Poisoners, larcenists, and the mad chambermaid: Villainy in late Victorian detective fiction

Jennifer Filion

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Poisoners, Larcenists, and the Mad Chambermaid: Villainy in Late Victorian Detective Fiction

by

Jennifer Filion

Thesis

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Thesis Committee:
Andrea Kaston-Tange, PhD, Chair
Laura George, PhD
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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to identify patterns of villainy in late nineteenth-century detective fiction in order to examine middle class conceptions of criminality and the way those models reflect the values of Victorian society. Through a study of more than sixty pieces of short detective fiction, this study identifies and focuses on six primary categories: the visual depiction of the criminal, the criminal class, the jewelry heist, the colonial subject, the violent female offender, and the domestic villain. The creation of each criminal category and the reinforcement of that “type” in popular literature functions to establish order and to support beliefs crucial to Victorian middle class identity and authority. Yet as each story attempts to validate and reproduce this identity, each criminal simultaneously expresses anxiety about defects in that culture and about a denial of responsibility in growing social problems and Imperial practices.
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Two gentlemen from Worcestershire board a train; the first is a Squire named Todhetley, the other is his traveling companion, Mr. Johnny Ludlow. After purchasing his ticket, the wealthy Squire stores the remainder of his traveling cash in a pocketbook inside his jacket. When the two men enter their train carriage they find it already occupied by three other passengers. Kitty-corner from the Squire's window seat is a “dark gentleman” with a lavender glove and a signet ring. To the Squire's right is Johnny, and to the right of Johnny is an ordinary-looking man “with fresh color and gold spectacles,” who is calmly reading a book. Next to the bespectacled reader is a man who can only be described by Johnny as “a lunatic,” and that's to mention him politely. Of all of the restless, fidgety, worrying, hot-tempered passengers that ever put themselves in a carriage to travel with people in their senses, he was the worst...calling the guards and the porters to ask senseless questions about his luggage; now treading on our toes, and trying the corner seat opposite the Squire, and then darting back to his own. He wore a wig of a decided green tinge, the effect of keeping, perhaps, and his skin was dry and shrivelled as an Egyptian mummy's (Wood, “Going Through” 175).

Johnny is barely finished grumbling about the lunatic when a final passenger joins the carriage: a veiled woman with large hair and a small Scottish terrier that she carries in her coat. The veiled lady sits in the seat opposite Johnny, and the train begins the move. Problems arise almost immediately in the small carriage. The lunatic is horrified by the terrier and demands its
removal. The dark gentleman, whom his servants refer to as “my Lord,” demands a copy of the Times, does not receive it, and becomes increasingly angry. The veiled woman snaps at the lunatic and requests to exchange seats with Johnny, which he does gladly. The man in the gold spectacles continues to read his book.

Amidst the arguing, barking, and continued demands for a newspaper, the lunatic makes an abrupt and troubling observation. The lamp in the carriage is not lit. This problem may not seem very worrisome, as the passengers are traveling during the day; however, the lunatic also observes that their route will take the train through a long tunnel.

As soon as the train reaches the next station the dark gentleman orders his servant Wilkins to have the lamp lit. Unfortunately the stop is too short, nobody comes to light the lamp, and the train begins to speed once again. After cursing Wilkins, the passengers debate about the possible dangers of the dark and the train reaches the passageway: “Here's the tunnel!” [the lunatic] cried out resentfully, as we dashed with a shriek into pitch darkness” (178).

Immediately the veiled woman's terrier springs from her arms and attacks the other passengers. The Squire wrestles with the dog and the passengers help to subdue the animal. The lunatic screams “Pitch him out the window!” to which the lady replies, “Pitch yourself out!” (178). The dark gentleman hands the dog back to his owner as the train exits the tunnel, and the carriage settles down. Wilkins is reprimanded, the lamp is lit, and the train reaches the next station. It is only after most of the carriage's occupants have departed that the Squire notices that his pocketbook, and the fifty pounds it contained, is missing.

Considering the passengers and the circumstances of the crime given by the author - Mrs. Henry Wood - who is the thief? “Going Through the Tunnel,” published first in 1874 and later in 1895, was written for a Victorian audience during a time period that saw a tremendous
increase in the popularity of detective fiction. The modern reader must consider not only who they think the guilty party is, but who Mrs. Henry's Wood's readers would assume the villain to be. Is it the mysterious woman in the veil, whose manners, as Johnny observes, are not completely proper? Is it the Lord, whose servant Wilkins failed to light the lamps and is the first to exit the carriage at the station? We should also consider the servant himself, who had access to and knowledge of the passengers in the car. We cannot forget the lunatic, whose appearance and behavior is described by Johnny as eccentric, foreign, and distracting. Or, perhaps overlooked, is the culprit the unremarkable and bespectacled man who goes almost unnoticed by his fellow passengers?

I argue that Mrs. Henry Wood's audience would have suspicions about each of these characters because each passenger is a construction that reflects the Victorian idea of criminality; each character is a “type” that the audience would recognize, a villain possessing stereotypical features created by and dependent upon the culture in which the story occurs. What is most notable about “Going Through the Tunnel” is that it contains a veritable lineup of Victorian usual suspects.

Problem Statement

It is important to note that the stories examined in this research project, of which “Going Through the Tunnel” is only one example, are a small fraction of the larger and more varied genre of detective fiction. The primary fiction chosen for this thesis is in short story form, published in Britain in either periodicals or anthologies during the time period of 1870-1905\(^1\), with two exceptions, Le Fanu's “The Murdered Cousin” and Dickens' “Hunted Down,”

\(^1\)The majority were published between 1892-190; however, there are several stories that were reprinted in different
published in 1851 and 1859, respectively. And because these stories are some of the earliest of
the genre, they contain several unique conventions that have been at the center of much
research and scholarship.

Naturally, the focus of the Victorian detective story is the figure of the detective, the
process of detection, and the privileging of forensic science. In short, the detective story is
centered on the process of unraveling a mystery and exhibiting the unknown for the reader.
Initially, the role of the villain seems to be an afterthought to the detailed process of deduction
the protagonist engages in- the criminal is not the subject of the story - the mystery is. The
Victorian detective is the only person in the narrative who is capable of solving the crime, the
only person clever or observant enough to figure out the mystery. The other characters appear
as mere vehicles in the effort to exhibit the investigator's superior knowledge. George Grella
notes that although the continuing success of detective fiction is often attributed to the
audience's ability to solve the mystery alongside the detective, this is often an impossibility in
earlier examples:

Because 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, the rate at which curare is absorbed into the
bloodstream, or the effects of an English summer on the process of rigor mortis, he
cannot duplicate the sleuth's conclusions (31).

The possessor of this knowledge, the brilliant and eccentric detective, is prevalent in the
fictional landscape of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century England. In fact,
Britain was home to a multitude of clever sleuths who spent their time tracking down clues,
roaming dark alleys in disguise, and maintaining safety and order in Britain. The most well-
known detective of the genre is Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who is rivaled only by

anthologies and periodicals, such as the reissuing of The Case of Miss Elliot (1905) as the third volume in
Baroness Orczy's Old Man in the Corner series (Greene 93).
his precursor, Poe's Auguste Dupin. While Holmes remains the archetype of Victorian detectives, he is certainly not the prototype. He is merely one of many famous sleuths born out of a pop-culture phenomenon. Holmes' popularity is evidenced through the number of fictional Victorian detectives created in his image, tellingly portrayed as eccentric personalities with a distinct appearance and odd hobbies (Grella 36).

As Britain became flooded by this wave of brilliant and indomitable detectives, it suffered a disastrous side effect. Such a large population of superb investigators inevitably needed crimes to solve. So with the rise of the detective came a simultaneous flood of literary crime, and along with it, a throng of horrendous villains. Much attention and scholarship has been focused on the figure of the detective and the process of detection. However, with such an extensive focus on the investigator, little attention has been given to the crime or, more importantly, the criminal. There is extensive scholarship on the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, heavy analysis of several classic detective novels (for example, Collins' The Moonstone and Dickens' Bleak House), and more recently, a focus on the creation and success of female detectives such as C. L. Pirkis' Loveday Brooke and George R. Sims' Dorcus Dene. Still, short detective fiction published in the mid-to-late Victorian era that does not feature Holmes has undoubtedly received less recognition. In addition, analysis in the majority of existing scholarship centers on the detective with little attention to the purpose of his or her detection. This scarcity is surprising, as I argue that the villain of the detective story reveals much more about the values of Victorian society than the detectives that society venerates.
Purpose of the Study

Through the villain the reader can see the greatest fears of Victorian society personified. The anxieties of nineteenth-century Britain are not revealed by the detective, but by what he keeps at bay through his superhuman skill and brilliance. It is not insignificant that the detective requires such great faculties to battle crime on the streets of London - the criminal that these stories fashion is undoubtedly a frightening figure. This leads us to the obvious question - who is this object of fear? At the end of the mystery, who is the culprit, the mastermind, the dreaded murderer or thief? (And who stole the Squire's money?) The purpose of this study is to examine the construction of the villain within the genre of Victorian detective fiction in order to understand how recurrent themes and representations of criminals illuminate this society and its values.

While the Sherlock Holmeses of the literary world illustrate idealized human traits and capabilities, the criminal is dually illuminating - first by what he is and, secondly, by what he is not. He is defined by his place in society, but this identity is also formed by the ways the perceived he is different than the imagined us, and how the criminal is contrasted with the respectable, idealized Victorian. Both roles, the respectable citizen and the criminal, are shaped by reality but are not necessarily representative of reality. More often, they are constructs that exist to reinforce existing social values. In this thesis I plan to discuss how the identity of the villain reflects Victorian conceptions of criminality. The reasons that the Victorian audience suspects the passengers on Mrs. Wood's train are often unspoken yet would have been understood by her reader. By studying the historical context of these stories and commonly-held beliefs concerning criminals, the reader will come to a better understanding of the Victorian perception of the villain and how this perception is formed and reinforced.
Methodology and Research Questions

I will explore the figure of the villain as revealed through a survey of more than sixty pieces of short detective fiction published in Britain during the approximate time period of 1845-1907. In order to narrow the scope of this thesis, I have chosen twenty-five stories to explore in depth, which, as stated previously, were published between 1870 and 1905, with two exceptions². Throughout the thesis I will provide a brief historical context for Victorian detective fiction, a brief discussion of sensation fiction, and a short discussion of applicable court cases, legal proceedings, and theories in the field of criminology.

Following this groundwork, I plan to divide my exploration of the villain into sections, based on six major patterns I have observed. Each of these six chapters will address one reoccurring depiction of the villain, based on categories formed from my research. The first section will explore the representation of the visual villain – a concept that springs from the widely held Victorian belief that a person's character can be seen and understood from his or her appearance. This concept is evident in almost all of the stories I have surveyed in the genre. I argue that there is often a direct correlation between the appearance of the person, the public perception of that person, and his or her character. Those assumptions are often portrayed as infallible and are proven or foreshadowed by some facet of the villain's appearance or expression. There are also conclusions in which the villain is the exact opposite of who the characters suspect, based on appearance alone. The shock of this revelation is hinged on the aforementioned dependency of Victorians on appearances. Both endings require the belief that a person, or criminal, can be revealed by physical characteristics. This emphasis on the visual is critical to the each chapter of this thesis and will reappear as I discuss additional types of

²Charles Dickens' “Hunted Down” (1859) and J. S. Le Fanu's “The Murdered Cousin” (1851).
criminals. This concept also reflects the work of the most famous and controversial criminologists of the era, Cesare Lombroso and Francis Galton\(^3\), whose influence can be seen through the figure of the visual villain. The visual villain as a criminal type will be examined through Charles Dickens “Hunted Down” and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” (the only Holmes story included in this project).

The next two chapters will explore the characterization of criminals in terms of class. The first will address attitudes concerning lower or working classes and the Victorian belief in their tendency toward crime and dishonesty. The figure of the working class criminal or “criminal class” is represented on Mrs. Wood’s train by the figure of Wilkins, the servant. Why might the Victorian audience suspect him? What crimes do the “criminal class” commit in detective fiction, and how often are they the guilty party? I will explore the figure of the working class criminal through “Who Killed Zebedee?” “Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will,” and “A Perverted Genius.”

My discussion of class and crime will continue through an investigation of the upper-class criminal, represented by the dark gentleman on the train. This type of villain is elusive; however, he is often found in a sub-genre of detective fiction I categorize as “the jewelry heist.” Is the theft of jewelry (or more accurately, the successful theft of jewelry) dependent on class? This chapter will explore this unique type of crime through an examination of “The Duchess of Wiltshire’s Diamonds,” “The Great Ruby Robbery,” and “The Wedding Guest.”

Next I will explore the role that gender plays in the characterization of villains, a criminal type represented by the veiled lady in the train carriage. This chapter will address the

\(^3\) Cesare Lombroso advocated degeneration social theory and argued that there was a subset of the human race that had regressed instead of evolving, thereby constituting a criminal class. Both Lombroso and Francis Galton’s theories founded the science of Eugenics. In addition, both Lombroso and Galton’s theories were predicated on racial discrimination.
role in of the domestic space in the construction of Victorian female identity, as well as the role of the violent female offender and the exoticized woman in crime fiction. My discussion will focus on the female villains appearing in “The Mystery at Number Seven,” “The York Mystery,” “Who Killed Zebedee?” and “The Long Arm.”

The lunatic on the train was described by Mr. Johnny Ludlow as being like an Egyptian mummy – a description that marks him as foreign, supernatural, and an object of fear. It is also important to note that Egypt, officially colonized by Britain by the time of the second publication of “Going Through the Tunnel” and during each publication of the stories below, represents a concern that is commonly displayed in this type of fiction: fear of the colonial subject, or fear of retribution from colonized peoples. I will explore themes of nationalism and colonialism in the British consciousness and posit that fear resulting from the continued oppression of the “Other,” as well as a need to reinforce an unwavering belief in the moral superiority of Britain in an effort to justify that subjugation, is demonstrated in the villains of the following stories: “The Return of Imray,” “The Divination of the Zagury Capsules,” “The Case of the Lost Foreigner,” “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” “The Sapient Monkey,” and “Levison's Victim.”

We have only one passenger left in the train carriage – the respectable and friendly-looking English gentleman with gold spectacles. What kind of criminal does he represent in the genre of detective fiction, and is he someone a late-nineteenth-century British audience might fear? The answer is yes - the bespectacled man represents a well-known and commonly feared villain who came into popularity with the rise of sensation fiction in the 1860s. The bespectacled man, whom I refer to as the domestic villain, is the kind of criminal made popular by the publication of sensational tales like Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Lady Audley's Secret. The
opposite of the visual villain, the domestic villain can hide in plain sight, often behind a pleasant exterior. More often than not, the horror the Victorian reader will feel at his exposure is intensified by the fact that the domestic villain is often a respectable member of society. Several popular court cases of the time, coupled with events in the “The Murdered Cousin,” “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker,” and “Dr. Varvill's Prescription,” all show a pronounced fear and fascination with the villain who blends into society, unnoticed and unmarked by visual warning.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the study I propose. First, of the sixty or so detective stories that I have read and reference in this thesis, there is room to discuss only a portion in depth. In turn, these sixty stories represent a fraction of the genre and should not be understood to represent the genre in its entirety. To narrow the thesis even further, I have made the decision to almost exclusively discuss the criminal(s) in the story and not to include the entirety of suspects. I have limited my discussion to six major themes, which are not entirely representative of the patterns I have observed. In addition, I have limited access to or research on the original periodicals in which these stories appeared. Further knowledge about or research on these periodicals may provide additional and valuable contextual clues.

The final limitation is one I have imposed on myself in choosing the scope of my research. As I have already stated, I plan to discuss characteristics of villains in this thesis, constructed from six patterns I have observed in the texts. Given the length of the thesis, it may seem more reasonable to address two or three of these patterns because this would allow me to include additional evidence, stories, and analysis of each topic. However, I argue that
these six characteristics are interdependent and that without addressing each of them, it is impossible for me to communicate the larger themes and implications of the Victorian perception of and fascination with crime. Each criminal type contributes to the public perception of the criminal, and in doing so reinforces the greater social hierarchy that holds Victorian culture together. Despite the limitations listed here, expanding the scope of my research has led me to more interesting and substantial conclusions than would be possible with a narrowed focus.
Chapter Two:

The Suspicious Hair and the Tell-Tale Hat: Reading the Visual Villain

“The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” opens on a winter morning as Dr. Watson calls on his friend Sherlock Holmes, only to find him in deep contemplation of a worn felt hat. Watson learns that the article came into Holmes’ possession on Christmas, after the owner dropped the hat in a street fight and fled before it could be returned. Watson suggests that it will be impossible to return the object to its owner, as the only clue to his identity are the initials H. B.; however, Holmes claims that much can be deduced about H. B. simply from the appearance of his hat. Watson’s own examination of the object leaves him with no insight into the man’s identity: “I can see nothing” he admits (Doyle 97). Holmes, in a characteristic display of keen observation, gives the following details, gleaned only from his inspection of the object:

That the man was highly intellectual is of course obvious upon the face of it, and also that he was fairly well-to-do within the last three years, although he has now fallen upon evil days. He had foresight, but has less now than formerly, pointing to a moral retrogression, which, when taken with the decline of his fortunes, seems to indicate some evil influence, probably drink, at work upon him. This may account also for the obvious fact that his wife has ceased to love him (97).

Watson is astonished with the intimate details Holmes reveals about H. B.’s life. How could Holmes know that the man has been recently fired, or that he had recently suffered a decline in moral character? How would Holmes know that the man drank often, and (most
astonishing) how does Holmes know that the poor man’s wife has “ceased to love him”? Surely love and morality cannot be observed in a hat. Nevertheless, Holmes provides reasoning for all of his claims.

Holmes states that the size of the hat indicates a large brain and therefore increased intelligence. Intelligence, he says, is “a question of cubic capacity” (97). H. B.’s previous and present state of employment is revealed by the initial quality of the hat as compared to the hat's present wornness. If the man were still rich, he would have replaced the hat, Holmes reasons. The man’s initial foresight is shown by his attachment of an elastic band intended to keep the hat on in the wind, his loss of foresight by the broken elastic, which again, has not been replaced. This, states Holmes, “is a distinct proof of a weakening nature” (97). Watson asks for proof of the wife’s declining love for H. B., and Holmes argues that the hat has a week’s worth of dust accumulated on it, and a wife who loved her husband would never let him out of the house with a hat in such disrepair.

Now, if a person were to see Mr. H. B. strolling down the street in this unfortunate garb, would it be logical to come to the same conclusion as Holmes? Would Doyle’s reader find the detective’s assumptions reasonable? Would one say “There is an intelligent, unemployed, and morally declining man whose wife no longer loves him?” Whether these things are true about H.B. are less important than the basis of Holmes assumptions - that inferences about character, intelligence, and affection can be made on H. B.’s appearance alone (or more accurately, on the appearance of H. B.’s hat). Doyle’s reader may find these conclusions acceptable, as Holmes’ deduction is a display of a common Victorian belief that one’s character can be judged solely on one’s appearance, and that character and morality manifest themselves physically. Even though Holmes examines a hat and not a person, this article of clothing
allegedly mimics characteristics of the body that provide information about the disposition of its owner.

Virtuous characters in nineteenth-century fiction often appear virtuous while villains often bear the mark of their criminality on their face or body. The criminal in late Victorian detective fiction is conspicuous, and some aspect of his appearance or expression gives the protagonist of the tale cause for concern. Oftentimes a detective is needed to identify the exact reason for this uneasiness; however, many other characters show distrust or suspicion of the villain based on his appearance. The survival or success of fictional characters is often based on their ability make such judgments. This philosophy of morality as visible is supported (and fueled) by the theories of leading nineteenth century criminologists, who published studies supporting the idea that the criminal (or the criminal class) was easily distinguishable from respectable society based on appearance alone.

Francis Galton, a British scientist who worked in varied disciplines, applied statistical analysis to data he gathered during his anthropological research. Galton used measurements of the human body to compare and identify differences in human appearance. Ultimately, he claimed that those measurements and his analysis could reveal insights into the characteristics of his subjects. For example, Galton believed that intelligence (among other human attributes) was an inherited trait revealed in the physical body. Like intelligence, criminality was also a matter of genetics because immorality is passed on through generations. Not only were negative characteristics inherited, but Galton used both measurements and photographs as data with

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4 Galton was the cousin of famed naturalist Charles Darwin. Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1851) argued that organisms were in a continual process of adapting to their environments through natural selection, wherein the members of a species with favorable characteristics live longer and reproduce in greater numbers. Galton’s theory is somewhat comparable to his cousin’s in that he argued negative personality traits in humans are hereditary and passed on to children. Galton’s theories on *eugenics*, though not necessarily intended for an applied purpose, would be used by the Nazi party in the 1930s to justify mass sterilizations and genocide.
which to develop arguments about features that “mark” the criminal.

The translation of human characteristics, or personality, as revealed in the physical body, is scientifically defined as physiognomy, and is clearly illustrated by the connected discipline of phrenology. Phrenology was a popular nineteenth century science that claimed personalities could be understood from the careful study of bumps on the human head. A lump in one particular place, say, the rear of the skull, could indicate a one’s level of concentration, a bump on the side, a tendency toward secretiveness. A map of the head and of its corresponding areas of meaning appears in Figure 1. The science of phrenology is an excellent illustration of physiognomy because it assumes that one’s inner thoughts, desires, or behaviors are translated into physical form. All one has to do is to feel or observe the contusions of the skull. When the shape of the head is understood, so is the person. A Victorian phrenologist, Franz Joseph Gall, theorized that the skull mirrors the content of the mind. He argued that the brain is the organ of thought, which is composed of multiple organs, or regions (Van Wyhe 21). These faculties each have a geographical location on the brain and their development can be measured by how large that location grows. This theory assumes, like Holmes, that the size of the organ is indicative of its power. Therefore, if the aforementioned area for secretiveness grows larger than the other faculties, it will produce a bump that can be read as scientific evidence of this trait. Holmes’ conclusion about the size of H. B.’s head in relation to his intelligence makes identical assumptions about the size and shape of the brain. However, it was not only the brain that was assumed to reveal characteristics of people in Victorian society, but the entire body.
Fig. 1. Names, Numbering, and Definitions of the Faculties. “Dreaming Up: "The Architect's Dream" by Charles Colbert American Art 6.3 (Summer, 1992): 80.
Galton writes in his 1879 article “Composite Portraits, Made by Combining Those of Many Different Persons Into a Single Resultant Figure” of his plan to develop a “picture” of this criminal by superimposing portraits and photographs of multiple convicts on top of one another and examining the resulting image for common traits (132). The author argues that “the photographic process of which I there spoke enables us to obtain with mechanical precision a generalised picture; one that represents no man in particular, but portrays an imaginary figure. . . it is the portrait of a type and not of an individual” (132-133). To Galton, the inherent characteristics of a man are revealed in physical features, and those features identify them as a type that can be sorted and labeled accordingly. Galton notes that the superimposed picture will result in a “type,” creating an entire category of person that is “the criminal.” With Galton’s research, one will be able to examine a face, identify whether that person is predisposed to crime or immorality, and act in response.

The image in Figure 2 is an example of Galton’s experiments. At the top of the image Galton displays six portraits of men with features that he believes mark a predisposition to criminality. Directly below these portraits, Galton develops one single image that is a combination of these men. For example, the top right portrait in the composite section combines the features of persons I, II, and III above. In doing this Galton hopes to show the viewer what a “violent” type looks like, as indicated by his label of the top six photographs as persons with “features common among men convicted of crimes of violence.” But what are these features? What specifically marks them as criminals? By looking at the composite photograph the viewer hopefuls to observe some emphasis of these “features”; however, there are
few similarities between the men. Instead Galton creates a new person out of the three photographs, a portrait that does not highlight any common features but is a more generalized image. Another point for comparison could be all five composites. It appears that the more criminals Galton adds to his composite, the more formless the portrait becomes. The large middle composite is of seven different criminals and it is the most ambiguous photograph of all. I would suggest that the criminal character Galton creates is frightening not in its specificity but because it could be anyone – the criminal becomes a mysterious figure instead of a marked man. The audience may fear the criminal “type” because Galton says there is a type, but they are unable to distinguish this type for themselves. This problem may heighten the sense of fear surrounding the visual criminal and increase the sense of dependence on scientists, detectives, and other authority figures who are capable of making such identifications. While Galton’s composites are decidedly vague, there were other criminologists of the Victorian era who were determined to identify more precise criteria in regards to the criminal type.

Another publication exploring physiognomy in criminology is the 1902 study by W.R. Macdonell entitled “On Criminal Anthropometry and the Identification of Criminals,” in which the author develops mathematical formulas in order to measure criminality in physical appearance. Macdonell gathered his data by measuring body parts of criminals and comparing them to the bodies of respectable Cambridge students. Some of these measurements include head length, height, foot size, and finger length (202). The measurements for comparable body parts in criminals and students are inexplicably recorded in different units; however, at a conversion rate of 2.54 centimeters to one inch, the Cambridge students showed the largest examples of head length, exemplifying Holmes’ theory of “cubic capacity.” Or at the very least, it suggests the validity of Holmes’ conclusion to the reader and to the Victorian scientist. The
extensive amount of measurements and body parts included in the study exemplifies the Victorian fixation on the criminal body and the need to determine if criminal bodies have measurements that differ significantly from law-abiding citizens.

