

**SPIRITED DETECTION: SCIENCE AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN  
VICTORIAN DETECTIVE FICTION**

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of supernatural elements in Victorian-era detective fiction. By focusing on critically neglected detective stories involving ghosts, clairvoyance, dreams, mesmerism and providence, I highlight the genre's emphasis on what counts as evidence, and I argue that Victorian detective stories use the supernatural to address questions of epistemology that extend beyond the fictional world to reassure readers in the midst of significant social, political, and religious changes in Britain. I illuminate how these texts treat pseudo-scientific, scientific, and supernaturally-received knowledge, and explain the implications for character morality, as defined by providence, when supernatural and scientific phenomena like clairvoyance and mesmerism are used by detectives and criminals.

The second chapter examines the use of supernaturally-received and perceived evidence and how the supernatural appoints detectives to solve crimes. I argue that instances of prophetic dreams and the intervention of ghosts and providence in fictional investigations grant reassurance to the readers by reestablishing order at the conclusion, an order which does not exclude the moral grey area occupied by the detectives who transgress the social order in order to restore it. The third chapter focuses on Seeley Regester's *The Dead Letter* (an American novel that was popular in England) to argue that Victorian detective fiction morally-coded supernatural and pseudo-scientific abilities in a way that supports a providential understanding of justice and social order.

The fourth chapter discusses the Victorian anxiety about conflicting modes of knowledge as figured through the tension between providence and criminal mesmerism. The criminals in the stories examined in the chapter use mesmerism to effectively rewrite the providential narrative, and their victims struggle to reassert their own narrative authority but ultimately must rely on providence to solve the case. Due to the multitude of Victorian definitions for supernatural phenomena, I conclude with appendices in which I provide a flexible and controlled vocabulary in XML tags to encourage and facilitate further exploration of the patterns of how the supernatural is used in detective fiction. The appendices examine how our modern efforts to categorize elements of text (including supernatural phenomena) mirror the nineteenth-century desire to categorize and thus control knowledge.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER II BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: THE SUPERNATURAL SOLVING OF CRIMES .....	26
Nineteenth-Century Debates about the Supernatural .....	31
The Tension of Evidence in Detective Fiction.....	39
A Murder is Announced...But Does Anyone Heed It?.....	44
The Interpretation of Empirical and Supernatural Evidence.....	57
Empowering the Called Detectives .....	69
Who is Chosen and Why.....	76
Punishment and Morality .....	88
CHAPTER III CLAIRVOYANT LENSES AND CLOUDED MORALITY: MESMERISM AND CLAIRVOYANCE USED BY INVESTIGATORS .....	96
Clairvoyance and Mesmerism.....	104
<i>The Dead Letter</i> Case Study.....	114
Working with Supernatural Evidence .....	118
Mobility and the Privilege of Gaze .....	132
The Punishment.....	147
Burton, the Detective Mesmerist.....	150
The Battle of Wills .....	159
CHAPTER IV “NEFARIOUS ENDS”: CRIMINAL MESMERISTS AND PROVIDENCE.....	166
A Threat to Order and Morality .....	171

	Page
The Fear of Invasion and Loss of Agency .....	191
The Struggle for Order and Control .....	199
Restoration of Order .....	224
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION .....	240
WORKS CITED .....	248
APPENDIX A TAGGING THE SUPERNATURAL: A DIGITAL EXPERIMENT ....	263
Choosing a Method .....	265
Editorial Decisions and the Customized TEI Tags .....	272
Editorial Bias .....	280
APPENDIX B DICTIONARY OF ELEMENTS AND ATTRIBUTES .....	284
APPENDIX C TEI-ENCODED TRANSCRIPTION OF “THE DIARY OF ANNE RODWAY” .....	294
APPENDIX D TEI-ENCODED TRANSCRIPTION OF “THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE” .....	345

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1. Burton Mesmerizes Lenore .....	143
2. Hypnotism Contortions .....	144

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The method of murder, and the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific. That is to say, pseudo-science and purely imaginative and speculative devices are not to be tolerated in the *roman policier*. Once an author soars into the realm of fantasy, in the Jules Verne manner, he is outside the bounds of detective fiction, cavorting in the uncharted reaches of adventure. (Van Dine)

Published in September 1928 in *The American Magazine*, the author S. S. Van Dine's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" imposes restrictions on the genre that would not have been recognized sixty years before. Looking back on the genre and taking the Sherlock Holmes stories as the epitome of Victorian detective fiction, as many scholars do, it may be tempting to deny that there is anything clairvoyant, mesmeric, or otherwise "pseudo-scientific," "purely imaginative," and "speculative" about the genre and its detectives. However, the detective genre has its roots in a blend of Gothic literature, ghost stories, religious tales of divine justice, and romances as well as the "rational and scientific" stories Van Dine prefers. As several scholars of recent years have compellingly argued, an understanding of the detective genre that does not allow room for the supernatural or preternatural is too reductive.<sup>1</sup> The genre's boundaries are

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Maurizio Ascari's book *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction* (2007) and Michael Cook's recent book *Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story* (2014) both explore the generic hybridity of detective fiction and especially focus on the inclusion of the supernatural in detective fiction.

not so rigid or exclusive as Van Dine and others have made them sound. Ingrained in the genre is a tradition of belief that justice will always triumph, that murder will out, and that tradition is usually related to a divine or supernatural influence.

The work of detective fiction scholars who exclude the supernatural from the genre rests on an ahistorical understanding of what “science” was in the Victorian period. By delving into the archive of supernaturalism, I discovered a more complete understanding of how the texts themselves are examining different Victorian theories about ways of knowing and addressing the anxiety in the Victorian era about what was true and what stabilized their community. While Van Dine declares that the “method of murder, and the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific,” Victorian authors often wrote murders committed by means of mesmerism and crimes that were solved through supernatural or pseudo-scientific means like dreams, ghosts and clairvoyance. Part of the problem with Van Dine’s rule is that he categorizes the pseudo-scientific and supernatural as irrational in contrast to rational science. Many Victorians believed clairvoyance and ghosts *were* rational science. For the detective genre, Van Dine creates a false dichotomy between the two that was not popularly recognized even twenty years before he wrote his rules. In the Victorian era, the line between science and the supernatural was not set in stone, and many authors of detective fiction like Catherine Crowe, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and even Arthur Conan Doyle blended what we now popularly view as two distinct fields. This is not to say that no one in the nineteenth century would have agreed with Van Dine. Some critics, readers, and authors shared Van Dine’s preference for the rational and ratiocinative methods despite the number of



stories that rely on the supernatural. Those who preferred rational detective methods were less inclined to believe in the supernatural at all. In the later Victorian era there was less interest in fiction that followed providential plot lines.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the preference for rational detective methods showcased the genius of the detective, emphasizing the human mind's ability to overcome all mysteries and regulate society without the need for providence or other ill-defined otherworldly forces. Although the Spiritualism movement made the topic of ghosts and clairvoyance popular, and scientific inquiries into the veracity of mesmerism kept the subject in the public eye, not everyone was convinced that any of these phenomena were real. There were those who preferred the type of detective fiction defined by Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin stories and continued in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories wherein the detective relies on his own mental prowess and deductive abilities to solve the crime. However, these preferences for ratiocination by no means represented any accepted "rules" governing the genre at the time, and many readers did not share these preferences. In the span between Dupin and Holmes (and continuing to the present day), there were many detective stories drawing on the mysteries of the supernatural and pseudo-scientific in addition to the crimes that need to be solved within the narratives, including ghosts, dreams, clairvoyants, and mesmerists.

It is not the case, as might have been expected, that an already-established version of detective fiction—fixed in structure and purpose—was merely recognized and seized as a good format for examining the mysteries of the supernatural and pseudo-

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<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Vargish's book for a further discussion of the historical use of providential plot lines.

scientific; rather, as Maurizio Ascari outlines in his *Counter-History of Crime Fiction* (2007), there has been a connection between detective fiction and the supernatural from the beginning of the genre. The earliest detective fiction included at least hints of the supernatural, if not overt supernatural influences represented in the fictional world of the story as truly otherworldly events. For instance, in Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (first published in *Gresham's Magazine* in April 1841), which many people consider to be the first English-language detective story, some characters wonder if there were supernatural forces involved in the case before the detective Dupin solves the case and proves otherwise. Several months earlier (in January 1841), Catherine Crowe's *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence* was published in England. Unlike Poe's story, which ultimately dismissed notions of the supernatural, Crowe's novel embraces the supernatural as a force to assist the detective.

Beginning with ghost stories involving crime and detection at the start of the tradition in the 1840s, and moving forward through stories involving clairvoyance and mesmerism published through to the end of the century, I am including supernatural detective stories that are usually left out of the genre. When these stories are included, they emphasize the genre's interest in different types of knowledge and adds the exploration of the prevalent questions in Victorian society about the mysteries of supernaturally received or dependent knowledge, pseudo-scientific knowledge, and knowledge that was defined as scientific, as well as the challenge of knowing what the truth is in an age when "knowledge" and "truth" are no longer stable and definitive. The stories are concerned with the tensions between scientific and supernatural knowledge

and the uncertainty and instability that this tension produced. The detective stories featuring the supernatural take on these mysteries, link them to the mysteries of criminal activities that also threaten society, and in the end provide reassurance for the readers. The Victorian era was one of great change courtesy of the industrial revolution and of reform movements to protect women, children, the poor, the ill, etc. Conceptions of personal identity were changing. Imperialism pitted the British against many different cultures, which were viewed as a challenge to British national identity. The crisis of faith brought about by scientific advancements caused people to question religious worldviews and wonder about the dangers new scientific experimentation might unleash. The detective stories discussed in this study address fears regarding agency, safety, faith, national identity and personal identity.

When researching the supernatural in Victorian detective fiction, one might expect to find that as the century progressed, science would increasingly prevail over more superstitious forms of knowledge like prophetic dreams. Such a pattern would support the long-held understanding of “the triumph of secular over the sacred” in the nineteenth century (Nash 65). Instead, in the texts involving supernatural phenomena that focus on solving worldly crimes there is an overarching sense—continuing as the century progressed—that a transcendent (often divine) power oversees the detection of crime and the punishment of criminals. This persistent sense of providence reinforces the belief that good will triumph over evil, but does not always create a strict division between good and evil as one might expect. Providence serves as an arbiter of morality related to the types of knowledge and their use in the stories. Some types of knowledge

granted control and power over others and are portrayed as dangerous. Even those characters working for justice can become dangerous/immoral if they use certain knowledge and skills.

While detectives tend to become increasingly ratiocinative in their investigations and while empirical evidence gains more privilege over ineffable evidence toward the end of the century, I argue that when the detectives are faced with criminals using mesmerism, their ratiocination is not enough to prevail: in these instances, the divine intercedes on the detectives' behalf and restores balance and justice while also reassuring the readers of the order of the world around them. I also argue that the different types of supernatural/pseudo-scientific abilities are morally coded, or, rather, that the morality of the characters becomes defined by their use of certain supernatural or pseudo-scientific abilities. I am interested in tracing how the supernatural detective stories accord with Victorian Christian dogma and how providence may be viewed both literally and as a figurative way for the stories to determine what behavior related to the supernatural is socially acceptable (and moral), and what behavior is not. For instance, literary texts portray recipients of prophetic dreams and helpful ghostly visitations as morally good characters who are rewarded at the close of the texts, whereas those characters who use mesmerism are morally grey or are portrayed as wholly bad. Victorian detective stories construe knowledge and the way it works as mysteries, which is one of the reasons why the authors are attracted to the supernatural and mesmerism as plot elements.

Rather than simply reflecting a (false sense of a) mass-cultural shift from faith-based belief to rational scientific belief, the detective genre maintains a position between the supernatural and the scientific. Both types of knowledge are privileged in the stories that I examine from the start of the genre in 1841 to the end of the century, and they are used together to solve crimes and mete out justice. In many of these stories the criminals usurp the detective's assumed narrative authority (and the authority of providence). These detective stories that involve the supernatural and pseudo-scientific exist between the poles of empirical scientific knowledge and ineffable supernatural knowledge. The solution of the mystery about which kind of knowledge gives greater access to the truth is never definitively solved in the stories. The same cacophony of dissenting opinions in Victorian treatises on clairvoyance, ghosts, mesmerism, etc. is represented in these stories so that (as suggested in Chapter II) the tension between the poles is productive for the investigation of the crimes.

Previous scholarly work on the supernatural in Victorian detective fiction includes Maurizio Ascari's 2007 book *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational*, Srdjan Smajić's 2010 *Ghost-Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science*, and Michael Cook's 2014 book *Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story*. Ascari works to map hybrid zones between genres and takes a historical approach to the genre, while Smajić's main argument deals with the questions of vision and perception and with the intersection of detective fiction and the supernatural. Cook's work—the most recent of these contributions—focuses on the frequent crossing of genre boundaries between ghost

stories and detective fiction in the Sherlock Holmes stories and twentieth-century detective fiction and argues that the ghost story is the ancestor of detective fiction. My argument—that the supernatural retains an important and powerful role in the genre through the nineteenth century—opposes Maurizio Ascari’s and Heather Worthington’s sense that science progressively supplants the supernatural in detective fiction. Ascari looks to Heather Worthington’s *Rise of the Detective in Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction* (2005) and her discussion of the development of the figure of the detective:

Thus, science was starting to assert its role as the guiding light of detection and punishment....In her recent book, Heather Worthington analysed the serial investigating figures of professionals—such as physicians, barristers and attorneys—who prepared the way for the detective proper, also in relation to the development of the New Metropolitan Police (1829) and the Detective Police (1842)....The sphere of detection was increasingly regarded as the proper domain of professionals who mastered specific disciplines and technical skills, while the theological apparatus that had formerly been utilized to contain crime in the absence of police forces became less and less relevant to the discourses of crime. (Ascari 39)

Ascari recognizes that the supernatural was not entirely supplanted by science, claiming that while part of the genre moved toward ratiocinative detection, another set of writers “were ‘rediscovering’ the link between detection and the supernatural” (40). While most scholarship on the supernatural in detective fiction has focused on what is commonly

perceived to be the mainstream tradition favoring ratiocination and science, I disagree with Worthington's assertion that the "theological apparatus" becomes less relevant. If anything, the supernatural was needed in instances when the criminal was able to use powers such as mesmerism that could not be fought by mere intelligence. There was no flag in interest that required a "rediscovery" of the supernatural as Ascari suggests there was. The supernatural featured in stories throughout the Victorian era and continues to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorians' interest in defining, categorizing, understanding, and controlling the world around them is confounded by the conundrum of supernatural phenomena because, as was the case with some newly discovered aspects of science at the time, such as x-rays, light waves and radio, one could not easily see in order to believe. One could not see the supposed magnetic forces that enabled clairvoyance and mesmerism, for example. Likewise, the supernatural phenomena such as spirit communications could not be empirically proven to come from spirits. Ghosts, prophetic dreams, clairvoyance and mesmerism were all put to the test many times by well-respected people in the hopes of discovering the truth behind the phenomena. The public grappled with questions of whether apparently supernatural phenomena could be explained by science, whether they were hoaxes, or whether they were spiritual phenomena that have little or nothing to do with science. Spiritualism, clairvoyance, and mesmerism presented challenges in a time when scientific fields were being defined and traditional knowledge systems were

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<sup>3</sup> The supernatural in present day detective fiction is discussed further in the Conclusion.

challenged in the crisis of faith.<sup>4</sup> The Victorians struggled to understand their relationship to the “other” world, if such a thing exists, and to understand what, if any, effect that other world has on *this* world. In the second volume of his 1875 *Glimpses of the Supernatural*, Rev. Lee references Father Perrone, who “calculated that upwards of two thousand treatises [had] been published” on Spiritualism between 1860 and 1875 (184). With thousands of books and pamphlets published on the subject within a few decades positing explanations of the phenomena that many characterized as supernatural, it is hardly surprising that these mysteries of the natural and supernatural world featured in detective stories as well.

