsh manufacturer who attempted to improve the working conditions of the lower classes. He promoted cooperatives and was a social reformer. He was particularly interested in providing free schooling to children of all classes and introducing new child labour laws.

<sup>67</sup> Bredesen explains, 'the Victorian widow was expected to bear the heavy burden of mourning – metaphorically and sartorially - in her veils and crêpe, as well as sequestration from society, isolating her for at least the proverbial year and a day' ('Conformist' 25).

an armchair detective. She has an intricate knowledge of London which she explains, ‘I have experienced the miseries of Temple Bar, and the horrors of Ludgate Hill, while the tenors of Cheapside afforded me much food for rumination’ (*Lady* 67). She traverses London expertly and knows how to navigate from one section to another. Furthermore, she is not afraid to walk London’s streets at night to trail suspects or to visit informants. Moreover, on some of her cases, she visits criminal districts without the slightest hesitation, as ‘[she knows her] way about St Giles’s pretty well, and experienced no difficulty in finding the delectable and highly insalubrious locality known as Vinegar-yard’ (*Lady* 269). She also comments on the state of some parts in London and the ever-changing infrastructure and life of Londoners.

She also shows herself as an experienced traveller, especially during her train journeys. She finds ‘the quickly rushing motion of a railway carriage ... exhilarating’ (*Lady* 45). She describes the railway<sup>68</sup> as ‘typical of progress’ and asks herself ‘What can equal such magical travelling?’ (*Lady* 45). The detective moves frequently from London to more rural settings, as in ‘The Mysterious Countess,’ when she attempts to track a thief by taking a train to Yorkshire. As she is unattached, her travel mode exemplifies her entire persona: independent, spirited, adventurous and ready to engage in numerous cases.

### **Mrs Paschal’s Cases**

The next section looks at Mrs Paschal’s ten cases and analyses how she puts her traits, capabilities and methods into practice when working as a woman detective.

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<sup>68</sup> By the 1860s, trains were omnipresent and ‘such variety in transportation testifies to changes in the rising middle class and the bustling urban workforce, ... the nineteenth century was a period of almost constant change in the material world, thanks primarily to the Industrial Revolution’s innovations in travel and communication’ (Sims xxi). As Daly explains:

The railway must be understood as more than a simple mode of transport: for the Victorians it stood as both agent and icon of the acceleration of the pace of everyday life; it annihilated an older experience of time and space, and made new demands on the sensorium of the traveller. With the modern city and the factory floor, then, the railway required a new subjective disposition. (463)

*'The Mysterious Countess'*

In 'The Mysterious Countess,' Colonel Warner summons Mrs Paschal as he does 'not know a woman more fitted for the task' than her (*Lady* 19). He introduces her to the case of the widowed Countess of Vervaine. A discrepancy between her extravagant lifestyle and her lack of property has been noted, and Mrs Paschal is to investigate where her funds come from.

The detective infiltrates the Countess' household as a lady's maid. Fanny, the 'young and lovely widow of the old earl,' is 'very clever and versatile' (*Lady* 21, 23). Mrs Paschal observes the Countess and describes Fanny as a 'terrestrial angel [who] has a will and a temper of [her] own ... [and is] tyrannical with her servants' (*Lady* 27). As such she is described as a tyrannical angel and Mrs Paschal deduces that 'she ha[s] a secret' (*Lady* 26).

One evening, Mrs Paschal's 'intuition' tells her that she is about to 'make some important discovery' (*Lady* 28). The detective decides to watch her suspect's room after she has retired. She sees a man issue from it and is puzzled at first but soon notices that the Countess is in disguise. She trails her to a previously locked room and watches the Countess through the keyhole. Upon entering the deserted room, she discovers a secret underground passage, leading away from the house. She follows the Countess; however, her clothes restrict her too much and she takes off 'the small crinoline,' for she 'consider[s] that it would very much impede [her] movements' (*Lady* 33). As the Countess changes into men's clothes and the detective drops her clothes, both females go against common stereotypes about female dress and etiquette<sup>69</sup>. Thus, both women act in un-lady-like fashion while engaging in manly activities.

In the secret tunnel, Fanny removes wall bricks to access a vault and takes gold from chests inside. Mrs Paschal reasons that she has 'gained as much information as [she] wished,' (*Lady* 36) but retreats in the wrong direction and she gets locked up in the tunnel.

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<sup>69</sup> Jennifer Fillion states that 'during the Victorian period there was great controversy on the subject of women's dress and how fashion contributed to the construction of a sincere and transparent identity' (34). She continues 'virtue and morality are therefore visible in the appearance of a woman' (34).

To escape, Paschal enters the vault, is promptly arrested, and surprised that she is accused of ‘robbing the bank’ (*Lady* 41).

The following day, she is congratulated by Colonel Warner for her ‘tact, discrimination and perseverance’ (*Lady* 41). Mrs Paschal explains that the Countess robbed the South Belgravia Bank but fled. Mrs Paschal travels by rail to Blinton Abbey and hunts Fanny down. When confronted by the detective, the Countess poisons herself and dies. Mrs Paschal does ‘not regret that so young and fair a creature has escaped the felon’s dock’ (*Lady* 48). Even though Mrs Paschal has solved the case, found the criminal, and retrieved the gold, she feels unsatisfied for not putting Fanny ‘into the hands of the police’ (*Lady* 43). Fanny commits suicide, the ultimate Victorian sin, thereby evading trial and imprisonment.

Mrs Paschal is reminiscent of Marian; however, there are no after-effects for the detective after shedding her clothes. Furthermore, she may predate Doyle in ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ concerning cross-dressing, and ‘The Red-Headed League’ in its portrayal of using tunnels to a bank. The narration resembles Sir Walter Scott in its lyrical asides and quotes, for example, when she compares Blinton Abbey to Scott’s ‘Melrose Abbey.’

### *‘The Secret Band’*

Mrs Paschal labels her second story ‘a complicated case’ (*Lady* 49). While on holiday, she is contacted by Colonel Warner. His letter asks her to investigate a society called ‘The Secret Band’ operating like the Carbonari<sup>70</sup>. Its members are political refugees who want ‘the Regeneration of Italy’ (*Lady* 50). Felice Mantuani, a member, has approached the Colonel for protection in return for information. Following Warner’s order, Mrs Paschal travels to London and visits Mantuani. The detective moves cautiously as Zini, the head of the organisation, is described as an unscrupulous man. She rents the

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<sup>70</sup> The Carbonari were a revolutionary organisation in Italy from the 1800 until 1831 and mainly involved in defeating tyranny and establishing a constitutional government for the southern country.

attic above the Zini's lodgings claiming to be 'a servant out of place' (*Lady* 54). She eavesdrops on Zini and can only partially retreat, leading to their first conversation.

Then, she is informed by a reproachful Colonel that Mantuani has been killed. Mrs Paschal believes Zini to be the assassin. Exerting perseverance, she can discover the Secret Band's meeting place, a ruined mill. She closely questions Dorothy, the housekeeper of the mill. She organises the next step in the investigation with Colonel Warner. Several days later, during a stormy night, she returns to Dorothy's, when the society holds a meeting. Mrs Paschal observes them through a peephole. Zini is indeed Mantuani's murderer and she takes 'a mental note of this incautious declaration,' (*Lady* 76) and later writes, 'With such a man you can never be too much on your guard, and I began to fear that I had been rash and imprudent in exposing myself too much' (*Lady* 78).

She is taken prisoner, exposed as a spy and interrogated by Zini. Even though she carries herself well in the interview, the society decides to kill her. She is taken to the water-wheel to be assassinated but can alert Warner's policemen on standby at the last moment. Zini is struck by providential lightning. The police raid the building, overtake the conspirators and save Mrs Gladden, who 'swoon[s] away' once the danger is overcome (*Lady* 90).

In narrative style, 'The secret band' is close to a sensation novel's. There are other parallels as well. Zini has some resemblance to Count Fosco. Zini is described as 'a terrible man ... a demi-god ... cruel and unforgiving ... [with a] puny spirit ... like Lucifer ... a man amongst men' (*Lady* 53-55). Mrs Paschal, in a Marian fashion, sees him as 'a man to admire' as there was a 'calm dignity and self-possession about him' (56). Furthermore, the more Mrs Paschal gets to know him, the more facets she discovers about him. She even attends his funeral, recognising his 'fine qualities' (*Lady* 90).

The setting at the mill is reminiscent of the Gothic<sup>71</sup> and reflects Mrs Paschal's state. Even if she faints at the end of the narrative in a true gothic heroine fashion, she

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<sup>71</sup> Alexandra Warwick further illustrates:



nevertheless only does this once the situation has been brought under control and the case has been solved.