Cesare Lombroso is perhaps the most well-known criminologist of the Victorian era and a vocal advocate of physiognomy. Like Galton, Lombroso believed that criminality was inherited and that criminal traits could be measured and identified visually. In his 1876 work, Criminal Man, Lombroso uses the measurements of 832 known criminals to draw multiple conclusions, such as “Robbers and murderers are taller than rapists, forgers, and especially thieves” (50). Other indicators of criminals include “jug-eared,” “swollen lips,” “feminine,” “sloping forehead” and “hunchbacked” (50-51). “Habitual murderers” often have hawk-like, large noses with dark hair and well-developed canine teeth (50-51). Arsonists have soft skin, and all criminals have a decreased sensitivity to pain, as evidenced in their predilection for tattoos (63). Most notably, Lombroso argues that criminals “speak differently because they feel differently; they speak like savages because they are savages, living amidst the very flower of European civilization” (78). Lombroso’s findings and his comparison of criminals to “savages” are clearly influenced by racial stereotypes and are heavily biased against those with physical deformities. It can also be argued that his assumptions regarding ethnicity and his glorification of Western identity should be immediately dismissed as biased. However, his findings are significant because they were presented and often accepted in Victorian society as legitimate scientific theory. As a result, the Victorian audience may have been further influenced by the idea of the visual villain and encouraged to see that criminal in terms of physical appearance, race, or class.

It wasn’t until after his death that Lombroso’s theories were tested in a study conducted
by Dr. Charles Goring and reviewed by his daughter, Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, and Victor Borosini. The results of this study were originally published in 1913 under the title “The English Convict. A Statistical Study by Charles Goring. Deputy Medical Officer. H. M. Prison Parkhurst” (Lombroso-Ferrero 209). Goring’s study defines three groups for study and comparison: “100 born criminals, 100 persons with criminal tendencies, and 100 normal persons” (207). The doctor, like Goring, defines criminal “types” of persons by coincidence of birth or by current incarceration, and uses measurements and observations in behavior as data in order to compare criminals to respectable citizens. Not only does Goring study criminals, but he also follows and notes the progress of their children (211). The results of Goring’s study claim to disprove much of Lombroso’s science; however, Lombroso-Ferrero and Borosini argue that Goring’s study does nothing but prove Lombroso’s claims. Lombroso-Ferrero and Borosini argue that Goring admits to “several criminal types. The thief differs from the incendiary; the former is taller but unstable, the latter more lacking in self-control, more refractory in conduct and more dirty in habits” (210). Another physical manifestation of the criminal is that “the stature of the criminal is generally inferior to that of normal persons, especially of those convicted of sexual crimes. The weight is proportionately less. . . the span of the arms is greater than normal” (223). Overall, it is argued that Goring’s figures prove that criminality is a matter of inherited traits and not of environment (220). The notoriety of Goring’s study and the ensuing response from Gina Lombroso-Ferrero stress the fact that Cesare Lombroso’s theories held the legitimate status until well after the turn of the century.5

Goring also notes that the popularity of Lombroso’s theories exists because the idea of

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5 The publication of Goring’s 1913 study, in addition to criticism from criminologists and anthropologists rejecting biological explanations of criminality in favor of sociological explanations, contributed to Lombroso’s decrease in popularity.
the criminal has been constructed by such images in newspapers and literature, in combination
with a popular belief in bad science (209). The idea of the visual criminal exists because of
literature and is reinforced by literature. This is an essential point: Goring claims that it is not
the validity of Lombroso’s science that convinces the public of its legitimacy, but a process in
which that science is continually reinforced by the media and popular culture. It does not
matter whether Lombroso or Goring’s theories are true; their publication and society’s
fascination and acceptance have made them seem so for a Victorian audience. The same could
be said of the publication and distribution of Galton’s portraits. It would be reasonable to
conclude that literature of the Victorian period includes constructs of criminality that support
or reinforce contemporary theories of criminology and that this process affected the public
perception of crime. Literature is not just a result of socially existing beliefs but an active
participant in creating and maintaining them.

Though Galton and Lombroso were a common topic of discussion in the Victorian
scientific community, how does the idea of the criminal as “visible” translate into popular
literature and detective fiction? The role of burgeoning scientific theories and innovations in
technology in literature are explored in Ronald Thomas’ “Making Darkness Visible: Capturing
the Criminal and Observing the Law in Victorian Photography and Detective Fiction.” The
author compares the role of the Victorian detective to the developing technology of the camera,
claiming both share a similar function of revealing to the reader/viewer what was previously
visible but could not be seen by the normal eye. This “seeing” not only implies that criminality
is visible (if one knows how and when to look), but Thomas argues that the reader is
encouraged to change his vision, view things through the lens of the detective, or as the author
points out, through the lens of “cultural power and authority” (136).
To begin, the detective does not have special vision that can see images the regular eye cannot; he or she simply knows where to look and what details to observe (Thomas 134). Yet, as stated earlier, the Victorian detective often has knowledge that the everyday reader or viewer does not. How then will the reader/viewer accomplish this “seeing?” Thomas states that “Together, camera and literary detective developed a practical procedure to accomplish what the new discipline of criminal anthropology attempted more theoretically: to make darkness visible – giving us a means to recognize the criminal in our midst by changing the way we see and by redefining what is important for us to notice” (135). The photograph gives the viewer the opportunity to examine the visual image in depth and to interpret that image. Galton attempts this with his photographic images. He assumes the composites will allow the viewer to see more about the criminal than could otherwise be observed and attempts to define what is most important for the viewer to notice by fixating on and interpreting the human face.

In addition, this vision is complicated by the “lens of cultural power and authority” that Thomas speaks of. The viewer is molded by the instruction of the detective in how to look, and the detective remains a source of authority. Thomas argues that these fictional detectives are like cameras themselves, and those cameras (such as Holmes and Bucket) are consistently reinforced as objects of crime detection and “surveillance” (136). Therefore, the reader of detective fiction becomes focused like the detective, consistently choosing, evaluating, and assigning meaning to the visual.

Furthermore, the reader/viewer is instructed to observe according to commonly held societal values and norms, for example, the “science” of Galton and Lombroso. The view can be further complicated if the reader comes from a place of societal privilege. In the example of Lombroso, the classification of criminal features marginalizes those whose ethnicity or
residence is outside of the “Western” periphery Lombroso creates. Therefore, the reader/viewer observes through a lens that is shaped by such theories and makes judgments accordingly. I argue that the Victorian reader/viewer evaluates fiction through this lens not only because of the Victorian tendency to place importance on appearances but because of the burgeoning emphasis on visual evidence in the field of criminology6. The concept of visual evidence in this genre of detective fiction is not limited to inanimate objects but extends onto suspects in a crime.

I offer, as an illustration of the visual villain, a devious scoundrel whose appearance so marks his person that his guilt is immediately discovered through his appearance. Mr. Julius Slinkton of Charles Dickens’ “Hunted Down,” is a man whose criminal intentions are betrayed, strangely enough, by the horrendous and disturbing part in his hair.

“Hunted Down”

“Hunted Down” is told from the point of view of Mr. Sampson, a man who works in a life assurance office and whose first impressions of others are always correct. Sampson proclaims: “Believe me, my first impression of those people, founded on face and manner alone, [is] invariably true. My mistake [is] suffering them to come nearer to me, and explain themselves away” (Dickens 49). The narrator explains that he is only fooled if a person is given a chance to speak and persuade him against his initial impression. Sampson argues that the only reliable standard with which to judge character is appearance. It is to Mr. Sampson’s benefit, then, that his office is enclosed by a large pane of clear glass that allows him to observe what is

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6 For example, in Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science, Ronald R. Thomas writes that the first incarnation of the lie detector appeared in 1895 and that police officers began to use photography for recording keeping purposes soon after its invention in 1839 (22, 111).
going on in the office visually, without sound (49). Lucky too, for the narrator tells the reader that many people try to cheat his business, and that “a Life Assurance Office is at all times exposed to be practised upon by the most crafty and cruel of the human race” (49). Mr. Sampson’s formidable observational powers are called into use upon his first meeting with Mr. Julius Slinkton, a man who visits Sampson’s office in order to purchase a life insurance policy on behalf of a close friend. It is then that Mr. Sampson states his immediate dislike of Mr. Slinkton, and explains what that man’s appearance reveals about his character:

His hair, which was elaborately brushed and oiled, was parted straight up the middle; and he presented this parting to the clerk, exactly (to my thinking) as if he had just said, in so many words: ‘You must take me, if you please, my friend, just as I show myself. Come straight up here, follow the gravel path, keep off the grass, I allow no trespassing.’ I conceived a very great aversion to that man the moment I thus saw him” (49).

Mr. Slinkton, argues Sampson, is attempting to mislead the viewer with his outward appearance and straight-and-narrow part, which suggests Slinkton is entirely respectable. The part, Sampson reasons, is a path representing a façade, and he refuses to accept the other man’s carefully controlled exterior. Mr. Sampson offers further explanation, giving the reader advice on how to judge the expression such a person’s face: “I have known a vast quantity of nonsense talked about bad men not looking you in the face. Don't trust that conventional idea. Dishonesty will stare honesty out of countenance, any day in the week, if there is anything to be got by it” (50).

Karen Halttunen argues in Confidence Men and Painted Women that the tenets of the Victorian moral code require one’s outer appearance to directly reflect his or her inner self (xvi). Sampson’s fixation on the appearance of honesty versus the authenticity of that honesty reflects anxiety concerning whether this “transparency of character” is truly possible (xvi). Here Sampson shows the reader that dishonesty can present itself in the guise of truthfulness and
that the reader must be more observant so that he will not be tricked. Sampson’s logic requires
that the viewer be attentive to detail and not dependent on the assumption of transparency.
This seems contradictory, as Sampson offers Slinkton’s appearance as evidence while
simultaneously distrusting it. This seems possible only because Sampson presents himself as an
authority who assists the audience in constructing an adequate lens. Sampson needs the
appearance of Slinkton as justification but also recognizes that his methods are problematic to
those of lesser skill. The Victorian idea of transparency that Halttunen presents is the central
support behind the existence of the visual villain though possible flaws in that transparency are
also a source of fear and anxiety.

Slinkton appears often, showing up at dinner parties and at Sampson’s office. He is
intent on purchasing a large life insurance policy for his friend and shares with Sampson that he
has two nieces, one of whom has recently died. Slinkton says he is grieved by this event, but
Sampson doubts his sincerity. Sampson is troubled by this information and this man’s behavior,
yet he cannot put his finger on what disturbs him – save the persuasive and demanding hair
(which he fixates on through pages 50, 51, and 54). Eventually even Sampson must question
the validity of his focus and uses Slinkton’s face as a means with which to gather additional
evidence. Eventually he comes to the conclusion that his reasoning is sound:

I took his face to pieces in my mind, like a watch, and examined it in detail. I could not
say much against any of his features separately; I could say even less against them when
they were put together. 'Then is it not monstrous,' I asked myself, 'that because a man
happens to part his hair straight up the middle of his head, I should permit myself to
suspect, and even to detest him? . . . (I may stop to remark that this was no proof of my
sense. An observer of men who finds himself steadily repelled by some apparently
trifling thing in a stranger is right to give it great weight. It may be the clue to the whole
mystery. A hair or two will show where the lion is hidden. A very little key will open a
very heavy door.). (Dickens 53)

Sampson considers whether his opinions are evidence enough to convict Slinkton and
comes to the conclusion that they are. His comments concerning that one hair and that “small key” are essential to both his theory and the overall theory of the visual villain. These images convey the idea that a small impression, one moment of instinct, is evidence enough to draw a conclusion. As for Galton and Lombroso, the breadth of one’s head, the length of one’s foot, or the span of one’s arms are clear indications of criminality. The two conceptions of criminality are similar in that one physical feature can reveal the obscured morality of a suspect. It could also be argued that Sampson is motivated by gut instinct and not Slinkton’s appearance; however, Sampson uses appearance as legitimate evidence for his judgments.

Eventually, Sampson takes it upon himself to find and warn Slinkton’s niece that he believes her life is in danger. He also visits the close friend of Slinkton, Mr. Beckwith, because he believes Slinkton will murder him in order to collect on the life insurance policy he has taken out on Beckwith’s behalf (of which he is the beneficiary). Sampson is so convinced of the stubbornness, the deviousness, the *villainy* of Slinkton’s hair that he begins to track down Slinkton’s friends and family and suggest that Slinkton is a danger to them. At the conclusion of the story, when Slinkton falls into a trap set by his pursuers, his appearance changes drastically from that of a respectable man to shrunken and animistic creature. In the face of his guilt, Slinkton’s true self is expressed physically. He is “white,” “haggard,” and “changed,” he “glanced about him in a very curious way – as one of the meaner reptiles might, looking for a hole to hide in” (67). When guilt is confirmed, the appearance of the villain changes, revealing what has been hidden from the reader and many of the characters throughout the story. The new visual representation of Slinkton confirms his guilt and reinforces that he is a criminal.

How is it then (if Slinkton’s guilt is so apparent to Sampson) that the other characters in the story seem unaware of his intentions? What of Slinkton’s niece, and Beckwith? The reader
and the other characters must be convinced of Slinkton’s guilt by an authority that can “see” the fault in Slinkton’s person. Similarly, the reader must be shown how to look for and identify the criminal. Sampson emphasizes the infallibility of his method and in doing so suggests the reader follow suit by trusting his own visually-based suspicions. The reader and the characters must see Slinkton through Sampson’s lens. When one knows what to look for, one will be able to identify the criminal immediately. The audience plays a similar role in “Hunted Down” to that of Watson in “The Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle” in that neither can identify the mark of Slinkton’s villainy nor the significance of H.B.’s hat. The audience cannot accurately interpret Slinkton or H.B. until the detectives instruct the reader in how to view clues and characters.

This philosophy is of extraordinary importance to the Victorian reader because it serves several functions. First, it is a reflection and reinforcement of existing societal beliefs – that one’s appearance is a direct reflection of one’s character. Secondly, it is an instruction on how to read detective fiction and an indicator of what to look for in a guilty party. Someone who looks guilty is oftentimes guilty. And if the criminal does not appear so (the least-likely suspect), he or she will appear guilty by the conclusion, when some facet of his or her appearance that confirms an internal flaw is identified by the detective. The reader is encouraged to look for and identify the criminal along with the detective, and that identification is dependent on both the existence of clues and the appearance of the suspects.

The important question becomes, which factors or facets of appearance indicate guilt to a Victorian audience? Criminologists ask the public to recognize them. Sampson and Holmes advise the reader to do so as well. What aspects of society work their way into the short detective story, simultaneously creating and reinforcing criminal stereotypes through literature?
It would be reasonable to assume that the effect that Dr. Goring found in the application of Lombroso’s theories is possible through the medium of fiction. If an audience reads crime fiction with reoccurring motifs, they may in turn assume that these are realistic criteria for criminal identification. Here we are taken back to the train car, back to the Squire, standing with frustration amidst a cast of characters that all appear guilty to the Victorian audience. In order to determine who stole the unfortunate man’s fifty pounds, the reader must sift through both the clues and his perception of the suspects. In short, he must view the story through the lens of Victorian cultural and social values. In the remaining chapters, I will explore specific trends in Victorian villainy in order to identify and illustrate these values in short detective fiction and construct the lens that helps the reader to identify criminals.
Chapter Three:

*The Murderous Cook and the Confidence Man: Class and Criminality*

It is essential in this chapter on class and criminality to reveal the identity of the thief on Mrs. Wood’s train. However, I would like to preface the author’s revelation and its implications by beginning with several general assumptions crucial to understanding Victorian conceptions of the criminal.

To begin, citizens of a lower socioeconomic status were believed to be more likely to commit crimes in Victorian England as economic factors were believed to be a contributing factor in one’s morality. Those who possessed an inferior moral composition and were members of the working or lower class were thought to make a career from crime. In addition, a subset of these persons was said to compose the “criminal class,” though that class was a decidedly vague demographic. Author Thomas Boyle writes in *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead* that it was believed in the early Victorian era7 “the criminal, exercising his or her free will, chose a life of crime, for whatever reason, and in doing so set him/herself beyond the bounds of respectable society” (11). It is in this imagined “space,” outside of civilization’s boundaries, that the criminal class exists, physically and morally removed from productive members of society. Boyle notes that places where lower or working classes lived were seen as potential crime zones, yet “there was no agreed on consistent definition of the social composition or geographical location of the “dangerous,” “predatory,” or “destructive classes”

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7 I use the term “early Victorian era” here to refer to the time period of roughly 1830-1860.
While this group of villains was ambiguous in its conception, one fact was clear: the criminal class did not include wealthy citizens. Author Clive Emsley notes that while “white-collar” criminals were acknowledged, they were viewed more as “rotten apples” in an otherwise ethical group, a “consoling distinction to which the middle and upper classes clung” (49). In short, is not entirely clear who the criminal class was; however, it was presumed who the criminal class was not.

The connotations of the words criminal, destructive, and predatory, in combination with Emsley’s observations that these definitions were often created through their contrast with and exclusion from middle class identity, construct the idea of the criminal as someone separate from respectable society both spatially and morally. Or, as David Taylor notes in “Beyond the Bounds of Respectable Society: The ‘Dangerous’ Classes in Victorian and Edwardian England,” this construction of the criminal identity follows Edward Said’s model in that the respectable classes must establish an opposite in order to solidify their own identity. Taylor observes: “the constructed ‘other’ of the ‘dangerous classes’ throws more light on the thinking and perception of the ‘respectable classes,’ that is the observers, than it does the observed” (Taylor 4). To illustrate this point, Taylor notes that the function of literature written on the criminal classes was mainly one of reassurance, to help the audience feel a sense of security and superiority. This contrast is especially evident in the literary disparity between depictions of criminals and authority figures (7). “The simple binary division,” Taylor writes, “– good/evil or respectable/rough – conceived in moral, physical, geographical terms, provided an analysis from which the worried reader might draw comfort” (9).

The spaces these binaries create between the citizen and criminal are comparable to the illusory boundaries depicted by Edward Said in Orientalism. Said argues that “Communities are
to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6). Like the idea of “nation,” members of a community may not know each other, yet “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Therefore, it does not matter whether the members of the middle class or upper class are truly different than the criminal or working classes, only that they imagine themselves as different, draw imagined boundaries between themselves and those classes, and construct an idealized image of their own class with which to compare and create their own identity.

Taylor estimates that the height of public panic about the criminal classes, inspired by the fear caused by these “differences,” peaked during the 1880s (10). It is also during this time that social assumptions concerning the motivation for crime shifted away from the premise of free will and towards scientific explanations that categorized criminals into a separate group with inherent behavior (11).

Working class citizens, especially servants in the households of the middle- and upper-class, were regarded with suspicion because of a general assumption that the working classes were predisposed to commit crime. For example, Victorian society viewed servants as more likely to steal from employers or engage in other immoral behavior, such as premarital sex. One can assume that the hired help was always under close watch by employers, and they are often the first people questioned following a crime in detective fiction. I argue that anxiety over the presence of the servant is heightened by the fact that this outsider shares the same domestic space as the middle- or upper-class individual. And, because it becomes more difficult to create imagined boundaries and space between persons residing in the same house, delineating the difference between middle class identity and working class identity becomes all the more important.
In addition, there are two important figures that appear prominently in late nineteenth-century crime fiction and who are clearly an object of great fear. Those figures are the man or woman of the criminal class who, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, impersonate a respectable individual of a higher class in order to commit crimes. These “archetypal” figures are commonly known as the confidence man and the painted woman (Halttuten xiv). The idea of impersonating another individual is particularly offense to Victorian ethics because one was expected to enact what Karen Halttuten calls a “transparency” of character (xvi). The idea of transparency stems from a romanticized view of Victorian middle class identity during a socially problematic period of urban industrialization, which Halttuten defines as sentimentalism (xiv). As a result of sentimentalism, Victorians compensated for social inequalities by celebrating middle class values and ignoring their agency in growing social problems (xiv). For example, Emsley notes that “Throughout the period 1750 to 1900 most experts and commentators went out of their way to deny any relationship between low wages, poverty and the bulk of crime” (49). Victorians then directed their anxiety over this denial onto the characters of the confidence man and painted woman, who, in society’s view, were immoral for concealing themselves in the guise of respectability. Ironically, these figures were condemned for being hypocritical.

But what does a confidence man do? In Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870, Halttunen describes the process in which the confidence man lures a naïve youth into a false sense of friendship, only to corrupt him morally and use that youth’s money for his own purposes (7-8). Descriptions of the confidence man show him to be “well dressed, well mannered, and charmingly articulate” (37). The appearance of the confidence man, in contrast to his intent, is a point of social anxiety because the visual
representation he offers does not match his inner character. The belief that these two elements should match illustrates an axiom of sentimentalism, namely, that those who appear to be respectable persons will always act in accordance to the idealized vision of the middle class. Haluttunen writes “the hypocrisy of the confidence man destroyed the sentimental typology of conduct by severing the link between surface appearances and inner moral nature” (42). And as discussed earlier, there was a societal assumption that one’s character could be observed through his or her physical appearance. The confidence man acted against this belief and was therefore an object of great anxiety.

Similarly, the character of the painted woman is based on assumptions about appearance. 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 (Haluttonen 66-67). Contemporaries feared that the “masquerade” of fashion distracted from moral growth and encouraged superficial interaction (66). Haluttonen cites “The Fatal Cosmetic” as an example of literature betraying this anxiety, it being the story of a young woman who simultaneously becomes vain and immoral, and whose poisonous cosmetics cause the death of a guest at her wedding (68-69). Another example from popular fiction is the unfortunate demise of Mrs. Eustace in Wilkie Collins’ *The Law and the Lady*, whose desire to be beautiful leads her to use cosmetics with arsenic and results in her subsequent poisoning and death. “True womanly beauty,” Haluttonen writes, “was not an accident of form; it was the outward expression of a virtuous mind and heart” (71). Virtue and morality are therefore visible in the appearance of a woman. What then, if a woman hides behind fashion, makeup, or clothing? Is it merely vanity that inspires her to dress in this way, or is she hiding something?
The figure of the painted woman, as the counterpart to the confidence man, suggests just this – that the “transparency” of her true morality must be covered.

All three of these assumptions are essential to understanding the significance of the villain in “Going Through the Tunnel.” Following their discovery of the theft, the Squire and Johnny immediately begin an investigation. This investigation consists of teaming up with the lunatic, questioning and searching the woman at the lunatic’s insistence, and chasing and tackling the bespectacled man in a field. It becomes apparent after this incident that the two men cannot prove any of the passengers are guilty. Despondent, the two give up hope on ever figuring out who the culprit is. Several months later, while taking a stroll by the sea, Johnny hears a familiar voice. It is the veiled woman from the train, and her companion is none other than the dark gentleman - the Lord! The fact that the two suspects are walking together immediately strikes Johnny as suspicious because they had acted like strangers on the train.

Johnny notices a man in a tweed jacket watching the couple, and asks the man if he knows their names. The couple, the man says, is known as Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray, and he is a police officer assigned to investigate them. The officer has been watching the Mowbrays for quite some time, and discloses that Mr. Mowbray “is a member of the swell-mob; one of the cleverest of the gentleman fraternity, and the one who acts as a servant is another of them” (Wood, “Going Through” 188). Johnny asks about the lady, and the man in the tweed suit replies that “She is a third” in the gang of thieves. It is then that Johnny works out the crime – the servant Wilkins put out the light and acted as if he did not have time to light it again. The woman caused a distraction with her terrier, sending the carriage into commotion and using the opportunity to steal the Squire’s money. When her husband handed her the dog, she passed the fifty pounds to him. He immediately left the carriage and when she was subsequently searched
was not in possession of the money. When Mrs. Mowbray was searched, she was so offended that she ironically accused the *Squire* of not being a gentleman (183). All three thieves worked together to create the illusion that fooled the other passengers. Following this revelation Johnny follows the couple, only to see them boarding another train and preparing to enact another scheme.

The essential pieces of “Going Through the Tunnel” are the identities the thieves assume and their success in doing so. The policeman states that they are part of a gang that pretends to be upper class - all along Mr. Mowbray was not a Lord and Mrs. Mowbray was not a Lady. The two thieves did not pretend to be middle class citizens but aristocracy, making their transgression all the more shocking and humiliating for the persons who were duped. The fact that the passengers were not able to tell the difference between a Lord and a thief is problematic because it challenges the assumption that the inherent traits that come with nobility are visually apparent. It defies the axioms of transparency and social expectations. “Wilkins,” who suffered so greatly for his inability to find a copy of *The Times*, was another actor whose fictitious servitude was a tool in creating the appearance of a class hierarchy that lent credibility to the ruse. Wilkins’s position as servant gave him access to the carriage and lamp. Mowbray’s appearance, condescending attitude toward his servant, and irrational demands encourage the other passengers to think that he is a Lord. Finally, the veiled woman is the embodiment of the painted woman, someone hiding her true intent behind a mask of fashion: “There was a sort of violet bloom on her face and some soft white powder, seen plain enough through her veil,” and “a mass of fashionable hair on her head” (173, 175). The woman literally hides her face and her intent with multiple objects, painting over her moral shortcomings.

It is his status as Lord that allows Mowbray to leave the train carriage with the money –
Johnny, the Squire, and the lunatic openly state that they cannot suspect the Lord, he cannot be the guilty party, because society dictates that the definition of an honorable person is an English gentleman. The lunatic admits “Of the four passengers, I suppose the one who left us at the station must be held exempt from suspicion, being a nobleman” (182). A Lord, as understood by the code of Victorian values, is synonymous with an honest man. Consequently the status of the upper class is a guarantee of honesty. This guarantee, or perception of gentility, is an excellent disguise for any potential criminal. The panic this story installs in Mrs. Henry Wood’s audience comes not only from the loss of property but from the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray could pretend that they are a Lord and Lady, and fool the middle-class passengers.