Detective fiction has been given several definitions, which explains many of the disagreements among scholars about “firsts” in the genre as well as whether or not stories with clairvoyance, mesmerism, and ghosts like Charles Warren Adams’s *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1862-3), and Seeley Regester’s *The Dead Letter* (1866) really even belong in the genre.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars insist that there must be a professional

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<sup>4</sup> See Alison Winter’s book *Mesmerized* for a discussion of mesmerism and clairvoyance in relation to the establishment of what we now recognize as distinct areas of science.

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars cite Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) as the first detective novel in England because it is the first novel featuring a police detective working to solve a crime that is the central plot of the text. Others cite Charles Dickens’s earlier *Bleak House* (1853) as the first of the genre because there is a police detective trying to solve a crime (even though it is not the main plot of the novel). More recently, scholars have put forth Charles Warren Adams’s *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1863) as the first detective novel because it is the first novel in England that wholly revolves around solving a crime and features a detective figure (though he is not a police detective). A similar set of disagreements exists in America between those who credit Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin short stories (the first of which appeared in 1841), Seeley Regester’s *The Dead Letter* that centers on solving a murder (1866), and Anna Katharine Green’s *The Leavenworth Case* (1878) that features a true police detective and a slightly less domestic plot, as the founders of the detective genre in the United States.



detective rather than an amateur investigator for the story to be considered detective fiction, and others, like Michael Sims, believe that *The Dead Letter* in particular is more of a romance and relies too heavily on irrational detective methods to qualify. In his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime*, Sims says that while many consider *The Dead Letter* the first American detective novel by a woman (actually, it is the first detective novel in America, regardless of the author's gender), "in fact the story depends heavily upon psychic visions and coincidence. Earning ancestor status at best, it can't qualify as a legitimate detective story" (xix). The significant supernatural and pseudo-scientific material in the book automatically disqualifies it from classification as a detective story in Sims's opinion, which, like Van Dine's, does not properly take into consideration the wealth of detective stories with supernatural elements even at the start of the genre.

In the same vein, some scholars believe that mesmerism is an aberration in the detective genre, which would thus preclude the texts I examine from being considered alongside Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and other apparently archetypal texts. Sarah Crofton, for example, includes mesmeric novels in the occult detective genre, which she views as outside the true detective tradition because the occult and mesmeric detective stories "[disrupt] the archetype" by pointing out the gap between psychical research/the occult and scientifically accepted facts (29).<sup>6</sup> Her understanding of the

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<sup>6</sup> Occult detective fiction is a subgenre that usually involves a detective solving, or resolving, a supernatural crime or event. Many people cite the character of Van Helsing from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) as one of the first occult detectives. Martin Hesselius in Sheridan Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) is another nineteenth-century example. I will not be discussing the occult detective tradition in my study because I am

detective archetype falls in line with the work of scholars such as Charles Rzepka, Lee Horsley, Franco Moretti, and Winifred Hughes, who view the world of a detective story as a closed system in which the detective holds a privileged place as an arbiter of meaning as he or she constructs a narrative of the crime that is so authoritative that the stories often do not need to include “scenes of jurisprudence or deliberations by a judge and jury once the detective has explained his deductions” (Crofton 38). Crofton explains that in Holmesian stories, “[i]n the presence of the great scientific detective, the evidence is enough because the detective’s scientific knowledge is a synecdoche for the metaphysical truth of his whole universe” (38). Such an understanding of the genre is too narrow, however. Crofton is right to point to the occult detective tradition as quite different from the Holmes stories, but places too much emphasis on the idea that there is an “archetype” of detective fiction in the nineteenth century, let alone that the archetype is the Holmes corpus. Looking back at the nineteenth-century detective fiction tradition while using Sherlock Holmes as the archetype is a mistake that excludes scores of books by claiming that they are genre hybrids rather than in fact the building blocks of that tradition.<sup>7</sup> The works discussed in this study were selected because they represent different types of supernatural and pseudo-scientific phenomena solving crimes, committing crimes, and they represent different approaches to the phenomena; thus, they serve as a representative sampling of supernatural detective stories. Only a few of the stories have received in-depth critical attention from scholars. In the case of *The Dead*

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focusing on the use of the supernatural in solving earthly crimes and not in solving supernaturally committed crimes, possessions, curses, or vampires.

<sup>7</sup> See Michael Cook and Maurizio Ascari’s books for more complete histories of the detective tradition and the supernatural.

*Letter*, only one scholar has devoted sustained attention to the book.<sup>8</sup> “The Haunted Homestead” and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” in particular have received little to no attention. The other stories have been discussed briefly by scholars, but in studies that are either so narrowly specific that there is still much to be said about the stories (Smajić), or in studies that are so broad that few details have been discussed (Ascari). None of the prior scholarly works focus on (or discuss with any depth) how the stories engage with debates about supernatural knowledge, morality, and perceptions of order.

The supernatural and pseudo-sciences have a complicated history with respect to questions of definition and of reception in the Victorian era. The nineteenth century in Britain saw a crisis of faith brought on in part by the scientific advancements that challenged the authority of the Bible.<sup>9</sup> Religious views of Spiritualism and divine justice fell out of favor in a large portion of the population who preferred a more strictly scientific approach. This is reflected in life by the development of forensic science and in fiction by the increasing popularity of the figure of the ratiocinative detective.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Spiritualism remained a palpable and popular belief system that influenced religion, science, and culture. Marlene Tromp observes in *Altered States* that the Victorians “were both firm believers and dismissive skeptics, but, from the Queen to the

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<sup>8</sup> See Catherine Ross Nickerson’s *The Web of Iniquity* for her discussion of *The Dead Letter*.

<sup>9</sup> Evidence of evolution, for example, challenged the Biblical creation narrative, and scientific efforts were proving that the world was much older than the timeline established in the Bible. Provable scientific facts were becoming privileged over the knowledge of faith required in religion. Victorians began to turn away from religion in large numbers or questioned their faith in light of scientific advancements and the culture of empirical thought that developed around it.

<sup>10</sup> See Ronald R. Thompson and Lawrence Frank’s books for further information on the rise of forensics.

quarry, Spiritualism held their attention,” and “the practices of Spiritualism may have helped shift the terms of mainstream discourse” (5, 9). As a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, Spiritualism began with the Fox sisters in America in 1848. The two younger Fox sisters, Margaret and Kate, convinced the oldest, Leah, that the spirit of a murdered peddler was communicating with them by making knocking sounds. They devised a system of knocks (yes, no, and the alphabet) by which to converse with the spirit. The girls’ neighbors became convinced that the haunting was real as well. More people heard the story and witnessed the communication and were convinced that Margaret and Kate were mediums who could converse with spirits. They began holding public séances with Leah acting as their manager.<sup>11</sup> The girls became a popular sensation, and the Spiritualism craze crossed the Atlantic to England where it also flourished. Many years later Kate and Margaret confessed that they were frauds, but the movement carried on anyway. The front sheet of the first volume of the English publication the *Spiritual Magazine* from 1860 (just when the movement gained popularity in Britain—enough to warrant the establishment of a journal dedicated to the subject), gives the following definition:

SPIRITUALISM is based on the cardinal fact of spirit communion and influx; it is the effort to discover all truth relating to man’s spiritual

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<sup>11</sup> It is unclear how the terminology of Spiritualism was established. Séance is from the French for “sitting” or “session” and in English it became specifically associated with Spiritualist sessions in which people try to communicate with spirits of the dead. The term “medium” in Spiritualism was likely adopted as a reference to the idea that a “sensitive” person acts a bridge or vessel, or the medium through which the spirits communicate with this world. The mediums were passive and were not the ones communicating with the spirits.

nature, capacities, relations, duties, welfare, and destiny; and its application to a regenerate life. It recognises a *continuous* Divine inspiration in Man; it aims through a careful reverent study of facts, at a knowledge of the laws and principles which govern the occult forces of the universe; of the relations of spirit to matter, and of man to God and the spiritual world. It is thus catholic and progressive, leading to true religion as at one with the highest philosophy. (n.p.)

Not everyone would have agreed with this definition, however. The definition's reliance on a deity might particularly have caused dissent. Some believed that spirits, clairvoyance, and mesmerism could all be explained scientifically and thus were not reliant on God or any other supernatural power.<sup>12</sup> Still others thought that Spiritualism was entirely fraudulent. Even amongst those who believed in a supernatural truth, some feared the practice of Spiritualism as the influence of the devil and evil spirits. Rev. Lee, for example, called it modern necromancy and witchcraft in 1875. He believed that what was called witchcraft in earlier times was the same as the clairvoyance of his own day (*Glimpses* 205-206).

While there was little to no consensus about Spiritualism in Victorian times, there were several recognizable schools of thought. A contributing author in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* (1862) identifies four hypotheses to explain Spiritualism: "fraud, self-delusion, the operation of some hitherto undiscovered natural law, and spiritual agency" (206). Many other nineteenth-century writers on the subject worked

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<sup>12</sup> See for example Esdaile's *Mesmerism in India* (1846) and J. H. Brown's *Spectropia or Surprising Spectral Illusions Showing Ghosts Everywhere and of Any Color* (1864).

with their evidence in light of these hypotheses. Among the Victorian writers of pamphlets, magazines and journal articles, and book-length texts on the supernatural and pseudo-sciences, there are five schools of thought. 1) Those writers who believe that all “supernatural” phenomena are scientifically explainable. For them, religion plays no role, and there is no such thing as the supernatural. 2). Those asserting that supernatural events are all rooted in a religious context. This context is usually Christian, though it is occasionally modified by Eastern influences, such as C. W. Leadbeater’s interest in Buddhism. Several proponents of this stance believe that science can help to explain the events, as all natural and spiritual concerns are governed by the laws of God’s creation. They believe that Spiritualism is a gift to help humanity know the divine and the spiritual realm. 3). Those writers who propose that religion explains the supernatural but believe that Spiritualism in the form of séances and clairvoyance is the work of the devil and is dangerous. 4). Those averring that Spiritualism is nothing but a hoax or the result of delusions created by wishful thinking, suggestibility, or mental illness. 5.) Those authors who claim they are presenting the facts and evidence on all sides of the matter and leave it to the reader to decide. Frequently, texts in this group approach Spiritualism dualistically, with evidence presented that supports either the truth of Spiritualism or the assertion that it is all a hoax. These five approaches to Spiritualism and related supernatural phenomena are reflected in the detective stories examined in this study, creating a complexly nuanced pattern in the Victorian-era treatment of evidence, knowledge, truth, and crime.

Just as the nineteenth-century understandings of the supernatural and science are difficult to categorize, so too are the phenomena themselves. Authors often tie ghostly visions to clairvoyant ability, as in prophetic dreams which are sometimes delivered by spirits of the dead. Theorists also sometimes connected clairvoyance to mesmerism, and mesmerism is sometimes believed to be the explanation for all of the other phenomena as well. I use the term mesmerism interchangeably with hypnotism and animal magnetism through much of this project due to the overlapping of meanings behind the terms throughout the Victorian period. “Animal magnetism” was the name given by Dr. Franz Mesmer in the late eighteenth century to what people began calling “mesmerism” in nineteenth-century England. Mesmer’s conception of animal magnetism was that there was a magnetic force in and around people, animals and objects, and that this force could be manipulated.<sup>13</sup> Around 1841 James Braid presented his theory of hypnotism, which covered many of the same phenomena and results supposedly produced by mesmerism but which asserts that the results are due to the power of suggestion rather than a magnetic force. By the end of the nineteenth century, the terms mesmerism and hypnotism tended to be used interchangeably. Several of the stories discussed here do not clarify whether the force involved is imagined to be mesmerism or hypnotism, often giving only a vague definition. “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” in Catherine Louisa Pirkis’s *Experiences of Loveday Brooke* (1894) is a notable exception, however, as the description of the force being exerted matches the technical definition of hypnotism and the power of suggestion rather than the original definition of mesmerism.

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<sup>13</sup> See the translated version of Mesmer’s book for further details.

Attempts at definitively categorizing phenomena as instances of “clairvoyance,” “mesmerism,” or “vision dreams” in the stories is a challenging feat because of the fluid definitions of and theories about the phenomena. The novels and short stories discussed in this study do not always give strict definitions or labels to the phenomena they include. Instead, the phenomena remain indeterminate and mysterious. This raises a question: is the supernatural the mystery or the solution in these stories? It is neither and both. On the one hand, the supernatural is sometimes investigated and “solved” (often in the form of instances of phenomena being proven or disproven, such as when they have been faked), but that is usually not the main focus of the tale. On the other hand, the supernatural frequently helps to solve the crime being investigated, but in many of these cases the supernatural influence itself is not “solved;” characters within the stories may have differing opinions about whether the phenomena were coincidences, the effect of imagination, a supernatural force, or something that can be scientifically explained. Throughout the following chapters, I provide nineteenth-century definitions for each type of phenomena in an effort to place the stories and events in context before analyzing their use in the stories.

In the tradition of the ineffable (by which I mean supernaturally-received knowledge) working in detective fiction, the supernatural often remains outside the main mystery of the text and is not accounted for. In his article “What is ‘Sensational’ about the ‘Sensation Novel?’” Patrick Brantlinger observes that the sensation novel and later detective novel genres tend not to address larger struggles in society in the way that, for example, Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1853) does. Instead, the novels “conclude in



ways that liquidate mystery: they are not finally mysterious at all” (21). Brantlinger oversimplifies the detective genre and overlooks an important element of the stories: everything is not neatly tied off at the end of the text. All the supernatural events are not resolved or explained in such a way that everything mysterious is “liquidated” (21). Of the stories that he lists as examples of this kind of concluding “liquidation,” Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1861), and Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868) in particular are notable for their use of supernatural, or, as Brantlinger prefers, preternatural, events in each case. These events include the prophetic dreams in *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *The Woman in White*, and the mesmerism and possible clairvoyance employed by the Indians in *The Moonstone*, which are not explained to the satisfaction of all the characters by the accepted scientific knowledge of the day. The character Murthwaite in *The Moonstone*, who has spent years in India observing the culture, attempts to explain the mesmerism exercised on a young boy by one of the three Indians seeking the Moonstone diamond. His explanation—that mesmerism is real in the sense that it is the effect of suggestion—is not wholly accepted by the other characters or by the story itself because Collins suggests that the boy medium is a clairvoyant and is not simply mesmerized and saying what the Indian man wants him to say as Murthwaite suggests is the case. Likewise, Robert Audley’s and Marian Halcombe’s dreams (in *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *The Woman in White* respectively) give them information that they have no way of knowing even subconsciously, and these dream visions are not explained scientifically or supernaturally in the stories. The dreams simply are what they are and remain unsolved

mysteries (like untraced anonymous tips) that help the investigators to persevere in their cases. These preternatural/supernatural events are not resolved into rationality by the end of the novels, but endure past the final pages as unsolved mysteries. In a stance similar to Brantlinger's, Winifred Hughes argues in *Maniac in the Cellar* that the detective genre was a return to the reassurance of the melodrama (with sparkling heroes rewarded for their virtue and dastardly villains soundly punished) because the stories end by explaining away all of their mysterious elements. Unlike what Hughes suggests, many of the stories examined in this study instead retain a sense of mystery at their ends and that mystery involves the supernatural. Nevertheless, the persistent sense of divine intervention created by the presence of the supernatural does lend a sense of reassurance to the genre not unlike the reassurance provided by the endings in melodramas. No matter how clever or how powerful they are in their use of mesmerism, for example, the villains always lose, as they do in melodramas. The detectives, however, are not always as sterling as the heroes of melodramas because their use of mesmerism in particular taints them.