*'The Lost Diamonds'*

The next case is about the recovery of the Duke of Rustenburgh's diamonds. Mrs Paschal overhears a conversation between two gossipers. She feels that 'it [is] her business to discover the perpetrators of theft, and so [she] immediately begin[s] to think how [she] could return the information to account' (*Lady* 95). Using head-quarters informants, she learns that the theft happened in London. As the Duke's valet, Karl Fulchöck, has since vanished, the police believe him to be the thief. Mrs Paschal searches the valet's room, noticing that the valet departed in a hurry and left his most valued possessions behind. She reasons that 'Karl Fulchöck ... was a plain, honest, straightforward, hardworking young man' and concludes he was 'abducted' (*Lady* 97). Although she believes the Duchess to be at fault, she does 'not say a word about [her] suspicions to any soul living' (*Lady* 98). She decides to 'watch her movements,' (*Lady* 99) as the Duchess is renowned for gambling high.

She tracks the lady to a house in Bloomsbury, where a money-lender lives. Thereafter, she asks Colonel Warner for 'a select body of police' (*Lady* 102). Under pretence and with her plain-clothes policemen as protectors, she sees Mr Lupus, the Shylock. She pretends to be in the Duchess's employ and thereby dupes Lupus while her policemen search the house. Karl is freed and Lupus is arrested 'in the name of the Queen' (*Lady* 109). However, Lupus is taken to the Duke who decides not to take revenge. The Duchess stops gambling and the Duke recovers his diamonds. Mrs Paschal 'receive[s] the reward, and [is] much complimented by all who [know her] and who [are] acquainted with the affair upon the sagacity [she] displayed in recovering the lost diamonds' (*Lady*

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The detective story, with its emphasis on the power of rationality, would seem an unlikely inheritor of Gothic, but its narrative efficacy and its fascination for the late Victorians lie in the same place – the rendering of urban modernity as Gothic. (34)

112). All in all, this story is fast-paced and sensational in how Mrs Paschal derives at conclusions and sees her actions through.

*‘Stolen Letters’*

Colonel Warner recommends Mrs Paschal for a case at the post office where valuable letters have been stolen. Working undercover, she petitions ‘to be allowed to learn the business of a letter-sorter, which request [is] granted at once’ (*Lady* 114). While at work, she observes one man in particular as he seems troubled. She follows Johannes Brown to a public-house, a place where men show ‘their true characters’ (*Lady* 115), and eavesdrops on a conversation he has with Mr Wareham. Mrs Paschal reasons that Brown had ‘first of all felt the letters ... and if he detected the presence of gold, he raised the envelope to his mouth and bit off the corner in which the coin has fallen, afterwards placing it in his pocket’ (*Lady* 117). She also finds out that Wareham is harassing Brown to a new criminal scheme.

She consorts with ‘an intelligent officer,’ to come up with a way ‘to put a stop to the nefarious practices’ (*Lady* 123, 122). The criminals’ latest elaborate scheme is to steal entire mailbags. Mrs Paschal hides in the building to observe while being close enough to act. She ‘allow[s] them to satisfy their rapacity, and wait[s] patiently’ (*Lady* 124). As they finish their theft, she steps in. Brown is immediately arrested but Wareham jumps into one of the wagons of the postal system and escapes. He is arrested later. Wareham is deported while Brown gets a minor sentence at the trial, with Mrs Paschal stepping in as a principal witness.

Since the textual form of this story is more neutral and professional in tone, it loses any notion of sensationalism or Gothicism.

*‘The Nun, the Will and the Abbess’*

In the next story, Mrs Paschal becomes a novitiate in a convent and rescues a young heiress imprisoned by the abbess. At the instigation of Father Romaine and her

devoted mother, Evelyn St. Vincent was put in a convent to end a romantic liaison with Alfred Wriniker. Warner deems it ‘just the case for a Lady Detective,’ and suspects ‘the abbess of the Ursuline Convent [to be] interested in Evelyn’s death’ (*Lady* 143, 142).

Mrs Paschal is aware of the risks, stating ‘if detected ... some terrible punishment may be inflicted on me’ (*Lady* 145). When at the convent, she ‘assume[s] a harmless character, which recommend[s] [her] to the nuns’ and is always ‘very docile and obedient’ (*Lady* 148). As the mother superior’s confidante and servant, the detective can accompany her everywhere including the ‘vaults, cells or cellars,’ where she first glances the heiress and describes her as a ‘hardly-treated captive ... suffering from infamous oppression’ (*Lady* 150, 151). Mrs Paschal finds out that Evelyn has refused to hand over her inheritance to the Abbess.

When the Abbess tortures Evelyn, Mrs Paschal does not intervene as she believes her efforts would not lead to ultimate success. Evelyn signs and the detective bears witness. Later, Mrs Paschal takes possession of the papers and flees the convent to enrol Warner’s help. They expose the ‘nefarious nature of the abbess’s transactions’ (*Lady* 159) and threatening her with the Police and scandal. The abbess, ‘a clever woman,’ comprehends ‘the state of affairs at once,’ exclaiming, ‘You have outwitted me. I admire your talent’ (*Lady* 161). However, she bribes Evelyn into leaving her a large sum before letting her go. Mrs Paschal muses that she ‘could have defeated the abbess in the long run’ (*Lady* 163). Yet the detective is more interested in reuniting the two lovers.

The tale is reminiscent of Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, substituting the castle with a convent, the villain with a villainess, and the imprisonment of a worthy girl. In this case, it takes a female detective to free the girl, so that she can conventionally marry her sweetheart.

### *‘Which is the Heir?’*

The sixth story is a case of extortion and seeks to clear Lord Northend’s name. Colonel Warner tells Mrs Paschal that a gipsy woman, Zitella Lambrook, apparently

removed the true heir to the estates at a young age, replacing the baby with another. The gipsy now wants to claim her reward as she raised the true heir. The Lord declines and she threatens with a solicitor, Mr Jarvis, who furthers the case.

Mrs Paschal investigates as ‘nothing would please [her] better’ (*Lady* 169). The detective suspects the solicitor of being the originator of the extortion. She also investigates the Lambrooks, by trailing them from the solicitor’s to their lair. Travelling in the same train carriage, Mrs Paschal overhears their conversation, whereupon she rejoices secretly as she has found out that ‘they were mother and son, and that their claim was entirely spurious and trumped up for the purposes of extortion’ (*Lady* 173). Thereafter she confronts the solicitor with her findings, who drops the case immediately as his ‘game is up’ (*Lady* 175). Lord Northend’s status is no longer questionable and he drops the investigation, taking it no further.

### *‘Found Drowned’*

Mrs Paschal finds her next case in a newspaper article. Laura Harwell, employed at a baker’s, was found drowned in the Serpentine in London. It is believed that there was some ‘foul play,’ as her body bears ‘marks of violence’ (*Lady* 180). The detective is intrigued by ‘the impenetrable mystery’ (*Lady* 180). First, she inspects Laura’s body. She notices that ‘they had not removed a single article of her attire’ and she decides that it was no suicide as ‘there was not that resolute expression ... of despair, and ... extreme misery’ (*Lady* 181). She further notices bruises and a torn dress, deducing that shortly before her death she was involved in a fight.

She then investigates the girl’s background and finds out that she had a sweetheart, Stephen Bardsley, and a man bothered her, Sir Castle Clewer. She counsels Colonel Warner to arrest Clewer on suspicion. However, Warner had already cleared Clewer. Warner advises Mrs Paschal to find Bardsley, who has been reported missing. Unfortunately, the inquest inculpates Clewer for wilful murder. Several weeks pass and while on a night errand, she comes across the apprentice and follows him to a cemetery

where she is admitted by the porter. She confronts the apprentice, who admits his guilt and proclaims he committed the deed because he was jealous. The murderer is hanged and Clewer acquitted.

The story is interesting because it can be regarded as an imaginative rendering of Poe's 'The Story of Marie Rôget.' It is much more melodramatic in language and carries some highly anglicised undertones.

### *'Fifty Pounds Reward'*

The detective's next case is an investigation of forgery in a low middle-class household. 'The case being of some importance was placed in [Mrs Paschal's] hands, and [her] first care was to call upon Mr Eskell at his home' (*Lady* 210).

Mrs Paschal first interrogates Mr Eskell and scrutinises his cheque-book, concluding that 'a draft [has] been torn out very neatly and very cleverly' (*Lady* 211). She deduces that only the wife or the housekeeper could have accessed the book. Mr Eskell tells her of the worrying friendship his wife has struck with a Mrs Wilkinson. The interrogation of the housekeeper shows that Mrs Eskell was in her husband's study where the cheque-book is kept.