Social status is crucial to the Victorian sense of identity. It is also important to understand that the barriers between classes, for example, between those who work for a living and those who live off of the interest of inherited wealth, were not as flexible or permeable as those in modern society. As stated in the previous chapter, it was a contemporary belief that one could see the character of a person through his or her appearance, with the assumption that the attributes associated with or inherent in higher classes are visually obvious. The same can be said for the middle and working classes and, most definitely, the criminal class that is the subject of this chapter. I argue that the horror of “Going Through the Tunnel” is less about the loss of money than about the dread of being unable to identify these crucial social markers, these pillars of identity that are so crucial to the Victorian middle class sense of self. Additionally, the inability to recognize others of one’s own social status is overcompensated for in the compulsive need to define and act out against those who are not a member of that group. The fear of error is reflected not only in the process of vilifying the criminal class in crime fiction but is also expressed through the figures of the confidence man and the painted woman,
who appear as objects poised to destroy this identity and the strict order of Victorian Society. Johnny cannot stop the gang or recover the money; he is only able to watch them board the train and prepare to rob another respectable person. This unresolved conclusion allows the reader to imagine the pair as actively searching out new victims, heightening the sense of fear caused by the Mowbrays and influencing the reader’s own sense of security.

The main objectives of this chapter are to define Victorian conceptions of the criminal class as compared to the construction of the respectable citizen in detective fiction. While I believe Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray from “Going Through the Tunnel” accurately reflect contemporary conceptions of the criminal, short stories of this genre provide a multitude of further examples. I offer three additional villains from varied social positions and with a range of motives. The first story, Wilkie Collins’ “Who Killed Zebedee?”8 features a murderous servant who exemplifies middle-class fears regarding potential violent behavior by their live-in help. Silas Hocking’s “A Perverted Genius” is about an extraordinarily clever and dangerous confidence man who fools an entire town and shows the inhuman nature of those who impersonate respectable persons. The last story, Robert Eustace and L. T. Meade’s “Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will,” features another con man whose true nature is betrayed by his geographical location and the quality of people he chooses to associate with. Together, these stories provide a basis for a discussion of ways that socioeconomic and social status, geographical location, and ability to impersonate those of middle or upper classes contribute to the Victorian idea of the criminal class.

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8 I have found this story in another anthology (A Treasury of Victorian Detective Stories) under the title of “The Policeman and the Cook.” Further research indicates that the story was originally published as “Who Killed Zebedee?” in the Seaside Library in January of 1880 and in the The Spirit of the Times in December of 1880. See http://www.wilkie-collins.info/books_little_novels.htm for further information.
“Who Killed Zebedee?”

“Who Killed Zebedee?” is the deathbed confession of a London police officer. The narrator tells his story as follows: late one evening, a young cook named Priscilla Thurlby barges into the police station and announces there has been a murder at the boarding house where she is employed. Mrs. John Zebedee has awakened to discover her newlywed husband is stabbed, and admits she may have committed the crime while sleepwalking. When the officer arrives on the scene, the wife is in a catatonic state and the husband, John Zebedee, is lying on the bed with the knife still in his body. What the investigative team can determine is that no one has broken into the building, and the murder was committed by someone in the house. The narrator questions all of the people in the boarding house, including the staff and the other boarders, but finds no additional evidence or clues. The only clue the police have is the knife used to murder Zebedee, which is engraved: “To John Zebedee, from - ” (Collins 146). Here the engraving abruptly ends, omitting the name of the person intending to give the gift.

While investigating the life of the Zebedees, the narrator finds that they were both employed as servants (a footman and a ladies’ maid) in the same household. The two were very much in love, and after John Zebedee inherited two thousand pounds following a relative’s death, the two were immediately married. Mr. Zebedee was stabbed on their honeymoon. There was no evidence to support the claim that Mrs. Zebedee murdered her husband while sleepwalking, and no evidence pointing to another party. Mrs. Zebedee stated during her hearing that she had not seen the knife before and did not know where it came from. The knife is presumably the property of the murderer. As there was little other evidence, the case remained unsolved. The ambitious narrator, however, sees the unsolved mystery as a way to get a promotion within the department and enlists the help of the young cook, Priscilla Thurlby,
because she is bright and has good references from her home parish.

The narrator suspects a womanizing boarder named Mr. Deluc, yet doesn’t have enough evidence to act on his suspicions. With the help of Priscilla he begins to build a case against Deluc. He also falls in love with Priscilla and proposes to her. Though excited about his impending marriage, the narrator continues to investigate the murder and the strangely engraved murder weapon. On his way to meet Priscilla’s family, the narrator sees a small cutlery shop and decides to inquire about the engraving. The engraving on the knife had been published in the newspapers and shown to all of the shops in London, but there is a chance that this shop had not seen or responded to the advertisement. Inside the shop, an elderly cutler by the name of Scorrier remembers the name Zebedee and recalls making the engraving. He also remembers never finishing it. Excitedly, the policeman asks him to look up the original order, which reads: “To John Zebedee. From Priscilla Thurlby” (157).

Heartbroken, the narrator writes to Priscilla’s reference in her parish and discovers that Zebedee used to work in Priscilla’s hometown. He had, according to the minister, “tried to seduce her under a promise of marriage. Her virtue resisted him, and he pretended to be ashamed of himself. The banns were published in my church. On the next day Zebedee disappeared, and cruelly deserted her” (159). The day following her abandonment, Priscilla marched into the cutler’s shop and snatched the knife, the wedding present, from the table before it could be finished. Coincidentally, Priscilla obtained a position in the very same London lodging house where Zebedee brought his new bride for their honeymoon. The narrator cannot bear to turn Priscilla in, but does confront her about the crime and subsequently leaves her. In a final letter, Priscilla writes:

The devil entered me when I tried their door. . . I had the knife in my hand, and the
thought came to me to do it, so that they might hang her for the murder. I couldn’t take
the knife out again, when I had done it. Mind this! I did really like you – I didn’t say
Yes, because you could hardly hang your own wife, if you found out who killed
Zebedee” (160).

Priscilla makes several important statements in this confession letter. First, that she planned to
frame Mrs. Zebedee because she was the woman John chose to marry. If her initial plan had
worked, Mrs. Zebedee would have been executed for the murder of her husband. And, even
though she denies it as a motive, Priscilla acknowledges that her marriage to the narrator may
have kept her from being arrested and charged, even if he finally discovered it was Priscilla who
committed the crime.

Priscilla also includes in her letter that the couple had been unaware of her presence, as
she spent most of her time in the kitchen. On her way up to bed she tried their door and found
it unlocked. As a servant, Priscilla has access to multiple rooms in the boarding house. A
servant would have reason to walk around the house and enter bedrooms because she may be
completing any number of errands or jobs. In addition, Priscilla is able to conceal her presence
from John in the kitchen. Servants also have access to areas of the home that the owner may
not visit on a daily basis. Therefore, Priscilla’s position as a servant allows her to commit
crimes without falling under suspicion. Like Wilkins, the access that Priscilla has to the crime
scene allows her to act secretly.

Perhaps even more telling is the revelation of Priscilla’s morality. The narrator says that
he initially trusts Priscilla because she has an excellent reference from her minister. That
reference got her the position of cook in the boarding house in which she commits the crime.
However, readers can see that Priscilla is a murderer. She has attempted to frame an innocent
woman and planned to use a marriage to the investigating officer in the case to place herself in a
position where she cannot be arrested. There is no initial indication that Priscilla is a murderer, and she has the same types of references as the other servants in the household. Who is to say that something sinister isn’t lurking behind the ordinary appearance of any servant? The fact that Priscilla is able to maintain this façade of respectability is just as frightening to a middle class reader with servants as is sitting down in a train car next to the Mowbrays.

Priscilla is also able to deny involvement in the crime and mask her actions by reporting the crime to the police and helping in the investigation. The police do not suspect her and they are unable to “see” her guilt. Priscilla also attempts to frame other parties while remaining undetected. No one is able to see Priscilla as she truly is, therefore, she does not embody the tenants of transparency. Priscilla hides – she hides in the kitchen, she hides behind a mask of respectability, and no one is the wiser. The discrepancy between the façade she presents and her true character, which is based in secrecy and concealment, is a point of anxiety because she is almost successful in her concealment. And what is not readily observable to a society who attempts to categorize morality and criminality through visual cues is most certainly dangerous.

On the other hand, Priscilla is not the only dishonest servant in the story. John Zebedee tries to seduce her and deserts her when he fails. Priscilla is humiliated at this abandonment, and the motivation for her violent behavior stems from her rejected attempt to enter the domestic sphere. She is denied access twice, once by Zebedee and again by the narrator who deserts her when he realizes she is a criminal. While Priscilla is not a painted woman, she does exhibit behavior that is impulsive and violent, and takes advantage of her position as servant to both commit the crime and frame another party. This behavior reflects and creates anxiety about the potential actions of servants and about inviting those from outside of the defined middle class space and identity into one’s home.
“A Perverted Genius”

The narrator of “A Perverted Genius” is Mr. Fields, a minister who resides in a quiet country neighborhood. Unfortunately that quiet neighborhood is the site of multiple robberies, though the police and residents are at a loss as to who the culprit could be. A band of marauding bandits is the most popular suspect among the town’s inhabitants. While at dinner, the reader is introduced to several of the town’s residents, among them a friend of Mr. Fields, Mr. Ball:

Though Mr. Ball had been in Banfield not more than two months at the outside, he had established himself a general favourite with all who knew him. He was most agreeable in manners, and was well informed on all questions of general interest, and practically sympathetic with all religious and philanthropic movements. He was clever, too, and knew how to say a commonplace thing in a striking way (Hocking 185-86).

This passage paints Mr. Ball as a considerate neighbor who charms his acquaintances with his faultless social skill. Mr. Ball appeals to the residents of Banfield because he embodies those qualities valued by their society and can converse easily on topics that are of interest to middle or upper class people. Those topics include the best places to spend or give money, as illustrated by his sympathy to “philanthropic” interests. When Ball visits the vicar and his wife, he quickly wins their approval: “he greatly admired the vicar’s silver and glass, and went into raptures over a richly-chased antique cup that stood in the centre of table. He spotted some valuable lace that Mrs. Ramsey wore, and admired it in such an adroit way that he quite won over that good woman’s heart” (186). Ball’s eloquently expressed admiration of the couple’s possessions impresses Fields greatly because he is able to identify and appreciate valuable objects, knowledge that Fields assumes only a gentleman would have.
Mr. Ball kindly advises the couple to lock their door in light of all the recent robberies, assuring them that robbers are commonly mentally inferior. He laments to Mr. Fields: “‘I wish to my heart we could lay hands on the thief!’ he said to me. ‘It is bad enough to be robbed, but to be so completely outwitted by a common burglar is humiliating’” (186). Mr. Ball is so kind and thoughtful that when the vicarage is robbed he expresses shock and amazement at the cruelty of the robbers: “‘Good heavens!’ he said. ‘You don’t mean to say they’ve been mean enough to rob the vicarage?’” (187). It must be one thing to rob a home, but Ball points out that robbing a minister’s residence shows an exceptional lack of morality.

At this point in the narrative the reader may have strong suspicions that the person who robbed the vicarage may be the same individual who was shown, admired, and appraised the valuable objects it contained shortly before it was robbed. Mr. Ball seems to be the likely suspect in the robberies; however, the residents of the village are not suspicious of his actions or the coincidences that occur between Ball’s visits and the thefts. Again and again Fields comments on how well-liked Ball is, showing that he has been blinded by the “well-articulated and charming” characteristics Haluttunen identifies as trademarks of the confidence man. While the reader may be horrified at Field’s ignorance, this terror simultaneously requires the reader to put himself in a similar position. Would the audience recognize a thief in their midst? Would the reader know a confidence man if he saw one? In his obvious ignorance, Fields requires the reader to participate in the role of the detective. The reader must identify reasons for his suspicion. In addition, the fear inspired by Ball’s actions and Field’s obliviousness may cause the reader to enact the same viewing in their own interactions, thereby reinforcing the story’s message and values by translating them into reality. I would argue that the greatest horror in the story thus far is not the duplicitous Ball. Instead, the reader may have a greater
fear of being like Fields and of failing to identify crucial social markers that stand between him and those who would rob him.

It is only on an evening when Mr. Fields is drawn away from home to conduct a baptism that he finally catches the thief in the act. To his own shock and amazement, the thief is Mr. Ball! Mr. Ball is tackled by a frightened Mr. Fields, who refuses to let him go, even though Ball threatens him with a gun. Ball shoots Fields twice but is captured and put in jail. It may seem that Mr. Ball is now safely restrained by the law, but his incarceration does not last long. This confidence man is not so easily thwarted. In fact, Mr. Ball shows himself to be an extraordinarily daring and resourceful villain.

While Fields is recovering from his wounds, Ball breaks out of prison, impersonates a police officer, locks the constable in his cell, and proceeds to rob the mayor. Ball is clever enough to break out of jail, can mimic a police officer well enough to fool the constable, and is cunning enough to trick the clergy and the entire town. However, he does not follow what one may see as the logical course of action – getting out of town and saving himself! Instead, he heads right to the mayor’s house and robs him blind. All of this is only after he shoots his best friend (twice), who is a minister. In the end, the authorities cannot catch up with Mr. Ball. When the reader leaves the story he is still out there, roaming the country in the guise of a charming gentleman.

This ending is as ambiguous as that of “Going Through the Tunnel.” Mr. Ball is now free to show up in the reader’s town, or at the reader’s dinner party. This type of ending encourages the reader to enact the vigilance Fields is lacking in his own interactions and to police class markers and social status with greater intensity. Field’s ineptitude and the reader’s identification of the confidence man encourages the reader to view the characters through the
lens of the detective, the lens of “cultural power and authority” that Thomas refers to, which allows him or her to evaluate the likeliness of the characters’ guilt.

Like “Going Through the Tunnel,” the fear inspired by “A Perverted Genius” is the ability of Mr. Ball to fool the residents of Banfield into believing that he is a gentleman. Mr. Ball is portrayed as even more dangerous because he upholds his ruse over an extended period of time. Like Priscilla, Ball’s actions contaminate the domestic space as he breaks into, robs, and violates the homes of others. When he is caught by Fields, he is attempting to climb into a house through a window. It is at this point of entry that Fields confronts and stops Ball, who is subsequently arrested. This ejection corresponds to the moment in the story when Ball’s true identity is revealed to the residents of Banfield, solidifying his rejection from middle class space. However, as evidenced by the great damage Ball inflicts, this recognition and rejection occur far too late.

“Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will”

As declared by the title, “Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will” is the story of a very odd legacy. As such, it is not surprising that the tale begins with a death. Mr. Bovey is an elderly miser who passes away and leaves an extraordinary will; because he has no relatives, Bovey has named three possible beneficiaries to his enormous fortune of gold sovereigns. In order to determine who will get the money, Bovey decrees that all three potential beneficiaries will come to his home and be weighed. Whoever weighs the amount closest to the weight of the gold sovereigns in his safe will get the fortune.

At the center of the story are a lady detective, Bovey’s pile of gold, and the beneficiaries, whose respectable status proves questionable. The lady detective is Miss Florence Cusack, who
is hired to attend the event and look after the interests of one of the possible beneficiaries, Mr. Wimbourne. The decision to hire Miss Cusack proves wise when, after winning the contest, Wimbourne is robbed on the road as he drives his cartful of gold to the bank (Meade and Eustace 175). It is shocking that a man driving a cart of gold down the road should be robbed of his treasure, but nonetheless, Wimbourne is shot and the thief drives away with his fortune.

Miss Cusack is openly distrustful of Mr. Graham, a defeated potential beneficiary, and denounces him when the robbery occurs: “I have known Mr. Graham for a long time, and distrusted him. He has passed for a man of position and means, but I believe him to be a mere adventurer. There is little doubt that all his future depended on his getting this fortune” (175). Miss Cusack provides additional evidence for her suspicion of Graham, also based on his ungentlemanly behavior and associates. She states that Graham has been seen in pawn shops, and is suspected of communicating in code through ads taken out in the papers. Cusack, who embodies the rational and observant figure of the detective in this story, bases her initial distrust of Graham on his failure to associate with people who are middle or upper class, and his tendency to frequent places that are looked down upon. Graham “appears” to be a man of position, yet Cusack claims that he is not. It is at this point in the story that Graham is first associated with the confidence man.

Cusack is right in her assessment of Graham. It turns out that Graham is in league with the pawn broker, whom he hired to hide the stolen gold. Cusack says of Graham: “For long years he was a one of a gang of coiners, but managed to pass as a gentleman of position” (180). As a result of Graham’s ability to fool others into thinking he is a gentlemen, he is able to associate with gentlemen and gain access to greater sums of money. Graham knew Bovey under this guise, found out about the will, and plotted to get that money by any means possible and
leave the country.

Graham was never a gentleman; he was another in a gang of thieves who pretend at respectability in order to gain the opportunity to commit crimes. Furthermore, the pawn shop he frequents is in a disreputable part of town. The location of the shop may not seem to be adequate proof for Cusack’s suspicion; however, the Victorian reader may have preconceived notions about criminality and space in London. For example, London’s East End was commonly seen as a place rife with crime and danger (Emsley 79). There was also a strong link between Victorian fiction and realistic conceptions of space in London. Simon Joyce notes that the places Dickens describes as slums in his novels became a target for police raids as a result of the public attitudes created by the literature. He writes “The priority given to the destruction of Saffron Hill, Jacob’s Island, and other sites of literary-criminal notoriety was presumably designed to counter the curiosity they excited among the novel-reading public” (102). This observation supports the theory that criminality in fiction like “Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will” is influenced by reality, but also helps to shape that reality and the perceptions of the public. Readers may accept the pawn shop as a place of danger because of their existing knowledge or prejudices concerning space; however, the existence of the story also reinforces and creates those assumptions. This in turn helps to solidify notions of the criminal class and the space it inhabits.

The construction of the criminal class is entirely based on its supposed contrast with Britain’s more respectable classes. In the case of “Going Through the Tunnel,” “Who Killed Zebedee?” “A Perverted Genius,” and “Mr. Bovey’s Unexpected Will,” the criminals’ immorality is explained by the revelation that he or she was never really a part of respectable society. The crimes the villains commit are possible only because the criminals pretended to be
decent citizens and never truly were. This revelation gives the Victorian audience an acceptable explanation as to why these characters commit crimes. While it is true that Priscilla is driven to murder over a broken heart and the Mowbrays, Mr. Ball, and Mr. Graham are motivated by money, this is not an adequate portrayal of the criminal character. Each must also pretend at something, or at being someone else.

The persona that each villain adopts is particularly offensive because it crosses imagined boundaries of space and morality essential to middle-class identity. For example, Mr. Graham pretends to be a gentleman and gains access to influential people and guarded spaces, such as Mr. Bovey and his house full of gold. But he actually comes from the vaguely-defined and fearsome “dangerous space” referenced at the outset of this chapter. This relocation is immediately identified as a point of unease for the detective in the story and is used as evidence of Graham’s guilt. What Cusack is saying through her condemnation is that Graham has been seen in places of ill-repute and among polite society – and that he cannot inhabit both places. He cannot cross the spatial boundary that separates the respectable parts of the city from the criminal because the latter is a permanent marker of his identity. This boundary is a constructed one, but vital to the identity of those who live on the respectable side of the line. Said argues that a person who creates an imagined boundary does not need the agreement or approval of the person on the other side of the boundary he or she creates. The creator uses that boundary to simultaneously define who he or she is as well as the identity of the person on the other side of the “fence.” What is crucial to the Victorian middle class then is the continual recognition and reinforcement of the boundaries created between that class and others or, in other words, between “our” space and “their” space.

The masquerade enacted in these four stories illustrates the importance of recognizing
these boundaries and those who transgress them. The stories also illustrate the need of the reader to identify the kinds of hypocrisy vilified by sentimentalism. The transparency required by sentimentalism asks Victorians to identify and criticize persons whose inner character is contrary to their outward appearance. In each of these stories this must be rectified, and the morality hidden by the visual representation that villain offers must be exposed.
Within late-nineteenth-century detective fiction there are categories of crime that appear frequently enough to constitute a sub-genre. One could assume that the regularity of any particular transgression indicates a heightened level of public interest in the crime itself. This chapter will continue the discussion of crime and class by focusing on one of these sub-genres: the jewelry heist. To begin, the jewelry heist is special in that it targets the extraordinarily wealthy; therefore the robbery requires meticulous planning and execution. This extended subterfuge is usually in response to heightened safety measures surrounding the targeted jewels and the security resources of the owner. In addition, the value of the stolen goods is larger than the monetary value of the jewels themselves. The jewels targeted by thieves are usually famous pieces of jewelry. They often have names, take on the name of their owner, and are a popular subject of discussion in society. The jewelry is not only valuable in that the stones are rare, large, or numerous; the jewelry also carries social currency. A person would have to be very rich to own such a luxury item, and this fact is not lost on the audience or on the characters in the story.

With that said, there are two types of people who attempt the jewelry heist: those of a lower class who steal jewels for money, and those of a higher class who steal for the challenge.

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9 Examples include Rodrigues Ottolengui’s “The Azteck Opal” and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.” The opal in the first tale is rumored to be taken from the eye of an Aztek idol (367) and the Blue Carbuncle is significant in that carbuncles cannot be blue because they are, by definition, red stones. The carbuncle in question was eaten by the goose that H. B. dropped in the street.
There are additional distinctions between these two groups. First, the lower class thieves are often caught because of a clever detective, an occurrence not unexpected within the genre of detective fiction. The fear of thievery reflects anxieties similar to those expressed in the previous chapter, including fear of property loss and invasion by the criminal class. In addition, the criminals’ eventual capture reflects the need to recognize and punish those who would intrude on a space that is supposed to be occupied only by the wealthiest citizens. The primary focus of this chapter will be the second type of thief – the high class criminal. The significance of the high-class jewelry thief is not necessarily in the criminal himself, but the contrast between the criminal and person(s) he robs.

The victim of the jewelry heist is often a threat to class distinction or a person who is simply offensive to Victorian sensibilities. For example, some of the victims included in this chapter are an upwardly mobile and tasteless bourgeois couple and an obnoxious American heiress. The thieves who rob them attempt the crime because they are presented as being as justified in their conduct. I argue that the thief’s crime is acceptable to the audience because of his status or because he robs someone who a Victorian audience may see as unworthy of possessing expensive pieces of property. This person, for whatever reason, is an outsider and is excluded through the audience’s acceptance of their loss of property. The jewelry thieves, their victims, and the criminals’ varying success express tension between classes or the need to solidify class identity.

“The Wedding Guest” and “The Duchess of Wiltshire’s Diamonds”

Guy Boothby’s “The Wedding Guest” and “The Duchess of Wiltshire’s Diamonds” both feature the same jewelry thief, a wealthy nobleman who moonlights as a criminal
mastermind. Simon Carne, the aforementioned thief, lives in a large home and is admired by the entirety of British society. “The Wedding Guest” opens as a friend confides in Carne that he wants revenge on a family called the Greenthorpes. The friend was engaged to Sophie Greenthorpe until her family became wealthy and decided that she deserved a better suitor. Sophie is now engaged to a man named Kilbenham, a marquis who desperately needs her money and is “a real bad hat” (“Wedding Guest” 257). Carne resolves to visit the Greenthorpes in order to determine how to best get the revenge his friend has requested.

Carne arrives at the home of the Greenthorpes, an originally working class couple who have made a good deal of money in business. Their wealth, however, is not enough to hide the flaws that Carne sees as inherent in their breeding. Carne feigns interest in Mr. Greenthorpe, but an acute observer might have read in the curves of his lips a little of the contempt he felt for the man before him. Matthew Greenthorpe's face and figure betrayed his origin as plainly as any words could have done. If this had not been sufficient, his dress and the profusion of jewellery – principally diamonds – that decked his person would have told the tale. In appearance he was short, stout, very red about the face, and made up what he lacked in breeding by an effusive familiarity that sometimes bordered on the offensive (259).

The narrator suggests that Greenthorpe’s true origins are shown through his physical appearance and that his personal qualities are a result of a deficiency in his “breeding.” This viewpoint assumes that Mr. Greenthorpe’s character is a result of genetics, further upholding the Victorian notion that persons are born with specific characteristics or tendencies towards impropriety. One of the elements of Greenthorpe’s appearance that most offends Carne is the excessive jewelry he wears. The narrator refers to the “profusion” of diamonds to indicate that Greenthorpe is not wearing them appropriately or that he does not know how to wear them. This emphasis on appearance also suggests that that Greenthope must be corrected in some
way, and the fixation on jewelry in this passage hints at how that correction might occur.