I have arranged my chapters so that the discussion of the supernatural phenomena that works through the detectives without their attempting to harness the phenomena comes first. Chapter II discusses these stories that feature ghosts, prophetic dreams, and providential interventions. The next chapter addresses clairvoyance, which was viewed by some as a supernatural gift and by others as a scientific phenomenon, as well as mesmerism. Chapter IV focuses on the tension between providence and mesmerism, which was most often considered scientific or at least pseudo-scientific.

This structure also creates a roughly chronological pattern, as I discuss the earliest stories in the second chapter and most of the latest in the fourth chapter. In this way, the study can trace the different forms of supernatural involvement in detective fiction in chronological context with each other and in the context of the changing understandings of science and religion in the nineteenth-century.

Chapter II, “Betwixt and Between: The Supernatural Solving of Crimes,” examines the use of supernaturally received or perceived evidence and the way in which the supernatural appoints detectives to solve crimes. This chapter examines instances of prophetic dreams, ghostly visitations, and the intervention of providence in fictional criminal investigations. Closely examining several stories [including Charles Dickens’s “The Trial for Murder” (1865), Wilkie Collins’s “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost” (1885), “The Diary of Anne Rodway” (1856) and *The Woman in White* (1860), Catherine Crowe’s *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence* (1841), and Henry William Herbert’s “The Haunted Homestead” (1840)], the chapter argues that there is a productive tension between empirical and supernatural evidence and that the investigators in these stories feel themselves to be divinely called to their role as detectives. The stories demonstrate the reassurance granted by the restoration of order, but also the moral and social grey area inhabited by detectives who transgress social order in order to restore that order. The chapter examines the detectives who are divinely called to investigate, and the way the supernatural grants them agency and authority in their texts without suffering punishment for any transgressions they may make in the pursuit of justice. None of the sleuths in this chapter are intentionally

exercising a skill such as clairvoyance; rather, the supernatural acts on or through them without their bidding. As a result, they retain their status as morally upright protagonists, unlike many of the characters discussed in the subsequent chapters who are associated with mesmerism, which is treated as a scientific field by the authors examined here.

Chapter III, “Clairvoyant Lenses and Clouded Morality: Mesmerism and Clairvoyance Used by Investigators,” continues to discuss the supernatural assisting detectives in their investigations by focusing on Seeley Regester’s novel *The Dead Letter* (1866). The novel is the only Victorian example I have found in which the detective uses mesmerism to access clairvoyance to solve a crime. Other instances of such investigations have been occult detective stories, concerned with solving supernatural phenomena or were written after the Victorian era. This chapter argues for a pattern of the morally-coded supernatural abilities that supports a providential understanding of justice, a pattern which can be seen in stories discussed in the other chapters as well to a lesser degree. For example, *The Dead Letter* portrays clairvoyance as a divinely given talent that is morally acceptable, but the exercise of mesmerism harms an innocent child and taints the detective with moral greyness because his exertion of mesmeric will over the young clairvoyant echoes the application of the criminal’s will over the child as well. Chapter II demonstrated the moral rectitude of the clairvoyants through whom the supernatural worked unbidden, and Chapter IV addresses the immorality of criminals using their abilities for their own benefit. I argue that *The Dead Letter* demonstrates nineteenth-century detective fiction’s criminalization of

characters, even detectives, who abuse their power over other people and disrupt the providential order because exercising too much (ill-understood) power threatens the stability of society.

Chapter IV, “‘Nefarious Ends’: Criminal Mesmerists and Providence,” turns slightly away from the investigation and towards the committing of crimes. Focusing on nineteenth-century detective stories of crimes committed by mesmerism, I discuss the Victorian anxiety about conflicting modes of knowledge and social order as figured through the tension between providence and criminal mesmerism. I argue that in Charles Warren Adams’s *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1863), Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), Ernest Henry Clark Oliphant’s *The Mesmerist* (1890), Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite* (1894), and Catherine Louisa Pirkis’s *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894), the criminals use mesmerism for their person gain and, in effect, rewrite the narrative that had been set out for them by providence. The victims and detectives struggle against the mesmerist’s abilities with little success in part because mesmerism is not a proven fact in these stories. The victims and detectives find it difficult to prove empirically that mesmerism is being used for nefarious ends. In three of the novels, the victims and detectives seek to convince an implied reader of the truth through narrative efforts in an attempt to regain control of their lives and to convince others of what seems impossible. The stories do not provide one definitive answer for the concerns about conflicting modes of knowledge, order and control. Instead, I argue that they invite the readers to engage with the mystery themselves and reach their own conclusions. The narratives encouraged readers to work along with the

fictional detectives to weigh evidence, and then encourage readers to apply those analytical skills to the mysteries they face in the greatly changing world around them.

In an effort to encourage further research on the supernatural in Victorian detective fiction and to overcome the difficulty of the obstacle presented by the plethora of definitions for the various supernatural and pseudo-scientific phenomena described in the stories, I have developed a dictionary of TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) elements and attributes. TEI is a standardized set of XML (Extensible Markup Language) tags adopted by humanities scholars. The existing TEI schema is mostly concerned with describing structural elements of texts, but with the new tags I have developed, scholars interested in tracking the patterns of how the phenomena are used in the narratives will have a ready schema to facilitate this work. I have defined the elements and attributes of the phenomena and their context in the stories with enough flexibility to accurately describe each mention of a phenomenon. The full data dictionary can be found in Appendix B. The TEI tags describe and classify the various supernatural occurrences in the stories such as clairvoyance, prophetic dreams, and ghosts, as well as their context such as whether or not a phenomenon is discussed positively or negatively, if it is viewed as supernatural, scientific, or pseudo-scientific, how it relates to the structures of detective fiction, etc. My discussion in Appendix A focuses on the way our modern efforts to categorize and describe elements of text connects to the nineteenth-century desire (and struggle) to categorize the supernatural, and further illuminates the question of how we know what we know. Appendix C and Appendix D then provide transcriptions of Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway" and Pirkis's "The Ghost of

Fountain Lane” which have been fully encoded with the new TEI elements and attributes.

This study is intended as an addition to the admirable works on the Victorian-era detective genre, and as a contribution to the effort to understand why the supernatural features so prominently in these detective works. Despite Van Dine’s complaint that stories including the supernatural “cavort[] in the uncharted reaches of adventure,” detective stories involving the supernatural are clearly not outside the bounds of the genre but instead provide useful insight into the Victorian understanding of science, pseudo-science, and the supernatural as mysteries to be solved and as a reassurance in the face of significant changes throughout the world. When we fail to recognize the significance of the supernatural in the genre, we overlook important insights into the stories’ approaches to knowledge types and morality.

**CHAPTER II**  
**BETWIXT AND BETWEEN:**  
**THE SUPERNATURAL SOLVING OF CRIMES**

Before the rise of forensic science, fictional detectives gathered evidence through dreams, ghosts, and fate or the Hand of God. These supernatural phenomena provide evidence to the detectives, and that (ineffable) evidence often points toward physical evidence that can be used to empirically prove the solution of the cases such as in a court of law. In Victorian detective fiction, supernatural evidence circumvents both physical and social restrictions of the world, making it valuable to the investigators and to the writers' plots. The rise of Spiritualism in the Victorian era fueled a long debate about whether the phenomena of ghosts and dreams were real or fake, and if they were real, whether they fell into the realm of science or of religion. This debate coincided with scientific discoveries that brought about a crisis of faith in England, calling the absolute authority of the Bible into question.<sup>14</sup> Scientific laws became more influential in the culture and the Victorians debated the distinction between what was science and what (if anything) was outside of natural science. Yet the inclusion of visionary dreams, the revelation of ghosts, and the work of providence in detective fiction were not merely a result of the new interest in Spiritualism. Instead, the phenomena root the genre in an older tradition of divine justice stretching back earlier than the Middle Ages. In his excellent book *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, Maurizio Ascari traces the history of

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<sup>14</sup> Work such as Darwin's publications about evolution, and breakthroughs in work on dinosaur bones called the Genesis narrative into question and also disproved the Bible's narrative of how old the world is, for example.



the supernatural in crime fiction and notes that “if we explore the medieval and early-modern cultures we realise that they expressed a common belief in the power of ‘supernatural entities’ not only to punish criminals in the afterlife, but also to ensure their detection on earth, notably when they were guilty of murder—the capital sin” (18). The nineteenth-century tensions between faith and science spilled into and defined the debate about Spiritualism, clairvoyance, and mesmerism, and they spilled into detective fiction as well.

Whereas detectives like Sherlock Holmes and C. Auguste Dupin, among the most famous of fictional detectives of the time, make it seem that nineteenth-century detective fiction favored ratiocinative detectives who solve crimes by means of cold logic and scientific evidence, a closer examination of the corpus reveals that detective fiction was also interested in exploring the interplay between the scientific and the supernatural as modes of knowledge. In the early years of the detective genre, between the 1840s and 1880s in particular, features such as ghosts, dreams, and providential influence appeared regularly in the texts. Rather than trying to solve the mystery of the supernatural (as the occult detective fiction genre does), detective fiction often featured the supernatural serving as evidence to solve “natural” crimes, particularly murder.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The beginning of the occult detective fiction tradition is generally identified as November 1855 when Fitz-James O’Brien’s short story “The Pot of Tulips” was published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. The occult detective tradition continued through the nineteenth century and to the present day in America and the United Kingdom, though the term is usually associated with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts. The occult detectives seek to solve supernatural events (some of which are associated with crimes) whereas the detectives I am examining seek to solve crimes in which the supernatural becomes involved. Not all scholars agree with this distinction between the types of detective fiction (such as Tim Prasil); however, for my purposes, I

The prevalence of supernatural evidence highlights the tension between older and newer understandings of justice and the supernatural. Types of knowledge were debated in nonfiction as well as fiction in the Victorian era, and in early detective stories there is more emphasis on how one knows what one knows, or, put another way, how scientific and supernatural evidence must work together, rather than on celebrating the logical genius of the detective who shows off how he or she came to his or her brilliant conclusions. Short stories and novels including Henry William Herbert's "The Haunted Homestead" (1840), Catherine Crowe's *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence* (1841), Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Andrew Forrester Jr.'s *The Female Detective* (1864), William Stephen's Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864), Charles Dickens's "The Trial for Murder" (1865), and Wilkie Collins's "Diary of Anne Rodway" (1856), *The Woman in White* (1860), and "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost" (1885) demonstrate how authors involve supernatural phenomena in solving crimes by providing evidence and warnings. In a world rife with changes to the society, technology, and faith, the persistent presence of the supernatural in detective fiction ensures that the crime is solved and order is restored, creating a reassuring sense that there is still order in the world without rejecting all of the new changes. Legal reforms in Britain relating to women, children, marriage, and the poor, and improved understandings of the natural laws of the universe caused anxiety in the Victorian era, yet detective stories embrace the status of supernatural

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am making the distinction based on whether or not the primary purpose of the story is to solve a crime.

phenomena as external to the natural order, the social order, and the legal order to support some of these changes.

Yet these stories are often left out of the genre's line-up because many scholars of detective fiction prefer the tradition of the ratiocinative detective to the stories that rely on the supernatural and blend significant amounts of Gothic and romance elements into the criminal investigation. Such an understanding of the genre ignores the fact that the detective fiction genre began as one that combined two types of knowledge: 1) empirical, scientific knowledge, and 2) intuitive, supernatural knowledge. This chapter examines how the tension between the two types of knowledge drives the investigations forward and challenges the characters to reassess their understanding of the world around them and the crimes in which they are involved. The combination of the scientific and the supernatural challenges the preconceptions of empirical and intuitive forms of knowledge, chronology, and how to interpret evidence.

The authors discussed here use the supernatural to work through their own varied insecurities about debates of the scientific and supernatural and the growing preference for scientific evidence. In the stories, the supernatural appears to enforce a fairly black and white view of right and wrong, and yet it simultaneously makes it possible for detective stories to acknowledge and consider new grey areas between science and religion, truth and lies, the law and justice, and right and wrong behavior. The supernatural and the empirical play off of each other, one leading to the other, and together solve the mystery and restore order to the story. Thus, rather than privileging either physical evidence and scientific knowledge or intuition and the supernatural,

something between the empirical and the intuitive is needed because the empirical, physical evidence alone is not enough to solve the mysteries. The supernatural, often divine, influence works to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. The most likely solution to this conundrum of the tension between the empirical and the intuitive evidence, as seen in these texts, is humanity's ability to use logic and intuition to make sense of physical, empirical evidence as well as experiential evidence such as dreams. The successful detective considers both sets of evidence, pulling them together to weave a coherent narrative, checking one kind of knowledge against the other to test its soundness. Furthermore, the supernatural in these stories does not simply reinforce a strict world order wherein everyone has a place from which they should not deviate. The divine in fact helps people to deviate from their socially prescribed places in these stories. For example, the supernatural seems to favor women detectives, choosing them to receive their revelations and guidance more often than male characters.

Before analyzing the particulars of science and the supernatural in fiction, an overview of nineteenth-century attitudes and theories is in order, including cases when the debate appears in real criminal investigations. From that grounding, the importance of the tension between scientific and supernatural modes of knowledge will be more discernible in the fictional investigations as ghosts, dreams and fate guide the outcome of the cases. After discussing the supernatural evidence in the stories, the final section of the chapter will turn to the detectives through whom the supernatural influences the natural world and explore why these particular characters are chosen within the context of the story and what the authors accomplish by "appointing" one or two of their

characters to be conduits of the other-worldly. In particular, authors such as Wilkie Collins, Catherine Crowe, Andrew Forrester, Jr., William Stephens Hayward, and Ellen Wood write stories wherein women detectives are appointed by a higher power to act outside of their normal sphere of influence without unforgivably transgressing the boundaries of their prescribed roles. The same kind of knowledge that later writers and scholars scorned as superstitious is exactly the kind of knowledge that makes women such effective investigators. Incorporating tropes of the supernatural in criminal investigations into their detective fiction, the authors examined in this chapter explore the uncertainty of scientific and supernatural types of knowledge. The best detectives in these tales need to use both types to solve the crimes. Those who accept the supernatural as a guide or as viable evidence risk being labeled as fallen or mentally unsound by society, yet the stories laud them instead and do not punish them.