Mrs Eskell returns from an elaborate shopping tour and is interrogated by her husband. Mrs Paschal quietly watches the proceedings until she is officially introduced. Mr Eskell claims that 'it is mainly owing to [Mrs Paschal's] practised wit that you are found out at the commencement of your criminal career' (*Lady* 215). It emerges that Mrs Wilkinson attempted to bring about an estrangement in the couple and the detective 'resolve[s] ... to frighten her a little' (*Lady* 216). She visits the butter-woman at her shop acting 'the cynosure of all eyes' and claims that she has 'come to arrest her for being an accomplice with one Louisa Eskell' (*Lady* 216). The Eskells and Mrs Gladden get their revenge even if no official steps are taken hereafter. By destroying the shop woman's reputation, the detective made certain that Mrs Wilkinson was humiliated. Mr Wilkinson pays for the damage and Mr Eskell forgives his wife.

*'Mistaken Identity'*

In her penultimate case, Mrs Gladden investigates a swindle based on mistaken identity. She works closely with the inspector and the prosecutor. Even though the suspect, Mr Halliday, is pointed out amongst other men, Mrs Paschal doubts this easy unravelling. She also considers the prisoner's reaction and notes, 'This is a remarkable case; but although the evidence seems to be against him, it is odd, isn't it, that he should take on so' (*Lady* 222). She personally interrogates Mr Halliday and finds out that he has an alibi for the time of the crime. She double-checks this claim with his employer.

Furthermore, she enlists her associate and police-informant Pegon, as he knows all London-based criminals. Pegon leads her to a tavern, and Mrs Paschal can make out a man with an astonishing resemblance to Mr Halliday. Pegon introduces him as Toko. Once the look-alike is arrested, she finds out that Mr Halliday's brother did not die in a shipwreck as previously assumed, but now dabbled in crime in London. Mr Halliday is immediately discharged after the magistrate and prosecutor lay eyes on his brother. The engineer even pays his brother's debts and drops the charges. Thereafter, Toko gives up a life of crime and sets up as a sheep-farmer in New South Wales.

*'Incognita'*

While Mrs Paschal is at Colonel Warner's, a woman requests an audience. The Colonel asks the detective to wait as, 'probably this lady may require [her] services' (*Lady* 240). Even though the case is 'rather out of [her] usual line [of work]' (*Lady* 242), Warner offers her the job and explains:

it appears that her son has just come into a very large property,  
..., which he inherited under his father's will. ... About a month  
ago, some woman got hold of him and is easing him of his  
superfluous cash in a most dexterous manner. (*Lady* 242-3)

The mother, Mrs Foster Wareham, wants to free her son from the clutches of ‘Incognita,’ as the love-interest labels herself. Her real name is Fanny Williams, a third-rate actress. Mrs Paschal informs the mother that she is ‘compelled to have recourse to duplicity’ (*Lady* 247) by spying.

Next, Mrs Paschal calls upon Fanny Williams pretending to be an unemployed servant. Employed as lady’s maid, the detective observes the young woman’s ruse in making Mr Wareham hers – by showing disinterest in his money, faking employment letters, manipulating Mr Wareham subtly, and bribing him to marry her. Mrs Paschal detects all of ‘the tricks of the trade,’ but grows rather alarmed as she sees that she has ‘undertaken a task which would require all [her] generalship to bring to a successful termination’ (*Lady* 263).

By accident, Charley Blake calls for Miss Williams and Mrs Paschal begins ‘to smell a rat,’ deciding to get out the ‘secret which [gives] him tremendous influence over [the actress]’ (*Lady* 264). ‘[Her] idea [is] that Jack Williams [is] Fanny’s husband’ and she is ‘determined to risk the assertion upon the slender chance of his confirming it’ (*Lady* 272). When Wareham proposes to Fanny, Mrs Paschal interferes. The deceived man attempts suicide; however, a low ebb prevents his demise. He leaves thereafter on the Grand Tour, not seeing Fanny again. Fanny, in turn, finds ‘a fresh victim’ (*Lady* 278).

‘Incognita’ shows the detective engaging in surveillance work and finding concrete clues.

Mrs Paschal solves ten cases in all: three for her employer and seven as a commission. Her cases include a variety of crime: theft, murder, kidnapping, embezzlement, forgery and impersonation. She solves most of her cases with varying outcomes. In ‘Countess,’ the lady is found guilty but commits suicide before her arrest. Zini in ‘Secret Band’ is killed in a storm, also evading trial. The superior mother in ‘The Nun’ is found out, but no actions are taken against her. She recuperates the Duke of Rustenburgh’s diamonds, but he takes no actions concerning his wife. This echoes Mr

Eskell's in 'Fifty Pounds Reward' and in 'Mistaken Identity,' both cases being dropped to install a happy family again. In 'Stolen Letters,' the culprits are apprehended, like Stephen Barnsley in 'Found Drowned'. The investigation in 'Which is the Heir?' is dropped once the client is cleared. Only in 'Incognita' is the suspect not apprehended as she has as yet not committed an infraction.

#### 4.7 The 1860s Professional Female Detective

So far, this study has shown the progression from early crime accounts – Newgate Calendars, Newgate novels, initial crime fiction and accompanying news footage – to the Gothic and sensation novel influences. Plenty of fiction dealing with crime was issued mid-century, and a multitude of female detectives befitting my earlier definition. Though most scholars jump from Poe to Doyle, assuming a forty-year gap, this study has tried to fill it in this chapter. Even though there was little short detective fiction with female sleuths, the casebook novel gave these detectives an adequate platform, allowing them to become a central part of the narrative. The criminal is no longer at the forefront but becomes the detective's prey. The detective is on the side of the law, working for the law, rendering her work respectable. It also propels the illusion that crime can be contained in a multitude of settings, crosses class boundaries and involves both sexes.

When the first female professional detectives appeared in fiction, the public was ready to accept this popular literary format. There was no moral outcry. Whilst including the changing image of women, the authors wrote for their audience and presented the female detective in an acceptable fashion.<sup>72</sup> Firstly, the mention 'female detective' is only rarely made and therefore readers can at times forget that they are reading a tale involving a female investigator. The first-person account using 'I' and 'we' enhances this. Secondly, the emphasis in both narratives is on gifted detective rather than female detective.

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<sup>72</sup> Klein explains, 'recognising that detective fiction as popular literature is more a commodity produced for mass consumption than a valid social history makes it easier to understand that whether written by women or men, the product is usually responsive to society's demands' (5).



Technically, readers could infer the detective to be male if it were not for the subtle hints of being a female.

Until now, this study has treated Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal separately as they are different. Firstly, the inspiration for the books derives from different influences. Forrester's casebook is in line with early memoirs and the subject matters show a strong stimulus of Poe's armchair detection. Contrarily, Hayward's Mrs Gladden is a blend of sensation fiction with Poe, delving occasionally into gothic conventions and sensational language. Forrester's stories are a series of intricate crime puzzles, whereas Hayward's stories are character-driven and thrive on action. Both detectives do not compromise their womanliness or attempt to become pseudo-male-detectives. They use their inherent female characteristics to solve their cases.

In terms of narrative voice, Miss Gladden is much more feminine as she details her private life, enunciates little anecdotes and muses over life. She conforms to patterns of proper femininity knowing her place in society and only venturing as far as would be permissible. All her investigations are in the domestic sphere. Her mannerisms and habits enforce this idea. Finally, she always complies with the law as her overriding principle and convicting criminals is her goal. Contrarily, Mrs Paschal shows more masculine attributes and readily sheds her female attire as in 'Countess.' She is much more modern in her ideas, is adventurous and a tough woman. Even if she has feminine moments, some of her behaviours are definitely not acceptable in a conservative patriarchy. Her cases are not solely within the domestic sphere. She is not afraid of entering public houses nor working with males, and can be very confrontational when dealing with witnesses or criminals. She also works outside the law to help clients and her overriding principle is justice. As such, she mainly concentrates on the thrill of the chase, but she is less likely to bring about a legal conviction.

Mrs Paschal is evasive concerning her family and friends. Intrinsically she protects her private life, like today's undercover agents who, while at work, do not talk about their private lives and at home cannot talk about their missions. This is a sign of

high professionalism. Miss Gladden also remains mysterious and focusses on work, but delves into more private periphery topics. Both female detectives balance work and private life to different degrees.

Mrs Paschal is more transparent in depicting her work, especially her position within the force. The reader knows her respective superior and her colleagues making her more of a genuine detective. She details the referral of cases from superior to detective, even giving insight into the liberties she can take. Even when working undercover, she is part of the force. Though she pinpoints the black sheep in the force, she generally defends their work, regarding it a necessity. This is very different to Miss Gladden as it is unclear who authorises her investigations. Clearly, Miss Gladden is not directly employed by the police force, making her more like an independent informant or consultant agent. She also vehemently defends her calling. Furthermore, she constantly points to the inefficiency of the police or is upfronted by their dismissal as an investigator. In 'Tenant,' she instigates the case, in others, she works alongside the police.