The social status of the Greenthorpes is betrayed by a variety of other factors beyond this exterior and the profusion of jewelry Carne describes. For example, Matthew Greenthorpe often slips into vernacular: “Me and the missus – hem! I mean Mrs. Greenthorpe and I -” (259). He has a habit of bragging about how much his possessions cost and making people guess their actual monetary value. He forces Carne to guess at the cost of his daughter’s wedding. Mrs. Greenthorpe is also guilty of these indiscretions, having proudly bought the family a solid gold toilet seat. However, Greenthorpe’s biggest mistake is in telling Carne, in a moment of absolute pride, of his wedding gift to his daughter Sophie. Among a litany of smaller gifts of jewelry and treasure, Greenthorpe plans to present his daughter with a box full of 50,000 sovereigns on her wedding day. When asked what kind of security he would be getting to guard such a treasure, Greenthorpe replies that

The billiard room will be used as a treasure chamber for the time being, as there is a big safe like that over yonder in the wall. This week bars are being placed on all the windows, and on the night preceding, and also on the wedding day, one of my gardeners will keep watch in the room itself, while one of the village policeman will mount guard at the door in the passage (260).

Elements of the security described in this passage seem difficult to surpass; however, Greenthrope shows his naiveté by hiring his gardener as a guard and bragging about the details of this security. The businessman’s working-class status and his boasting (which is implied to be a consequence of that status) ultimately help Carne to steal his property. Greenthorpe’s wealth is highlighted not only by the extensive (yet inadequate) precautions he purchases but by the existence of an entire “treasure chamber.”

Carne steals Greenthorpe’s jewels and money by enlisting a servant, attending the
wedding and feigning illness, drugging the guards, donning two suits of clothes, “a pair of wigs, two excellently contrived false beards, and a couple of soft felt hats,” and cracking the most intricate safe on the market (267). The safe, another of Greenthorpe’s security measures, is “of the latest burglar-proof patent and design” and is hidden behind a wall of wainscoting. Despite its credentials, the safe is not an obstacle for a thief like Carne: “The secret was an ingenious one, and would have baffled an ordinary craftsman. Carne, however, as has already been explained, was far from being a common-place member of this profession” (268). Here there is a clear distinction drawn between an ordinary thief and Carne, who is portrayed as belonging to a separate class of criminal. It takes Carne ten minutes to crack the safe and replace the jewelry and gold with fake items so the theft would not be immediately discovered. The best security that Greenthorpe is able to imagine and purchase with his bourgeois money cannot stop the skill of a thief like Carne, proving that Carne’s skills trump Greenthrope’s resources.

Greenthorpe may be wealthy, but no piece of security he can purchase can rival Carne’s cleverness and planning. Carne’s prestige allows him privileged information and access to the Greenthorpe home. In turn, Matthew Greenthorpe is not presented as a sympathetic character – his motivation and even his generosity are portrayed as narcissistic. Instead Greenthorpe functions as a dupe for the high-class criminal and the audience is invited to laugh at him as Carne does. It is notable that Carne is glorified in his success and that Greenthorpe and his loss are portrayal as comical. Is it ethical for Carne to take Greenthorpe’s property, invade his home and steals his possessions? What is it about this crime, or criminal, that encourages the audience to support transgressions of the law? I argue that Carne is acceptable to the audience because he is a clever gentleman and his theft is a display of skill. His motive is not money but revenge. It may seem odd that Carne would revenge himself on a family that has not harmed
him directly; however, Carne acts on behalf of a friend and therefore appears less selfish.

Carne commits multiple crimes against others during the heist – he drugs the guards and eventually frames a man who is innocent. Despite this brutality, the victims of Carne’s plot are not seen as victims. Instead, the limited information the reader is given only establishes that the guards are bought with Greenthrope’s money and the man who is framed is a low class criminal. One may assume that the criminal should suffer consequences for his actions, but the only characters who suffer are the Greenthorpes, their paid guard, and a member of the criminal class. Simon Carne presents a paradox for the reader because he is clearly a thief but is depicted as more knowledgeable, cultured, and intelligent than the caricature-like persons he robs/injures. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that Carne’s upper class status serves the essential function of separating him from the criminal class and creating the opportunity for his motives, actions, and crimes to be more acceptable to the audience. This is possible because what Carne dislikes the audience may dislike, what Carne finds offensive they may find offensive, and what Carne does they may wish to do. Carne begins the story by identifying how Greenthorpe says the wrong things and wears his jewelry the wrong way. This assumes that Carne knows the right things to say and the correct way to wear these accessories. Carne is more cognizant of situation than Greenthorpe, and in this way gains control of the situation.

Greenthorpe has infiltrated high society; however, items of luxury which he handles incorrectly are taken from him. Carne is never caught or punished and is free to commit more robberies, a conclusion that suggests that Greenthorpe’s loss is acceptable to the reader.

“The Duchess of Wiltshire’s Diamonds” begins with a description of both Simon Carne and the process that transforms himself into his detective alter-ego, Klimo. In order to hide his identity, Carne dons old clothes, a gray wig, a false beard, and “a large papier-mâché hump”
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(Boothby, “Duchess” 462). Thus attired, he spends the afternoon consulting clients. These dual identities are essential to the success of the thief’s next big heist. In the evenings Simon Carne is invited to the most prominent dinners and social gatherings, which is how he gains access to the Duchess of Wiltshire and the “famous Wiltshire necklace” (464). The necklace holds at least three hundred stones and is valued at over fifty-thousand pounds, a “mere fleabite to the man who had given it to his wife” (466). The famed diamonds are almost impossible to access. When the Duchess is not wearing the jewels they are kept in a safe in the Bank of London. In the evenings between their transportation to and from the Bank they are placed in a safe inside the Duke’s closet. The Duke himself transports the jewels to and from his wife’s neck.

It is Carne’s reputation and status that allows him an opportunity to befriend the Duchess and to handle its container. He does not break in or take the diamonds by force. Instead, he feigns interest in the ornately carved Indian box that holds the jewels. The Duchess offers to lend him the empty box so that he may draw an illustration on the day she wears the jewels. Carne enlists two Indian craftsmen to build a trap door for the inside of the box, so that it closes around the jewels when opened and appears to be empty, even though the gems are concealed beneath the contraption. When the Duke and Duchess are puzzled as to how the jewels could be missing after they placed them in the box and the safe, they consult the famous detective Klimo who is allowed access to the “empty” box. This gives Carne the opportunity to steal the jewels. Carne then dons another disguise that includes an army uniform and fake moustache and plants evidence to point the police in the direction of a common robber who broke into the safe. Though in the end of the story another man selling diamonds is framed for the crime, Carne does not seem to care and revels in his victory.
Carne’s motivation for stealing the necklace is decidedly vague; he makes no statements as to why he chose the Wiltshires or if his desire to sell the jewels is resolute. Why target the Wiltshires, a couple who is as sympathetic as Greenthorpe is not? Even though the narrator is quick to point out that the Duke and Duchess of Wiltshire are so wealthy that the loss of the diamonds is not devastating to their finances, this does not seem to justify their loss. Carne’s lack of motivation is problematic because he does not provide an adequate motive to “justify” his actions.

Instead, the focus of the story is clearly on the process of stealing the necklace. As he holds the jewels, Carne muses “Where so many have failed... it is pleasant to congratulate oneself on having succeeded” (478). He believes that this is the most difficult theft he has ever conducted (467). Carne is presented as a special kind of thief, whose connections and cleverness allow him to accomplish great feats and to trick others. Carne steals the necklace because he can, and no ordinary thief can do the same. He is able to hire men to create an elaborate box, break into an unbreakable safe, and slip easily in and out of a seemingly endless array of disguises that involve props, makeup, and prosthetics. Perhaps Carne’s success is not founded in intelligence or skill but simply in the wealth of resources his money provides. The emphasis in this story is not on the Wiltshires but on Carne and the variety of things that a thief can accomplish with status, connections, and access to money. The novelty of these great feats is presented as a sufficient plot in “The Duchess of Wiltshire’s Diamonds,” as is the lack of consequence for Carne’s crime. What is the result of Carne’s multiple escapes and thefts without punishment? What should the audience assume about this character and the class he represents? In no way does Carne deal directly with policemen or with the court system – he is untouched by the law that applies to the common man. Therefore, it would be logical to assume
that immunity or irresponsibility is an appropriate standard for a gentleman thief.

Again, Carne does not seem to be concerned with the damage he inflicts and instead focuses on his own success. The most significant similarity between this robbery and the Greenthorpe robbery is the way Carne frames another man for the crime. The fictional criminal in both stories is a member of a lower social status than Carne, and both the Greenthorpes and the Wiltshires jump at the chance to catch and convict those men. In each case the authorities do not suspect that Carne would steal the diamonds but quickly accept that the working class man he frames is guilty. It is important that suspicion does not immediately fall on the guests at either party but on a phantom member of the criminal class who invades the home. The authorities in these stories are far more likely to suspect a break-in than for the thief to be middle- or upper-class. Carne escapes for the same reason that the dark gentleman on the train escapes, and that is because he is initially above suspicion.

For a crime like theft, a gentleman is sometimes given leniency not provided to others. In Robert Barr’s “The Clue of the Silver Spoons” one hundred pounds is stolen from the coat pocket of a gentleman during a dinner party. The detective discovers that the thief is another gentleman, Mr. Innis, who stole not for the money but because he suffers from kleptomania (Barr 570). The detective goes to Mr. Innis and simply requests he return the money, which is returned in its original envelope with the gentleman’s apologies. There are no formal charges leveled against Mr. Innis, and his actions are portrayed as the result of a harmless eccentricity. The lack of initial suspicion surrounding both Carne and Innis indicates that there is leniency granted to criminals within high society and outside of the public sphere. But what happens when the public sphere enters the domestic sphere, and when the thief lacks Carne’s abilities and status? Simon Carne’s skill is not shared by every jewelry thief, as evidenced in the next
short story by author Grant Allen.

“The Great Ruby Robbery”

The last heist is an example of the conflict between both the upper and lower classes and of British and American society. Allen was born in Canada, but he studied and lived in England. His life was also marked by his close friendship with fellow author Arthur Conan Doyle. Grant’s unique perspective on British and American identity is evident in his short story, “The Great Ruby Robbery,” which opens with a description of an incredibly willful American heiress named Persis Remanet. Having recently arrived in London, Persis’ presence reveals some underlying hostility concerning how a rich American is so easily accepted into British culture at the expense of respectable British citizens.

The narrator states that the heiress was staying with Sir Everard and Lady Maclure, and relates that when rich Americans come to London, they always get to stay with aristocracy and are treated well. However, if the English visit America, they must pay their own way (Allen 214). The narrator continues in this line of thought by stating: “Yankees visit Europe, in fact, to see, among other things, our art and our old nobility; and by dint of native persistence they get into places that you and I could never succeed in penetrating, unless we devoted all the energies of a long and blameless life to securing an invitation” (214). Persis’ easy access to high society and invitations to exclusive events are obviously sensitive subjects for the narrator, who refers to his audience as “you and I” and also uses the phrase “our.” These phrases define an identity for the narrator and the audience as British citizens, while simultaneously excluding Persis. Also, the narrator states that Persis only gains this access through her persistence, a unique American quality if only in its excess. This immediately sets up Persis as a caricature of the forthright
American, willfully barging into society. This display of independence is solidified by the narrator’s comment that “Persis, as a free-born American citizen, was quite as well able to take care of herself, the wide world over, as any three ordinary married Englishwomen” (215).

One evening Persis goes to an event wearing an extraordinary ruby necklace valued at over six-thousand pounds. Upon returning home she goes to sleep, only to awake later with a horrible feeling. She checks the case - and her rubies are missing! She informs the rest of the house that her jewels have been stolen. Persis immediately calls for her host and relays her initial suspicions of the staff, an accusation which Lady Maclure resents (216). This passage differentiates between the two women, not only in Persis’ directness and Lady Maclure’s defensiveness, but in the way that both are presented as viewing the staff. Persis’ first and only suspect is the maid, and Lady Maclure is offended at the American’s accusations: “‘Are you sure you put them in the case, dear?’ [Lady Maclure] asked, for the honour of the household” (221). From this line, we can interpret that crimes committed in the Maclure home, even if by a staff member, would reflect negatively on the house as a whole. Therefore, Maclure’s concern is not only for the maid but how the theft would reflect on herself and the perception of her household. Persis is portrayed as a person who jumps to conclusions, and Lady Maclure seems more of a reasonable, thorough individual. The contrast between the two women further contributes to the depiction of Persis as an impulsive and aggressive American.

Lady Maclure is convinced that Persis has misplaced her jewelry, while Persis insists that the jewels have been stolen. This difference of opinion creates even greater conflict between the two women. The narrator chimes in again, citing Persis’ unusual attachment to the jewelry as another symptom of her American-ness and as a position contrary to European instinct:

‘Persis was an American, and no American is insensible to the charms of precious stones; ’tis a
savage taste which the European immigrants seem to have inherited obliquely from their Red Indian predecessors” (220). The narrator suggests here that Europeans are not unnaturally attached to possessions, and associates Persis’ attachment to her jewels with his own interpretation of the negative and savage qualities of indigenous American peoples. He therefore suggests that Persis, as an American, is less civilized than himself and his audience. This idea is easily disproved by the frantic way in which the Duke and Duchess of Wiltshire pursue their missing diamonds; however, the narrator feels certain that this materialistic trait is existent only in Americans.

Eventually Lady Maclure is forced to contact the police on Persis’ behalf. The officer they send is less sympathetic to Persis’ plight than is the narrator or Lady Maclure. He too believes Persis has misplaced her jewels, though she insists they have been stolen. He also asks whether Persis is sure she didn’t put them away somewhere else, and she indignantly responds that she is completely positive she has not. The police officer, Mr. Gregory, replies: “I should say that settles the matter,’ he answered, blandly. ‘Our experience is that whenever a lady's perfectly certain, beyond the possibility of doubt, she put a thing away safely, it's absolutely sure to turn up where she says she didn't put it’” (222-223). Here the reliability of Persis’ statement is questioned because Mr. Gregory considers her a silly young woman. Persis, though depicted as having great advantages in the beginning of the story, is incrementally reduced by the fact that she is American, a woman, and purportedly silly. As an American, Persis is impulsive, aggressive, entitled, and materialistic; as a woman, she is forgetful and confused.

Despite his misgivings Mr. Gregory is thorough in his search and his investigation. He questions every person in the house and examines every inch of space. The narrator goes so far as to remark that Gregory “even doubted the parrot” (227). Meanwhile, Persis, who is
described as an American and therefore “lazy,” continues in her suspicions of the maid, Bertha (227). Persis is convinced the thief is Bertha because she dislikes the look of her (221, 227). She is also convinced that the maid is plotting against her and looking through her mail (228). Persis won't believe Bertha when Bertha says she is talking to the postman because they are engaged because Persis thinks this is a lie and part of the plot against her (228).

The mystery is only solved when a new Inspector arrives at the house and informs Persis that the thief has been caught – and it is none other than Mr. Gregory! He arrived at the scene and saw immediately that Persis had simply misplaced her necklace – it was sitting underneath a handkerchief on the dressing table. He took the jewels because he assumed that no one could accuse him of a robbery that was committed before he arrived, and one which he was investigating. Gregory would have gotten away with it, if Bertha hadn't figured it out and gone to the police. Persis had carelessly misplaced her jewels, and her property was retrieved by the very person whom she suspected and was cruel towards.

In this case the thief is caught; however, it is important to examine both the victim and the criminal. It could be argued that both Persis and Mr. Gregory are vilified in the story. Her status as an American and his as a working class thief make them both unappealing to a Victorian audience and consequently their suffering is acceptable. Persis gets her jewels back, but they are stolen as a result of her “American” and feminine qualities. There is an additional element to Persis and Gregory’s interaction that author Anthea Trodd addresses in her article “The Policeman and the Lady: Significant Encounters in Mid-Victorian Fiction.” Trodd notes that this interaction is a point of interest because it occurs “between a detective policeman, intruder into the sanctuary of the home, and a young lady, representative of that home’s sanctities” (435).
The young lady represents the domestic space, while the policeman is symbolic of the public space and the growing power of the government in everyday affairs. Trodd writes: “At one level these problems concern etiquette, uncertainties about the social status of the policeman, and the conversational peculiarities of being interrogated by a kind of higher servant or lower tradesman” (436). Mr. Gregory, who comes and questions the members of the Maclure household, is of the working-class and therefore of a lower social status than those he questions. Within the strictly observed social strata of Victorian society, how is it possible that a tradesman could enter the domestic sphere and wield authority over the wealthy? This inversion of authority is a point of anxiety for the upper class, which is unable to completely accept invasion or surveillance by public authority. Trodd records several articles that appeared in the mid-nineteenth century that echo the concerns of “The Great Ruby Robbery.” “The Modern Science of Thief-Taking,” Trodd observes, records a similar scenario in which a policeman enters a house following a jewelry theft only to harass the female servants and disturb the household (439). His presence is only neutralized by the detective who arrives and solves the case. This situation also highlights a strange double standard in Victorian detective fiction, and that is the glorification of the brilliant archetypal detective and the vilification or mocking of the general police force.

It is significant that the criminal policeman appears within a jewelry heist. It indicates that the policeman will give in to the temptation to violate the home if he is offered the opportunity. It is also important that this violation occurs within the young lady’s bedroom and her private space. The desecration of the young lady by the policeman is another Victorian concern noted by Trodd in her article (435). Here, Mr. Gregory examines Persis’ bedroom and steals her jewels. The valuable jewels could be representative of Persis’ sexuality or innocence,
two things highly valued and guarded in this culture. Gregory’s theft of the jewelry, which is worn on the body and kept in locked and secret places, insinuates how innocence could be corrupted if the influence of the working class is allowed into the domestic sphere. Gregory’s transgression is offensive in a way that Carne’s is not, indicating a significant difference the ways these criminals are perceived by the audience.

The two thieves differ in several critical ways. First, the gentleman thief relies heavily on planning and talent to execute his crimes. His motivations range from revenging a friend to challenging his own skill. On the other hand, Gregory commits his crime on impulse. He is clever, but he is unable to complete the task of framing another before he is discovered and arrested. He steals the necklace so he can sell it and use the money, which is his undoing. Most importantly Carne, as a member of the upper class, succeeds where Gregory does not. The jewelry heist is unique because it targets single objects of incredible worth and fame. It is interesting to note that the only type of person who retains possession of this object (even in the case of thief like Carne) is a member of high society, and if the jewelry passes into the hands of a working class criminal, that criminal has a higher likelihood of failure.
Chapter Five:

*The Ghost of Napoleon and the Snake Charmer: Nationalist and Colonialist Perspectives in Villainy*

By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain had colonized a sizable portion of the world, controlling the segment of North America that is today Canada and Alaska, small sections of the Caribbean including Jamaica, portions of Africa and South America, the sub-continent of India, New Zealand, and the entire continent of Australia. The magnitude of the British Empire is astonishing considering the relative population and natural resources of England to those of the lands England colonized in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Britain continued to gain resources and labor from the conquest of foreign lands until the British Empire reached its greatest breadth during the late Victorian era. The map in Figure 3 illustrates the extensive territory Britain controlled in 1886, a date slightly prior to the publication of the majority of stories in this study. The map’s borders feature illustrations of British citizens interacting with indigenous peoples from the Empire’s various colonies; however, the relationship between the Victorian colonizer and the colonized was not as idyllic as this diagram suggests.

The process of colonization with which England built its Empire required that Britain invade a nation, occupy and govern it as an extension of existing British territory, appropriate its natural resources, and repeat the process in another location. The breadth of the Empire is
Fig. 3. Ready, John Charles. *Imperial Federation “Map of the World” showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886*. Map. Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library. 20 Feb 2008 <http://maps.bpl.org/details_M8682/>

Influential in Victorian fiction because that fiction expresses anxieties concerning the relationship between the British colonizer and the colonized. The colonized individual reminds the British citizen of his or her own agency in the domination and control of indigenous peoples and of the tenuous hold England has over its territories as a result of the aforementioned disparity in resources and population. While British citizens may have doubted or denied instability in the Empire’s structure, fear of uprising or rebellion in reaction to
England’s continued repression of its colonies resulted in a general fear and suspicion of those who England dominated.

This chapter also seeks to explore themes of British nationalism as related to villainy and crime in detective fiction. The need to solidify and reinforce identity through the concept of nation extends beyond British interaction with and depiction of the colonial subject. English identity was defined not only by the relationship between the British citizen and the colonial subject but also by a false contrast between England and the rest of the world. In order to maintain a sense of superiority, England relied on an identity built on a concept of nation that allowed the discrimination necessary to continue military action and occupation. As a result, the foreigner or outsider is a common criminal in Victorian detective fiction. He or she is recognizable by some visual indicator of her or her ethnicity, or is portrayed as having some type of mental or moral deficiency as a result of that heritage.

While it is apparent that interaction between the British and colonial subject would be strained, the stories chosen for this study also indicate discrimination towards citizens of countries as near as France, Spain, and Italy. While far from distant, these places retain a sense of exoticism for the contemporary reader, which is linked to the dissemination of ideas through popular literature. The definition of “exotic” is surprisingly broad according to author Piya Pal-Lipinski. In The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture, she writes:

By the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, for the British Protestant imagination in particular, the near exotic could be mapped as Italy, Spain, Greece, and parts of eastern Europe. The remote exotic initially designated Turkey and India, and then gradually North Africa and the Far East. In the early 1800s Italy and Ottoman Greece were especially problematic; their classical past perceived as being in conflict with the more “barbarous” present (2).

The author defines the British concept of exotic as including several European countries not
geographically far from England. Both Spain and Italy are considered exotic locations, even if their exotic nature is less than the “remote exotic” Pal-Lipinski defines. That remote exotic would also include the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

As evidenced by the exoticizing of Italy and Spain, the location of a country is less important to the vilification of a culture than the British perception of its character and level of civility. Pal-Lipinski writes above that Italy and Greece are perceived has having been civilized, but suffered a regression in morality. In reference to popular eighteenth century fiction, Pal-Lipinski states that “Gothic fiction consistently reimagined Italy and Spain as haunted by wild banditti, degenerate monks, claustrophobic convents where female communities became threatening, ‘savage’ landscapes, decaying castles and homeless, wandering young women” (2) and that “the near exotic was, in fact, a dangerously seductive, hybrid cultural space inhabited by exotic, transgressive, and infected figures: exiles, vampires, sexual ‘aberrants,’ wanderers, prostitutes, gypsies, criminals, and half-castes” (Pal-Lipinski 3).

Fiction reflects but creates reality at the same time; previous examples of this phenomenon include the popularity of Galton’s science and police raids on dangerous locales from Dickens novels. The effect of the near exotic figure being recurrently cast in the frightening and mystical roles cited by Pal-Lipinski is similar. As a result of popular fiction, the Victorian reading public came to view the near exotic figure as an object of fear and to view that figure in opposition to British culture and values.

The expanding British Empire casts the colonial subject or the near exotic figure in one of three roles. The first depicts the subject in a position of submission and ridicule. The subject has some mystical agency or power but is ultimately contained and controlled by the colonist, represented by the detective(s) of the story. When the British authority figure in the narrative
maintains control over the colonial or near exotic subject, the British citizen can reassert the claim of superiority necessary to the continuation of Imperialism and the nationalism that fuels that continuation. In this role the Other is not the villain of the story but is used as a tool by both the detective and the villain to complete tasks or to procure information. The Other is complicit in the crime of the story because he is portrayed as an instrument with no discernable knowledge or moral compass with which to make judgments. He is shown as an animal, demon, or fool, and the mysticism and fear he represents must still be contained and used.

The second role paints the colonial subject or servant as a violent offender who rebels and attacks a British citizen who opposes him or his agenda. This representation reflects the fear of impending rebellion against the nation. The last role requires that the villain use supernatural power or authority to attack others. For example, there is a significant amount of literature in this period that deals with the unearthing and commodification of Egyptian artifacts and mummies. Oftentimes the mummified corpses brought back from Egypt were put on display, unrolled, or in the centuries prior to the occupation of Egypt, sold in pieces to apothecaries who prescribed them as remedies. Stories about the rising of the mummy and the appearance of the vampire in England are examples of anxiety the British subject feels about the ramifications of colonization and the subsequent crimes of imperialism – in the example of the mummy, grave robbing. In all three roles, the foreigner is marked by a description of his sinister or animalistic appearance or a description of his supernatural power.

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10 Daly notes that the popularity of unrolling mummies peaked in the 1830s and 40s. His article “That Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity Culture and Fictions of the Mummy” includes an excerpt from a 1837 edition of the British Press which narrates a public enrolling. The onlookers cut bandages from the corpse, took and examined artifacts, and when the dead flesh was finally exposed, “though black and shriveled, it exited much applause” (25).
Postcolonial scholar Edward Said specifically references the novel and the narrative as “important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences. I do not mean that only the novel was important, but that I consider it the aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study” (Culture and Imperialism xii). Said affirms the power of fiction in the dissemination and fortification of belief. In regards to this study, the vilification of other cultures and peoples is learned, spread, and strengthened through literature. Like the popular sciences referenced in Chapter Two, it is not important whether imperialist values are true or valid, only that the reading audience believes them to be so. Said further argues that “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world. . . The power to narrate, or to block other narrative from forming or emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (xiii). Said’s argument concerning the power of narrative is particularly relevant in relation to Victorian culture considering the limited access the British citizen may have had to the global community. The average British reader would not necessarily have the means or opportunity to visit each of Britain’s many colonies: to travel to India, to sail to Jamaica. Therefore, the reader’s understanding of these places and indigenous peoples is constructed entirely through what the media and British government claim they are. The reader’s understanding of the colonial subject is often entirely reliant on the “idea” of this subject in relation to England.