### *Nineteenth-Century Debates about the Supernatural*

There is no word more fallacious, indeed, than fact: e.g. there is nothing more indubitable, attested by the eyes and senses of more witnesses, than that the sun moves every day across the sky; yet every educated man now knows that it never so moves at all. The most undeniable self-evident fact existent is no fact at all, but an illusion. (Verney 521)

Reflecting non-fictional writings on the supernatural, fictional Victorian detectives and the characters around them question whether the phenomena they

experience are true, false, or coincidence.<sup>16</sup> Even the stories in which investigators benefit from supernatural assistance do not always present the supernatural as an accepted fact. In investigating supernatural phenomena, nineteenth-century thinkers experienced what Peter Lamont calls a “crisis of evidence” (897). As they examined séances and other Spiritualist phenomena and events, the investigators struggled to find the “right kind” of evidence to prove what was true and what was false. Some of the investigators began to doubt the validity of religious modes of knowledge when the crisis of faith and the rising preference for scientific knowledge and evidence gained prevalence.<sup>17</sup> Lamont’s contention is that “those who were not convinced that the phenomena were supernatural also struggled to provide a natural explanation, and when the reality of the phenomena was ostensibly validated by scientists, the problem of séance reports provoked a crisis of evidence” (899). This debate about Spiritualism was demarcated in part by whether or not one was appealing to “religious rather scientific authority” behind the evidence presented, because some Victorians tried to find scientific evidence to prove ghosts and other Spiritualist phenomena while others preferred to draw on religious explanations and their intuitive understanding of their experiences (917).

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<sup>16</sup> See Frances P. Verney’s article “Evidence: Historical, Religious, and Scientific” in *Fraser’s Magazine* Oct. 1871 (pp. 512-524) for a further discussion of the different types of evidence needed to prove scientific facts and the type needed to prove religious facts, as well as historical approaches that have been taken to these questions.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Nash’s article, “Reassessing the ‘Crisis of Faith’ in the Victorian Age,” and Turner’s *Between Science and Religion* for more information on the Victorian crisis of faith. See also Frank and Thomas for information about forensic science and the changes in knowledge and evidence types in the Victorian era.

Some nineteenth-century writers believed, as Catherine Crowe writes in her book *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), that the supernatural is not a disruption to the way God ordered the universe but merely something we do not yet understand.<sup>18</sup> Andrew Lang, for example, who served for a time as the president of the Society for Psychical Research, wrote that there was no such thing as the *supernatural* for the simple reason that it was all, in fact, natural, and merely had not yet been explained by scientific laws (*Cock Lane* xii).<sup>19</sup> Others, like J. H. Brown, set out to prove that there are no such things as ghosts by demonstrating that all supposed sightings are the result of “mental or physiological deception” (7).<sup>20</sup> Of those who believed ghosts, dreams, clairvoyance and other supernatural phenomena to be possible, there were those who embraced phenomena such as clairvoyance and ghosts as new avenues of scientific enquiry that

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<sup>18</sup> Catherine Crowe (1803-1876) was an English writer who became very interested in Spiritualism and was, for a time, a respected literary figure in England. *The Night Side of Nature* was widely read and is even mentioned in O’Brien’s occult detective story “What Was It: A Mystery,” published in 1859. See Lucy Sussex’s book *Women Writers and Detectives in Nineteenth-Century Crime Fiction* (2010) for further details of Crowe’s life and notoriety. *The Night Side of Nature, Or, Ghosts & Ghost Seers* was first published in 1848 in London. The quotes in this text are drawn from the 1852 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

<sup>19</sup> The Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882. According to their website, they were “the first society to conduct organised scholarly research into human experiences that challenge contemporary scientific models” (*Society*). There has never been a group consensus of beliefs regarding the examined phenomena; the group has been held together instead by the shared interest in applying scientific methods to studying the unexplained.

<sup>20</sup> In his book *Spectropia or Surprising Spectral Illusions Showing Ghosts Everywhere and of Any Color* (1864), Brown discusses the science behind human vision and optical illusions. He provides a series of simple silhouette images in different colors and instructs his readers to stare steadily at an image for a length of time, and then to look at a blank white wall. If for example, one stares at a red image, one will then see a green image on a white surface due to the way the eye receives light waves of different colors. He believes this after-image effect and other optically produced illusions explain all ghostly sightings.

would help humanity to understand itself and its relation to this world and other worlds. In a time before scientific fields of enquiry were definitively defined, there were those who believed that ghosts were natural phenomena that could be studied and explained in a way that would build on existing laws of physics. The fact that current science could not explain the existence of ghosts or the workings of clairvoyance, prophetic dreams, etc. did not mean that scientific knowledge was incorrect.<sup>21</sup> For instance, a theory explaining dreams wherein people communicate with each other (like Marian Halcombe's dream of Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White*) was that thoughts could be transferred on wavelengths that could not be perceived by the known and developed sense organs, but could be perceived by underdeveloped sense organs about which science knew little or nothing, a sixth sense, or animal magnetism.<sup>22</sup> Another example was the belief that ghosts might exist in a different plane or world that could occasionally communicate with our world. Alternatively, there were those who feared the attempt to communicate with ghosts or explore clairvoyance as dangerous dabblings in devilish powers. One such author was the Reverend Frederick Lee who believed that the supernatural exists and that some instances of it (revelatory dreams, for example) are good and beneficial, but that the practice of Spiritualism (trying to contact the dead) is mostly unsafe and unholy. He also decries fraudulent mediums as damaging to society:

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<sup>21</sup> Winter discusses the development of distinct fields of science in relation to the development of mesmerism and hypnotism in her book *Mesmerized* (1998). See also Brown, Burdett, and Thurschwell's *The Victorian Supernatural*, Oppenheimer's *The Other World*, and Owen's *The Darkened Room* for discussions of Victorian approaches to the supernatural, preternatural, and scientific.

<sup>22</sup> Leadbeater, for example, discusses this theory of wavelengths in his text *Clairvoyance* (1899). Leadbeater was very influential in the Theosophical Society and was a well-known figure in England.



“By counterfeiting genuine prodigies and true revelations, therefore, [the devil] draws men into the deadly meshes of a degrading and damnable superstition, by means of a delusive and lying supernaturalism. And the mischief resulting from such an active and successful policy is by no means on the wane, if they are not surely on the increase, in these dangerous latter days” (*Glimpses* 1.159-60).<sup>23</sup> Fraudulent mediums, in his estimation, are encouraging people to misunderstand the divine and unholy powers at play, and the practices of these frauds not only call genuine divine works into doubt, but also inspire people to try to claim too much power for themselves.

Meanwhile, many nineteenth century authors encourage further investigations into the supernatural to find the truth rather than fearing experimentation as Reverend Lee does. In an article reprinted in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* (1862) edited by “Sceptic,” the unnamed author cautions against the dangers of simply dismissing the existence of the supernatural: “If we stamp all those who declare that they have witnessed these so-called ‘Spiritual Manifestations’ as liars, of course the inquiry will be at an end” (206). The author advocates investigating rather than making an assumption and ignoring something simply because it seems unlikely. Likewise, Catherine Crowe’s stated object in her treatise on Spiritualism, *The Night Side of Nature*, “is to suggest inquiry and stimulate observation, in order that we may endeavour, if possible, to discover something regarding our physical nature, as it exists here in the flesh, and as to its existence hereafter, out of it” (v). Further investigation might produce evidence that

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<sup>23</sup> This quotation is from the first volume of Lee’s book *Glimpses of the Supernatural: Being Facts, Records and Traditions Relating to Dreams, Omens, Miraculous Occurrences, Apparitions, Wraiths, Warnings, Second-Sight, Witchcraft, Necromancy, etc.* printed in London in 1875.

would link the supernatural to empirical scientific knowledge for Crowe, who acknowledges that there is a problematic lack of evidence and proof which scientists are willing to accept since so much of the existing work on the supernatural relies on anecdotal and experiential evidence (13). However, she believes that scientists are not objective when it comes to the supernatural because they come to the problem with their minds already made up. She instead says that “experience, observation, and intuition” will be the guides of those researching the supernatural because science, intellect, and logic are against the supernatural (2). Both scientific inquiry and Crowe’s supernatural inquiry share the tool of observation, though they choose to test observations against different types of evidence for verification. As in Verney’s quote at the beginning of the section, observation can mean the observation of an illusion. Charles Dickens preferred a more skeptical approach to hauntings, premonitions, second sight, etc., because he was more convinced by mesmerism than by supernatural explanations of phenomena (Henson 44). Science, even in the Victorian age, preferred observations that could be reliably reproduced and supported by other physical evidence, while many of those studying Spiritualism placed more value on the corroborating evidence of shared experiences even if they could not be reproduced or scientifically studied.<sup>24</sup> Such un-empirical evidence was part of the crisis of evidence discussed by Lamont, and the scientific unwillingness to accept such information continues today when scholars dismiss personal accounts about experienced supernatural events “as inherently

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<sup>24</sup> See Lang’s *Cock Lane and Common Sense* for an anthropological approach to the question of whether ghosts, etc. exist. He suggests that the large volume of anecdotal evidence from around the world sufficiently supports the hypothesis that the supernatural is real.

unreliable sources” (Lamont 898). Other writers of the day pursued more scientific experiments in hopes of finding empirical evidence, which was the approach taken by the Society for Psychical Research, for example.

The detective fiction examined here often embraces a view of the supernatural that supports the existence of a spiritual world (usually rooted in the Christian tradition). By examining the works of Crowe and Lee, we gain a good understanding of the basics of such an approach that is useful to an examination of the detective stories. Both authors discuss the duality of the world and the duality of humanity in connection to their theories of the supernatural in a way that sheds light on how Victorian detective stories establish their characters in relation to the supernatural.<sup>25</sup> Lee, a minister in the Church of England, argues that we experience two worlds: “the Natural, which governs the physical and moral laws of the world, and the Supernatural, which...governs the moral laws of man” (*Glimpses* 1.157). Lee believes that the supernatural exists in the world to guide humanity. Crowe describes a dual nature within humans by distinguishing the physical from the spiritual in the individual and explaining that the organs and senses of the physical body are for interacting with the material world while our souls are for understanding the universe and God (*Night* 47). In her theory she asserts that the Holy Spirit influences the individual through the soul, but the soul may not heed that influence if the person relies too much upon his or her physical body and

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<sup>25</sup> I think it likely that Lee, writing in 1875, had read Crowe’s *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), because he references many of the same historical examples such as the man who claimed to have a dream warning of the upcoming death of Mr. Perceval, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was shot dead in the House of Commons (before the dreamer could warn him). Crowe’s book was widely read and several editions were printed over a number of years.

senses. Crowe bases this on the writings of Saint Paul who says that man is composed of spirit, soul, and body.<sup>26</sup> Saint Paul considers the spirit to be part of the human whereas Crowe views the spirit as an external being, but Crowe shares Saint Paul's understanding that the soul and body are two distinct parts of a human and serve different purposes. Crowe's own detective figure, Susan Hopley, uses both her physical senses and her spiritual senses to solve the murders of her brother and employer. Other fictional detectives mention feeling that they are led (or forcefully pushed along) by the hand of fate, providence, or more specifically by God, which Crowe would probably suggest falls into the category of the "spirit" influencing the soul and driving the detectives to investigate. Many of the stories discussed in this chapter refer to God in particular, or to a providential force more generally, and so it is useful to read these texts in a Christianity-based context wherein a duality exists of the soul (supernatural) and the body (natural). Such a reading is also not so very different from a reading in which a duality between science and the supernatural exists because the pertinent point for these stories is that there is a tension between the empirical and the ineffable with mankind standing at the intersection of the two, able to perceive and weigh the value of evidence from both as a result of their dual nature. These detective stories embrace the duality of human nature and of the world presented by these theories. When crime is committed, the supernatural steps in to assist in the investigation by working through an appointed agent or two to carry out the investigation. The authors explore the tension of

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<sup>26</sup> The source of this tripartite concept is generally cited as 1 Thessalonians 5:23, in which Saint Paul closes his letter: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the King James translation.

definitions and perceptions through their detective fiction, which is, of course, concerned with solving mysteries.

### ***The Tension of Evidence in Detective Fiction***

Catherine Crowe's approach to the question of credible evidence in *The Night Side of Nature* sheds light onto the similar concern in detective fiction. Crowe is concerned with the difference between intuitive and empirical evidence, or what she calls "evidence from within and evidence from without" (*Night* 13). Many skeptics of Spiritualism cited the lack of empirical scientific evidence (evidence from without) as the reason why they did not believe in Spiritualism which is notorious for its reliance on experiential and intuitive evidence that cannot be replicated on demand or proven scientifically (thus, evidence from within the one who has experienced it). This tension between evidence from within and evidence from without extends into detective fiction because even the detectives who believe in supernatural evidence are aware that they cannot use this evidence to prove their case to the world. In fact, Crowe uses this tension in her 1841 novel, *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence*, wherein the heroine is assisted by "evidence from within" in the form of a dream vision of her brother's ghost. Other stories used a similar approach with prophetic dreams, ghosts, and a strong belief that the detective is being guided by fate. Frequently, the dreams in these stories reveal a truth to the investigators that sets them on the right path of inquiry—a path they might not be able to find on their own. Dreams of this type were sometimes connected to the study of clairvoyance, because people (usually women,

sickly, or passive people) who had these dreams were believed to be clairvoyantly sensitive and likely to be able to commune with other people's minds, read sealed letters, etc. In such novels as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and "The Diary of Anne Rodway" (1856), various characters have prophetic dreams that either reveal information that the investigator would take a long time to find on their own or they reveal future events to the dreamer. The dreams are like cheat codes that allow the investigator to leap forward in their inquiries despite a lack of empirical evidence.

Several of the stories, such as "The Haunted Homestead," address the danger of supernatural evidence swaying people away from the truth. This mirrors examples from real criminal investigations and court cases which are discussed in texts about the supernatural in Victorian times such as the pieces by Sir Walter Scott and Andrew Lang, both titled "Ghosts Before the Law." Scott discusses the few cases he has heard of involving ghosts presenting evidence in trials, and Lang adds a few more cases to the list. Scott wrote a section on "The Trial of Duncan Terig *alias* Clerk, and Alexander Bane Macdonald, for the Murder of Arthur Davis, Sergeant in General Guises's Regiment of Foot, June 1754," and Lang addresses Scott's writing as well as the trial in his own article appearing in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1894 (Lang "Ghosts" 210). During the trial of Duncan Terig and Alexander Bane Macdonald, a man named Alexander Macpherson testified that the ghost of Sergeant Davis had visited him, told him where his body was and asserted that Terig and Macdonald had killed him. Physical evidence presented in the court strongly implicated Terig and Macdonald, and the jury

was, apparently, inclined to find them guilty. However, when Macpherson was asked what language the ghost spoke, Macpherson replied, “As good Gaelic as he had ever heard in Lochaber,” to which the counsel answered, “Pretty well...for the ghost of an English sergeant” (qtd. in Lang 214). Doubt was thus cast on Macpherson’s testimony about the supernatural evidence, and, surprisingly, doubt fell over the related physical evidence as well. The jurors privileged the ghost’s testimony in such a way that it shaped their interpretation of the physical evidence, too. The perceived revelation that Macpherson was lying about the ghost’s testimony shifted the jury’s understanding of the narrative as a whole, and cast doubt (for reasons not made clear in Scott’s and Lang’s writings) on the interpretation of the physical evidence. The jury acquitted Terig and Macdonald as a result. Lang denounces the jury’s decision to ignore “the other incriminating evidence” as “illogical” (214). He also suggests that “the old theologians would have declared that a good spirit took Davis’s form, and talked in the tongue best known to Macpherson” (214). Alternatively, Scott suggests that Macpherson knew about the murder and “invented the ghost, whose commands must be obeyed, so that he might escape the prejudice entertained by the Celtic race against citizens who do their duty” (Lang 215). This court case demonstrates the perceived dangers surrounding the tensions of spectral evidence and physical evidence in courts, and the fear that guilty people may have gone free. Lang and Scott are both of the opinion that Terig and Macdonald were guilty and that the jury came to the wrong verdict after being confused by what they believed was false spectral testimony. By extension, this story suggests that spectral evidence and physical evidence need to work in conjunction, and that

people such as detectives and jurors need to use the physical evidence to check their interpretations of the supernatural evidence.