Though fashioned differently, Forrester and Hayward depict female professional detectives as showing abilities, cunning ingenuity, working methods and ethics similar to those of the male sleuths. Neither Miss Gladden nor Mrs Paschal need a male partner-in-crime to solve their cases, yet they occasionally require a male to handle arrests, protect them from uncountable danger or perform other duties outside their female range. Both detectives almost seek to erase their gender from their cases. Forrester 'develops a character who seldom identifies herself as a woman' (Klein 23), reinforcing Miss Gladden's statement that male and female detectives are at par. Mrs Paschal shows a similar conviction. Their 'sex is thus almost incidental to the stories' (Sussex 79). Only occasionally do the authors reference their gender. Therefore, they signalled something new in the literary sphere. Even if the Victorian reader would inevitably interpret the books in terms of gender, these accounts are more about women living outside the norm. 'The image of women entering male strongholds ... and taking charge [was] the appeal

of early women's detective stories ... and as such laid the groundwork for the female detectives ... in mystery fiction' (Janik 182).

From a narrative viewpoint, Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal constitute progress from earlier sensation heroines who abandoned their investigative careers once they were safely married. Only one thing is clear, they were both probably too old to engage in a possible second marriage, or a new line of intellectual engagement was more tempting. Mrs Paschal's widowhood and Miss Gladden's undisclosed familial status allow for new literary possibilities<sup>73</sup>. Gavin comments on the values of older detectives, '[b]y portraying older women as skilled, successful, and central to their narratives, their creators insist that these mature women are made visible to readers. In this way, these sleuths become surprisingly subversive figures' (Gavin 'Feminist' 263).

As such widowhood<sup>74</sup> liberates Mrs Paschal from restrictive societal norms, gives her a valuable excuse for her work, and legitimises her in the eyes of the public. Even if their casebooks end abruptly, both women could potentially have been revived, had their authors wished so<sup>75</sup>.

Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal use their innate – intuition and imagination – as well as taught capabilities – observation, reasoning and deciphering clues – in their investigations. 'The creation of a female detective provided a number of narrative possibilities that were unavailable to male detectives. The very fact that she was a woman could work to her advantage' (Patnaik and Kumar 138). Melissa Schaub terms the early ladylike detectives 'the female gentleman':

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<sup>73</sup> Widowhood would gain even more prominence from the 1890s on and became a reoccurring theme in later detective fiction.

<sup>74</sup> In Victorian times, widows:

functioned in commercial enterprises, handles their own estates, and made decisions regarding remarriage without recourse to parent or male guardian. Compared to the legal nonexistence of a Victorian wife or the social limitations of a spinster daughter, a widow's capacity to act on her own initiative and manage property gave her the legal status of a propertied subject ... her position is both exceptional and temporary. (Bredesen 'Conformist' 22)

<sup>75</sup> This possibility resonates with Doyle's Holmes who was at one stage killed off at the Reichenbach Fall, only to be later resurrected by the author after much public outcry.

The core of the ideal is a woman who is competent, courageous, and self-reliant in practical situations, capable of subordinating her emotions to reason and the personal good to the social good, and possessed of honour in the oldest sense of the term. These are personality traits, corresponding with the moral aspect of Victorian gentlemanliness. (8)

Both detectives show these tendencies though differently but abstain from feigning maleness.

For Victorians, intuition held great import. Defined as a womanly trait, it had its positive uses and was considered the opposite of objective, rational thought. 19<sup>th</sup>-century intuition was the opposite of deductive reasoning but it was regarded as a lesser entity<sup>76</sup>. Within a rigid Victorian society, women's intuition was seen as an integral part of her womanliness. Regarding detective endeavours, perception is a crucial element, as Bredezen explains, 'intuition is also stereotypically feminine and, therefore, appropriately found in a lady detective's arsenal of abilities and skills' ('Conformist' 27). Miss Gladden relies heavily on her perception and combines it with her other capabilities. Mrs Paschal recognised the value of feminine knowledge but is less guided by it.

Furthermore, Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal approach their investigations from different strands, as Craig and Cadogan illustrate:

there is [Miss Gladden] who succeeds ... because of specialized "feminine" knowledge which suddenly acquires a new respectability, if only for the duration of the tale; and there is [Mrs Paschal] who competes with male detectives on equal terms. (12)

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<sup>76</sup> Joan B. Burstyn analyses:

Women's powers of intuition were thought to be superior to men's, although this was of dubious value since intuition was no substitute for rational thought when it came to decision-making. However, since women's intuition could at times help men, and certainly added to women's charm, it had to be preserved from the encroachment of reasoning. Women's superiority to men in intuition was used ... to justify her inferiority in status. (72)

Even though this statement propels feminism, it nevertheless underlines the radical and far-reaching work these early detectives undertook. These detectives cannot be defined by one aspect of their work.

Merely the fact of being a woman serves as a disguise. Due to the public's general beliefs about females, she did not enter their field of vision as much as a man would have done. Women-detectives could remain inconspicuous when necessary. Furthermore, this status gives them leave for in-depth observations. Moreover, they are versed in domestic matters more than their male counterparts. Knowledge about dress codes, hats and female attitudes also enter the detective's mind quite frequently. As such, incidental details placed within the stories can only be correctly read by female detectives.

In terms of their capabilities both Mrs Paschal and Miss Gladden go against common belief prevalent in the middle- and upper-class, as they possess education beyond the feminine instruction, are versed in more varied matters (crime, society, socio-cultural landscape and domestic duties), and do not spend their times as wives or mothers<sup>77</sup>. Gender is attached to power within a conservative society with the man being in control. Both detectives do not accept the traditional space reserved for them, thereby attempting to exert influence on society and men. They also believe that women can be taught like men and that both sexes are at par in all their competences.

Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal do not attempt to be male detectives. Within and outside the domestic environment, they limit their work to the cases where women have an advantage over men. Miss Gladden complements rather than competes with the male detective, whereas Mrs Paschal is in open competition. Being in competition is a very Victorian preoccupation. In their attempts to work as a woman in a male's world, they

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<sup>77</sup> Purchase is more pointed in his enunciation of the Victorian sphere:

Most Victorian men believed that women did not possess the intellectual capabilities which educated and industrious men were endowed with. Such an opinion served to distinguish women further from men, while preventing women from entering ... the male-dominated fields of education. ... This biological determinism then became linked in Victorian consciousness with the motherly and wifely virtues of child-rearing and housework that became associated with the role of women. (74)

manage to infiltrate an unfeminine domain, thereby creating their own *raison d'être* within the force and making their gender part of their argument.

Gavin writes that Victorian female detectives, 'operate subversively; when they solve a case, moral certainties may be re-established, but gender role expectations are broken down' ('Feminist' 261). Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal accept cases in areas men could not, as Miss Gladden explains, 'it cannot be disproved that if there is a demand for men detectives there must also be one for female police spies' (*Female* 3). Female investigators are, according to them, seen as less of a threat, more capable of interrogating women and spying within a household. As such their work includes a surprise component as they are not suspect when investigating. These investigative females had to do their work facing adamant protestations from some men and women around them. This opposition hardly ever comes from co-workers, but especially from suspects and criminals, once the detective has outed herself. Furthermore, they accuse the female investigators of playing an unfair game. However, both texts are elusive when it comes to the question of which cases were not brought to the sleuths' attention, as it would have brought a fuller light on their *modus operandi*.

Concerning observation, both detectives read signs, extract information by interaction to assemble clues about character and behaviour. They put much more emphasis on logic, careful preparation and reasoning. Miss Gladden uses 'ingenious skills of deduction and logic' (Ashley *Female* xi) and Mrs Paschal is at par. Thomas writes 'the detective is most effective when [s]he ... can recognise the hidden truths beneath social constructions' ('Detection' 189), allowing them to see beneath the surface.

In their methods, Mrs Paschal and Miss Gladden rely on eavesdropping, snooping and spying, dissimulation, disguise, and pursuing criminals. They also resort to more scientific means such as ballistics, early forensics, and pathology, generally Victorian male domains. Even though both detectives share intelligence, rational thinking, dedication to their work and ambitiousness, Miss Gladden is the calmer, more thoughtful and reserved of the two detectives. As such, she does not discuss her cases and prefers to

work from home to unravel her cases. She is uneven as a character and her narration, going from a calm and intelligent role, to complex legal situations, to wry accounts. She also engages more in domestic melodrama than in detection per se.