Furthermore, the identity of the colonized subject is built by both the narratives told about imperialist experience and the narratives excluded from popular fiction and discourse. The British subject would most likely have access to documents and narratives written by fellow
British subjects and would not have equal exposure to a possibly conflicting points of view published by colonial subjects. This fact heavily favors the British interpretation of historical events. The representation of the colonial subject in British fiction is therefore crucial to the Victorian reader’s understanding of indigenous peoples.

In “Criminal Savages? Or ‘Civilizing’ the Legal Process” Judith Rowbotham explores the Victorian process of sorting crime and its significance by comparing the alleged transgression of the offender to that offender's perceived place on the “ladder of civilization.” Rowbotham examines how crime is discussed in Victorian print media through the use of coded language (91). Oftentimes, as Rowbotham notes, media portrayed violence as a “savage” act. Uncivilized behavior such as violence was associated with foreign people and places, and civilized or non-violent behavior was associated with British values and practices (94-95). Rowbotham’s study supports Said’s claims concerning the dissemination of belief through literature and supports the idea that the Other villain in Victorian literature is formed in part from continual reinforcement in a variety of media.

Said begins Orientalism by reminding the reader that the Orient and Occident are not actual geographical locations, but conceptual ones: “The Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely there, just as the Occident itself is not just there either. . .” (5). Instead the idea of the Orient as a place is “man-made,” and while not without basis, argues Said, reflects an entire set of beliefs and history associated with place and culture. This construction exists in order to legitimize Western notions of power and superiority over other cultures and to justify dominance. For example, the boundary of a nation that identifies itself as separate from its neighboring countries is not defined by a literal line. It is a constructed boundary that creates an illusion of separateness and space that might not otherwise exist, therefore creating a “here”
and “there,” an “us” and “them.” Said notes that the “Far East” is neither “far” nor “easterly,” except in relation to the West. Europe imagines itself as a measuring stick of progress and defines other cultures in relation to itself. Said writes,

> taking the late eighteenth-century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (3).

Said argues here that defining a place or a culture in Western terms gives the West the authority to makes claims about it, to compare that culture to itself, to make judgments, and to dominate based on those judgments. One medium with which the West describes, teaches, and settles the Orient is fiction. When an author makes a foreigner or colonial subject the villain of a crime story, he or she is participating in the construction of the Other and shaping the way that society views him or her.

Creating the Orient as a place of residence for the Other requires the privileging of European culture, knowledge, and law. Again, the existence of this Other space is dependent on its contrast to European identity. Said argues that the Orient is portrayed not only as the opposite of the West but as a pale imitation of European ideals: “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). The Orient and the colonial subject are “underground” counterparts that the West envisions for itself, and while they do not promote Western ideals of knowledge and reason, they instead serve as sources of magical and mysterious influence. So while the Occident supposedly represents science, rationality, and morality, the Orient represents a malevolence and mysticism, which are reoccurring motifs in the short stories chosen for this chapter.
The same process occurs in relation to time and space: “Imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away” (Orientalism 56). This concept can be applied to the reader of fiction and his conception of a place or character. That reader may envision the location he is reading about in a way that is quite different or more distant than the actual location itself. Location is created by imagined ideas or imagined contrast between that location and reader’s current space. By romanticizing or vilifying another space/time, the author and the reader are able to redefine that space, or person, in relation to themselves. Said outlines the process that occurs when a concept stops being completely unknown and is appropriated into the viewer’s existing system of experience and belief:

One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing . . . In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things” (Orientalism 59-60).

The Other villain in detective fiction is a criminal who is not British and therefore reflects anxieties regarding the outside world and the unique role that Britain plays in the global community during the late nineteenth century. Extreme displays of nationalism and the vilification of other cultures or ethnicities is a way to enact the method of control Said describes above, namely, as a way to reimagine people and places in a way that seems less threatening to the Victorian reader. The Other must be easy to control and manipulate because Britain must believe it has control over its colonies; the Other must be devious and violent because this seems to justify subjugating his or her culture for British gain; the Other must draw power from supernatural or mystical sources because he or she does not possess “superior” post-
Enlightenment knowledge and science.

Stories that feature the colonial subject or foreigner as a criminal tool include Headon Hill’s “The Divination of the Zagury Capsules” and “The Sapient Monkey,” and Catherine Pirkis’ “The Ghost of Fountain Lane.” In each of these stories the Other character is not the villain in the story but is an instrument of a British subject who uses that person for his or her own gain. The foreign subject is a puppet with which a more capable, intelligent, and devious Western mastermind enacts his schemes.

Subjugation of the Other

Douglas Greene, editor of Detection by Gaslight, suggests that while Headon Hill’s work has waned in popularity over the years due to a lack of quality and originality in his writing, he was a prolific author and published seven collections of detective stories between 1892 and 1908 (77). “The Divination of the Zagury Capsules” features Mark Poignand, the youngest son of a respectable family, who earns his fortune by working as a detective. Poignand is famous for his ability to solve the unsolvable and for doing so in a relatively brief amount of time. The real secret of Poignand’s success, however, is kept in a small, hidden room in his office. Inside this secret room a “little wizened old Hindoo” sits cross legged, playing with a basket of cobras (“Divination” 78). Poignand employs the snake charmer in his PI business because “he determined to utilize the snake-charmer’s instinctive faculty as the mainstay of the new undertaking” (78). A man Poignand found and brought home from India, Kala Persad sits inside the room until Poignand comes in and relates the details of a case. Poignand then acts on the advice or suspicion of Persad. The answer that Persad gives

11 Pseudonym of Frances Edward Grainger
Poignand (which is always correct) is never a product of advanced knowledge or learning but is instead referred to as instinct (79). The narrator illustrates this point when describing Poignand’s role in the business: “it devolved upon himself entirely to procure evidence and discover how the mysteries were brought about, and in this he found ample scope for his ingenuity, for Kala Persad was profoundly ignorant of the methods adopted by those whom he suspected” (79). Poignand argues here that he does not involve Persad in every aspect of the investigation because Persad is incapable of understanding the reasoning and motivation of the British criminal.

Instead of sharing his fame, wealth, and freedom, Poignand takes full credit for solving the mysteries and keeps Persad inside the hidden closet in his office. It seems implausible that Persad would accept this arrangement willingly; however, the narrator and Poignand feel that Persad is capable of wishing for little else than time with his beloved snakes. Throughout the story Persad is portrayed as having animalistic tendencies. The argument presented by Poignand is that the snake charmer does not require recognition and material goods because he neither understands nor appreciates them and is content to live in what is basically a cage. The physical space that Poignand places Persad into is symbolic of the way Poignand contains and manipulates the Indian subject.

Persad is described by the narrator as being similar to the snakes he charms. Persad is uncomfortable in the English winter: “At his feet, like-minded with their owner, the cobras squirmed and twisted in the basket which had first excited Poignand’s curiosity…” (84). Furthermore, Kala Persad speaks broken English, has filmy eyes, jumps around, hugs himself, and often just rocks back and forth (85). In one passage he literally speaks to the animals: “the jungle-instinct of pursuit was strong upon him, and he began to croon weird noises to his
cobras” (85). The imagery provided by the detective echoes a wild animal pursuing or attacking prey. The moment in which Poignand enters Persad’s chamber seems similar to a zookeeper entering into the habitat of an animal. Persad is a tool for Poignand, a way that he gains and maintains power and wealth.

Poignand is the detective of the story, but his status as authority figure necessitates his control of Persad. Persad’s supernatural abilities and communion with animals shows the Indian subject as a powerful tool that can be harnessed for the British colonist’s gain. Submissive and detached, Persad does not protest his incarceration but simply does as Poignand asks. This passivity implies that Persad’s instinct could be utilized by anyone. The story seems to indicate that this fact, in combination with the mystical, animalistic tendencies of Persad, justifies Persad’s confinement.

A man named Pietro Schilizzi plays a role similar to that of Kala Persad in Hill’s “The Sapient Monkey.” Mr. Franklin Gale, a young bank clerk, is accused of embezzling £500 from his employers. Frank’s father and his fiancé Maud verify that the note linking Frank to the crime was offered to a street performer as part of a trick. This performer claimed that his monkey could tell a real banknote from a false one – and he could, using Frank's money. Zambra is initially concerned about finding the man, but Maud, who was impressed with the monkey’s skills, took a photo before they left which “portrayed an individual of the usual seedy stamp, equipped with a huge accordion and a small monkey secured by a string” (Hill, “Sapient” 238). The performer is described as an “itinerant juggler,” a term synonymous with a gypsy or traveler (238). Like Persad, the street performer’s link to the animal is the key to his abilities. In addition, the description of the man as typically “seedy” implies that the performer is a type of individual the reader is already familiar with and may have preconceived notions about.
Because Zambra “felt certain that the 'monkey man' had a hand in it,” by switching the note, he sends a spy to watch the man perform (238). With the term “monkey man” the performer is described directly in relation to his pet monkey and his identity becomes dependant on that link. Zambra learns from his spy that the man’s name is Pietro Schilizzi, and he has been drunk for days. Zambra goes to Pietro's residence and finds him snoring under a pile of rags. The man is an alcoholic, devious street performer who is obviously poverty-sticken. All of these details in conjunction with the revelation of Schilizzi’s Italian heritage, suggest that this is just one in a line of revelations about his character that cements the “usually seedy” impression Maud’s photo initially gives the detective. Zambra wakes Schilizzi and offers him money for information on the monkey and the banknote, to which Schilizzi replies, “Certainly, signor; anything for money” (239). Schizilli reveals that a cashier at the bank paid him to switch the notes, thus framing Frank Gale. This last exchange, in which Schilizzi is easily bought, is yet another in a list of faults portraying Schilizzi as a weak, comical, and deplorable character: he drinks, is easily bribed, and steals other people’s money. When the cashier is caught, the newly married Gales frame the photo of the “monkey man” as a decoration at their wedding (240). Again, Schilizzi is referred to as the “monkey man,” which cements his connection to the animal he employs to cheat others while at the same time marking him as comical and inconsequential.

Both Persad and Schilizzi are given dangerous or amazing skill, yet are kept in positions of submission. Persad is kept in a closet, and Schilizzi is too drunk and immoral to be truly effectual. The devious bank clerk, Zambra, and Poignand easily manipulate these figures into assisting them with their crimes or detection. Both Persad and Schilizzi are tools of the British detective and criminal, whose advanced abilities, morals, and knowledge allow them to
dominate the Other. Though they occupy a position of subjugation, Persad and Schilizzi are
given talents that are either mystical or devious, and are consistently associated with animals or
animalistic qualities. This could be a point of concern for the British reader, who may see
himself in opposition to the perceived mysticism of the Orient. The reader’s fears are
heightened by the abilities of these two figures but are assuaged when both Persad and Schilizzi
are kept under control by British authority figures.

In “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” detective Loveday Brooke simultaneously
investigates a stolen check and the haunting of Fountain Lane by a spectre that greatly
resembles Napoleon Bonaparte. Brooke describes Napoleon, the deceased general who led
French troops on a military campaign through much of Europe, as “anathema maranatha to
every religious mind,” or one who is cursed and loathed (Pirkis 51). As part of her investigation,
Brooke attends a religious service given by a millenarian preacher named Richard Steele who
speaks about the Apocalypse. Steele claims that on the day of judgment, Apollyon\textsuperscript{12} will be
revealed as “Napoleon! A Napoleon it will be who, in that day, will stand as the embodiment of
Satanic majesty” (60). Steele also informs his congregation that he will gladly take donations
from congregants to assist members of the elect when Napoleon appears and the end of the
world is imminent.

A servant named Maria Lisle who believes that the Apocalypse is signaled by the ghost
of Fountain Lane steals the check in question and gives it to her pastor, who then forges the
name of Maria’s employer and cashes it for the amount of £600. Loveday comments that Maria
is “not one of the criminal classes, but a religious enthusiast,” implying that she is not inherently
bad, but that her religious fervor has made her susceptible to the influence of her criminal

\textsuperscript{12} This name could refer to the Devil, or the Beast named in the Bible’s Book of Revelations.
pastor (61). In this story Richard Steele equates the devil with the French general and uses the fear of his congregation to gather funds. Ironically, the Napoleonic Empire gained territory by conquering neighboring European countries, a practice comparable to Britain’s own rampant imperialism. The figure of Napoleon therefore represents both a threat to Britain and British anxieties about its role in similar campaigns. The actions of the Napoleonic Empire are comparable to those of the British Empire; however, Napoleon is offensive in that he represents the possible reversal of that power. His presence alludes to a time where the British citizen may have been placed into a position of submission. Napoleon is a threat to the Briton but also signals the collapse of a dynasty. He is frightening because he represents a narrowly avoided past and a possible future.

The figure of Napoleon as the devil or bringer of Apocalypse is symbolic of anxieties concerning the British Empire and the possible collapse of that Empire. The residents of Fountain Lane who testify to seeing the ghost associate Napoleon with the devil and supernatural power. Richard Steele is able to manipulate his congregation into criminal acts by invoking the name and image of Napoleon and showing that threats to Imperial power are authentic points of concern for the residents of Fountain Lane and the reader of the story. Steele, the villain of the story, evokes the name of Napoleon and manipulates the congregation for profit. The power of Napoleon is harnessed by Steele, who uses this figure for his benefit. Naming Richard Steele as a villain and thief takes power and agency from what the ghost represents and thereby neutralizes some of its power over the residents of the Lane. This balance of power is achieved by the detective of the story. Like Persad and Schilizzi, the detective of the story must conquer, neutralize, or discover the powerlessness of the Other
figure to show dominance and reimagine the Other figure, as Said demonstrates, through British terms.

Violence and the Other

Stories that depict the foreigner or colonial subject as a violent, dangerous, or rebellious figure include Rudyard Kipling’s “The Return of Imray,” Richard Dowling’s “The Going Out of Alessandro Pozzone,” and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s “Levison’s Victim.” An example of detective fiction depicting an attack on the Empire from a foreign group is Arthur Morrison’s “The Case of the Lost Foreigner.” The story features a group of French Anarchists who plan to “carry out a number of explosions probably simultaneously in the city” (36). And while France is not considered remote or exotic in British culture, British dislike for the French as a result of previous military conflict and cultural differences make it possible to argue that the British middle class see the French in opposition to respectable English society. I offer Morrison’s tale as a brief example of fiction that heightens the sense of fear surrounding invasion and violence from outsiders.

It is discovered that the Anarchists place bombs of acid inside loaves of bread and plan to distribute the loaves in order to kill Londoners (36). The Anarchists are portrayed as utterly violent and without morals. In a key example of their heartlessness, the detective notes that if a child were to pick up the loaf, this “would have been something for the conspirators to congratulate themselves upon” (37). An attack on one of these conspirators, who wanders into the way of the British police, leads to the group’s eventual capture. The crisis averted in “The Case of the Lost Foreigner” is horrific indeed but carried out by a vague and unspecified group of French citizens whom the reader knows little about, save that they represent an attack on
order and on British authority. The Anarchists of this narrative represent greater fears about the possibility of attack or danger inside of Britain. And while an attack on London is of great concern to the reader, this fear also extends to British citizens who venture into the greater Empire.

“The Return of Imray” is centered on the vanishing of Imray, an officer of the British army who mysteriously disappears from his post in colonial India. The discovery of Imray’s fate and the motivation of his killer represents the need of the British colonial to control his subject, the need to deny responsibility for the violence occurring as a result of the British occupation of India, and fear over whether this inevitable violence is justified. Following his disappearance the bungalow that Imray occupied is subsequently rented by a member of the British Police named Strickland, whom the narrator of the story visits. While attempting to force a pair of rogue snakes from between the thatched roof and ceiling cloth, Stickland and the narrator dislodge a body, which falls onto the dining room table. The corpse is Imray, and his throat has been cut “from ear to ear” (Kipling 72). The sheer violence of Imray’s demise is frightening; however, the effect is heightened by the narrator’s implication that the large and understaffed Empire prohibited any extended investigation or concern about Imray’s disappearance. The officers and the reader are faced with difficult questions: Who killed Imray, and how is it that no one cared to look for and find his corpse until this moment? Could his fate be the eventual fate of the narrator, Strickland, or other British officers?

Strickland resolves to question the Indian servants, the largest of whom is named Bahadur Khan. Khan is described as a “great, green turbaned, six-foot Mahomedan” (73). Bahadur’s size and implied power is alarming, but his language is decidedly submissive. He refers to Strickland as “his Honour,” “the Presence,” and “the Heaven-born,” suggesting that
he willingly submits to the authority of the colonizer (73-74). Khan confesses to the murder of Imray, but provides the following defense for his crime: “Walking among us, his servants, he cast his eyes upon my child, who was four years old. Him he bewitched, and in ten days he died of the fever – my child!” Khan reveals he killed Imray because he believed him to be a wizard, and the superstition Khan uses as justification becomes a point of ridicule and fear for the two officers. Strickland communicates his wonder to the narrator: “‘This. . . is called the nineteenth century. Did you hear what that man said?’” (75). Strickland shows in this passage that he views the Indian’s perceptions as belonging in other time entirely. This also implies that the Western point of view, which supposedly privileges science, medicine, and empirical knowledge, is more progressive and advanced than the mystical interpretation of events that Khan offers.

Here Strickland defines himself and his knowledge by comparing it with that of the colonial subject, much like the process Said describes in Orientalism. He notes that Imray failed in that he did not understand the “nature of the Oriental,” which argues that the Other is by nature mystical and supernatural in thought and belief (75). It also implies that the colonial subject, while appearing servile, is always capable of sudden and irrational violence. Strickland argues that Imray would have been safe if he had remembered this and acted accordingly. This statement is a call to the reader of the story, a reminder to never forget or underestimate the possibility of violence and the irrationality in the colonial subject. This point of view encourages the British subject to continue to view the colonial subject with suspicion, and seeks to justify continued dominance of that subject through a claim to self-defense. Strickland is awestruck by the fact that Bahadur was Imray’s servant for four years but suddenly and violently rebelled. This event is a direct threat to the colonizer and represents the possibility that such a rebellion could happen to any representative of British power and authority.
In response to Strickland’s assessment, the narrator “shuddered. My own servant had been with me for exactly that length of time. When I went over to my own room I found my man waiting, impassive as the copper head on a penny, to pull off my boots” (Kipling 75). This statement, in combination with the fact that Khan is eventually bitten by one of the snakes from the ceiling and dies, further associates the colonial subject with a snake (74). The “copper penny” phrase the narrator uses to describe his servant is both a belittling comment about the man’s skin color and an allusion to the poisonous serpent. It is implied with this observation that the narrator sees his seemingly placid servant the same way he views a poisonous animal. Again, the Other is given animalistic characteristics in order to simultaneously heighten the sense of danger surrounding him and demean him.

This ending is fittingly symbolic for the Imperialist perspective: it claims superiority over the colonial subject yet fears the colonial subject. Strickland blames the violence of Bahadur on his outdated superstitions because in this way Strickland can ignore the valid and logical reasons Bahadur could have for attacking and killing Imray. Strickland ignores his agency in the situation; he ignores the injustice of Khan’s oppression and servitude. In the end of the story it is Bahadur’s ignorance that is presented as the reason for Imray’s death. No consideration is given to the possibility that Imray may have been killed because he was attempting to occupy a country and culture that he had no legitimate claim on. The only responsibility Imray has in his own death, according to Strickland, is that he did not actively recognize the ignorance of the colonial subject. This is a clear and strong message to the reader of “The Return of Imray” and a warning about what could happen to the colonizer. The death of Imray is symbolic of an imminent uprising, yet the villain’s given motive allows the British reader to ignore his or her role in the oppression of Bahadur and the death of Imray.
“Levison’s Victim” is the story of a foreign merchant who forces a British woman into marriage by blackmailing her father. He later abducts her and pushes her over a cliff to her death. Interestingly, because much of the story is dedicated to the pursuit of Levison and conversations with witnesses of Levison’s flight, much of the story is also focused on descriptions of the Levisons and the contrast between Levison and his British bride. Frequent and detailed descriptions of Levison’s appearance are only enhanced by the contrast between Levison and his wife. These continual descriptions implicate Levinson’s ethnicity in his villainy. Another important point of contrast is the man who pursues Levison in an attempt to save Laura from her fate, Horace Wynward, Laura’s true love and a British citizen. The unsuitability of Levison’s near exotic figure as Laura’s husband is reinforced by consistent references to his deviance and comparison with the more suitable Wynward.

Levison is described as both “A gentleman from the Spanish colonies” and “the Spanish merchant” (Braddon 74). Immediately the reader is informed that Levison is Spanish, a fact that is implied to be central to his integrity. Though Horace has never met the man, as he pursues Laura and Levison across Europe he speaks with multiple witnesses who give him their impressions of the couple. As indicated previously, these accounts are very similar and highlight Levison’s ethnicity, often juxtaposing his more visually apparent immorality with descriptions of his ethnic features. One onlooker notes: “The gentlemen looked old enough to be her father, and was peevish and fretful in his manner, never letting his wife out of his sight...” (75). Levison is established early on as both lecherous and irrationally jealous. He forces a British woman into marriage, showing that he is both a sexual and violent threat.

During a particularly unproductive leg of his journey, Horace observes: “Neither by land nor by sea passage could I hear of a yellow-faced trader and his beautiful young wife. They
were not a couple to be overlooked easily; and this puzzled me” (75). Horace’s thoughts imply that Laura and Levison should be easily noticed because they do not appear as if they belong together. Another witness alludes to: “the man of foreign appearance, but talking English; the young woman young and beautiful...” Here Levison is simply foreign, and his wife in contrast is beautiful. Again, they seem mismatched. The testimony of each witness only solidifies this opinion in the mind of Horace and of the reader. One onlooker confirms that Levison’s criminality is clearly visible in his expression, which is closely associated with a description of his Spanish features: “He told me he had never seen anything so appalling as Levison's jealousy; not an open fury, but a concentrated silent rage, which gave an almost devilish expression to the man's parchment face. He watched his wife like a lynx, and did not allow her a moment's freedom from his presence” (77). Levison’s “parchment” face, another reference to his sallow complexion, exists in the same sentence as a reference to his devilish expression, insinuating that these two elements are somehow linked. The witness also applies animalistic imagery to Levison, and uses a predatory animal when he does so. The reference to the lynx foreshadows the eventual spring of the predator and the death of his victim.

After following the couple to Germany, Horace learns that a body resembling Laura has been discovered at the bottom of a mountain and realizes that Levison’s jealously has led him to murder her. When he finally catches up with the merchant, Horace describes him as follows: “He found [Levison] exactly the kind of man he expected to see; a man of about fifty, with small crafty black eyes shining out of a sallow visage that was as dull and lifeless as a parchment mask, thin lips with a cruel expression, and a heavy jaw and bony chin that betokened no small amount of power for evil” (78). Yet again, there are references to Levison’s skin color and his “crafty,” evil, vigilant eyes. At this point in the story, Levison’s ethnicity and appearance have
been so often linked to his villainy that it is clear the reader is meant to associate the two.

When Levison arrives at an appointed meeting, Horace continues his description even further: “his sallow complexion looked more than usually parchment-like and ghastly” (79). When confronted with an accusation of murder, the reader is given yet another description of Levison: “It was almost impossible for that pallid mask of parchment to grow paler, but a sudden ghastliness came over the man's evil countenance” (80). Levison’s complexion is referred to for the last time, along with the evilness of his expression. Levison then admits to pushing Laura over a cliff, and even confesses he had considered cutting Laura’s throat.

If one message is communicated clearly in “Levison’s Victim,” it is that Levison is not a suitable husband for the young and innocent Laura. Levison enters the British space and takes Laura outside its borders. He then takes her to a foreign location and pushes her over a cliff, where they are initially unable to identify her body and nobody is even certain she is missing. Levison’s behavior toward Laura and his confession indicate he has an excessive amount of jealousy and anger toward his wife. He poses a clear threat to Laura and thereby all British women who read her story. The title of the story, “Levison’s Victim,” is a reference to the same character who is “Levison’s Wife,” thereby equating the two. The unsuitability of this villain as a partner in marriage is continually reinforced by everyone who observes the couple and thinks them improperly matched. The reader of “Levison’s Victim” is asked to consider the character of Levison much in the way the reader of “The Return of Imray” must regard Bahadur – with fear and suspicion. If one is not careful, Other characters like Levison and Bahadur are capable of murder and subterfuge. Therefore, the reader is advised to look at the Other through the lens of the detective and the cultural power and authority that seeks to categorize the Other and limit his power. One way to limit the power of the Other, the
narrative suggests, is to limit accessibility and control of the Other through marriage.

A character of a similar moral constitution to Levison appears in “The Going out of Alessandro Pozzone.” The Italian villain of this tale engages in a physical conflict with an English detective when that detective suspects him of murder. Their confrontation and the detective’s ultimate victory neutralize the threat of the near exotic criminal, who had been living as an undetected threat in British society.

When Mr. Bell is murdered outside of his home, Bell’s son John visits the residence of his father’s neighbor in order to give him a misdirected letter. While the letter is addressed to Mr. Alessandro Pozzone at Number 7, the man who answers the door at Number 7 gives his name as Sig. Cordella. John Bell describes the man: “He was a low-sized man of about five-and forty years of age, bald, dark-skinned, black-bearded, black-eyed, with black heavy eyebrows – not at all a pleasant face. Although there was always a faint smile on the features. . . Not notwithstanding this unpleasant smile the Italian's face was handsome, eminently handsome” (Dowling 133). Bell’s description emphasizes the darkness of Cordella’s face by consistent references to blackness, darkness, and heaviness. These features and the man’s Italian name comprise much of the little information Bell and the reader possess about this foreign neighbor.