Despite the primacy of this concern about privileging religious/supernatural evidence or scientific/empirical evidence in the nineteenth century, in detective fiction the focus is less on proving whether the phenomena are true or false, scientific or religious, and more on the solution of the crime. The authors may use the supernatural as a narrative tool to advance their plots and add spine-tingling elements, but when the stories are considered together the supernatural serves a greater purpose than a mere literary device. The authors use the supernatural (by which I mean both the phenomena studied by Spiritualists and the religious belief in the divine) to challenge modes of knowledge as it relates to solving crimes. They are not making theoretical arguments about whether or not ghosts are real outside of fiction. Within the tales the supernatural is not part of the mystery but part of the solution. Doubts about the validity of supernatural evidence arise in the stories, but the primary concern of the characters and narratives is not to answer those doubts. Some of the texts do prove that the supernatural event is faked, such as Anna Katharine Green's *The Leavenworth Case* (1878), and some fake the supernatural to provoke an incriminating response as in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "Levison's Victim" (1870). In most stories, while some effort might be spent on trying to understand the supernatural occurrence, the supernatural usually goes un(re)solved, and remains beyond the detective's grasp at the end of the story though the crime has been solved. This is not, however, a cause for concern within the texts. The stories end with order restored to the characters' lives, and they are contented leaving the



supernatural as a good sort of mystery. The supernatural, unempirical evidence assists the detectives, and while the sleuths do not always know if they fully believe in the supernatural or not, they are grateful that the crime has been satisfactorily resolved.

In a similar vein of supernatural assistance for detectives, there is also a tradition of ghosts revealing information about their own deaths. This is the case in situations when the death might not be suspected to have been murder or in cases when the ghosts want to protect loved ones or take revenge on their killers. By 1878 the prophetic dream wherein a ghost imparts evidence or knowledge was such a popular trope that a falsified dream of a ghostly visitation denouncing a murderer is used as a red herring in Anna Katharine Green's American novel *The Leavenworth Case*.<sup>27</sup> These ghostly appearances are not necessarily the work of some transcendent power but are the efforts of human spirits to help order the world of the living, and they are often linked to Spiritualism and clairvoyance more than dreams and the guiding hand of fate. Stories featuring visionary dreams and ghostly visitations include Henry William Herbert's "The Haunted Homestead" (1840), Catherine Crowe's *Susan Hopley* (1841), Charles Dickens's "The Trial for Murder" (1865), and Wilkie Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway" (1856) and "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost" (1885). Concerns about categorizing credible evidence were prominent not only in detective stories, scientific laboratories, and the court of law, but also in the court of public opinion, prompting questions about

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<sup>27</sup> In *The Leavenworth Case*, the killer tells the hero amateur detective that he had a revelatory dream on the night of the murder in which Mr. Leavenworth's long-deceased wife burst into his room and wakened him to warn him that her husband was in danger. The killer then claims he witnessed Mr. Leavenworth's murder in the dream and names his romantic rival as the killer. The detectives discover that this is a lie told to cast suspicion on the wrong person.

how we know what we know, and what counts as credible evidence. What types of knowledge are privileged; the ineffable or empirical facts? A pattern emerges in Victorian detective fiction stretching from Herbert's "The Haunted Homestead" in 1840 through Collins's "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost" in 1885 wherein ghosts, prophetic dreams, and providence shape the criminal investigations by working with empirical evidence to reconstruct the narrative of past events. The next section examines how ghosts worked to ensure that the living know a murder has occurred (stepping in when there is no physical evidence to prove it) and the way investigators resist accepting the supernatural as real before discussing the fruitful tension between physical evidence and supernatural evidence and how the two work together to correctly interpret facts and recreate the narrative of the crime. The natural companion of these narrative devices is the trope of the supernatural pointing to physical evidence to satisfy the human desire for "facts."

### ***A Murder is Announced...But Does Anyone Heed It?***

Drawing from the long tradition in folklore of ghosts visiting the living to tell them they were murdered, the authors of detective fiction use the trope to explore the reluctance to accept that the supernatural is real.<sup>28</sup> Echoing the real-life reluctance felt

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<sup>28</sup> One story that is retold in nearly all such nineteenth-century books on ghosts is the real case of the Red Barn Murder. In 1827, William Corder murdered his lover Maria Marten and buried her beneath a red barn. Her family believed that she had eloped with Corder and the truth was not discovered for nearly a year. Her mother claimed she had a recurrent dream that Maria's spirit appeared to her and told her where she was buried. Eventually the mother decided to test the truth of the dream. The floor was dug up, and Maria's body was found. Corder was then traced, tried, and hanged. The story was hugely popular at the time and inspired ballads and plays, some of which enjoyed a long-lasting popularity. See Lucy Sussex's book *Women Writers and Detectives in*

by many readers and the general populace towards investigations into Spiritualism, most characters in these stories are reluctant to accept that the supernatural is real and that supernatural evidence is worth taking into consideration. Yet in each story at least one character rises to the challenge of accepting knowledge that cannot entirely be explained. Beginning chronologically in 1840, Henry William Herbert's short story "The Haunted Homestead" is an early example of fictional ghosts ensuring their murders are investigated.<sup>29</sup> Set shortly after the Revolutionary War, the tale recounts the murder of a traveler who then haunts the tavern where he met his killer (185). The traveler stops at Hartley's Hawknest tavern for a rest during a storm, but wishes to press on to the next settlement. Unfamiliar the area, the traveler accepts Cornelius Heyer's offer to show him the way along the mountain road. Heyer then murders the traveler, robs his corpse, and hides the body. That same night the traveler's spirit begins to haunt the tavern. A loud sound of rushing wind is followed by the sound of something heavy crashing overhead and a wild and eerie laughter that fills the building. Meanwhile, it is perfectly calm outside the building. The occupants fear that the sounds are something supernatural indicating that some foul deed has been done. If not for the haunting, none of the locals would have ever known about the murder and Heyer would never have been caught.

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*Nineteenth-Century Crime Fiction* for further historical details about the Red Barn Murder (15-17).

<sup>29</sup> Herbert was an Englishman of aristocratic family (his grandfather was the Earl of Carnarvon) who emigrated to the United States in 1830. He was a writer and briefly edited the *American Monthly Magazine*, which he helped to found. "The Haunted Homestead" was printed in three parts in the *The Ladies' Companion, A Monthly Magazine* in the United States.

Most of the locals in “The Haunted Homestead” are willing to accept that something supernatural is trying to get their attention when the strange sounds haunt the tavern while a few voices of dissent scornfully call it superstitious nonsense. Among those who believe in the supernatural, however, there is further dissent in their interpretation. Some believe that the supernatural is denouncing the tavern owner for some wrongdoing while others view it as a call to action to solve the traveler’s murder. In “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost,” “The Trial for Murder,” *Lady Audley’s Secret*, and *East Lynne*, characters experience a similar tension surrounding the supernatural as they both do and do not believe that their experiences *are* supernatural. Neither the supernatural nor the scientific evidence is ever completely privileged over the other, and the detective must work with both kinds of information. Herbert’s story embraces the tension between the two types of evidence, suggesting that physical, scientific evidence is needed in the end, but that such evidence might never be found if not for the supernatural evidence pointing toward it.

A few years later, Wilkie Collins’s detective, Anne Rodway, investigates her friend Mary Mallinson’s murder because she is the only one who believes it is murder. Rather than being visited by a ghost, Anne takes up sleuthing after a premonitory dream convinces her that the scrap of cloth found in Mary’s hand is the key to the case.<sup>30</sup> Mary has no other friends or family to look out for her, and when she dies from a head wound sustained on her way home from work, Anne looks out for her interests. The inquest

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<sup>30</sup> “The Diary of Anne Rodway” was originally published in *Household Words* in July 1856. Lucy Sussex suggests that Wilkie Collins borrowed heavily from *Susan Hopley* in his story “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” and observes that the two authors knew each other (*Women* 62-3).

rules that Mary's death was an accident and that she fainted and struck her head while walking home from work, but Anne is not convinced. The doctor in attendance at Mary's death advises Anne to keep the scrap safe until the inquest when it must be presented as evidence, but he warns her that it is probably nothing more significant than "a bit of stuff [that] might have been lying on the pavement near her, and her hand may have unconsciously clutched it when she fell" ("Diary" 5). A dream prompts Anne to hunt for stronger evidence by affirming in her own mind that the circumstantial evidence is more than just a coincidence. Anne's dream revolves around the scrap of cravat. "I thought it was lengthened into a long clue," she writes, "like the silken thread that led to Rosamond's Bower. I thought I took hold of it, and followed it a little way, and then got frightened and tried to go back, but found that I was obliged, in spite of myself, to go on" ("Diary" 32).<sup>31</sup> This premonitory dream reveals to Anne that the physical evidence has more information to reveal—more physical evidence to prove that Mary was murdered. An angel instructs her in Mary's voice, "Go on, still; the truth is at the end, waiting for you to find it" ("Diary" 32). The dream proves true, and it ensures that Anne is on the look out for the rest of the cravat until she finally finds it and is able to follow the trail from there to the killer.

The prophetic dream is a recurring trope in stories often classified as sensation novels as well. For instance, the detective Robert Audley is spurred to his investigation

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<sup>31</sup> The idea of the supernatural vision of clairvoyance or dreams turning ordinary objects into "clues" leading to Rosamond's Bower is echoed in Seeley Regester's *The Dead Letter* (1866).

by a revelatory dream in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*.<sup>32</sup> Robert's friend George Talboys has gone missing, and Robert believes that he is dead. George is estranged from his family and thus Robert is the only one to look into George's disappearance. Robert has a dream that gives him information that puts him on the right track, a track he might not have found otherwise. The dream indicates to him that there is a grave with the wrong woman buried in it, and it gives him glimpses of his future investigation: "At one time he was pursuing strange people and entering strange houses in the endeavour to unravel the mystery...at another time he was in the churchyard...gazing at the headstone George had ordered for the grave of his dead wife" (*Lady* 96). The grave is cryptically significant in the dream: "he went to the grave, and found this headstone gone, and on remonstrating with the stonemason, was told that the man had a reason for removing the inscription, a reason that Robert would someday learn" (96). The dream puts Robert on the track of Lady Audley's secret past and her true identity: George's wife, Helen who is supposedly dead. Robert might well have suspected the connection after seeing George's reaction to the painting of Lady Audley, at which point George recognizes her as his wife, but unless Robert was able to piece together that if Lady Audley is Helen, then someone else must be buried in Helen's grave, it is instead a piece of evidence provided by providence or the supernatural. In this instance, George's ghost does not give the dream to Robert (as the deceased do in

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<sup>32</sup> *Lady Audley's Secret*'s first parts were published serially in *Robin Goodfellow* from 6 July to 28 September 1861. The magazine was discontinued at that point, and the remainder of the novel was published in *Sixpenny Magazine* in 1862 from January through December. The quotes included here are taken from the Oxford University Press edition, which is based on the revised eighth edition.

“The Haunted Homestead” and “The Diary of Anne Rodway”) because George is not really dead, but Robert’s belief that he must solve his friend’s murder is what drives him to stop the criminal Lady Audley.

In an example of the supernatural becoming involved in a fictional court case, Charles Dickens’s “The Trial for Murder” revolves around the ghost of the murder victim watching over the trial of his killer.<sup>33</sup> The narrator recognizes that his story is hard to believe and laments that the evidence to prove the ghost’s existence is so “miserably imperfect,” but he chooses to tell the story anyway (“Trial” 250). The narrator recounts his experience as a juror on a murder case when he saw the murder victim’s ghost working to influence the witnesses and the jury to ensure his killer was convicted. Unlike the characters in the other stories to be discussed, the narrator in “The Trial for Murder” is not a detective, but is still an important figure through whom the supernatural acts and to ensure justice is done. Despite the evidence of the narrator’s own eyes and other senses, which is supported by the experiences of a few other people, the narrator does not whole-heartedly assert that he believes the ghost was really there, and claims not to be telling the story in order to convince the reader one way or the other about the ghost’s existence.<sup>34</sup> He leaves it to the reader, then, to decide what they believe based on the evidence of the narrative he has to tell. In telling the story, the

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<sup>33</sup> “The Trial for Murder” was first published in the Christmas issue of *All the Year Round*, 1865.

<sup>34</sup> As Lucy Sussex says, *The Night Side of Nature* was a popular book on Spiritualism at the time of its publication. Charles Dickens reviewed the book in the *Examiner*, and criticized Crowe for believing in even unlikely ghost stories without taking a sufficiently skeptical approach to her “evidence.” In contrast, Dickens’s narrator takes a skeptical approach to his experiences with a ghost. See Henson’s essay for further discussion on Dickens and Crowe.

narrator claims that he has “no intention of setting up, opposing, or supporting, any theory whatever” (250). The physical evidence and testimony submitted to the court supports the evidence provided by the ghost and by the narrator’s visions, and though the narrator is convinced that the defendant is guilty he does not want to argue for one school of thought regarding the nature and existence of spirits. Nevertheless, he does not offer any alternative version of the narrative and thus influences the reader’s interpretation as much as the ghost influences the narrator.

Like the narrator of “The Trial for Murder,” one of the detectives in *East Lynne*, Barbara Hare, cannot entirely come to terms with the conflict she feels about fate and dreams when compared to rational thought.<sup>35</sup> Near the end of the novel, Barbara asks Lady Isabel (disguised as Mme. Vine, the governess) if she believes in fate. By “fate,” Barbara is referring to the idea that a transcendent force determines the events of the world. Lady Isabel says she does, but Barbara declares that she does not. The narrator remarks, though, that “the very question proved that she did not wholly disbelieve it” (Wood 491). Barbara further says: “Sitting alone in the drawing-room just now, and thinking matters over, it did seem to me very like what people call fatality. That man [Levison], I say, was the one who wrought the disgrace, the trouble, to Mr. Carlyle’s family; and it is he, I have every reason now to believe, who brought equal disgrace and trouble upon mine” (492). In other words, Levison is the killer who let her brother

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<sup>35</sup> *East Lynne* was published by Mrs. Henry (Ellen) Wood in serial installments between January 1860 and September 1861 in the *New Monthly Magazine*. It was then published in 3-volume format with revisions in 1861, and then in an illustrated single-volume edition in 1862, which included further alterations. The quotes here are from the Oxford University Press edition, which is based on the 3-volume text.