Humorous Mrs Paschal shows mental capacity, agility of mind, physical exercise in her duties and sense, and couples them with more female sensibilities. She regularly enters dangerous situations fully aware of the risks. However, she sometimes hinders her own investigations. For example, in 'Countess' she takes the wrong turn in the tunnel as she is too preoccupied with watching the thief. Thereby she makes an already difficult situation, of observing a criminal at work, critical. Only by thinking it through rationally, does she find a solution. Furthermore, she is more diplomatic in handling her cases than Miss Gladden.

Miss Gladden is less impressive in her endeavours. However, she is reminiscent of Poe in her calmness and clear-headedness. She accepts that detectives can get it wrong. For example, in 'Tenant,' she takes wrong steps in her investigation, in 'Georgy', she is misled by appearances, and in 'Judgment,' she misreads actual evidence. Most of her cases do not have a satisfactory end. Contrarily, Mrs Paschal has a much higher success rate of solving cases. She is much more focused on individual clues, appearances, factual evidence than Miss Gladden. She tackles crime from a different perspective. Sims writes, 'instead of chatting about fashion in the parlour while men smoked after-dinner cigars, [she is] out in the London fog, shadowing suspects, crawling through secret passages, and even fingerprinting corpses' (xxii).

Actively passive Miss Gladden and exuberant Mrs Paschal were able to incorporate their female viewpoint in their investigations. They started their work as means to ward off poverty but see it as a calling. They are like their male contemporaries as they have a touch of eccentricity and are far from domesticated heroines. They married off their spheres of factual knowledge with their intuition to solve crimes. Both investigators relied as much on their facts about domesticity, social situations and human nature as on more scientific advances. Therefore, they bring their own tools to a male-

dominated profession, thus expanding their investigative methods. They also both rely heavily on using disguise as part of their investigative process and recognise the value of ‘acting’ the part. Female attributes become a quality rather than a hindrance.

The question as to why Forrester and Hayward invented female professional detectives cannot be answered by this study. However, the ‘official’ subsequent gap of 25 years between these two first detectives and the next ones is substantial. They are to a degree rightly labelled the interregnum years or as Symons explains, ‘years of mostly indifferent work, or a literary form awaiting its proper medium’ (75), but this does not fully complete the picture and is far from the truth. Even though Kathleen Gregory Klein suggests that these early female sleuths are mere ‘honorary men’ (18-30) this does not do Miss Gladden or Mrs Paschal justice. In the same way as they were influenced by earlier writing deriving from various sources, the years after these two detectives are of importance. The next section of this study will look at the legacy of Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal.



## 5 Conclusion

‘If this world lost all its detectives it would very soon complainingly find out their absence, and wish them, or some of them, back again.’

Miss Gladden (*Female* 42)

‘Why, I should as soon have thought of seeing a flying fish or a sea-serpent with a ring through its nose ... [than] a – female – detective.’

Mr Halliday to Mrs Paschal (*Lady* 236)

### 5.1 Interregnum Years? - No

The interest in crime appeared much earlier than the statement issued in the wake of Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868), labelling it ‘the first and greatest of English detective novels’ (Elliot 412). Readers satisfied their need for sensation deriving from crime as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century in novels and other forms of writing. However, as Sayers observed, ‘the detective story could not flourish until public sympathy had veered round to the side of law and order ... The tendency in early crime literature is to admire the cunning and astuteness of the criminal’ (11). The balance shifted from those who committed a crime to those who detected it, the rogue hero gave way to the protector of society, re-establishing order as seen in memoirs and recollections.

Thomas explains that the detective genre is an amalgam of ‘tales of murder, sexual betrayal, and double identity [that] combined elements from gothic fiction, the Newgate novel and Victorian stage melodrama’ (‘Detection’ 179). Nayder points out its complexity, as it ‘takes crime and policing as its theme but uses this theme to investigate

a number of broader social issues: the origins and construction of social identity, for example, the integrity and violation of social boundaries, and the status of women' (178). Both the female criminal and the female detective broached these topics. Whereas the female criminal was very common in both fiction and fact from quite early on, the lady detective was more elusive until the late 1880s remaining a minority or rarity.

Embedded in these narratives were also broader social issues that needed unravelling, especially the status of women within Victorian society. Therefore, 'the appearance of the female detective in English fiction during the nineteenth century was a result of a complex intersection of legal, social, moral, institutional and gendered practises' (Kestner *Sisters* 1). These fictional female detectives navigated conservative society and the fringes of respectable society. Analysing these heroines allows insight into a social order that was attempting to voice women's needs to play a larger part within real society. They substantially remain female but engage in non-feminine activities in and outside the sanctity of the home. These early female detectives – amateur and professional alike – signal a new cultural interest.

For these mid-Victorian readers, reading about a female detective probably was in itself sensational. Fay Blake suggests that a 'female engaged in a male profession ... must have been regarded as a titillation to predominantly male readers' (33). However, reading about female detectives was probably not only exciting, it also endangered previously constructed gender norms. The powerful female entering the male sphere, showing her ability to cast others as criminals, clearly disrupted the hegemony of male authority. Even if early Gothic and sensation heroines were hindered to either engage in detection or see cases to their completion, they nevertheless opposed patriarchal culture. Klein sees the early ventures of female investigators as a failure, as she only looks at the end of each work and sees the heroine returning to the status quo. However, the genre shows women possibilities and choices they might have in life and these do not end with the close of the novel. If their choice is marriage, it does not make their endeavours less womanly nor less investigative. These narratives function because their protagonist is a

woman, who openly acknowledges her status, her advantages and limitations as a detective. The conventions of the genre are observed, and she can function within them like Anne, Marian, Clara and Eleanor. Yet, both Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal have the support of strong representatives of the male gender and thereby, had their rightful place in accepting a dominant and domineering role.

Each of the female detectives presented in this study, whether they are professional or amateur, have favoured very different kinds of investigative methods in line with the literary genre they were published in. Their proceedings reflect their personality, background or general interests. Furthermore, they illustrate the society they live in with its conventions and rules, the way law is pronounced and executed while they seek the truth. As such:

a distinctive feature of detective fiction is the way detectives frequently proceed from the interrogation of suspects to the interrogation of society. Individual crime comes to be seen as a symptom of, or reaction to basic flaws in the political, social, and industrial systems. (Ed 258)

Intrinsically, Anne Rodway represents the social injustices of a lower-class seamstress who was not believed by the police. Marian Halcombe's narrative helps to expose the flaws in English Marital laws. Clara Vaughan and Eleanor Vane comment on the strictures detecting women must work around. The social commentary as depicted in Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal's texts further helps to illustrate differences in society. These female heroines present a paradox, as they restore order but violate norms. They work outside their domestic sphere to solve mysteries in other contemporaries' domains. They use their feminine charms to extract information from witnesses and suspects to convict criminals. They also engage in subversive, unfeminine behaviour by walking the street at nights, knowing how to fire a pistol and shedding their clothes when necessary. They openly engage in counterculture. If the reader engages in a historical reading of these novels, it is possible to see how all these women were restricted by a society that

was partially troubled by the notion of a female detective. They were a step away from the submissive women preferred by the majority of citizens – both male and female.

Overall, the female professional detectives investigated in this study do not overtly defer from their male counterparts – Dupin, Bucket or Waters. Poe's tales of ratiocination lay the ground for the essential elements of the detective formula. The sensation genre embedded notions of these; however, crime was just a sub-plot in these novels. The female detective's investigation, at the forefront, did only reappear with Forrester and Hayward's casebooks. These novels become a marker for initiating investigative females to the plot formula of crime fiction. Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal use a variety of techniques and show prowess in their lines of investigation. Their methods include 'using informants, tailing suspects, staking out suspicious locations, interviewing witnesses, combining the science of the crime and poring over forensic evidence' (Herbert 339). They went undercover, acted as spies or ladies' maids. Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal are highly capable and well-trained detectives. They are commissioned for specific cases, and no longer stumble across crimes involving a loved one. The only significant difference, when compared to their male brothers, is that they do everything with a 'female touch,' making their gender their *raison d'être* in the business. Furthermore, most of these heroines do not end at the Reichenbach Fall, but they marry once their investigations are over. Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal, already widowed or middle-aged escape this destiny; nevertheless, after their first casebook, both heroines disappear from the literary scene for unknown reasons.