Only when going through his father's letters does John learn that Alessandro Pozzone is the name of a wanted felon who had murdered two men on a shipping expedition his father witnessed fifteen years ago and whom his father knew to be guilty. Bell approaches Cordella and demands to know where Pozzone is because he believes that Pozzone killed his father to get rid of a witness (134-135). Cordella says that he will tell John Bell where Pozzone is, if he will come closer and help him, at which point Cordella confesses and a confrontation occurs: “Now I will tell you where Pozzone is – In your arms! Now I will tell you where my knife is –
In your heart! The Englishman drew himself up with a powerful effort, shook himself clear of his assailant, slipped his hand beneath his waistcoat as though to loose his strap, drew out the hand – Bang!” (140).

It is at the moment of confrontation that John Bell ceases to be referred to as John Bell, and simply becomes “The Englishman.” Like a superhero moniker, “The Englishman” stands in stark contrast to “The Italian” that Bell has pursued throughout the story. Their physical battle and the emphasis on ethnicity suggest the stakes of the fight are greater than possible injury and death. It is here that West is presented in literal conflict with the East, and “The Englishman” comes out victorious. When Bell pulls a gun and kills Pozzone, he is presented as justified in doing so because he acts in self-defense. However, Pozzone, as a violent Other and a criminal, must be subdued and is consequently killed. Pozzone is more than a simple stereotype, much like the vilified Bahadur. His violence and Bell’s victory play out anxieties concerning the threat of the Other; his death appeases the reader’s fear and the Pozzone’s threat.

The Supernatural Other

“The Story of Baelbrow” is both a detective story and a ghost story in which the ghosts are revealed to be both a mummy and vampire. The fictionalized rise of the mummy, a familiar trope in Victorian fiction, is symbolic of British fears concerning an uprising or rebellion against the Empire and represents fear of the revenge of colonized peoples. When the residents of Baelbrow are attacked by what the owners believe to be a centuries-old ghost, the Swaffam family appeals to a brilliant detective, Mr. Flaxman Low. Harold Swaffam, who seems

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13 E. and H. Heron, authors of the story, are actually a mother and son team named Kate and Hesketh Prichard (246).
brave and willing to confront the ghost, is unintentionally responsible for the presence of the mummy and vampire. Low claims the Swaffam family is responsible for unleashing the mummy by first by opening the sarcophagus Mr. Swaffam sent home from Egypt, and secondly by providing the psychic energy required for the vampire by building the home on what used to be a burial ground (E. Heron and H. Heron 256-257). Swaffam responds to this discovery by shooting the mummy in the face multiple times, dragging its body into a canoe, and burning it (258).

Before discussing the details of “The Story of Baelbrow,” I would note that the appearance of the mummy and vampire are not novel in Victorian literature, nor is it unexpected that Mrs. Henry Wood uses the figure of the mummy as means of describing the foreign appearance of the lunatic on the train in “Going Through the Tunnel.” From the beginning of Wood’s story the lunatic is suspicious because he evokes a contemporary symbol of fascination and horror. As Nicholas Daly writes in “That Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity Culture and Fictions of the Mummy,” the figure of the mummy was an important symbol and commodity in Victorian England. Owning or displaying the corpse was a novelty and form of amusement for the nation that occupied Egypt in 1882. Unrolling a mummy became a popular attraction and amusement for Victorians early in the era; however, as time passed, mummies could be found only in museums (24-25). While on one hand a novelty, Victorians had to unearth and plunder the tombs of Egyptians in order to procure the bodies. This fact, coupled with the mysticism that Said claims is central to an Occidental conception of the Orient, led to a wealth of fear concerning this object and its place in British space. As a result, the mummy reappears frequently in Victorian fiction. Daly argues that the mummy, at the specific point of late-nineteenth-century fiction, is symbolic of consumption and
consumerism. I argue that the violent threat of the mummy represents fear surrounding the misuse of mummies as objects of consumerism.

The mummy did not attain value under the usual laws of production and demand, but simply because people desired to possess it, and as Daly remarks, “the mummy, as a markedly foreign body within the British economy, articulates precisely the imperial dimension of the nineteenth-century British economy” (27). The Victorian “craze for spiritualism,” in addition to the fetishizing of the mummy as a powerful foreign object to be used for one's own needs, creates the value of the mummy and the Victorian needs to own it, possess it, and bring it into the domestic British space. In this way the mummy is also an Other object that can be used, much like Persad, Schilizzi, and Napoleon. British culture rewrites and reimagines the mummy in its own terms in order to neutralize its power. However, once in British space, the mummy cannot be completely dissociated with supernatural themes necessary to the Victorian concept of the Orient. As a result, fiction depicts the mummy rising and acting out its revenge.

The mummy is unleashed on the Swaffam household because Mr. Swaffam takes the mummy from its grave and attempts to use it for display and commodity in the way Daly describes above. Harrold Swaffam opens the sarcophagus, similar to the unrolling that many Victorians took part in. As a result the mummy attacks members of the household. Also, because the Swaffams have carelessly built their house on a burial ground and filled it with Oriental artifacts, they enable a vampire to invade the home. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the story is the reaction of Harrold Swaffam to the attack on his household. He violently assaults the mummy and uses excessive means to destroy it and prevent its return. The level of Swaffam’s violence is equivalent to the fear he feels. Swaffam’s actions could be interpreted as commentary on the fear inspired by the presence and violence of the Other, as
well as fear concerning the misuse of bodies by English society.

The mummy rises up as Bahrudur rises up against his master. The actions of these villains are comparable to those of Levison, who conspires to drag Laura across Europe to her eventual and violent death. These individuals enter into the British space and commit violent, frightening acts. The purpose of this violent crime in detective fiction serves to reinforce its potentiality and, arguably, its likelihood, to the Victorian reader. The stories are warnings against what will happen if the boundaries between the Other and the reader are weakened or neglected. To the reader, the stories may suggest it would be reasonable to police interactions with the exotic or colonial subject with greater intensity. Still, it is important to note that not all stories paint the colonial or exotic subject as violent. Some literature depicts this criminal type in a position of submission. This submission is portrayed as necessary because the subject is immoral, unintelligent, animalistic, or demonic. The first three stories chosen for this chapter contain scenarios where the Other or exotic figure is the mystical yet ineffectual tool of British authority and whose skills are harnessed, focused, and contained by that authority, thereby effectively maintaining distinctions between British and colonial/exotic identity.

As Said argues, fiction of the nineteenth century provided a way for colonists and explorers to create a reality that readers appropriated into an existing set of beliefs. Through this process the Victorian author and reader are able to rewrite and reimagine the world through the lens of Imperialism. The need to assert British identity and values is illustrated through the glorification of the British subject and through the proposed contrast between this subject and the colonial or exotic villain. The detective fiction featured in this chapter illustrates the need to understand and define power relationships in a way that supports continued Imperialism and soothes fears associated with possible shifts in power or uprising of colonized peoples.
Chapter Six:

*The Mad Chambermaid and the Vengeful Wife: Murderous Women and the Domestic Space*

The ideal Victorian woman is one whose physical well-being, mental health, and behavior are dependent on her entrance to and contentment within the Western domestic sphere. Jane Wood writes in *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* that “the linking of women’s well-being to contented domesticity was a concept which held considerable sway at the time, not only in middle-class advice literature but also in influential medical literature and social commentary” (9). The achievement of domestic felicity, from a Victorian point of view, is consequently linked to a woman’s health. This belief concerning women’s bodies, according to Wood, was reinforced by both contemporary scientific authorities and popular literature in a way that is similar to the dissemination of the visual science of Lombroso and Galton. It is with this understanding that I contend the violent\(^{14}\) female criminal is defined by the ways she is either excluded or rejected from this prescribed feminine ideal. Women who cannot fit into the picture of Victorian domesticity often have violent criminal tendencies or suffer mental/physical illness as a result of their exclusion. The female villains in this chapter fail to meet the criteria of a content and healthy woman in Victorian society in at least one of the following ways:

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\(^{14}\) The villains in this chapter all commit murder. Therefore, my discussion of their characteristics can only make claims on violent female crime in Victorian fiction. This will exclude criminal acts such as embezzlement, theft, fraud, etc. Due to the wide variety of crimes and criminals in the sixty stories surveyed for this project, I was forced to narrow my research. I chose to address violent crime because it was the most common transgression. See Chapter Three for a discussion of two additional feminine criminal types: the painted woman and the domestic servant.
1) The woman is excluded from the domestic sphere or fails to maintain a position within that sphere.

2) The woman is unable to attain a position in domestic culture because of criminal tendencies originating in her ethnicity or “Otherness.”

I argue that detective fiction perceives criminal acts committed by women as caused by a mutation of the ideal domestic model. When it comes to violent female offenders, I contend that the domestic culture Wood describes and the ethnicity of the criminal, as prefaced by the previous chapter on colonial and nationalist attitudes, are the most powerful influences on the fictionalized female villain. Female criminals exhibit an obsession with making or maintaining a socially recognized and sanctioned marriage and often commit crimes in order to achieve this goal. In these stories women rarely act or have motivation outside of domestic culture because they are not seen as having predominant interests or abilities that extend beyond marriage or motherhood. In terms of functionality, these particular patterns in popular literature suggest a need to reinforce the sanctioned role of the woman in society as well as support and defend racialized and colonial rhetoric.

A brief example of the rejection defined by the first criterion is that of Priscilla Thurlby, the murderous female cook of “Who Killed Zebedee?” Priscilla was having a special knife engraved for her fiancé, but when he deserted her before their wedding she snatched the murder weapon from the engraver’s table and later used it to stab him to death. It is at the moment she experiences rejection from the domestic sphere that she begins to become a criminal. In addition, the event that ultimately causes her to stab and kill Zebedee is the fact he has married another woman. It is significant that Zebedee is killed on his honeymoon as Priscilla prevents him from experiencing the marital happiness she is denied. Priscilla also
admits that her plan is to frame Mrs. Zebedee for the crime, thereby punishing both newlyweds for Zebedee’s desertion.

In regards to the female Other, or the second criterion, vilification or fear of the exoticized woman is linked to Victorian fears of contamination; therefore, the figure of the exotic woman is seen as dangerous, insane, or devious. Victorians assume the exotic woman will attempt to enter the Western model of domesticity; consequently, Victorian fiction depicts the exotic woman being rejected from or corrupting that domesticity. One notorious example of the exotic archetype is found in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* in the person of Bertha Rochester, the mad Jamaican wife John Rochester locks in the attic of his home. When describing how he was “tricked” into marrying what he assumed was a rich, passive, white woman, Rochester laments that Bertha is both non-white and hopelessly mad. Bertha has inherited both her ethnicity and the family madness, which Rochester claims has caused Bertha to behave erratically and promiscuously. Bertha Rochester exemplifies the destruction of the domestic space by the exotic female through her madness, her attempted murder of Rochester, and in her eventual destruction of the house by fire. The figure of Bertha suggests that exotic women are possible contaminants to the home, whose sickness can take the form of mental illness or sudden physical aggression. Most importantly, Rochester has a firm belief that the madness and negative characteristics Bertha exhibits have been inherited from her mother. This implies that any children they would have would be tainted by her alleged illness, further contaminating the domestic space. Consequently Bertha’s presence in the home is a direct threat to the Victorian and British sense of safety and identity.

Author Susan Meyer discusses the ideals of British colonialism exhibited in the exoticized depiction of Bertha Rochester. She also notes that “the marginality and
disempowerment Jane experiences due to her class and gender are represented through metaphorical linking between Jane and several of the nineteenth century’s ‘dark races’” (Meyer 74). In these passages Jane is visualized or described as having features like an exotic woman, much like the red, black, and savage animalistic imagery attributed to Bertha. Here Jane’s social marginalization is expressed through visual representation – she is marked as an exotic woman, she is marked as an outsider. When Jane feels her marginalization most acutely, that feeling is reflected in outsider’s observations of her appearance. It would be reasonable to assume that characters who are exoticized in a way similar to Bertha or Jane bear the mark of exile and are being primed for exclusion from British society.

In defining the exotic female in Victorian fiction, one must also define the geographical locations and ethnicities that were suspect to a Victorian audience. The previous chapter cited Piya Pal-Lipinski’s definition of the near and remote exotic. I refer to that definition here and to Pal-Lipinski’s argument that places like Italy and Spain that, in addition to being much closer to Britian than the Carribean home of Mrs. Rochester, are “dangerously seductive, hybrid cultural space[s] inhabited by exotic, transgressive, and infected figures: exiles, vampires, sexual ‘aberrants,’ wanderers, prostitutes, gypsies, criminals, and half-castes” (Pal-Lipinski 3). The author uses the phrase “dangerously seductive” in reference to these figures to suggest that while they are considered morally inferior, they are simultaneously attractive to the viewer. This coexisting attraction and repulsion makes the figure of the exoticized woman problematic for a Victorian audience. Furthermore, the Gothic fiction that reimagines Italy and Spain into the “near exotic” is sustained by the repetition of these tropes in late-nineteenth-century literature.

The two criteria proposed as motivation for the female offender are evident in the villains of “The Mystery at Number Seven,” “The York Mystery,” and “The Long Arm.” While
each woman is different from the others in terms of marital and socioeconomic status, the motives for their crimes bear some striking similarities. “The Mystery at Number Seven,” another detective story by Mrs. Henry Wood, begins with a familiar cast of characters.

“The Mystery at Number Seven”

Squire Todhetley has decided to take his family and Mr. Johnny Ludlow to visit a widowed friend at No. 6, Seaside Terrace at Montpellier-by-the-sea. When they arrive for their vacation, the widow informs them that her neighbors at No. 7, the Peaherns, have gone abroad following the tragic death of their only son, Edward. The only people left at No. 7 are two young housemaids, Matilda Valentine and Jane Cross. Johnny meets both of them and describes them in detail. He states that Matilda “had a pale olive complexion, with magnificent, melancholy dark eyes. Many persons would have called her handsome” (Wood, “Mystery” 89). Of Jane Cross, he observes: “She was nice looking also in a different way; fair, with blue eyes, and a laughing, arch face” (90). Though he prefers Jane, Johnny thinks it is silly Jane is afraid to be alone in the house with what she believes is the ghost of Edward Peahern.

One evening Johnny and the Squire are looking out the cottage window and observe Matilda exit No. 7 with a jug. When Matilda comes back she tries to get in the front door, but it is locked. Johnny sees her knock, but there is no answer. When Johnny informs the others at No. 6 about what has happened, the widow says that the maids usually go out the back way to get the beer for supper. (92). A passerby jokes that the milkman “has slipped in to make love to her,” in reference to Jane Cross (92). The visitors learn that, according to local gossip, the milkman was courting one of the housemaids at No. 7, but no one knows which one. Matilda turns pale at the mention of the milkman. She also is afraid because she says there is a chance
that Jane could be scared if she sees the ghost (93). When Matilda, the Squire, and Johnny climb a wall and break into the locked house they find Jane Cross lying dead at the bottom of the stairs. The policeman notices that Jane's dress is torn at the bodice and sleeve and suspects foul play.

The doctor says that Jane Cross has been dead for an hour. Matilda claims this is impossible, as she left Jane Cross only twenty-five minutes ago. When it was time for dinner Jane sent Matilda for the beer and told her she had to take the front way because the back gate was locked. Matilda left the front door closed but unlocked so she could get back in without bothering Jane. She came back to find it locked. Matilda is certain that it must have been the sight of Edmund's ghost that scared Jane and caused her to fall over the banister and down the stairs. When asked by the police if she or Jane had a sweetheart, she says no, but a neighbor claims that the milkman was one of their sweethearts (99). And because of local gossip most of the town's suspicion falls on Thomas Owen, the milkman. Matilda asks the Squire's wife to help her find a situation in London – she claims she cannot go back to No. 7. Six months later, when Johnny sees Matilda at her new position in London, he notes that her appearance has changed drastically: “Instead of the healthy and, so to say, handsome girl known at Saltwater, I saw a worn, weary, anxious-looking shadow, with a feverish fire in her wild dark eyes” (108).

This new description of Matilda Valentine’s eyes is interesting in combination with Johnny’s earlier observations of her appearance. Before he noted how beautiful she was, and described her eyes as magnificent and dark. It is exactly this exotic quality that led Johnny to admire Matilda. However, when he sees her again he notes that her eyes are “wild,” conjuring a savage if not animalistic image of Matilda’s appearance. The word wild is juxtaposed to the word dark, implying a connection between the darkness of her eyes and their savagery. Matilda’s
beauty is somehow connected to her wildness, and Johnny is both attracted to and fearful of her.

Matilda’s new employer, Miss Deveen, confides in Johnny about the change she notices in the housemaid’s “looks and manner. She is just a shadow. One might say she has passed through six months' fever. And what a curious light there is in her eyes!” (109). Again, the “curious light” that Miss Deveen notices is another indicator of Matilda’s Otherness. The word *curious* implies that Deveen does not understand the nature of the light because it is unusual and foreign to her. Miss Deveen also admits that one of the other servants in the house dislikes Matilda: “Miss Cattledon, by the way, is rather hard upon Matilda just now: she calls her a “demon” (109). When asked why Matilda would be called a demon, Miss Deveen tells Johnny a servant named Hall stole one of Matilda’s letters and read it aloud for everyone to hear. It was a letter to Thomas Owen. Miss Deveen describes the altercation that followed between Matilda and Hall:

Matilda was in a perfect storm of fury, attacking Hall like a maniac. She tore out handfuls of her hair, she bit her thumb until her teeth met in it: Hall, though by far the bigger person of the two, and I should have thought the stronger, has no chance against her; she seemed to be as a very reed in her hands, passion enduing Matilda with a strength perfectly unnatural . . . Cattledon maintains that Matilda, during the scene, was nothing less than a demon; quite mad. When it was over, the girl fell on the floor utterly exhausted, and lay like a dead thing. . . Her state then, immediately afterwards, made me think – I speak it with all reverence Johnny – of the poor people from holy writ from whom the evil spirits were cast out” (111).

The passage describing Matilda’s animal-like attack of her co-worker is similar to accounts of Bertha Rochester’s fits of violence. She is described as a “maniac,” which highlights her volatility. Matilda’s smaller stature does not keep her from easily overpowering her opponent with a strength Deveen describes as “unnatural.” The description of her violence
is absolutely terrifying – Matilda bites all the way through the other woman’s thumb, and tears her hair from her head, implying that fits of violence and incredible strength are an ever-present threat from the housemaid. Most notably, the staff and Miss Deveen describe Matilda as a “demon,” or an unholy spirit. Miss Deveen claims Matilda reminds her of one possessed by evil, a statement that endows Matilda with supernatural power and makes her an object of fear. The reader now knows that Matilda is beautiful yet prone to fits of madness and violence. She is attractive but dangerous. The character of Matilda, thus far, fits the stereotype of the exoticized woman. And though Johnny and the reader do not know why Matilda suffers violent fits, the intensity of her actions foreshadows some inevitable and terrible revelation concerning Matilda’s character.

Johnny runs into Thomas Owen in London after learning of Matilda’s assault. Thomas moved his business because the town was treating him as if he were guilty. However, Thomas suspects that Matilda is Jane Cross’ murderer (117). Thomas claims he rang at No. 7 twice that afternoon, and those times were ½ hour apart. Therefore Matilda must have ignored the rings and lied about it to the coroner. Also, Thomas is now engaged to Matilda’s cousin, Fanny, who has told him the following information about Matilda:

Matilda's father married a Spanish woman. She was of a wild, ungovernable temper, subject to fits of frenzy; in one of which fits she died. Matilda has inherited this temper; she is liable to go into frenzies that can only be compared to insanity. Fanny has seen her in two only; they occur but at rare intervals; and she tells me that she truly believes that girl is mad – mad, Mr. Johnny (118).

The truth about Matilda is now revealed. Her mother was Spanish, had a wild temper, was prone to fits, and her hereditary condition was passed on to her daughter. Fanny’s revelation implies that this madness is directly related to Matilda’s Otherness, or ethnicity. As
Piya Pal-Lipinski noted, Spain was considered a “near exotic” location, and British citizens often questioned the character and civility of the country as a whole. Mrs. Wood’s revelation concerning Matilda’s heritage may have been further evidence of her madness and an acceptable explanation for her violence. Soon after Fanny’s revelation, Matilda is sent on an errand that takes her near Thomas’ shop. Matilda runs into Owen and Fanny, who invite her in for a drink, and she learns the two are engaged. When Matilda hears that Thomas Owen is planning on marrying her cousin, she becomes enraged: “Matilda's hands lifted themselves with a convulsive movement and fell again. Her eyes flashed fire. “*Your wife?*” Matilda exclaims (121). Johnny says that the news

had a dreadful effect upon her; her agitation increased with every word. Suddenly she rose up in the chair, her arms lifted, her face distorted. One of those fits of passion had come on. We had a dreadful scene. . . It was the climax of Matilda Valentine's life. One that perhaps might have been always looked for. From that hour she was an insane woman, her ravings being interspersed with lucid intervals. During one of these, she disclosed the truth” (121).

Matilda had loved Thomas Owen and had been convinced her loved her as well. She resented Jane because she was afraid that Thomas preferred her. Jane just laughed her accusations off. Matilda started to write Thomas Owen, but Jane saw the letter and made fun of her, joking that Owen liked her much better. So “Matilda, fallen into one of those desperate fits of passion, had caught her up and was clutching her like a tiger-cat, tearing her hair, tearing pieces out of her gown” (122). The struggle with Jane culminated in Matilda throwing Jane down a flight of stairs and ultimately killing her. Matilda then locked herself out of the house and feigned ignorance about the events that led up to Jane’s death. Matilda is sent off to the insane asylum following her confession.

My argument concerning the female villain depends upon the three events that cause
Matilda to fall into fits of insanity and violence. The reader knows from Matilda’s disclosure of her love for Thomas Owen that she hoped to marry him. She killed Jane Cross because she was afraid that Thomas preferred Jane and would marry her instead. On this first occasion, Matilda fears that Jane will prevent her from marrying and entering into a state of domestic happiness, so she attacks and kills her. The second fit occurs when a co-worker steals a letter confessing Matilda’s feelings for Thomas and mocks her. This insult by Hall, who ridicules Matilda and thinks her feelings for Owen are absurd, causes Matilda to fly into a rage. Finally, Matilda learns that Thomas Owen is going to marry another woman and that there is no chance she will become his wife. This occasion is described by Johnny as the “climax of Matilda Valentine’s life.” From this moment on, from this permanent rejection by Thomas Owen, Matilda is driven into unending madness and is rarely coherent again. This rejection is portrayed as the pinnacle of her existence. Matilda can no longer function in society following this dismissal and must be restrained and contained in an asylum.

Matilda Valentine fits both criteria I propose at the outset of this chapter: her violent crimes are directly related to her ability/inability to attain a position in the Victorian domestic sphere, and her rejection from this space is predicated on her ethnicity or otherness, which justifies this expulsion to the audience. Another indicator of the accuracy of the latter criterion is Johnny’s observation that Matilda’s eventual descent into madness “perhaps might have been always looked for.” This implies that there were clues, all along, that people could have observed and thereby predicted Matilda’s downfall. What are these clues? What is it about Matilda Valentine that should have served as a warning to those who knew her?

I would argue that the clues Johnny Ludlow refers to in this passage are the very clues he follows to Matilda’s guilt, those concerned with Matilda’s ethnicity and her mother’s
madness. The descriptions of Matilda’s complexion and her wild eyes are references to her Spanish heritage. The information that leads to the discovery of Matilda’s guilt is directly related to Fanny’s disclosure of Matilda’s ethnicity, and the wild behavior is related to that ethnicity. These clues could have been observed, claims Johnny, and this behavior predicted. I would also argue that this statement is a nod to the reader, who could have noted the clues as he or she read the story. Here the reader is again invited to view the story, and the criminal, through the lens of cultural power and authority established by Victorian popular belief. He or she is encouraged to look at Matilda’s appearance and heritage as clues that point toward her guilt. In this way the story is both a reflection of Victorian beliefs concerning the criminality of the Other (remote or near) and a fortification of that belief as readers are encouraged to enact the same discrimination as Johnny and Fanny in their judgments.

The murders of “The Mystery at Number Seven” and “Who Killed Zebedee” are similar in that the women’s motives are related to their inability to marry. The act of this rejection is a catalyst for violent or criminal behavior that continues after the murder. Rejection creates a permanent change in a woman’s character, making her unsuitable for domestic happiness. While this pattern of behavior is discernable in characters who are unmarried, what would be the motive of a married woman who commits murder? Why would a woman who exists inside the proffered marital sphere of contentment commit such a violent act? “The York Mystery” proposes that a woman’s inability to maintain her given role as “wife” is also an adequate motive for violence.
“The York Mystery”

“The York Mystery” is one of a series of stories by Baroness Orczy, the well-known author of the Scarlet Pimpernel series. The collection of detective stories from which this narrative is taken is aptly named “The Old Man in the Corner” series because each crime is solved by a brilliant old man who sits in the corner of a café. This man draws his conclusions from only secondhand information and clues provided to him. He does little or no firsthand investigation. This type of storytelling is noteworthy because the Old Man and the reader are on equal footing in terms of access to information and clues. In the end, when the criminal is announced, the reader who has not solved the mystery is instructed by the detective in how this reader failed to observe or where they failed to look, in essence training him in how to conduct future observations. The stories begin when a character approaches the detective and relates the circumstances of a crime. Based on the information that person divulges, in addition to any media coverage on the case, the Old Man will announce who the guilty party is.