Richard live under suspicion for so many years for a crime he did not commit. Barbara's mother has had several dreams about Richard and the killer, and Mrs. Hare believes that they are prophetic dreams. The dreams, along with small details shared by Richard, have combined to convince Barbara that she has found the killer. Barbara may resist accepting the possibility of fate and prophetic dreams because she wants to avoid the disparaging gendered stereotype of being a superstitious woman prone to irrational thinking. Barbara strives to be taken seriously by Archibald Carlyle (the object of her affections from the start of the story and eventually her husband), and Archibald does not put stock in the supernatural. Nevertheless, Barbara chooses to act on the guidance provided by the prophetic dreams, deciding that it is better to take a risk and hope that the dreams are significant than to do nothing to help her brother.

Wilkie Collins turns to the trope of the ghost denouncing his killer in his later story "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost."<sup>36</sup> The ghost of Mr. Zant warns his wife that he was murdered, a fact that had not previously been suspected. The story begins when the widowed Mr. Rayburn and his young daughter Lucy come across Mrs. Zant in the park. Lucy notices that Mrs. Zant is acting strangely and brings the woman to her father's attention. Mr. Rayburn witnesses Mrs. Zant's curious behavior, and, fearing that she is unwell, he and Lucy follow her home. In Mrs. Zant's later explanatory letter to Rayburn she describes her two experiences with her husband's ghost. While walking in the park, Mrs. Zant says that her perception of the world around her changed and she ceased to see things that were really there. Her description suggests that a supernatural presence

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<sup>36</sup> Collins first published this story under the title "The Ghost's Touch" in 1885.

effects her perception and her ability to move: “It was not to be seen, and not to be heard. It stopped me” (“Mrs. Zant” 186). She feels the presence of her deceased husband, but even in that moment of conviction she desires further evidence to prove that he is really there. She says that her “helpless mortality longed for a sign that might give [her] assurance of the truth” (186). Even in the midst of a haunting, Mrs. Zant does not readily believe that her experience is real. Though she never sees her husband and never hears any words from him, and can only think her own questions to him rather than speaking them aloud, she can feel him and the ghost makes his identity known by kissing her. She recognizes the feel of the kiss, “and that was [her] answer” (186). Mr. Zant communicates that he is there to protect her. On the following morning, her husband’s ghost makes her understand that his brother John murdered him, and that John is a danger to her. She sees a vision of the grass around her scorched and burning, which she takes to be a sign of danger, and she “prayed for a warning of it, if danger was near” (188). Her prayer is answered by the feeling of an unseen hand taking hold of hers and raising it to point along the trail of the burning grass to the figure of John Zant. In closing her letter to Rayburn, Mrs. Zant says that she does not wish to unduly influence his interpretation of the story, but admits that she does believe that what she saw was a “supernatural revelation” (188). The feeling of the kiss and the sense of her husband’s presence is enough to convince Mrs. Zant of the truth of her experiences, though as I will discuss later, she still worries that she might be going mad.

In Wilkie Collins’s “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost,” the protagonist who is drawn into the supernatural case is not sure what to believe about ghosts and fate. More than the

narrator of “The Trial for Murder” and Barbara in *East Lynne*, Mr. Rayburn remains in an undecided state of tension about whether he believes there really is a ghost or a rational explanation. Within the context of the story his indecision appears irrational because there is no other reasonable explanation for events. Within the story the existence of the supernatural *is* the rational explanation. At the beginning he entertains an alternative theory, but subsequent events make that theory highly improbable. Mrs. Zant writes a letter to Mr. Rayburn in part to explain her odd behavior and in part to ask his opinion about her sanity. She finds it difficult to believe in some ways that she is “the object of a supernatural revelation,” worrying that she might instead be “an unfortunate creature who is only fit for imprisonment in a madhouse” (“Mrs. Zant” 184). After reading the letter, Mr. Rayburn concludes that she is not mad. He believes that her account of the story demonstrates mental soundness: “The memory which had recalled, and the judgment which had arranged, the succession of events related to the narrative, revealed a mind in full possession of its resources” (189). The alternative interpretation, which he recognizes to be a materialist interpretation, would say that she was “the victim of illusions (produced by a diseased state of the nervous system), which have been known to exist...without being accompanied by derangement of the intellectual powers” (188). Rayburn does not want to go so far as to make a judgment about whether or not what she experienced was a supernatural revelation, but he does not believe she is mad.

In considering the impression the letter has made on him, he does not know exactly what to make of his feelings, but “he was only conscious of feeling certain impressions—without possessing the capacity to reflect on them. That his anxiety on

Mrs Zant's account had been increased, and that his doubts of Mr John Zant had been encouraged, were the only practical results of the confidence placed in him of which he was thus far aware" ("Mrs. Zant" 189). His conclusion that Mrs. Zant is not mad is curiously paired with his unwillingness to believe that she experienced something supernatural. He does not decide if she is the victim of illusions or if she has been visited by a ghost, but does feel that she is in danger, regardless. As he says, he feels that he does have the "capacity to reflect on" and make sense of the information presented to him (189). Despite this, his anxiety is enough to stir "him into instant action," and he goes to talk with Mrs. Zant (189). Rayburn's refusal to believe in a supernatural event in spite of believing in the ghost's warning that Mrs. Zant is in danger is a remarkable lapse of logic on his part. The narrator states what Rayburn will not, that he is "filled...with forebodings of peril to [Mrs. Zant]," and that those forebodings are "all the more powerful in their influence, for this reason—that he shrank from distinctly realising them" (191). At this point, if Rayburn were a more modern student of psychology, he would have heard enough information about John Zant to infer a motive for his peculiar actions. His reluctance to visit his brother and sister-in-law while his brother was alive and his current anxiety about her health (and beauty) provide him with an excuse for "enticing her into his house," and these together indicate a "secret sense of guilt" because John is in love with his sister-in-law and has murdered his brother (192). Rayburn experiences an internal conflict at this point in the story, and yet his instinct wins over his rational side that will not admit that John Zant is suspicious and possibly dangerous, because he feels it is "his duty to reject...[such] unjustifiable aspersions on

an absent man” (192). Despite his attempts to behave rationally, Rayburn decides to take his daughter for a visit to the seaside so that he can keep an eye on Mrs. Zant.

Rayburn’s suspicions are founded when he meets John Zant, and the narrative suggests that Rayburn himself has some psychic ability. After meeting Mrs. Zant in the park, Mr. Raybrun checks up on her, even going to speak to John who appears a pleasant person exhibiting solicitous concern for his sister-in-law’s well-being. Yet when the two men part, Rayburn asks himself, “Is that man a scoundrel?” (“Mrs. Zant” 183). He has very little evidence for thinking so, and yet “[h]is moral sense set all hesitation at rest—and answered: ‘You’re a fool if you doubt it’” (183). Rather than calling his reaction “instinct” or “intuition,” it is his “moral sense,” suggesting that he has an instinct stemming not from his unconscious mind recognizing clues which he has not yet fully processed based on body language or other evidence. Instead, it is a “moral” instinct, though the story does not tell us what this “sense” is capable of perceiving (sights, sounds, feelings, etc.). Rayburn’s reactions to the perceptions of his moral sense are described as “presentiments” (184). This nods toward a sensory organ capable of perceiving things that science has not yet explained, and links Rayburn to the nineteenth-century interest in preternatural phenomena.

Though Rayburn never acknowledges that he believes the supernatural explanation, the reader is likely inclined to believe that version of events. The narrator has not allowed for another interpretation. Rayburn witnesses the ghost’s attack on John Zant at the end and hears Zant say that something has hold of him, so either John Zant is sharing Mrs. Zant’s delusion or there really is a ghost. In contrast to Rayburn, the

narrator clearly points to a supernatural intervention in the form of a vengeful ghost. The opening line of the story makes this clear: “The course of this narrative describes the return of a disembodied spirit to earth, and leads the reader on new and strange ground” (“Mrs. Zant” 173). The narrator acknowledges, however, that some readers will be skeptical: “The record of this event will of necessity produce conflicting impressions. It will raise, in some minds, the doubt which reason asserts; it will invigorate, in other minds, the hope which faith justifies, and it will leave the terrible question of the destinies of man, where centuries of vain investigation have left it—in the dark” (173). The story, then, is not meant to solve the great mysteries of mankind; it purports only to relate a series of events. The narrator claims that he “declines to follow modern examples by thrusting himself and his opinions on the public view. He returns to the shadows from which he has emerged, and leaves the opposing forces of incredulity and belief to fight the old battle over again, on the old ground” (173). This opening roots the story in the long tradition of ghost tales, and as part of the on-going debate between rational disbelief and a faith in the supernatural. The story suggests that the supernatural cannot be discounted simply because it seems unlikely or impossible. If the only explanation for events is that the supernatural is real and that a ghost attacked his killer to protect his wife, then that must be the truth. Collins thus challenges preconceptions about facts and evidence and encourages his readers to open their minds to new ideas.

In “The Haunted Homestead,” “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” “The Trial for Murder,” *East Lynne*, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, and “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost,” impressions of the supernatural are treated with respect and sincerity and are not wholly subordinated

to “rational” thought and inquiry. The authors use the trope of supernatural phenomena to spur investigations. Nevertheless, even within these tales, the supernatural is not always readily accepted and characters feel compelled to privilege science and rational thought as Rayburn and Barbara do. They work with physical evidence and empirical facts, but it is the blend between the supernatural and the natural that leads to the solution of the crimes; neither type of evidence works alone. These initial events challenge the investigators (and readers) to look at evidence, people, and actions from new perspectives. Thus, the stories promote inquiry and require the characters to consider information and possibilities that they might initially resist.

### ***The Interpretation of Empirical and Supernatural Evidence***

Supernatural evidence and physical empirical evidence work best when considered together in these stories because it ensures that the body of evidence on the whole is correctly interpreted. Even though the authors of these stories did not all agree on definitions and beliefs (such as Dickens, Collins, and Crowe), they each wrote stories that address their common ground: the need to investigate both sides of the natural/supernatural spectrum. The goal in a criminal investigation is to reconstruct the correct narrative of the crime from the fragments of the story provided by evidence. During the two years that pass before the killer is brought to justice in “The Haunted Homestead,” for instance, most of the locals become convinced by the wrong interpretation of what the supernatural is trying to say. In the second installment of the story, the Hartley family is in economic difficulty because they have had to close down

their haunted tavern. The locals look on Mr. Hartley with suspicion, believing that his property is haunted because he is the murderer. They believe this in spite of the fact that many of them know as eyewitnesses that he could not have committed the murder. After all, the killing took place “at two miles distance, while Hartley was employed before the eyes of many in his own crowded bar-room” (Herbert 265). Herbert points to the danger of granting supernatural evidence more authority than the rational evidence of their own observations that have been corroborated by many others’ observations. This is a fictional example of a case in which the supernatural holds more authority than physical evidence. Despite what the locals see with their own eyes, they are swayed to doubt physical evidence in light of their interpretation of the haunting. The supernatural evidence needs to be accompanied by empirical evidence in order for the correct narrative of events to be known and believed. The townsfolk “began to shrink from [Hartley], as one on whom the judgment of an offended Providence had weighed too visibly—whom punishment divine had marked out as a sinner of no small degree!” (265). The opinions of the people are not portrayed in a positive light, and their belief in the long-standing “murder will out” order of the universe very nearly allows the murderer to get away with his crime.

In the face of the tragic situation in which Mr. Hartley is suspected against all provable facts, a man named Dirk emerges as the hero of the story because he is willing to consider a different interpretation of the haunting: that it is calling the tavern occupants to investigate and find the killer, Heyer, who was the only other person with the traveler when he left the tavern. Eventually Dirk finds the truth of what happened



and Heyer will be prosecuted in court rather than leaving punishment to the divine justice that supposedly marked Hartley. Herbert disapproves of the lazy acceptance of preconceptions of divine judgment and instead presents a detective character who takes action and works toward human justice, all the while using the supernatural evidence as his guide. Herbert thus demonstrates that a flaw in supernatural evidence is that it may be more open to different interpretations than physical evidence ideally is.

As a counter-point, “The Trial for Murder” enforces the need for the correct interpretation of physical evidence shaped by the consideration of supernatural evidence. The ghost of the murder victim is present throughout the trial of his killer. He interacts with the witnesses, though they have no idea of his presence, and he visually comments on their testimony. Unfortunately for the ghost, only the narrator can witness this display of evidence. Other than the guard, no one else in the case seems able to see the ghost, but that does not mean that it cannot influence the minds of people in the room. It seemed “as if [the ghost] could invisibly, dumbly and darkly overshadow the [witnesses’] minds” (“Trial” 258). The counsel for the defense, when he posits the suicide theory, is affected by the ghost’s presence and he falters, turning pale, and seems to lose his train of thought, making his statement less authoritative than it might otherwise have been. Similarly, a character witness for the defense follows the ghost’s pointing finger to look at the prisoner with “great hesitation and trouble” in her expression (258). In this way, the ghost partakes in the examination of witnesses at his trial, causing the defense to falter and appear less persuasive. The ghost even indicates to the narrator when lies are being told, thereby directing how the narrative of the crime

is understood. For instance, when the defense suggests that the victim might have cut his own throat, the ghost “with its throat in the dreadful condition referred to...stood at the speaker’s elbow, motioning across and across its windpipe, now with the right hand, now with the left, vigorously suggesting to the speaker himself the impossibility of such a wound having been self-inflicted by either hand” (257). Likewise, when the jurors are at the tavern discussing the case among themselves, the ghost always appears and listens to the conversations. If the men seem to lean toward finding the prisoner innocent, the ghost beckons to the narrator who then joins the conversation and guides it toward the evidence that supports a guilty verdict (257). At the end of the trial, the ghost “stood directly opposite the jurybox,” rather than inside it as one who is passing judgment against his killer (259). The narrator stands to announce the verdict, and the ghost “seemed satisfied, and slowly shook a great grey veil, which he carried on his arm...over his head and whole form. As [the narrator] gave in [the] verdict, ‘Guilty,’ the veil collapsed, all was gone, and his place was empty” (259). The implication is that the ghost has seen justice done, and he no longer needs to remain in the mortal world, so he disappears behind the “veil.” The victim has made sure that his version of the story is known, and that the court arrives at the correct narrative about the murder.

In “The Haunted Homestead,” the mystery is solved because a few men, including Dirk, continue to investigate and the ghost leads them to physical evidence. Right after the mysterious sounds fill the tavern on the night of the murder, the traveler’s horse returns. Dirk and the others find blood on the pommel of the saddle, which, in combination with the haunting, inspires them to follow the horse’s tracks up the

mountain road. The trail ends at a stream bank where they hunt for clues, even creating a small dam in the stream to divert the course of the water. As a result, “a narrow stripe of mud was...exposed to sight, which had, of late, been covered by the foamy ripples, and there, the very spot whereon the traveler’s corpse had fallen, with a large foot-print by the side of it, was rendered clear to every eye” (Herbert 230). In addition, they find “one splash of blood close to the water’s edge,” but otherwise, “all clue was lost” (230). This physical evidence convinces them that they have found the scene of a murder and they believe this is what the haunting was meant to communicate. They then track the other set of hoof marks belonging to the traveler’s companion. Heyer’s tracks lead straight back to his homestead where the men see him sound asleep through the window. Unfortunately for the investigators, the trail of evidence ends there, and for months the tavern continues to be haunted. The spirit of the traveler continues to demand attention in hopes that someone will find his killer, never allowing anyone to forget what befell him: “With this all clue was lost; and, save, that night after night the same hellish disturbance resounded through the chambers of the tavern, till the inhabitants, fairly unable to endure the terrors of this nightly uproar, abandoned it to solitude and ruin, the very story of the hapless traveller might well have been forgotten even on the very scene of his murder” (230). Yet after the tavern is abandoned, the haunting ceases for there is no one left for the spirit to stir into action (266). Through a combination of supernatural and natural clues, sufficient evidence is eventually found to prove Heyer’s guilt. The physical and the ineffable evidence have worked together to denounce the killer and ensure that he is caught.