Craig and Cadogan see the 1890s as a revival of the female detective and write that 'the genre acquired, along with a characteristic atmosphere and narrative pattern' its first more developed female detectives (12). This study testifies that the female detective never truly left the scene of crime detection, just appearing in different genres and it took another almost 25 years for them to mature. Even though casebook novels with female detectives disappeared from the literary sphere, the female sleuth found a different outlet for her endeavours. Bredeisen lists 'jokes, poems, cartoons, short or serialised stories that

feature women detectives' (*Detectives* viii) starting as early as 1865. The years immediately after 1864 saw at least twelve theatrical productions having a female detective. The most famous, written by C.H. Hazlewood, is *The Female Detective, or foundling in the Streets*, which was staged in London in November 1864. This play was popular well into the 1880s. Therefore, the timespan between the 1860s to the late 1880s are not interregnum years. There was not a pause in literary output having female detectives at their heart, it was only a shift in narration and genre.

What is certain is that the idea of a professional female detective was born in the 1860s; however, their development thereafter matured only slowly. The first investigators worked within the constraints of society, scarcely presentable to their audience.

[A]lmost all the 'lady detectives' of the Victorian period took up detection wither because fate has made it necessary for them to find employment or, in order to clear the name of a male relative. This was a very clever strategy employed by the early authors of stories with female detectives, in order to placate outraged readers who would then see these women's transgressions beyond Victorian norms as nobly heroic efforts to preserve the sacred family. (Patnaik and Kumar 139)

Panek is correct when he writes that 'tracing the history of the detective genre provides [a] problem. The way in which we define the detective story determines the history we create for it' (*Introduction* 7). Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal are one step in this history, albeit often forgotten. This study looked at the interregnum years between two better studied periods, including different genres as the Gothic and sensation. Later developments focused more on establishing rules for the genre, finding patterns in narration and diversifying detectives. The last section of this study looks at the aftermath, more specifically the years before the turn-of-the-century in term of detectives.

## 5.2 Legacy

This study has shown that crime writing spans hundreds of years and evolved in different genres before merging into what is known today as detective fiction. Devices, codes, conventions and plot formulas have been interlinked. Almost like a detective, the author of this study retraced in a chronological fashion the chain of cause and effect to make sense of the different literary texts enlisted in the search for clues. This dissertation has also shown how the first female detectives navigate the waters of crime, illustrating her methods, her means and capabilities putting it into a socio-cultural context. Furthermore, the male and female relationships and working-conditions these detectives engage in have been analysed. This study furthers Catherine Ross Nickerson's claim<sup>78</sup> that crime is a long and multiple-genre progression. Though mainly using a British context, this study establishes links between genres and across time by looking at the development of the female detective.

Even though the period between the 1860s to the 1880s is seen as the interregnum years of crime fiction, multiple books were published that had crime as their theme. The first steps were taken for the detective genre to become more apparent. The sensation genre continued to use amateur female detectives until the genre's expiration. For example, Wilkie Collins' *The Law and The Lady* (1875) can be seen in this fashion. Inspired by Madeline Smith's Not Proven verdict in Scotland and the use of arsenic, Eustace Macallan is accused of poisoning and receives a similar verdict. His second wife, Valeria, investigates to prove his innocence. The quality of writing is not of Collins usual high standard, but the work nevertheless shows a continuation of the detective motive within the genre. Mary Elisabeth Braddon continued to write within the genre incorporating crime, yet never had another female detective.

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<sup>78</sup> This study echoes Catherine Ross Nickerson's *The Web of Inequity*, in which she suggests that Poe is not the only originator and that detective fiction did not progress in a linear progression. Even if she analysed only the American context, looked at the period between the American Civil War and World War II, and only analysed texts written by women, she nevertheless proposes the idea that the roots of detective fiction can be found in Gothic and early mystery novels.

The nineteenth century underwent momentous changes, especially its cultural and social sphere, shaping the country for generations to come. The railway connected the far corners of England; thus, it facilitated the growth of even more industrial achievements. London and other major cities expanded rapidly as people flooded the cities in search of lucrative work. However, while the industry roared, social and economic stability weakened, resulting in depressions, food shortages and an ever-increasing anxiety about people's livelihood, especially among the lower classes. During the Industrial Revolution, the middle class became more prominent. Due to the influx of people in London, the city became overcrowded, was in severe lack of housing and employment opportunities and some parts were stricken by poverty which led to an increase in crime and uncertainties. Furthermore, society had to accept new sciences questioning well-established religious beliefs. Scientific discovery in almost every field meant that people had to reformulate preconceived ideas and values. Religion that once served as a basis for explaining everyday life came under scrutiny<sup>79</sup>. By the end of the century, ideas considered outrageous at mid-century were now seen as common knowledge, allowing for new ventures.

If one regards the 1860s as an embryonic time in the nurturing of detective fiction, then the late 1880s and 1890s are a different reference point when it comes to female detectives. Like the mid-century, the turn-of-the-century was a time when many new debates and reforms altered the sphere for women in British society. Detective fiction helped Victorians to see their changing times as a period where order remained rather than where chaos prevailed. Criminals were caught, crimes were solved, and detectives were at the heart of it. Furthermore, Victorians came to terms with their new realities.

The 1880s witnessed the first women being employed by the police and it was, as Klein writes 'no conventional women's work,' as 'the detective's distance from a woman's ordinary life is clearly implied in this behaviour' (70). The same distance Miss

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<sup>79</sup> One example would be Charles Darwin's publication *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) which at times has been read as a rejection of the notion of God's creation and his divine designs. As Darwin contradicted this former 'truth' by explaining the roots of natural existence, the British had to accept these new truths.

Gladden and Mrs Paschal managed by keeping their private and professional life apart can also be observed in later detectives as they ‘defied convention, and had chosen for [themselves] a career that had cut [them] off sharply from [their] former associates and [their] position in society’ (Klein 7). Therefore, the earlier fictional works become a reflection of reality and the new sphere progressively found its way into literature.

From the 1870s onwards, writers introduced numerous new detectives – from the blind detective to the child detective, from the grouchy to the criminal detective -, most of them thrived because they were different. Part of this unusualness was their unconventional and eccentric character, and women-detectives were only one category of this literary landscape. The turn-of-the-century, therefore, also saw a multitude of very different female amateur and professional detectives occupying the literary sphere<sup>80</sup>. Authors of the 1890s owe much to the early detectives and their creators. These authors would draw from the Gothic, sensation, detective and romance fiction to shape their tales. Klein lists twelve different novels featuring a lady detective that were published between 1890 and 1910 (56). The history of the female detective has seen its character evolve from the incapable heroine of gothic fiction who is only interested in solving (pretend) mysteries, to the slightly more capable female protagonist in sensation fiction who solved parts of the mystery before a man took over. A new wave of female detectives took over from the amateurs. They were not only intelligent and dedicated to their endeavours, but also saw their cases through to the end and were often professional from the mid-1860s onwards. Writers of 1890s female sleuths left gothic conventions almost entirely behind, especially the horror attached to the genre. Traces of sensationalist melodrama remain. Poe, Collins, Forrester and Hayward are overhauled for this new outpour.

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<sup>80</sup> Though not treated as part of this study, some examples include: English-born Fergus Hume created his *Madame Midas* (1888), a challenging work and an appraisal of the woman detective. Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Thou Art the Man* (1894), featuring Coralie Urquhart, Charleton Savage’s ‘The Squirrel’ in *The Beech Court Mystery*; and Mrs George Corbett’s *When the Sea Gives up its Dead, a Thrilling Detective Story*, starring Annie Cory. L. T. Meade created Robert Eustace and his sidekick Florence Cusak in 1899; Grant Allen wrote about Miss Cayley (1899) and Hilda Wade (1900).



The study now presents a selection of works that may have been influenced by earlier writing having a female detective – amateur or professional – as the protagonist.

The next female detective under study is Miriam Lea from Leonard Merrick's *Mr Bazalgette's Agent*, published in 1888. The novel became available in the wake of Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and the same year when Jack the Ripper came into prominence. The incompetence of the police at solving the Ripper murders led to the creation of new detectives to fictionally restore order and ease public anxieties. In need of funds, Miriam applies for the job of detective and writes down her own account of the case. She writes in her diary: 'I suppose it was dullness that drove me to these blank pages as a confidant, on the principle on which we always seek a friend, to share our sorrows, not to divide our joys' (Merrick *Agent* 15)<sup>81</sup>. She works undercover but is employed by Alfred Bazalgette Detective Agency, who labels her as having 'perception' and being 'a lady of brains, of education' (*Agent* 17). He also tells her that she 'would hardly be an ostracite' in her line of work (*Agent* 37), suggesting that more women are employed in the detective profession.