“The York Mystery” begins when the Old Man shows a reporter named Polly the picture of a prominent woman, Lady Skelmerton. Polly describes the Lady’s appearance as “not exactly pretty, but very gentle and childlike, with a strange pathetic look in the large eyes which was wonderfully appealing” (Orczy 94). It is somewhat unclear why the Lady’s “strange” and “pathetic” appearance would be considered attractive; however, one could assume that these features are related to the gentle and childlike qualities of her expression. It would be safe to assume that Lady Skelmerton is appealing because innocence and passivity are ideal traits in a woman and should be easily visible or, as Halttunen explains, transparent. The Old Man informs Polly that Lady Skelmerton and her husband, Lord Arthur Skelmerton, were involved in a scandalous and unsolved crime, which he has unraveled. Arthur Skelmerton, The Old Man
says, had a widely acknowledged gambling habit. The extent of Arthur’s obsession was so extensive that one year during racing week in York, the Skelmertons rented a house connected directly to the track.

Maud Skelmerton is very fond of her handsome husband. He was a soldier who initially had no interest in marrying Maud but was eventually convinced that it would be in his best financial interest to marry the heiress. Aware of his son-in-law’s frequent gambling, Mr. Etty provides his daughter Maud with an allowance of £3,000 a year, of which she has sole financial control. Maud Skelmerton worships her husband, ignores his faults completely, and works fervently to convince her father that his son-in-law is “a paragon of all the domestic virtues and perfect model of a husband” (96).

All does not go well for Lord and Lady Skelmerton during racing week. Arthur loses £5000 on one horserace and many doubt he has the money to cover his debt. Events are further complicated when the police are called to the Skelmerton residence and discover three men on the lawn – two grappling with each other, and one lying face down on the ground with a knife in his back. The two men fighting are Lord Skelmerton and a working-class man named George Higgins. The dead man is Charles Lavender, the bookie to whom Skelmerton owed the £5000. Both claim the other is the murderer. Though Higgins is immediately arrested, both men are eventually charged with the crime.

It is revealed through the court testimony of George Higgins, who eavesdropped on Skelmerton and Lavender’s initial conversation on the afternoon of the murder, and the butler, who received Lavender when he came back to collect that evening, that Lavender was threatening to reveal Skelmerton’s multiple gambling debts and forgeries to Mr. Etty and Maud Skelmerton if Arthur did not pay the £5000 he owed immediately. It is also revealed that the
knife found in Lavender’s back is the property of Arthur Skelmerton. The prosecution claims that Skelmerton killed Lavender because Lavender was blackmailing him with information “which may have forever ruined him socially” (103). However, there is not enough evidence to convict Arthur. Lord Skelmerton is acquitted and the case remains unsolved. Lady Skelmerton, who had fallen into a coma upon hearing of her husband’s arrest, never recovers and dies on the day he is acquitted.

In a sub-section entitled “The Broken-Hearted Woman,” the Old Man claims he has solved the case and states that Lady Skelmerton saw Lavender when he was waiting for her husband in the hall that evening. Then, the Old Man says, she realized Lavender was “a living danger to her husband. Remember women have done strange things; they are a far greater puzzle to the student of human nature than the sterner, less complex sex has ever been” (108). The reason for Lady Skelmerton’s death, as is foreshadowed by the sub-title of section, is because she “probably died of a broken heart, but women, when they love, think only of one object on earth - the one who is beloved” (108). In these two passages the Old Man argues that Lady Skelmerton’s motivation for the crime is the protection of her husband’s reputation. Furthermore, he believes that women will act criminally in the interest of the person whom they love. It is significant that the detective argues a woman in love can think of no one else but the object of her affection. This implies that once in love a woman ceases to be herself, think in her own interests, or have motivation outside of that affection, that once she loves she loses her sense of self and becomes an extension or agent of her partner. In this way Maud Skelmerton is not an individual but an extension of her husband. This assumes that women will commit crimes on behalf of their domestic partner or potential domestic partner, and that violence is only possible when this relationship is threatened. The threat to her husband is presented here
as an adequate explanation for her motive, or an adequate explanation of the circumstance under which a woman would act violently. This motivation, I believe, is less of a reflection of the circumstances of the crime than of Victorian assumptions about marriage and female identity.

However, I would argue that Lady Skelmerton’s motive, which is undoubtedly based on a threat to her domestic felicity, is more complicated than a simple explanation of love. The narrative emphasizes how much Maud worships her husband but, equally so, how little he loves her in return. One of the most telling aspects of the story is the façade Maud constructs to influence how people outside of the marriage perceive the marriage. Maud goes to great lengths to convince her father of the couple’s happiness and the perfection of her husband. Ultimately the marriage Maud constructs is one that does not exist but one she clings to. The motivation for Lavender’s murder is not solely based on the love and protection of Arthur, but also on Maud’s fear of exposure. If the blackmailer were to reveal his information, Maud would no longer to able to maintain the artificial appearance of the ideal domestic situation that she has so laboriously built. It is during her coma and the trial that the details of the Skelmerton’s marriage leak into the public and, possibly, cause Maud’s death. It is not solely in the interest of her husband that Maud kills Lavender, but to stop her “expulsion” from her idealized marriage.

In a line of reasoning that is intended to finalize the guilt of Lady Skelmerton and vindicate Arthur Skelmerton, the Old Man states:

To me the whole thing was clear from the very first. When I read the account of the murder – the knife! The stabbing! – bah! Don’t I know enough of English crime not to be certain at once that no Englishman he be ruffian from the gutter or he Duke’s son, ever stabs his victim in the back. Italians, French, Spaniards do it, if you will, and women of most nations. . . the woman only would lie in wait till the enemy’s back was turned. She knows her weakness, and she does not mean to miss (108).
The Old Man’s speech is revealing in several respects. First he draws a line separating the English man from men of other nations. He argues that the Englishman’s refusal to stab another man in the back proves he is inherently braver, more honorable, and more civilized than his foreign counterparts. This assertion is made with such surety that it is offered as adequate evidence of Arthur Skelmerton’s innocence. Following his first comparison, the Old Man claims that women of all nations would stab a man in the back in order to guarantee success and avoid a physical confrontation. This implies a deviousness in women that is apparently not present in English men. An Englishman would not stab a man in the back to ensure his success in committing a murder, even though such an act would probably improve the odds of his success. This distinction draws two clear lines: one between men and women, and one between English men and everyone else. The sense of honor present in even English “ruffians” is a characteristic that women lack. The entire passage is odd in that it implies there is an honorable way to commit murder and a dishonorable way, and the distinction between the two is crucial to the Old Man’s perception of English identity and male/female identity.

After these revelations Polly looks again at the photograph of Lady Skelmerton and this time notices that the woman has a “decided, willful curve around the mouth” (109). After the circumstances of the crime have been explained to her, Polly now “sees” the elements of criminality in the face of the murderer, though it is only after she has been guided in how to look through the lens of the detective that she is able to perceive visible criminality. In the case of Maud Skelmerton, these elements include a tendency towards willfulness that had previously been obscured by her more dominant, childlike features. Like Matilda Valentine, the clues to Maud’s potential violence are apparent in her appearance but are not immediately recognizable. Once Polly has been trained by the detective she able to see Maud Skelmerton as she truly is.
This emphasis on the visual is comparable to the immediate stress on Matilda’s features because both faces are clues that point toward the guilty party. The guilt of each woman is visually obvious, however, it is only after instruction that the reader and the viewer are able to examine and recognize the important clues they missed.

“The Long Arm”

Mary Wilkins’ “The Long Arm” features first person narration from a woman whose father has been murdered. Sarah Fairbanks and her fiancé are both suspects in her father’s killing because Sarah’s father has forbidden them to marry. Mr. Fairbanks was a cruel man who had many enemies, a fact that initially widens the pool of suspects. However, the entire Fairbanks home is found locked from the inside the following morning, suggesting the murderer did not break into the house. Because Sarah and her father live alone, this fact makes Sarah appear to be the only possible perpetrator. Even Sarah doubts her innocence - on the morning she found her father stabbed to death she also found one of the dresses in her closet stained with blood. Sarah thinks she slept through the night, but is disturbed by the fact she had bad dreams and generally resented her father for his refusal to allow her to marry.

Though Sarah is horrified by her self-doubt, she must admit that her possible motive for killing her father is based on this refusal. Her father’s actions have incensed Sarah to the point where she wonders whether she could have murdered him. The fact that her father is cruel, dominating, and unfair are not presented as adequate motives; however, his rejection of her potential marriage causes Sarah and the reader to wonder whether she has repressed the memory of stabbing her father.

The two spinsters who live next door to the Fairbanks, Phoebe Dole and Maria Woods,
have resided together since they were young girls (Wilkins 386). Maria is described as a small, friendly and submissive woman. In contrast, Phoebe Dole is taller, sterner, and has a will of iron. Phoebe works as the town seamstress and offers to help Sarah prepare for her father’s funeral. As the two women examine the bloody dress in the closet Phoebe notices the stains and announces they will die the garment black. Sarah says “I made no suggestions. I did not care how it was done, but if I had cared it would have made no difference. Phoebe always does things her way. All the women in the village are in a manner under Phoebe Dole's thumb. Their garments are visible proofs of her force of will (385).

The physical description of Phoebe and her personality mark her as stereotypically masculine. Her domination over Maria is echoed by her interaction with Sarah and with the other women in the town. Her decision to dye the bloody garment, however, does not strike Sarah as immediately significant. Sarah does not second guess Phoebe’s destruction of evidence or question Phoebe’s motivation in doing so. She simply does as Phoebe says.

When Sarah decides to investigate her father’s murder she is told by a detective that the only way the murderer could have gotten the chain off the door and latched it again is if they had unusually long arms. Sarah begins to examine the arms of people in town and notices during choir practice that “Phoebe Dole's arm is fully seven inches longer than mine. I never noticed it before, but she has an almost abnormally long arm. But why should Phoebe Dole have unhooked that door?” (399). Instead of confronting Phoebe, Sarah decides she will ask Maria about the murder. During that interview Sarah discovers that Maria has been keeping a secret about her father, Mr. Fairbanks. Maria admits that before Sarah’s parents were married she and Mr. Fairbanks were engaged, but Maria had broken it off. Recently, because the two were older and Fairbanks was widowed, they had decided to get engaged again. Still, Sarah is
confused by this information and is unable to see why this event would be a motive for murder. Maria explains that Phoebe made her refuse Sarah's father long ago because Maria had initially promised Phoebe she would not marry. Phoebe forced Maria to write him a refusal and to return the engagement ring (401).

Sarah decides to enlist the help of the male detective to help her confront Phoebe. Sarah describes her arrival at this meeting: “Phoebe came first, advancing with rapid strides like a man” (402). When confronted by the police, Phoebe confesses: “She was going to marry your father – I found it out. I stopped it once before. This time I knew I couldn't unless I killed him. She's lived with me in that house for over forty years. There are other ties as strong as the marriage one, that are just as sacred. What right had he to take her away from me and break up my home?” (402). In her confession Phoebe reveals that the domestic structure she and Maria Woods had built and maintained over the years was threatened by Mr. Fairbanks, and that this threat to her home constituted a motive for murder.

Phoebe’s motive is comparable to that of Maud Skelmerton in that she acts on her wish to maintain the domestic sphere she has established. While Phoebe is described in masculine terms and is depicted as having a will stronger than that of her partner, her motivation is limited by her gender to a wish to maintain her life with Maria. Phoebe admits to breaking in and stabbing Mr. Fairbanks with the shears Sarah used for sewing. Phoebe uses a domestic tool to destroy Fairbanks, echoing both her position as a woman and earlier observations about the way the garments she creates are evidence of her authority. Phoebe also admits that she crept into to Sarah's closet and planned kill Sarah if she woke or gave any indication she had heard what had happened. But Sarah remained asleep. The blood on the dress came from Phoebe, who waited in the closet until she was assured Sarah was not a witness to the crime.
Sarah is horrified at the confession, and says “I cannot describe the dreadful calmness with which that woman told his – that woman with the good face, whom I last heard praying like a saint in meeting. I believe in demonical possession after this” (404). At first Sarah is convinced of Phoebe’s morality by the face she presents. However, the reader is taught how to see the criminal through the lens of the detective, who tells Sarah how to spot the killer. In this case Phoebe is “marked” by her abnormally long arms. After she has developed an adequate lens, Sarah is able to see the visual markers of criminality in Phoebe’s appearance. The comments about demonical possession echo the descriptions of Matilda Valentine during her fits of rage. This suggests that the characters in the story, as well as the audience, are so baffled at the reality of feminine violence that they assume the source of that violence must be provided externally.

In addition, it is interesting to note that Sarah is shocked and appalled by Phoebe and her actions. Sarah herself wondered, at the beginning of the story, whether she could have murdered her father because she was angry at Mr. Fairbanks’ refusal of her marriage. If this is a conceivable motive for Sarah, how does it become inconceivable for Phoebe? Sarah’s guilt is a real possibility, as is the guilt of the fiancé she marries at the conclusion of the narrative. Sarah’s lack of sympathy for Phoebe and her lack of understanding are problematic given her own self doubt. The story ends with Phoebe Doe dying in prison and Sarah’s happy marriage. Sarah successfully enters the domestic sphere and Phoebe dies following the destruction of her home. Matilda, Lady Skelmerton, and Phoebe Dole all suffer as a result of their expulsion from domestic culture, and none of them are able to survive outside of this prescribed role. The extent of their madness and death reinforces the idea that the space outside of the Victorian home is uninhabitable for women.
The Idealized Domestic Sphere

In each of these stories the criminal attempts to attain or maintain a domestic ideal that Pal-Lipinski argues is crucial to the Victorian perception of a woman’s health and happiness. If women’s health is founded on this model, it would be logical for characters that cannot attain that ideal to be portrayed as deviant, ill, or suffer rejection. One question that arises in regards to this rejection relates to construction of the domestic ideal. How did the “angel of the house” come to be created in such a way, and how does that construction relate to the British sense of identity discussed in the previous chapter? In other words, what stakes does Victorian society have in consistently promoting the domestic model and in villainizing those who exist outside of it?

Shani D’Cruze writes in “The Eloquent Corpse: Gender, Probity, and Bodily Integrity in Victorian Domestic Murder” that the domestic sphere was the basis of the British family, and that “the gendered, raced, and classed identities that were produced as much in the home as out of it are increasingly being recognized as partaking in the constitution of national identity” (181). Moreover, if the right to exert power and dominate others on a global scale is dependent on being “British,” British domesticity is required to continually produce new British citizens of a suitable class to participate in the Imperialist power structure. In this view, the middle class domestic space is critical to building and reinforcing national identity, or the sense of self the Old Man so accurately illustrates in his description of the honorable way an Englishman would commit murder as opposed to the dishonorable practices of women and the French.

If this domestic space was infiltrated by the exoticized woman, how would that affect the proliferation of this nationalist identity? It would most certainly undermine the notion of
British superiority, as it is unlikely a person would teach their non-British children they were inherently inferior in comparison with their British counterparts. And, as “The Mystery at Number Seven” would suggest, popular literature attempts to reinforce this message with the threat of infection or sickness. For example, Matilda Valentine inherits her temper and madness from her mother. Therefore, if she were to marry Thomas Owen and have children, the children would suffer from a comparable illness.

Pal-Lipinski notes that fear of bodily contamination is a familiar trope in British literature and is not unique to the detective story. The detective story is simply another place to reinforce a continuing message concerning the exoticized body. Pal-Lipinski writes that

The expansion of British colonialism, marked by the spectacular displays of the Great Exhibition of London in 1851, had ironically provided the very circumstances by the means of which cholera had traveled westward from India in 1817... Victorian colonial medicine became inevitably preoccupied not only with preserving the ‘health’ of the colonizers, but also with regulating the bodies and medical discourses of the colonized” (60-61).

The author notes that popular novels often featured exotic locales in which British citizens became ill as a result of their contact with indigenous peoples. The exoticized body was reinforced as a site of contamination - physically, mentally, and morally. The exoticized woman is portrayed as alluring but dangerous, perhaps even more so because the female body is so closely linked to constructing and continuing systems of male power in British society. Therefore, the reader of Mrs. Henry Wood’s story is more likely to accept the circumstances causing Matilda’s insanity and Thomas Owen’s rejection of her love because she is considered unsuitable for the domestic sphere. Again, this false fear of contamination is directly linked with the need for Victorians to establish and reinforce an idealized British identity.

In a decline similar to that of Matilda, Lady Skelmerton dies attempting to maintain the
illusion of love in a marriage of convenience, and Phoebe Dole’s attempts to impede Maria’s marriage are met with her decent into violence and eventual death. The female villain’s fate is a means to convey and reinforce social norms and expectations through popular literature. While these dire patterns are prevalent in stories where the women are the deviants and murderers, how is the intended message affected when the woman is not the villain but the victim? My discussion of domestic violence and the corruption of the Victorian domestic space continues in the following chapter with a discussion of sensation fiction, the domestic villain, and the Victorian fascination with violence and scandal inside the home.
Chapter Seven:

*The Scheming Husband and the Poison Prescription: Household Crime, Sensation Fiction, and the Domestic Villain*

This chapter features stories by three fashionable authors of the Victorian era: Fergus Hume’s “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker,” J. S. Le Fanu’s “The Murdered Cousin,” and Mrs. J. H. Riddell’s “Dr. Varvill’s Prescription.” Though their larger bodies of work are more varied in genre (being primarily mystery, supernatural, and domestic fiction, respectively), each author draws from a common genus to create the detective stories presented here: sensation fiction. While sensation fiction reached its height in popularity decades prior to the publication of the stories included in this study, its impact on the genre of detective fiction is indisputable. The influence of sensation fiction on the development of the *domestic villain* will be explored through a brief discussion of its history, a mid-century sensation text, and three examples of detective fiction that illustrate the transition of the domestic villain from the sensation to the detective genre.

Sensation fiction is a variety of literature made popular by its scandalous themes and characters. It was often judged by contemporary critics to be immoral due to its controversial subject matter. In a comparative definition, *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead* author Thomas Boyle notes that sensation fiction is similar to gothic literature in that the plot of each is dependent on many of the same sensational elements, such as mysteries, rapes, near rapes,

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15 The height of sensation is estimated to have occurred in between 1860-1870 (Boyle 119).
murders, and strange and disconcerting settings; however, the difference between the two genres is that no supernatural elements are allowed in sensation fiction (120). In fact, the outcome of sensation fiction is different than that of supernatural fiction in that the criminal is not a mysterious or paranormal monster but a person who appears completely ordinary and respectable. In short, sensation fiction is a thriller or horror story whose setting and monster exist inside the bounds of respectable society and oftentimes within the domestic sphere.

Revisiting Mrs. Wood’s train, there is one passenger in the carriage who has escaped initial suspicion simply because he looks wholesome, quietly reads his book, and has a non-threatening “fresh” complexion and a pair of gold spectacles. The bespectacled man on the train has the potential for domestic villany because his appearance gives the viewer a sense of goodness and normalcy, which is the opposite condition of the visual villain outlined in Chapter Two. A contemporary reader familiar with sensation fiction may recognize this potential as a convention of that genre. In order to provide a more detailed example of the characteristics of the domestic villain, I refer briefly to the work of Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Braddon\(^\text{16}\) authored the extraordinarily popular novel Lady Audley’s Secret in 1862. The following summary of that novel is a model of the shocking revelations one might expect from both the sensation genre and the domestic villain.

In the beginning of the narrative, Lady Audley is what appears to be a true “angel of the household,” a sweet, well-mannered, blond-ringleted governess who marries a widowed Lord. Due to an extensive amount of detective work done by her new nephew, Robert Audley, the reader is at first shocked to learn that Lady Audley was previously married and gave birth to a

\(^{16}\) Braddon also published a periodical entitled Belgravia Magazine that specialized in short sensation pieces. Charles Dickens' All Year Round was also a frequent publisher of sensational tales, such as serialized forms of several of Wilkie Collins' novels.
child. But this is not the real secret advertised by the title. It then seems the mystery is solved when it is revealed that Audley’s first husband George is still alive! Following this revelation, Lady Audley attempts to murder her first husband and the detective to save herself from exposure. The fact that Audley is an adulteress and murderer seems as if it must be the solution to the puzzle, but it is not. When confronted with the truth, the real source of Lady Audley’s secret is finally revealed: her mother was mad, and this same madness has overtaken Lady Audley herself. In a fate similar to that of Matilda Valentine, Audley is quickly placed in an asylum and the story ends. The content and appeal of this convoluted novel is extremely noteworthy. First, the novel was able to appeal to a wide and varied audience despite contemporary objections to the multiple and scandalous crimes that transpire. Second, as a domestic villain Lady Audley reflects an ongoing yet ironic fascination with domestic crime on the part of the Victorian audience.

Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead is a summary and analysis by author Thomas Boyle of a collection of newspaper and periodical clips compiled by Mr. William Bell MacDonald between the years of 1840 and 1861. All of the clips refer specifically to crimes and popular court cases reported by the Victorian media. Boyle offers an analysis of sensational media coverage as well as popular literature, like Lady Audley and Collins’ Armadale, which are influenced by contemporary court proceedings. MacDonald’s clippings and Boyle’s analysis reveal a marked fascination with domestic crime during the era immediately preceding a surge in sensation fiction’s popularity. The question becomes, given the Victorian emphasis on middle class respectability and rigid morality within the household, why were Victorians so interested in stories of dysfunctional and shattered domesticity? Why this fascination with domestic criminals and villains who appear innocent but are dangerous, thereby challenging claims that there is
visual evidence of criminality and an easily definable criminal class?

Boyle offers an explanation of this apparent contradiction: “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, an absolute terror at the prospect of discovering rents in the fabric of the system’s internal logic” (136). Boyle’s analysis argues that Victorian society promoted itself as being ordered, moral, and decent but was simultaneously aware of the dishonest nature of this belief. Boyle writes that the novels “take place, after all, in a world which – beneath the pretense of sanitized respectability – is randomly violent, [and] suffers from inadequate (or non-existent) hygienic conditions” (21). This hypocrisy, identified in previous chapters by Karen Halttuten, contributes to the significance of the domestic villain in that Victorians deny the negative elements of their society yet are painfully aware of them at the same time. The respectable Victorian citizen is one who believes in and adheres to moral and social laws. Middle class identity depends upon this adherence. Thus the domestic villain is the villain who is not supposed to exist. Well-known criminal groups - the criminal class, the confidence men, the painted women, the mad housemaids – often bear the weight of the villainous scapegoat in Victorian fiction. However, the domestic villain, often hidden by these other criminal groups like a magician’s misdirection, is perhaps the most frightening villain and the most revealing of all.

Boyle further argues that Lady Audley’s angelic appearance in contrast to the ugliness of her crimes is a reflection of this fear. Readers are repulsed by Audley but are fascinated by her misconduct. According to contemporary critics, Lady Audley was considered revolting on both an ethical and artistic level; however, the novel was extraordinarily popular (Boyle 125). Those who advocate “transparency” aspire to measure the character of a person visually, but in her
success Audley demonstrates this practice is unfeasible. Audley is a frightening villain because she is a violent threat, she resides inside of the domestic space, and her existence challenges commonly held beliefs regarding criminality. Audley and other domestic villains are reminders of the ugliness that can lurk behind “transparency” and are the sinister counterpart to the criminal Other who so often takes the blame.

Furthermore, Boyle points out that the setting for sensation novels, which is often centered on a respectable home, is not insignificant: “the stories tend to suggest that the deterioration in the social fiber often occurs where things have the greatest appearance of propriety. The poisoner is the doctor; the woman who stabs to death her six children is the former wet nurse to the Prince of Wales” (40). This fascination with domestic crime, the “least-likely suspect,” or crime that occurs in “polite” society is further reflected in the multitude and variety of court cases reported on by the Victorian media.

To begin, the number of clippings in Bell MacDonald’s collection that deal with the dissolution of marriage reveals a public fascination with divorce cases, which were often reported on in extreme detail (Boyle 18-19). For example, a Mrs. Robinson who was tried for adultery kept a detailed account of her affairs in a journal that was produced as evidence at trial. The detail with which she described said encounters only served to convince the public and the jury that she was not an adulteress but simply mad (109). In 1854, a particularly violent case of child abuse and murder was testified to in court by a nine-year-old witness – and the brutal account appeared in the paper, in its entirety. Not satisfied simply to read about crime, the public took an active role in the trials and punishments of the offenders whose trials they observed in print. In 1859 one of the most popular cases in the media was that of Dr. Godfrey, who was eventually acquitted of bigamy and of the murder of a young girl (203). Following his
acquittal, the public rushed to throw stones at him outside of the courthouse. Boyle notes that fascination with corrupt medical professionals such as Godfrey was only rivaled by that of “scandalous clergy” (208). Many of the cases that most fascinated the public were fictionalized in popular literature of the time, allowing the reading public another outlet to examine domestic crime. With the legal and media circus demonstrated by MacDonald’s clippings, it is difficult to identify cases that most fascinated the public and inspired authors; however, Boyle points to the trial of William Palmer as such an example.