In addition to leading investigators to new evidence, the supernatural also assists the detectives solve crimes by helping them get more information from the physical clues they already have. In “The Diary of Anne Rodway” Collins uses a vision dream as a plot device to reveal to Anne, the detective, that the scrap of cravat found in the hand of her dying friend Mary is the key to discovering her killer. Though the doctor in attendance believes the cravat is probably insignificant, Anne writes that “[a] chill ran all over me as I looked at [the scrap]; for that poor, stained, crumpled end of a cravat seemed to be saying to me, as though it had been in plain words: ‘If she dies, she has come to her death by foul means, and I am the witness of it’” (“Diary” 4). The evidence presented at the inquest, that Mary felt faint at work and that the doctor found no signs of foul play, lead to a misunderstanding of the past events. As in so many of these early detective stories, circumstantial evidence that is either dismissed or inadmissible in court is the key to finding the truth while the empirical evidence leads to the wrong conclusion.<sup>37</sup> At the inquest, the coroner admits that the cravat does justify the suspicion of foul play, but it is not enough evidence to produce a verdict that will lead the police to continue their inquiries. The jury accepted the doctor’s explanation that Mary fainted “in the absence of any positive evidence” (6). The cravat is returned to Anne, who then sets about finding “positive evidence” by tracing the origin of the cravat.

The ghosts and dreams not only make clear that murder has been committed and help the living to correctly interpret evidence, but they also urge investigators to find

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<sup>37</sup> Commenting on this trend, Anna Katharine Green’s *The Leavenworth Case* (1878) was taught in law schools for years as an example of the dangers of putting too much weight on circumstantial evidence.

physical evidence to corroborate the narrative they tell. Herbert, Collins, Crowe, and Braddon acknowledge that in order for the general populace to accept the solution of a crime, there needs to be empirical evidence that is not the result of possible delusions or lies and that cannot be interpreted in another way. This empirical evidence is found because supernatural phenomena help investigators find that evidence, sometimes letting them cheat chronology by glimpsing the past or the future to find pieces of the narrative puzzle that they may not otherwise find.

For instance, Anne Rodway has a dream that emphasizes the importance of the scrap of cravat, convincing her that what seems like a piece of trash is in fact a clue. Eventually, Anne finds the rest of the cravat through a stroke of fate. She needs to buy candles on her way home and decides to stop at the next shop she passes rather than going to her usual one. On the rag and bottle side of the establishment she sees, in a jumbled pile of fabric scraps, a piece of black silk with lilac stripes, which turns out to be a cravat with a corner torn off. She suggests that the scrap be used to wrap her parcel, and in her first act as a detective she casually asks about the origin of the scraps in the pile, and learns where to find the woman who sold them. With the next piece of evidence in hand and a lead to follow, Anne expresses her belief that the divine is guiding her, saying “God knows to what results it may lead,” as she is initially unsure what to do with this new evidence (32). Even as the supernatural points to the empirical physical evidence needed in court, Anne relies on the divine to bring about a just end rather than her own intelligence and initiative. Only after Anne succeeds in what her dream foretold is the truth known. The dream alone does not solve the case any more

than the physical evidence at the inquest does. Due to their interrelatedness, it is often true that one type of evidence helps the detective find more of the other.

In *East Lynne* there is more skepticism about the idea that a supernatural force is guiding the investigation. Mrs. Hare has a dream of a meeting that has yet to happen, and this glimpse of the future is a self-fulfilling prophecy because Barbara decides it cannot hurt to see if they can learn something by mimicking the dream, even though she maintains that she does not believe in prophetic dreams: “You know, mama, I do not believe in dreams...I think when people say ‘this dream is a sign of such and such a thing,’ it is the greatest absurdity in the world” (Wood 232). When the man Thorn, whom Richard suspects is the killer, returns to town, Barbara works to ensure that a situation like the one from her mother’s dream comes to pass. Providence also plays a part in bringing Richard back to West Lynne at just the right time to coincide with the realization of Mrs. Hare’s prophetic dream. Barbara thinks “this visit of Richard’s must have been specially designed by Providence, that he might be confronted with Thorn” (255). Likewise, Richard explains his arrival in town as the result of what is “chiefly a hankering within [him] that [he] could not get rid of[,]...a feeling...that [he] could not rest away from [home],” and so he decided to risk returning to his hometown (266). Barbara, despite her desire to value rational thought and physical evidence more highly than supernatural evidence, is the only character to pay attention to all the actions of providence in the story. She ties all the circumstantial evidence together to help Archibald Carlyle, her co-investigator, find enough proof to bring Francis Levison up on criminal charges. The Hares mimic the dream by having the same people present,

including Richard eavesdropping in secret. Barbara works with less empirical forms of evidence than Carlyle, drawing on her mother's dreams, on circumstantial evidence, and on eye witness evidence such as Richard remembering that the killer had a habitual gesture of brushing his hair from his forehead that made his jeweled ring glint. Barbara is the one who helps to clear both Richard and the man named Thorn from suspicion, and to recognize that the killer was Levison using Thorn's name when he was calling on the daughter of the murdered man. Throughout, Barbara attempts to hold to a natural, rational view of the world, but struggles to do so in light of so many occurrences that seem to be the work of fate. Wood uses the chronological trickery of a prophetic dream to move the investigation forward and to suggest that Barbara and Archibald's resistance to any mode of knowledge other than scientific logic valuing physical evidence is faulty.

Many nineteenth-century crime stories featuring ghosts harken back to a long line of legends of ghosts denouncing their killers dating back to at least medieval times in stories told about real murders. Lee, for instance, cites many such stories as do Scott and Lang. Lee goes so far as to say that "[t]he number of records in which it is believed that dreams have been the means by which murder has been discovered are so considerable; and some are so well authenticated, that it is impossible, as it certainly would be presumptuous, to endeavour to set them aside" (1.230). Ghosts in these stories are linked to the belief that the divine will not allow murder to go unpunished but will act to punish the killer.

Not all of the authors examined in this chapter are willing to accept the old adage that murder will out, though, which is further evidence that there is no collectively-

adopted Victorian party line on supernaturalism. The villainous Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) dismisses the older notions of the moral ordering of the world in favor of an intellectual ordering.<sup>38</sup> Fosco comments on the ridiculousness of the moral "clap-trap" of society which purports that "[c]rimes cause their own detection...And murder will out" (*Woman* 236). Fosco says:

There are foolish criminals who are discovered, and wise criminals who escape. The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other. When the criminal is a brutal, ignorant fool, the police, in nine cases out of ten, win. When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police, in nine cases out of ten, lose. (236)

In an interview with Edmund Yates in 1879, Collins confesses that Fosco's "theories concerning the vulgar clap-trap that murder will out, are [his] own" (152). The solution of the mystery in *The Woman in White* relies on Marian and Walter's ability to outthink and outmaneuver the Count, and though Marian does have a dream in which Walter assures her he is coming home and foreshadows some coming events, it does not directly impact her investigation. The most overt supernatural phenomenon in the novel is instead the sense that Anne Catherick drives the detectives forward, even from beyond the grave. Nevertheless, many of Collins's stories explore the influence of fate and the

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<sup>38</sup> *The Woman in White* was serially printed in *All the Year Round* from November 1859 through August 1860. The book was then printed in a three-volume edition. Collins interrupted the edition printing in order to make changes to the time line of the story in an effort to correct errors pointed out by readers. The quotes used here are from the Oxford University Press edition, which draws on that "New Edition" text of 1861.



effect of dreams and ghosts. Most notably, Collins's novel *Armada* (1866) revolves around the question of whether fate drives the plot or if the fearful belief in fate drives the characters to ensure that the prophesied events come to pass. A dream vision early in the story haunts one of the main characters for the rest of the novel as he strives to ensure that the dream does not come true. In "The Diary of Anne Rodway" and "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost," however, Collins writes overt examples of the supernatural influencing the outcome of criminal investigations. They do not necessarily suggest that *murder will out* in the sense that God will punish the murderer, but they do suggest that the supernatural may be a genuine force in the stories that should not be dismissed by characters simply because it cannot be proven scientifically.

In contrast, Herbert's story makes the most direct connection to the old belief that murder will out. The tavern, it transpires, is not the only haunted building. The spirit of the murdered man also haunts the old homestead beneath which his body is buried. Rather than loud sounds calling the occupants of the tavern to action, the homestead's haunting manifests in a visual display, discernible to anyone outside the building and alerting them to the fact that there is something important to discover there. One night Dirk and Hartley are walking home when they see ghostly fire at Heyer's abandoned homestead: "their eyes were suddenly attracted by an appearance of bright dancing lights—as of the aurora borealis—flashing and streaming heavenward....Strange were the sights indeed, flashes of vivid flame upleaping suddenly from earth and then a long dark interval and then a glimmering glow pervading the whole circuit of the homestead" (Herbert 266). Not immediately suspecting a supernatural source, the two

men rush to help put out the fire. Yet when Dirk breaks through the door of the house the interior is dark and untouched by flame. The fire then disappears on the outside as well, and Heyer reproaches them for shouting a false alarm. When the flames reappear, Heyer tries to brush it aside, saying “Pshaw! Stuff...is that all?” and hastily retreating inside his house, shutting the other two men out (267). Dick and Hartley then recognize the supernatural sign for what it is and Dirk declares: “BLOOD WILL OUT!—Blood will out, man, and here I’m on the track on’t now I tell you!” (267). Dirk believes that murder will always be discovered and the killer caught through supernatural means. Herbert’s story provides a sense of comfort by drawing on the old traditions, and the fact that the story is set in the previous century means that the characters operate in a culture in which supernatural (or superstitious) thought is still common and related to reason in a way that is challenged in Victorian England. Herbert draws from a tradition of tales about ghosts in courts of law for his story as well as the belief that the supernatural works to punish the wicked.<sup>39</sup>

Although the belief that murder will out was a popular one in British history, the authors of stories involving the supernatural are not always trying to endorse it. The supernatural marks the killers and helps ensure they are caught and punished, but it is usually reliant upon the actions of living characters to see things through. The detectives or recipients of the supernatural information take the messages from the supposed spirit world and are the agent of action in the natural world. Although these stories challenge readers and characters alike to take both the supernatural and the scientific into

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<sup>39</sup> See for example Maurizio Ascari’s *Counter-History of Crime Fiction* or Andrew Lang’s “Ghosts Before the Law.”

consideration together, the supernatural points toward empirical and physical evidence that can be used to finish piecing together the narrative of the crime and prove the solution of the case. Thus, it appears that there is no definitive stance on whether or not the supernatural is “the greatest absurdity in the world,” but rather that the conundrum is an intriguing mystery that may never be solved (Wood 232). By writing these stories, the authors present situations in which crimes are solved, but also tales in which the characters have to engage in the debate about whether or not to accept unempirical evidence and knit together pieces of information from many different sources. The authors are not attempting to promote only ratiocinative detection, but appear to embrace intuitive and ineffable evidence and knowledge as well.

### *Empowering the Called Detectives*

Thus far, the authors’ interest in the tension of knowledge has been examined through the supernatural’s involvement in criminal cases, the way supernatural evidence challenges characters’ preconceptions about knowledge, the way the supernatural ensures murder is recognized and punished, and the way empirical and intuitive evidence works together to recreate the narrative of past events. The supernatural also works through one or two people who are made aware of the supernatural’s involvement even if they are not called to act as investigators. These characters are given privileged positions, suggesting that the supernatural evidence and knowledge are more valuable and laudable than natural knowledge. This section examines critical views of fictional detectives who use the supernatural and of real Spiritualist mediums to provide

background for the portrayal and empowerment of the detectives in *Susan Hopley*, “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” *The Woman in White*, *East Lynne*, *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, and *The Female Detective*. Examining who is chosen to work with the supernatural and why illuminates questions of agency and passivity in the texts as well as how the detectives risk transgressing the expectations of social order. The punishments meted out in the stories reveal which aspects of morality and order are enforced. Behaviors that are ordinarily punished in Victorian fiction are instead given approval or overlooked so long as the detective performing those behaviors are working for justice.

The supernatural is often cited as a guiding influence for fictional detectives, particularly amateur detectives. In his book *Bloodhounds of Heaven*, Ian Ousby traces the history of fictional detectives and observes that before the late 1880s the amateur sleuth was the preferred character type because it combined the romantic hero and the detective. It seemed less intrusive to have a well-bred character investigating a mystery among his or her own set than to have a lower-class professional detective interfering (Ousby 134-6). Ousby argues that the beginning of the detective fiction genre is grounded in a desire to “establish moral and intellectual clarity...seeking to distinguish good from evil” (42). Ousby does not discuss the supernatural’s influence in the genre, and yet his take on the situation is accurate. As Ascari says, the supernatural works for justice and ensures that wrongdoers are punished (19). Taking this a step further, the supernatural works through the amateur and professional detectives in the genre, and yet the detectives are not censured for their efforts or their other-worldly connection. This

role of the detective as the force of morality is frequently found in Victorian detective fiction despite the fact that, as Ousby says, (professional) detectives carry a stigma of disreputability, and “[r]ather than appearing the embodiment of society’s belief in justice and order, the detective belongs to an alien world, uncivilized, amoral, and potentially savage. He seems, in fact, far closer in spirit to the criminal than to the average citizen” (4). This is based on the historical connection between the two groups, as many early detectives were converted criminals, or were of a lower class and had connections with criminals.<sup>40</sup> In literature, amateur detectives became the preferable agent of justice because they are able to move more discreetly amongst suspects and handle situations outside the law to avoid damaging scandal, as in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, and they can produce results when the law is unable to, as in *The Woman in White*. The amateur detective is frequently drawn into an investigation through some force of “fate” or “providence,” though they usually desire to be helpful from the beginning because it has a direct bearing on their lives or the lives of their loved ones. Often, the investigations require that the detectives defy codes of conventional behavior. Thus, there are two standards of virtue in these novels: that of society based on the observance of rules for polite behavior, and that of upholding justice by ensuring criminals are punished and the innocent are protected. Authors of Victorian detective fiction use the supernatural to support the latter before the former.