She investigates Jasper Vining, a gambler and alleged forger. As Vining has fled London, Miriam is to hunt him down. Bazalgette provides Miriam with a cypher code to use in future communications, a photograph of Vining, and travel money. Miriam traces Vining to Hamburg, Paris, San Sebastian, and Lisbon. She is excited by the chase, embedding sensationalist notions in her writing. While in Lisbon, she meets a man, who matches the description. However, the man eludes her, and she follows him to South Africa. After checking numerous hotels and observing railway stations, she hunts him down at the Kimberley Diamond Fields. Vining apparently confesses his crimes; however, it turns out that he is actually James Vane. Then, Miriam falls in love with James and curses her professional duties. She wants to clear his name even if she may have to

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<sup>81</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Leonard Merrick's *Mr Bazalgette's Agent* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Agent* [page].

defy the law. In the end, a cable from Bazalgette informs her that the real Vining was apprehended in New York, Miriam is free to marry innocent Vane.

Throughout the narrative, Miriam questions the morals of being a detective and the narrative at times critically depicts her motives for engaging in such work. Her narrative is reminiscent of the earlier first-person accounts and casebooks. Miriam is professional, engages in global travelling and shows enterprise in her undertaking. She is a dynamic character who changes greatly as she becomes accustomed to her job. She is assertive, independent, intelligent and resourceful, also sharing Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal's bravery, endurance and persistence. Miriam shows high levels of self-confidence and unwomanly behaviour in her work. Moreover, she has Mrs Paschal's adventurous streak. She uses reasoning in her enquiry and sees the process as 'gather[ing] materials' (*Agent* 97). Towards the end of her narrative, she doubts her vocation and sees it as problematic. She writes, 'I wish [Vane] had not spoken of being my friend; it makes me feel mean,' (*Agent* 100) thereby finding her biggest weakness as a detective as she has become intimately involved with the suspect. She has failed her mission and is glad to leave detection. She reasons, 'I was guilty. I was wicked, but I was a woman and I loved him' (*Agent* 129). She shows clear parallels with *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* in terms of its narrative structure, thematic content and the first-person account<sup>82</sup>. As such, Miriam is not on a par with Doyle's new narrative technique which he established with Sherlock Homes.

Sherlock Holmes is often regarded as a milestone within detective fiction histories. Arthur Conan Doyle takes on the task of propelling the tales of ratiocination because after, 'reading some detective stories, [he] was struck by the fact that their results were maintained in nearly every case by chance' (qtd in Davies vi). In 'The Sign of Four,' Holmes is reminiscent of Mrs Paschal when he says, 'I cannot live without brainwork, what else is there to live for?' (93). Furthermore, he echoes the earlier female detective

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<sup>82</sup> It also bears strong resemblance to an American Dime novel first published in 1880 by Old Sleuth in *SLE Weekly* called *The Great Bond Robbery; or, Tracked by a Female Detective*, sharing a similar starting point and ending.

in keeping his private life almost hidden from view. He rejects all notion of passion and marital interest in women. Though engaging in armchair-detection, Sherlock Holmes 'is also a man of action and it is through this aspect of the man that the potency of the stories reached its full power: the call in the night, the hansom-cab ride through the gaslit streets into danger' (Davies xii). Furthermore, at times Holmes lets his criminals escape punishment, thereby placing compassion before the law, even if he always justifies his choices. Furthermore, he compares the criminal world as one of savages, echoing Mrs Paschal's reasoning. In 'The Adventure of Peter Black,' he says, 'What savage creature was it that might steal upon us out of the darkness? Was it a fierce tiger of crime?' (Doyle 560). This could be read as active Darwinism. Even though Mrs Paschal and Miss Gladden only show early notions of forensic science, 'Holmes, not possessing Dupin's distrust of the scientific habit of mind, codifies cigar ash, the impressions of bicycle tyres, coal-tar derivatives, disguises and finally, bees' (Whitley ix). In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes echoes Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal when he exclaims the necessity to incorporate 'scientific use of the imagination' (Doyle 690) as part of solving his cases, to bridge the gap between the material world and objective truth.

Holmes's writing also benefitted from the new, more powerful portrayal of women in the wake of *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. He left the highly common victimised sensationalist figure behind and incorporates more complex characters. Some of his clients are women launching the inquiries. However, the most prominent character, Irene Adler, functions as Sherlock's nemesis. She is his equal intellectually and in wit. In 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' she occupies a shadowy position, stealing a photograph. She cross-dresses as a man and Holmes is unable to recognise her, thereby he is less of a detective than Mrs Paschal. Irene is as intelligent, resourceful and quick-witted as the early detectives. She is independent and works efficiently in her line of work, though criminal. She evades Holmes but asserts a position of authority in besting him, committing the crime Holmes was employed to prevent. Rzepka interprets Adler's defeat over Holmes as Doyle's way of expressing that females could enter new

professions (145). Another example from Doyle's writing would be Miss Mary Sutherland in 'A Case of Identity.' The typist shows strong will and personality in the pursuit of her fiancé, Hosmer Angel. Moreover, Miss Violet Hunter in 'The Adventure of the Copper Beeches' becomes a pseudo-detective in her own case. She works as a governess but quickly sees the strangeness in her position. She becomes an accomplice to Holmes as the detective asks her to help him in the arrest of Mrs Toller. He labels her a 'brave and sensitive girl,' and asks her only because she is 'an exceptional woman' (Doyle 321). Sherlock's women exert their independence, power, authority, control, and employ important parts in Doyle's narratives. Even though Holmes helps to sustain the more formulaic and presumably male world of detective fiction, he has incorporated females like Miss Gladden, Mrs Paschal and Miriam.

Another male detective emerging in the early 1890s is Arthur Morrison's Martin Hewitt. Hewitt acted as a substitute after Holmes' presumed demise at the Reichenbach Fall. Even though Morrison loosely drafted his character around Holmes and the stories revolve around the puzzle-solving pattern, Hewitt is also a reaction against the eccentric sleuth, being much more of an everyday man. Like Holmes, Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal, Hewitt is very elusive when it comes to his non-professional life. Unlike Holmes, being a detective is Hewitt's only source of income, combining the necessity of making a living with his penchant for deduction and his satisfaction for solving crimes bringing him close in motivation to Mrs Paschal and Miss Gladden. Whereas Holmes and Mrs Paschal clearly belong to a higher class, Hewitt, like Miss Gladden, is from a lower class. He is very social and at ease when conversing with a Lord, a stable boy or anyone else he comes in contact with, making him on a par with Miss Gladden.

Hewitt is a better team player than Holmes. Mrs Paschal and Hewitt point out their good working relationship with the police. Morrison writes, 'Few inspectors indeed of the Metropolitan Police force did not know Hewitt by sight' ('Seton' 289) and Hewitt and Mrs Paschal complement the force by their efforts, making them very distinct from Miss Gladden and Holmes. For Hewitt, observing and interpreting details are the essence of

his investigations. Similar to the female sleuths, he mixes science, logic and common sense to arrive at conclusions. Morrison's tales are much more complex in nature and always rely on a surprise component. In an abstract way, considering the content matter, they show similarities to the early sleuths'. In 'Seton,' he uses an advertisement in the papers to lure the culprit out, like Miss Gladden does in 'The Unknown Weapon.' Hewitt highly values the importance of intuition as part of his methods as in 'Mason'. His main methods are common sense and a good eye for observation when bringing clues together. He openly counteracted other movements, such as sensationalism, decadence and the New Woman movement in his fiction. Other writers use the political and social change and embedded it in their writing.

To a degree, it is only with the rise of the New Woman movement<sup>83</sup> and more feminist ideals that writers not only had once more the courage to write about strong positive females but also to portray them as successful detectives. Ever since Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) had the 'woman question' been debated, at times using 'slavery' as a synonym. Laura Marcus explains:

The concept of the [New Woman] suggests an evolutionary model of womanhood, in which women are seen as standing at the dawn of a new century and of a new age in which the future is female. In popular imagery, positive and negative, the New Woman is often represented as college-educated, independent, and physically, if not sexually, liberated. (vii)

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<sup>83</sup> The term 'New Woman' first appeared in Sarah Grand's essay 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' in March 1894. She actively encouraged women to rethink their positions by encouraging them to 'solve the problem and proclaim for [themselves] what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy' (271). She advocated the dismantlement of separate spheres and saw education as a means for women to escape patriarchal society. These women, who have gained territory in independence, seem to be successful in their careers even if at times their personal backgrounds are overshadowed by personal problems. Furthermore, the New Woman movement tried to expose the oppressive nature of the conservative and patriarchal society, while also giving and exemplifying new paths for young women's development. They advocated to give women more legal rights in terms of property, earnings and divorce. They supported the 'votes for women' campaigns.

At the time, New Woman fiction was regarded as controversial, a threat to the normal running of society and vulnerable young female readers. These threats were closely linked to the movement of decadence, which also came to prominence in the 1890s. Conservatives saw both movements as corrupt and dangerous. Both movements act as a riposte to the old order.