William Palmer was “officially charged with only one murder, but was alleged . . . to have done away with at least fourteen people, including his wife and brother” (Boyle 62). Public fascination with Palmer was increased by his status as both a gentlemen and suspected murderer. Palmer fit in easily to middle class society, thereby making his arrest all the more newsworthy. This phenomenon is explained by Boyle: “Palmer was neither easily categorized nor dismissed as an alien creature by the official consciousness. He was at once a communicant at the altar of nineteenth-century ‘progress’ – a man of family, of property, of science, of religion – and a gambler and a womanizer” (62). Boyle further states that “by virtue of his image to the public – created a more threatening figure than any semi-fictional grotesque . . . and that this aspect of domestic realism strongly influenced the development of criminal fiction in the years following the case” (66).

Boyle claims that Palmer’s status as a member of Victorian society makes his villainy more disturbing than any other kind of criminal or supernatural monster. Like Lady Audley, Palmer’s status and benign appearance made him seem an unlikely suspect in the multiple murders of which he was accused. Therefore, the public was all the more fascinated with the evidence of his guilt and the implications of that guilt. As an English gentleman Palmer was
held to a higher standard of morality, and the public was repulsed and fascinated with his criminality because it implied that murder could occur in their own respectable homes.

The possibility of crime occurring in the home is a point of fascination to the contemporary reader because such a criminal could potentially be living under his or her roof. The domestic villain is exciting because that villain occupies the same space as the reader.

Contemporary fiction and science took pains to eject and exclude the violent criminal from middle class domestic space. For example, the “criminal class” is composed of working class individuals located in different geographical spaces than the reader. The colonial subject or exotic villain are easily identifiable and are ejected from domestic culture or British space as a result of their ethnicity. The domestic villain is thrilling to the Victorian middle class reader because he is similar to that reader. When asked to view the domestic villain through the lens of the detective, the reader must turn the lens on him or herself.

The reaction of simultaneous fascination and disgust inspired by Palmer and Audley is further demonstrated by fiction echoing similar domestic crimes. J. S. Le Fanu’s “The Murdered Cousin” is anthologized in the recent collection of Victorian detective stories published by Oxford University Press, though it is both a tale of detection and a sensational yarn. Le Fanu’s story, originally published in 1861, combines multiple aspects of sensation fiction and detection to tell the story of a villain similar to Palmer, a gentleman indebted due to gambling and willing to kill family members and strangers alike in his quest for money. And though published earlier than Riddell or Hume’s stories, the status of the “The Murdered Cousin” as both a sensation and detective text provides a point of comparison to examine the elements of sensation that carry over into the later detective genre.
“The Murdered Cousin”

The young and newly-orphaned Margaret arrives at her uncle’s estate. Margaret has never known her uncle, Sir Arthur Tyrrel, or her cousins. She has had no contact with that family following a suspicious death on Sir Arthur’s property. Sir Arthur owed a man named Tisdall more than £25,000 on a gambling debt, and that man was subsequently murdered on Sir Arthur’s property. The police, who suspected Sir Arthur, could not prove the gentleman was guilty. The deceased’s brother, after having visited the Tyrrel estate and spoken to Sir Arthur about an incriminating letter he received from Tisdall before the murder, became convinced that Tyrrel was trying to poison him and fled the premises. Details of the murder appeared in the paper and Sir Arthur was eventually was shunned by society (Le Fanu 23). Like Palmer, Tyrrel is immediately identified as a gentleman whose gambling debts precede his involvement in multiple murders and whose crimes are sensationalized in print.

Following the Tisdall murder the Tyrrel estate did not receive many visitors, though Margaret and her father believe her uncle to be innocent. As a sign of good will towards Sir Arthur and his two children, Sir Arthur is made Margaret’s guardian following her father’s death. And while the reader is not entirely certain of Sir Arthur’s guilt at the beginning of the story, Margaret’s entrance into the home immediately seems like an unwise decision. It is important to note that upon Margaret’s death, Sir Arthur will receive the entirety of the Tyrrel fortune. As a titled woman entering into what she believes is a respectable household, Margaret is confident in her father’s decision to send her to Tyrrel. The home Margaret enters is idealized in Victorian culture as an emblem of morality and order; however, Tyrrel’s estate does not offer the safe retreat Margaret and her father envision.

Given previous claims about the importance of appearances, one may expect the
revelation of Tyrell’s villainy to begin with Margaret’s initial description of her uncle. However, Sir Arthur seems like a kind and pious man: “he was a striking looking man. . . He was tall, and when young his figure must have been strikingly elegant . . . [with] fine dark eyes” (27-28).

Though he has previously been “ruinously addicted to gaming,” Sir Arthur now seemed reformed; he places heavy emphasis on conduct and often quotes scripture (19). Margaret’s favorable impression of his appearance, coupled with Sir Arthur’s excessively religious behavior, convinces Margaret that she is perfectly safe with her uncle. She is made uncomfortable, however, with the “vulgar” advances of her cousin Edward, whose attempts at romance she refuses repeatedly during her stay.

When Margaret refuses Edward’s proposal of marriage, Sir Arthur’s conduct toward Margaret and his appearance change drastically. He is furious that Margaret would reject his son and refuse to marry into the family. He tells Margaret:

‘you must be aware that if my son Edward were, which God forbid, the unprincipled, reckless man, the ruffian you pretend to think him’ – (here he spoke very slowly, as if he intended that every word which escaped him should be registered in my memory, while at the same time the expression of his countenance underwent a gradual but horrible change, and the eyes to which he fixed upon me became so darkly vivid, that I almost lost sight of everything else) – ‘if he were what you have described him, do you think, child, he would have found no shorter way than marriage to gain his ends? A single blow, an outrage not a degree worse than you insinuate, would transfer your property to us!!’ (33).

Margaret’s horror at Sir Arthur’s ultimatum of marriage or death, the revelation of his true character and his likely guilt in the murder of Tisdall are intensified by his successful mask of innocence in contrast with his current “serpent-like gaze” (33). Like the victims of Audley and Palmer, Margaret is unable to see her uncle’s motives through this mask and is now suffering for it. While his appearance does eventually reflect his intent (as is common), it is too late for
Margaret to escape him. The kindly, religious uncle that Sir Arthur appeared to be is not the person he is. The fact he was able to trick Margaret, coupled with Margaret’s relative isolation inside the home, make his threats extremely frightening. In addition, his deception is even more intensive than that of the painted women and confidence men visited in Chapter Three because his ruse is not a short-lived performance. Sir Arthur has lived in the same house as Margaret and interacted with her on a daily basis, yet now reveals himself to be capable of extreme violence. The thrill of the domestic villain to the Victorian audience lies in his or her ability to commit the ultimate form of hypocrisy, and infiltrate and corrupt the domestic space virtually undetected.

Sir Arthur Tyrrel is similar to Audley and Palmer because he represents a threat from inside of the home. Unlike many of the previous criminal types, it is impossible for Margaret to separate herself from Tyrrel in regards to class, space, or ethnicity. As a domestic villain Tyrrel is comparable to the reader and the victim until the revelation of his murderous intentions. Again, the reader may experience two contradictory reactions to Tyrrel, the first being repulsion at the criminality of a middle class member of British society. The second reaction is a mix of confusion and fascination because the domestic villain, by definition, shatters the comparative means with which many Victorians define criminality. When the villain is similar to the victim or the reader, there ceases to be a self and Other, an “us” and “them.” Therefore the figure of the villain inevitably becomes more ambiguous and frightening.

Also troubling is the domestic situation Margaret finds herself in. As her guardian and the owner of the estate, Sir Arthur is able to intercept any letters that Margaret writes for help. Sir Arthur even goes so far as to say he will have her committed to the asylum as a madwoman if one of her letters is to reach another person. She becomes, literally, a prisoner in the remote
Tyrrel estate. With no other course of action, Margaret must wait in her room to learn if her uncle will kill her because she has refused to marry Edward and give control of her fortune to Sir Arthur.

Domestic violence and the attitude toward familial abuse in the Victorian era differ from modern conceptions of the crime. Susan Edwards addresses the issue of domestic violence in Victorian England in her article “‘Kicked, Beaten, Jumped on Until They are Crushed,’ All Under Man’s Wing and Protection: The Victorian Dilemma with Domestic Violence.” Edwards documents several Victorian authors who write that dangerous abusers (defined as those who hit their wives more than necessary) belong to the working classes, supporting popular and inaccurate conceptions about the “criminal class” (249). Edwards' discussion of the Victorian male criminal in comparison to his female counterpart shows him as responding to a provocation with violence built on a logical basis: “When men kill wives, then the narrative of the provoked ‘reasonable’ man is in effect the anthropomorphization of masculinist rhymes and reasons, which justify male violence by an appeal to the fiction of an objective authority of ‘reasonableness’” (250). Through the social acceptance of male violence towards wives, the perceived dichotomy between masculine and feminine is translated into crime – a man who commits a crime does so with reason. Also, domestic violence was supposed to be a reality in the working or criminal class, yet it appears in fiction featuring middle and upper class characters. This suggests that the separation of violence along class lines was not an accurate reflection of reality. In this way the story blurs the lines between perceptions of the criminal class and middle class.

Sir Arthur’s guardianship of Margaret and his ability to force her into marriage or have her committed to an asylum for Margaret’s accusations of abuse echo the sentiments Edwards
reports in her study. As the heir to the Tyrrel fortune, it is Margaret who has the initial upper-hand in her relationship with her relatives. However, Sir Arthur’s attempt to wrestle control of Margaret’s money and body through threats of violence and appeals to sanity and logic is an example of domestic violence in Victorian fiction that, according to the report of Edwards, may resonate with a contemporary audience.

Because she is so unsettled, Margaret convinces her cousin Emily to stay the night in her bedroom. Emily sleeps as Margaret paces the room. As she does she hears noise from outside, and catches sight of someone digging a large hole off to the side of the house. Realizing the hole is most likely a grave and her uncle intends to kill her, Margaret attempts to open and flee through the door, but it is locked. Terrified, but woozy from some substance put in her drink, she realizes that every object she could have used in her defense has been removed from her bedroom. Margaret’s uncle, her cousin Edward, and her lady’s maid have all conspired to place her into her current situation and to murder her for her money. Threats of physical and sexual violence occur regularly for Margaret; however, the situation Margaret finds herself in is made all the more horrifying because these threats come from within the home. Terrified and unable to wake her drugged cousin, Margaret hides as her uncle and cousin Edward enter the room and beat the sleeping figure to death with a hammer. Edward leaves the bedroom door unlocked long enough for Margaret to escape and run to the village before the murderers realize that they have mistakenly killed Emily Tyrrel.

Le Fanu’s story is characteristic of the sensation genre in that it relies on conventions such as an isolated and frightening location, a mysterious murder, and a villain who is not an outsider but a member of Margaret’s own family. The story’s emotional impact is enhanced by the first person narration of Margaret, who discovers that appearance is not an adequate
indicator of morality. This discovery, repeated in both “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker” and “Dr. Varvill’s Prescription” is a message that transitions from sensation to detective fiction, thrilling readers with the unthinkable idea that similar evils may be lurking in their own domestic space. Oftentimes the husband or wife of a murder victim is also the main suspect, and as “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker” shows, this suspicion is not without good reason. Published in 1894, “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker” contains themes similar to Le Fanu’s sensation piece, with added emphasis on the process of objective detection, as is characteristic of the later genre.

“The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker”

A detective is called in to investigate when a young wife is murdered in her home. Mrs. Vincent had apparently walked in on a robbery in progress while her husband, a stockbroker, was at work in the city. Neighbors, servants and friends all testify that the couple was deeply in love. As a result of this testimony and Mr. Vincent’s delay at work he is not an immediate suspect in her murder. Instead, the detective chooses to focus on Mr. Julius Roy, a friend who Mr. Vincent claims approached him for a loan of £50 soon before the murder and robbery (coincidentally, of exactly £50). However, a woman named Clara Ford who is in love with Roy claims that Mr. Vincent is a villain, that he propositioned her, and has motive to frame Mr. Roy.

The only clue to the crime is a greenstone idol found at the scene, and that evidence eventually convicts the true murderer, Mr. Vincent. Mr. Vincent gave a note to his wife with the instruction to lend Mr. Roy £50, which she did. After the evidence was in Roy’s hands, Vincent returned home and killed his wife so that he could frame Roy and marry Miss Ford. The greenstone idol, which Vincent obtained from a man from New Zealand and which fell out
of his pocket at the scene, led Clara to believe Vincent was guilty. After his arrest Vincent confesses to Miss Ford: “I hated my wife, who was a drag on me, and I hated Roy, who loved you. In one sweep I thought to rid myself of both” (Hume 288).

Mr. Vincent’s motive differs from that of Sir Arthur in that one kills for money and the other for love; however, both are willing to murder members of their household to get what they want. Vincent’s status as domestic villain is cemented by his ability to fool the entirety of his acquaintance into thinking he loved and was faithful to his wife. The beginning of the narrative emphasizes how well-liked and respected the couple is, escalating the eventual surprise of Mr. Vincent’s guilt. The fact that Mr. Vincent was internally the opposite of what he displayed externally also contributes to the astonishing and sensational nature of his crime. Again, Victorian conceptions of “murderer” are often predicated on that criminal being an outsider from society. The murderer in this case is a supposedly loving husband, emphasizing the fact that crime cannot be defined through exclusion and that any reader’s husband could also be a murderer in disguise. Mrs. Vincent’s death is an example of sensational domestic violence portrayed in detective fiction, as is the following story, “Dr. Varvill’s Prescription.”

While bearing some similarities to the Palmer case in motive, the most significant connection of Mrs. J. H. Riddell’s story to Victorian domestic violence is the murder weapon. The Victorian preoccupation with poison is linked to the aforementioned fascination with domestic crime because it is assumed that a murderer requires personal access to the victim and his home in order to gain access to his food or drink. Therefore the murderer is most often someone who knows the victim. Again, the closeness of the victim to his assailant is a novelty to the Victorian reader who may normally conceive of criminality and criminals as existing outside of the middle class or middle class space, and whose definition of the criminal is
oftentimes dependent on the contrast between self and Other. When the criminal can no longer be defined by his contrast to the victim or the reader, the figure of the villain becomes difficult to define and categorize.

“Dr. Varvill's Prescription”

Tony Ward begins “A Mania for Suspicion: Poisoning, Science, and the Law” by stating that Wilkie Collins based the villain (and crime) of his novel Armadale on the famed poisoner Thomas Smethurst, whom Boyle also describes in Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead. Ward, like Boyle, notes the Victorian preoccupation with poisoning and the fear of poisoning as a domestic crime in particular (Ward 140). The author includes documentation of several important poisoning cases of the Victorian era and concludes that public perception of the poisoner was that she was most often female (149). The following story is the tale of a thwarted poisoner that reflects some of the same fears created and supported by the reiteration of poisonings in sensation fiction and dramatized court cases such as that of Mr. Smethurst.

The unlikely detective of “Dr. Varvill’s Prescription” is a pharmacist named Hepplethorn who moves his shop from a quiet country town to London. One night as he is working in his store a gentleman comes in to fill a prescription written by a Dr. Varvill for Mr. J. Tercett. After inspecting the order the pharmacist is horrified by the prescription, which is later disclosed to contain enough strychnine to kill “half a dozen” people (Riddell 222). Instead of refusing the fill the prescription (for fear that the gentleman might successfully fill it elsewhere) Hepplethorn omits the strychnine, hands over the prescription, and sends his son to follow the man home. After learning the identity of the gentleman is Mr. Osmond Tercett, Hepplethorn visits Dr. Varvill, who denies writing such a prescription. The Doctor insists the
amount of strychnine has been altered. If a man were to take the prescription as dispensed and
die, the blame for said death could be placed on both the doctor and pharmacist, who wrote
and filled an “incorrect” prescription. While Dr. Varvill will not assist him, Hepplethorn is
determined to seek help from Mr. Tercett’s solicitor.

Hepplethorn learns that John Tercett is Osmond Tercett’s cousin. He also learns that
as generous as John Tercett is, his cousin is equally selfish. The solicitor notes, “Osmond
Tercett would have taken her mite from the poor widow, and stripped Dives of his purple and
fine linen” (231). If John were to die, Osmond would inherit an income of more than £14,000 a
year. Because Osmond is John Tercett’s family member and is trustworthy enough to fill his
empty prescription, the obvious horror of the story lies in the possibility that a family member
could poison J. Tercett, or the reader, with relative ease. Osmond’s access to John and his
personal greed create a frightening situation that echoes Victorian fears of household violence,
despite society’s continued denials of problems inside its idealized domestic sphere.

When confronted with his treachery, Osmond blames the “old imbecile” who filled the
prescription, and pleads to his cousin, “We have always been like brothers – nearer than any
brothers ever were. There is not a man on earth I love and trust as I do you. Won’t you believe
me?” (236). Osmond’s plea for either trust or absolution is only possible given the unique
relationship of the victim and the criminal. Specifically, the fact that the attempted poisoning is
a domestic crime first proves a barrier for Hepplethorn in his quest to warn J. Tercett and later
creates the opportunity for Osmond’s escape despite the evidence against him. It is clear that
while John and Osmond are family, Osmond is more than willing to murder John for his
money and John is willing to forgive him. John is moved by Osmond’s plea until he receives a
customary visual warning of Osmond’s criminality: “Tercett raised his head and looked at the
speaker – looked at that false handsome face as if he would read the very soul of which it was a mask” (237). At the exposure of his villainy, Osmond Tercett’s beautiful face is described as a mask, a covering for something more sinister beneath. It is a trademark of the domestic villain to lure his victim into security with an honest appearance; however, at the revelation of Osmond’s guilt, the reader and John Tercett see the visual markers of his criminality. At the end of the story John Tercett does not have Osmond arrested but cuts him out of his life and refuses further contact or financial assistance. Osmond does not go to jail for attempted murder. John’s mercy is indicative of the closeness of their relationship and of his unwillingness to acknowledge Osmond’s capacity for murder. Because John Tercett is unwilling to accuse Osmond publically, Osmond is free and may eventually try to kill somebody else. The conclusion of the story also illustrates the possible shame John Tercett experiences as a result of the criminal activity occurring in his respectable household.

The domestic villain is a common denominator between sensation and detective fiction. The mask Osmond wears is similar to the mask that Sir Arthur Tyrrel, Mr. Vincent, Lady Audley, and Mr. Palmer don to fool their victims. Each criminal is alike because he or she is able to sustain an appearance of normalcy while simultaneously attacking members of his or her household. Thomas Boyle notes that hundreds of sensation novels were published in the 1860s, a figure that demonstrates the popularity of the genre and the domestic villain (119). And while the existence of the domestic villain indicates awareness of societal problems on the part of Victorian society, such awareness did not necessarily inspire introspection as to the cause of those problems. For example, another domestic crime that fascinated the general public was the condition and abuse of illegitimate children. This particular topic is explored in depth by David Bentley in “She-Butchers: Baby-Droppers, Baby-Sweaters, and Baby-Farmers.”
Bentley claims that “Baby-farming was one of the great unresolved scandals of the Victorian period” (199). Many single women who became pregnant were also domestic servants and could not let their employer discover their pregnancy or child. As a result the women were forced to send their children out to be cared for and nursed (Bentley 199). Baby-farmers were women who advertised to take children for a price but later deserted or murdered them. There are several cases mentioned in this article in which women were convicted and executed for this type of murder, such as the case of Margaret Waters in 1864, Annie Took in 1879, the notorious Amelia Dyer in 1896 (202-205, 208, 210-211), and many more accounts where guilty women were incarcerated (208-210). Bentley states that the amount of press coverage and public outrage regarding these crimes resulted in the creation of bills such as the Infant Life Protection Bill, which were intended to catch and punish baby-farmers (207). However, the author also states that the anti-baby-farming cause (and the bill) lost public support and attention because neither the bill nor society offered another solution to the mothers of an ever-growing number of illegitimate children. Because there was no one who was willing to take responsibility for the children victimized in these cases, Victorian society basically withdrew its objections to the practice.

Therefore, while Victorians were aware of the rampant child abuse taking place, they were unwilling to work towards a solution because that solution required reexamining ideas concerning single motherhood, sexual abuse in the profession of domestic servitude, public assistance, and attitudes toward legal rights of children and of the working class. Therefore, while this domestic issue was acknowledged it was not necessarily addressed, as that action would require further introspection and self-awareness. What is also notable about the domestic villain is that he or she does not disappear following sensation fiction’s decline in
popularity but resurfaces in the detective genre decades later in much the same form. This indicates that like the ever-increasing problems arising from Victorian social issues, their literary incarnations would not just disappear.

Because a moral and rigid family structure is the basis of Victorian society, the criminal of the detective story is most often an outsider, though in the case of the domestic villain, the reader does not fear a threat from outside familiar society but the danger from within. The domestic villain is frightening because of his or her familiarity. The continuing popularity of this type of villain reveals that the contemporary reader is aware of the fragility of the domestic structure glorified by Victorian culture and exposes a general fear and anxiety concerning one’s own company and home.
Conclusion

The indicators of criminality in late Victorian detective fiction are numerous and varied. In order to assess the patterns presented in this thesis, let us revisit Mrs. Wood’s “Going Through the Tunnel” for a final time and reexamine the passengers in the carriage. Each of these characters is representative of one type of criminal, one pattern of villainy. A review of comparable detective fiction from the period provides new clues as to the potential criminality of each character and makes the crime that occurs in the tunnel seem even more problematic than our initial voyage inside of Mrs. Wood’s locomotive. Now the reader is able to look at the suspects through the perspective of the Victorian detective and to use the lens of cultural power and authority that detective employs.

To begin a brief examination of the each of the suspects as the Victorian reader might, the viewer may look for a visual indicator of criminality. It is likely that the villain may be marked by some facet of his or her appearance that communicates a tendency towards evil or which marks the villain as a member of the “criminal class.” The servant Wilkins is suspect simply because the middle class reader may have preconceived notions about his moral composition due to his status as a servant. The dark gentleman is, as the lunatic notes, initially above suspicion due to his rank. However, as in the case of jewelry thief Simon Carne, this lack of suspicion would (and does) make it easier for him to commit the robbery. The lunatic is suspect because his appearance marks him as foreign and is reminiscent of the colonial subject that the British consciousness distrusts and fears. The veiled Lady is suspect because her
appearance is masked, disallowing the transparency that is supposed to differentiate a moral
from an immoral woman. Finally, the bespectacled man is a possible suspect because the
Victorian reader familiar with the genre of sensation fiction and domestic villainy may not trust
his appearance of normalcy. Examining the genre as a whole allows the reader to see the
characters as Johnny and the Squire see them, and to view each passenger through the
perspective of the Victorian detective.

While it is important to examine each type of criminal individually, I argue that patterns
of villainy in these pieces of detective fiction create an interdependent whole, which
paradoxically functions as a means to support the Victorian social structure and is a reflection
of anxiety regarding the disintegration of that society as a result of its defects. For example, the
visual villain in detective fiction demonstrates the desire to see crime in others, to identify those
who are dangerous through the employment of scientific method or empirical knowledge, and
to maintain strict order through this taxonomy of the criminal. However, as Thomas Boyle
notes in the previous chapter, the society in which Victorians lived was not the ordered state
advertised by these classifications but one that was randomly violent. As such, the compulsive
need to classify and identify the criminal is a direct response to this chaos. So while science
advertised regulations for identifying criminals and notions of where the criminal class could be
geographically located, these statements of fact are merely a desire to create order where there is
actually little stability.

The need to classify the criminal extends to the idea of the criminal class and the
compulsory need to place each person into a predetermined hierarchy that supports the
advancement of the middle and upper classes at the expense of the larger working class. The
middle and upper classes are theoretically justified in their comparative wealth because they are
of a higher moral character than the working class. The confidence man and painted woman are offensive in that they defy classification and prohibit this easy categorization. The colonial subject and exotic villain are essential concepts for the British hierarchy and classification system described above. More specifically, middle- and upper-class citizens must justify military action and monetary gain by consistently promoting and glorifying British identity in a way that is similar to the supposed contrast between the middle and working classes. This glorification inevitably requires vilifying those in opposition to British interests and beliefs or those Britain seeks to exploit. Awareness of this exploitation leads to fear of retribution, hence the rebellious colonial subject that appears in detective fiction.

The glorification of British identity requires that the British domestic space continually engender British citizens capable of reproducing the above hierarchy. The domestic space is promoted as essential to the physical and mental health of women in an attempt to create the conditions for this reproduction. Therefore, female villains outside of this space are mentally or physically unwell, as are the women British society deems unsuitable for the proliferation of Victorian identity, such as the exoticized woman. In this way order, by means of controlling reproduction and familial structure, is maintained.

The domestic villain is a contradiction in that he breaks the rules of criminal classification. The Victorian concept of criminality is based on the supposed contrast between the criminal and the respectable middle class; however, the domestic villain is a member of the middle class. In the domestic villain the system of classification with which Victorian culture seeks to define self and villain becomes blurred. Here, the lens of cultural power and authority used to identify and categorize other criminal types must be refocused back on the reader, and the ways in which that society defines the villain must be reconsidered.
By means of its popularity, sensational nature, and unique dependence on fear and crime, detective fiction as a genre has the potential to influence a society of readers primed to police class, ethnic, and gender barriers and to preserve existing social boundaries. Again, the reasons behind the detective or contemporary reader’s suspicions are not necessarily representative of reality, but of an idealized Victorian reality that reinforces cultural values. The concept of guilt and innocence in these stories undoubtedly bears the shiny gloss of sentimentalism that Halttuten describes. And as Halttunen also notes, sentimentalism served to deny agency in growing social problems of the era while justifying existing practices. The villains in these texts and the motivation behind their actions are not precise representations of social groups but are more accurately a middle class understanding of criminality crucial to the continuation of Victorian identity.
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