As the 1890s allowed more and more female detectives to join the stage, they mark a ground-breaking point in the history of detective fiction. Via these heroines, women's positions in society and their roles were more fully explored. Female investigators also allowed for new forms of detection integrating her female perspective and experience, and her understanding of culture. Pykett writes:

the sensation novel's reworking of female Gothic, melodrama and domestic realism anticipates the generic and stylistic hybridity of the New Woman fiction. ... In fact, in many ways the critical debate on the New Woman novel picked up some of the main threads of the sensation debate, focusing on transgressive, independent heroines, and representation of the female body and women's feelings. (*Sensation* 125)

Pykett further comments that the New Woman, 'represented a threat not only to the social order, but also to the natural order' with critics labelling them as 'non-female and unfeminine' because these women showed resistance to 'traditional womanly roles' (*Feminine* 140).

This period also saw the rise of female authors writing about female detectives. Kungl argues that these women writers 'when seeking to establish professional authority for their female detectives ... relied primarily upon socially accepted traits as a means of incorporating women into male-dominated spheres, regardless of their own beliefs about those traits' (81).

Two of the successors of Forrester and Haywards' Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal are Anna Katharine Green's female detectives<sup>84</sup>. One of them is Amelia Butterworth, a spinster detective from New York, who made her debut in *That Affair Next Door* (1897). Unlike Mrs Paschal and Miss Gladden, Amelia comes from a well-off family and is financially secure. She uses her independence to go into detection and mainly uses her observation skills to solve her cases. She is often under the scrutiny of her colleagues who dismiss her abilities. Peterson summarises:

Miss Butterworth, from her strategically placed window, sees mysterious comings and goings in the Van Burnam mansion next door to her own. When the dead body of a young woman is discovered in the presumably deserted house and Mr Gryce is sent to investigate, Miss Butterworth discovers her own undeveloped talents for detection. At first, Mr Gryce does not take her seriously, beyond recognizing her superior knowledge in matters of hatpins, bonnets, pincushions and petticoats, but he soon comes to respect her keen mind and practical good sense. The sparring between them is handled with the deftness of high comedy, as Amelia, who narrates the novel, describes her own persistence in tracking down clues despite Mr Gryce's gentle hints that she withdraw into ladylike seclusion. (194)

In the end, Miss Butterworth is right, Gryce admits it and remarks, 'You have saved me from committing folly' (*Affair* 168). Via Amelia, Green established the nosey spinster detective more firmly and is reminiscent of Mrs Paschal. As such, she is the older

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<sup>84</sup> Green first wrote *The Leavenworth Case* (1878). It focuses on a murder, but she manages to manipulate her reader's expectations and presents them with a surprise ending. This novel has a locked-room mystery as it tells the story of a murdered millionaire, thereby echoing Poe. Via the rescuing of letters, the use of the post and the telegraph and an overseas assistant, Green incorporates the modern with the old conventions employed by Poe as well as Gabriau in France. Even though *The Leavenworth Case* presents readers with a male detective, one Ebenezer Gryce, as a woman writer, Green brings in her femininity to explore a variety of themes, and shapes later authors.

unmarried aunt to Green's 'meddlesome old maid' (*Affair* 10)<sup>85</sup>. Green's next female detective, Violet Strange, inspired the beginnings of the 'girl' detective. She made her first appearance much later in *The Golden Slipper and Other Problems for Violet Strange* (1915).

Catherine Louisa Pirkis's Loveday Brooke (1893) takes on the sensation fiction theme of portraying crime close to the centre of the home. She is unmarried and, even if she is forced to work to earn a living, has chosen detection as her vocation like Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal. As part of her undercover work, she investigates robberies to observe suspects at close range. Furthermore, Loveday's employer, Ebenezer Dyer, regards this specific method of observation as particularly apt for female sleuths. As such, he echoes statements issued by Mrs Paschal's employers. Dyer labels Brooke:

the most sensible and practical woman [he] ever met ... she has the faculty – so rare among women – of carrying out orders to the very letter ... she has a clear, shrewd brain, unhampered by any hard-and-fast theories ... she has so much common sense that it amounts to genius. (Pirkis *Loveday* 5)<sup>86</sup>

In 'The Redhill Sisterhood,'<sup>87</sup> he states that the 'idea seems to be gaining ground in many quarters that in cases of mere suspicion, women detectives are more satisfactory than men, for they are less likely to attract attention' (*Loveday* 67). Loveday becomes also invisible due to her perceived ordinariness in behaviour and looks. Dyer believes that Loveday is invaluable to the police force and he respects her for her 'sharp wits' (*Loveday* 33).

In comparison to earlier sleuths, Loveday is also an outsider who steps over social and gender boundaries, adapting to the kind of life she has to deal with. Like Gladden and

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<sup>85</sup> Butterworth's antecedents, for example, can be traced down to Agatha Christie's Jane Marple, Mary Robert Rinehart's Rachel Innis and Patricia Wentworth's Maus Silver.

<sup>86</sup> For simplicity's sake, all references to Catherine Louisa Pirkis' *The Experiences of Loveday Brook: Lady Detective* will hereafter follow this pattern: *Loveday* [page].

<sup>87</sup> This story is reminiscent of Doyle's 'The Reigate Squires' (1893).



Paschal, 'by a jerk of Fortune's wheel, Loveday had been thrown upon the world penniless and all but friendless,' and as she cannot find another way of making money (*Loveday* 5), strongly echoing Mrs Paschal. Furthermore, 'marketable accomplishments she had found she had none, so she had forthwith defied convention, and had chosen for herself a career that had cut her off sharply from her former associates and her position in society' (*Loveday* 4). However, it takes her years to rise in ranks which is quite different to the 1860s professional sleuths. Only when 'an intricate criminal case threw her in the way of the experienced head of a flourishing detective agency,' did she get 'better-class work' (*Loveday* 4-5). Gavin explains:

Slightly over thirty, she knows her own mind, argues with her male employer over theories of detection, and is intelligent, physically fearless, and highly observant. She draws on female knowledge ... in solving cases but never resorts to stereotypical feminine wiles or 'weaknesses.' Devoted to her profession, she keeps her private life private, behaves and is treated professionally, and is admired for her detective ability by her employer, clients, and the police. ... [I]t is her professional skill and dedication that is highlighted. ('Feminist' 260)

As part of her detection methods, Brooks uses disguises when covertly entering a household. In 'The Redhill Sisterhood,' Loveday solves the case because she uses her knowledge about child rearing. As such, her innate female knowledge helps to crack the mystery. She also recognises society's blind spot when it comes to women's domestic employment. In 'Missing,' Mrs Greenhow says that 'lady detectives, ... were a race apart ... thank Heaven, she would soon see the last of this one' (*Loveday* 207). As such, Loveday operates on the edge of society, like Miss Gladden and Mrs Paschal. She is also very defensive of her profession and lists eulogies on her detective work similar to the earlier sleuths. Moreover, she shows high levels of empathy when dealing with clients, suspects, witnesses and even, at times, criminals.

She engages in similar cases as the earlier detectives, ranging from unpleasant marriages to fanaticism, theft, fraud, impersonation, embezzlement and murder. She also reasons about her rational abilities that ‘sometimes ... the explanation that is obvious is the one to be rejected, not accepted’ (*Loveday* 127). She does not hand out information before the close of a case unless it is to further the case. She is up against societal conservative conventions and through her dealings has to find her place within society. However:

as a woman, she can create a narrative about crime different from that concocted by prejudiced, gender-biased male professionals ... and there is certainly a sub-textual advocacy that women ought to be admitted as detectives to Scotland Yard. (Kestner *Sisters* 74-75)

Not that much changed for turn-of-the-century detectives especially when it comes to battling the socio-cultural and political landscape. They continued to fight their cause for more independence and were still considered outsiders. They used detection more fully as they had a wider selection of methods available to them. Even though in their work, these female investigators are modern, inventive and think outside the box, in their private lives they strive to bring order to the home and mostly play to the script society has provided for them. These novels take on romance elements within the detection process. Most importantly, these novels hint at the new possibilities for women in an ever-changing world.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the female detective has become unobjectionable and undistinguished. She has started to occupy more varied and integral positions within detective narratives, no longer in disguise. The early detectives paved the path for later female sleuths. The female investigators at the *fin-de-siècle* left the embryonic state of the 1860s behind and were fully aware of the attributes their gender allowed them in pursuing their prey, still within a male-dominated sphere, but elevating their *raison d'être*. As Alexander McCall Smith writes some one hundred years later, “Women are

the ones who knows what's going on ... They are the ones with eyes. Have you not heard of [them]?" ... "A woman sees more than a man sees. That is well known ... They are the ones"" (59-60).



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