Likewise, there are two contradictory views of detectives who use the supernatural and other “alternative” forms of evidence in Victorian literature. In his

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<sup>40</sup> See Ousby’s book for further discussion of the history of the detective figure in literature and its connection to historical detectives.

article “*Cage aux folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White*,” D. A. Miller observes that “characters who rely on utterly unlegal standards of evidence like intuition, coincidence, [and] literary connotation get closer to what will eventually be revealed as the truth” (114). Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan, on the other hand, in looking at women detectives in fiction say that although the early figures in the genre added to the feminist ethic, the books were by no means feminist. In support of this, they disparagingly remark that these early women characters relied on the supernatural, female intuition, and dumb luck as the mysteries practically solved themselves while the women bumble about (Craig and Cadogan 16). This attitude severely underestimates the importance of the supernatural and its connection to other easily dismissed modes of knowledge like intuition in the nineteenth-century detective tradition. The supernatural singles out particular people to serve as detectives in the stories, and grants them an agency beyond the characters’ normal scope as they solve puzzling mysteries. The ratiocinative detective had not yet become the apotheosis of the genre and the volume of stories that embrace a combination of empirical and intuitive sources of evidence supports a reading of the genre as one that values a detective who is willing to consider all types of information in the pursuit of justice. The genre protects the morality of the detectives even as they bend social rules in pursuit of justice because they work in loopholes in the system of morality. This form of supernatural involvement and evidence favors women detectives who are generally thought to be more sensitive and receptive to these alternative knowledge types.

We can see parallels in the treatment of women detectives and the historical figures of Spiritualist mediums relating to their agency. Both Spiritualists and the women detectives in these stories are sensitive to the communications or influences of the supernatural, be they religious or otherwise. Both groups enjoy increased agency due to their connection to the supernatural. Looking at historical examples of women mediums, Marlene Tromp and Amy Lehman both argue that Spiritualism gave women a platform for increased agency and loopholes in social norms to exploit. Amy Lehman tackles the question of agency in women's trances in her book *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance* (2009) as she examines the central question: "Were Victorian women empowered or victimized by the theatre of trance in which they performed?" (3). She compellingly argues that trance performance empowers women, though different mediums found different types of agency and influence. However, Lehman is examining historical women who practiced trance performances and does not address the fictional representations of such activity. In turning to fictional examples, the question arises whether the fiction supports such empowerment more firmly and openly or whether it argues against such practices and reasserts the status quo.

In detective fiction, dreams, ghosts, and the guiding hand of providence are all tied to concepts of morality and social order because they are part of what is usually set up as the dualistic battle between the good detectives and the evil criminals. Ousby argues that mid-Victorians saw the detective as a "champion of the dominant social morality" (75). Likewise, Winifred Hughes says that the "logic and aesthetic form" of detective fiction "is one way of making order out of one's world," and provides the

reassurance of the older melodrama format wherein the good are rewarded and the wicked are punished (165). Men and women who take up sleuthing in fiction benefit from the assistance of the supernatural, having been chosen to investigate, but it is a more significant change of status for the women detectives than the men because investigating thoroughly means the women have to be more active in the public sphere.

While discussing historical figures of women mediums who communicated with spirits, Marlene Tromp observes that performing as mediums gave women “a new kind of self-determination...that led to many unconventional choices” (22). These mediumistic women exhibited behavior unlike the accepted women’s roles, but they were not ostracized or punished for it because the behavior was the result of full-body manifestations of spirits or spiritual possession. They were, in theory, not responsible for their own actions, and thus had not committed the transgressions themselves. “If ordinary rules no longer applied—something that was clearly true in Spiritualism,” Tromp argues, “and the terms of women’s identity were being undermined, women might gain access to a whole new range of behavior” (23). Rather than directly challenge the social order, Spiritualism “blurr[ed] the boundaries between the terms [of social practices]...secur[ing] the ‘respectability’ of such violations and usher[ing] these critiques into mainstream discourse and stylish drawing rooms” (28). Likewise, fictional detectives like Marian Halcombe, Barbara Hare, Anne Rodway, and Susan Hopley do not suffer any public castigation for their sleuthing or their use of alternative forms of



knowledge.<sup>41</sup> Engaging in a criminal investigation brings women detectives into the public sphere where they normally have little authority. Additionally, as Ousby points out, detectives were in part despised as spies and criminals who indelicately interfered with other people's private lives; a view which threatens to taint the male detectives like Walter Hartright and Robert Audley as well. These stories are not strongly feminist because the female detective's empowerment relies in part, as I will demonstrate, in her passivity and humble obedience, but they do empower the women by giving them a larger scope of action as well as a privileged and respected place. If the male sleuths who initially view investigation as a vulgar pursuit finally realize "that detection is actually a form of chivalric duty, a course enjoined upon them by family loyalty or romantic attachment," and it helps to transform "an idle young gentleman of pleasure into an earnest, dutiful, and domesticated citizen" (like Robert Audley), then the pattern of the genre suggests that women who take up investigating are also performing a duty for the same reason, and they are elevated to something greater than inactive, passive women (Ousby 135).

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<sup>41</sup> It is not until later in the century, when women take up detecting as a profession, that we see more reactions against women acting as sleuths, perhaps because the narrative does not give them a divine appointment for taking that role. For example, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864), *The Female Detective* (1864), both volumes of George R. Sims's *Dorcas Dene* stories (1897, 1898), *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke*, *Lady Detective* (1894), and most blatantly Merrick's *Mr. Bazalgette's Agent* (1888). It is also possible that these women detectives do not need divine assistance quite as much as their predecessors because they have marginally more freedom, are better educated, and because of the New Woman movement at the end of the century. The New Woman movement certainly made detectives like those in Grant Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (first serialized in *The Strand* in 1898) and *Hilda Wade* (first serialized in *The Strand* in 1899) possible.

### ***Who Is Chosen and Why***

These detectives are described in terms of having been “called” to serve the purpose of a force greater than their own which is somehow separate from the physical world and connected to a spiritual world or plane. Even in stories like “The Haunted Homestead,” “The Trial for Murder,” and “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost” when there is not much detection involved in the solution of the crime, the supernatural forces always work with or through at least one living person. There are two reasons why particular detectives are chosen by supernatural forces. The first is that, as in non-literary cases of Spiritualism and clairvoyance, the recipient of the supernatural is often a “sensitive” person who is usually sickly and/or a woman. The second is that the detective has strong ties to either the victim or someone who is wrongly accused as the killer, and the detective must work to find the truth and restore order to the lives of those affected by the crime.

The trend of “sensitive” fictional detectives is rooted in the theories about health, gender, and “sensitivity” to the supernatural. For example, Crowe says that when healthy, the body and soul stick together, “[h]ence it is that somnambulists and clairvoyants are chiefly to be found amongst sickly women” because the soul of a sick or weak person is able to leave the body either to make room for another soul (as in mesmerism, which will be discussed in Chapter IV), or to separate from the material world and better interact with the spiritual world and receive information from spirits, God, etc. (*Night* 123). The narrator of “The Trial for Murder,” for example, is not in perfect health during the whole of his experience with the ghost, being “slightly

dyspeptic” as his doctor calls it (252). Similarly, Mrs. Hare who has the prophetic dreams in *East Lynne* is described as a physically weak and sickly person, and Mrs. Zant has just recovered from an illness when she experiences the presence of her husband’s ghost. Robert Audley is a lazy, unmotivated man who is often described in feminine, or at least unmasculine, terms as a result, and he is the only character in *Lady Audley’s Secret* to receive assistance from the supernatural in the form of a dream vision.

Anne Catherick, the titular woman in white in Collins’s novel, is also sickly (she dies of natural causes at a young age). She writes a letter to Laura Fairlie to pass on a warning of danger that she received in a dream. Anne begins her letter by asking if Laura believes in dreams, and points her to Biblical passages about dreams to encourage her to “take the warning I send you before it is too late” (*Woman* 78).<sup>42</sup> Anne’s dream warns Laura against the man she is set to marry, and gives a full description of his appearance without naming him. Anne’s weak health suggests that she may be a sensitive medium, but she, like Mrs. Hare, Barbara Hare (*East Lynne*), Marian Halcombe (*The Woman in White*), Mrs. Zant, Robert Audley (*Lady Audley’s Secret*), Susan Hopley, Anne Rodway and many other characters in similar stories, also has a vested interest in and affection for the person at the center of the investigation. As Anne Catherick tells Laura, she has “an interest in [her] well-being that will live as long as [she] draw[s] breath” because Laura’s mother was Anne’s “first, [her] best, [her] only friend” (*Woman* 79). Anne is also described as weak-minded, which makes it easy for characters to

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<sup>42</sup> Victorian treatises on Spiritualism that wish to connect the movement with Christianity often point to Biblical stories of prophetic dreams as evidence of the veracity of contemporary vision dreams. In this way, authors like Crowe also argue that dreams and the interpretation thereof are not unholy.

dismiss her warnings as the ravings of a woman who has escaped from a mental asylum. Marian and Walter eventually see other evidence that convinces them that Anne was right to warn them, and thus believe her. Victorian readers might also have assumed that her weak-mindedness, because it makes her more child-like, makes her more likely to be clairvoyantly sensitive. As with Anne, the affectionate bond between characters is often the reason why a given character is “called” to investigate by the supernatural, though this is not always the case, as in “The Haunted Homestead” and “The Trial for Murder.”

Several Victorian writers addressed the reason why spirits tend to appear to random people rather than to, for instance, the police. William H. Harrison writes that “[t]he satirist has asked why ghosts of murdered men, instead of going to the police station or to the nearest magistrate, find their way in the dead of night to some agricultural labourer who has nothing to do with the case, and frighten him and his wife into fits” (100).<sup>43</sup> This is often the case in accounts recorded in books such as Harrison’s *Spirits Before Our Eyes*. He answers the satirists by explaining matter-of-factly that “[t]he reason why the spirits select them for a visit is, that they find them to be mesmerically sensitive, and in some way so *en rapport* with themselves that they can make their presence known” (101).<sup>44</sup> Conveniently, in most detective stories the spirits

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<sup>43</sup> Harrison’s *Spirits Before Our Eyes* was intended to be a two-volume work, but the second volume was never published. The first volume was published in London in 1879.

<sup>44</sup> Lee recounts a story of a young woman who was murdered, though no one knew about it until she haunted the local miller, telling him he must reveal the murderer (*Glimpses* 2.3-7). She told him what had happened, where to find her body, and where to find the definitive physical evidence of the weapon and the bloody shoes and socks of the killer. The miller went to the magistrate and told him what he had seen. In turn, the magistrate agreed to follow the instructions and everything was found just as the ghost had

do not need to visit some unwitting but mesmerically sensitive farmer's family because the author makes their loved ones sufficiently sensitive to receive the information the ghost reveals. When there is a bond of affection, the link gives the characters further reason to investigate and to transgress boundaries of propriety, like Barbara Hare in *East Lynne*. Birgitta Berglund observes that early women detectives were often solving cases to clear the name of a loved one or to protect a loved one, which made their actions more palatable to the readers. Once the cases are completed, these women characters ceased investigating and return to their domestic existences (Berglund 142-43). In the stories examined in this chapter both men and women are engaged in following the lead of the supernatural toward the truth, and it is generally implied that it is their moral duty to pursue the truth.

The chosen detectives have something in common: their investigative work stems from the noble motives of wanting to find the truth, punish the wicked, and restore order. It is also important to observe that none of them does anything to call the supernatural to their aid (unlike characters to be discussed in later chapters), thus strengthening their image as humble, average people who are doing their duty and who are suitably skeptical about any supernatural influences. Their chosen status is one of the reasons they retain their role as protagonists in their stories. In one of the more blatant examples of the supernatural being connected to the divine, Anne Rodway's dream takes on religious imagery, for the clue "led [her] through a place like the Valley

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described. Lee dates this story around 1632, giving an idea of how long the idea for plots like that in "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost," "The Trial for Murder," and "The Haunted Homestead" has existed.

of the Shadow of Death, in an old print [she] remember[ed] in [her] mother's copy of the Pilgrim's Progress. [She] seemed to be months and months following it without respite, till at last it brought [her], on a sudden, face to face with an angel whose eyes were like Mary's" ("Diary" 32). The reference to the Valley of the Shadow of Death may be meant to bring to mind the language of the Psalms: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23.1,4). The allusion suggests that Anne's dream tells her that she is not done with the investigation into the murder, and that God is working with or through her ("for thou art with me") in this endeavor, and she is thus "called" to investigate. Believing that she has been guided to new evidence by God, Anne feels that she is a vessel through which the divine continues to work when she questions the woman who had sold the cravat to the rag and bottle shop, and to the woman's husband who had owned the cravat. Though the husband frightens her and she wishes that her fiancé Robert were there to ask the questions for her, she feels compelled to question the man almost against her will: "the moment I came face to face with him, something out of myself seemed to stop me, and to make me speak without considering beforehand, without thinking of consequences, without knowing, I may almost say, what words I was uttering till the instant when they rose to my lips" ("Diary" 33-34). She questions the man very directly about the necktie and tells him that she has the other corner. Managing to bluff her way through the conversation, she frightens the man into admitting that he saw Mary that night, that she tore his cravat as she fell, but that it was the man getting into his cab who struck Mary. Anne now has a witness to the blow that

killed Mary and to the man who dealt it, but she feels that she is not fully in control of herself during the interview. Questioning a man, even a suspect, frightens Anne. She resists stepping out of her quite domestic sphere, but finds herself speaking before she knows it. Describing the event as though an external force compelled her may be her way of excusing her behavior, but since the narrative is meant to be her private diary, she would only be lying to herself.

Robert Audley is also inclined to credit the supernatural for his involvement in the investigation. He remarks that he feels compelled to action by a hand of destiny, otherwise he would have remained in his usual sedentary state. For instance, after the fire at the inn (set by Lady Audley to kill him and her blackmailer, Luke), Robert hears Luke's confession of his wrongdoings shortly before he dies. Robert ponders how "[Luke's] sin has recoiled upon his own head....Who shall dare to try and order his own life after this? who can fail to recognize God's hand in this strange story?" (*Lady* 431). God, in Robert's view of the situation, has control over all their lives in the story, and if one should try to take control of one's own life, God will intervene to set it right. This is not a view shared by all the investigators, but it clearly demonstrates that it was a popular trope for the divine to take action on earth to right wrongs. When Robert confronts Lady Audley about killing George and being a bigamist, he speaks "with a cold sternness that was so strange to him as to transform him into another creature—a pitiless embodiment of justice, a cruel instrument of retribution" (271). His status as the instrument of divine justice makes him unlike himself, and transforms him temporarily, much as Anne Rodway felt that she was compelled to speak to the cravat's owner

without really knowing what she was saying. Robert Audley states that it is his destiny to solve the case. When speaking to George's sister Clara (whom Robert marries at the end of the story), she decides to confide in Robert, saying, "I will trust you...for I see that you will help me" (200). Robert solemnly replies, "I believe that it is my destiny to do so" (200). God and fate guide Robert to the solution of the mystery, and his involvement makes him a more active, engaged man, who is hardly recognizable as the same lazy lawyer who had never taken a case. Braddon describes his transformation as a positive one, after which he is worthy of marrying the impressive Clara Talboys. Likewise, Anne Rodway and her fiancé Robert both think "that the hand of Providence must have guided [her] steps to that shop from which all the discoveries since made take their rise" ("Diary" 35). In one of the most explicit statements regarding the "called" status of detectives in such stories, Collins has Robert state his belief that he and Anne "are the instruments of effecting a righteous retribution" (35). The characters are empowered precisely because they are passive. They allow themselves to be guided and act as conduits rather than greedily, proudly asserting their own prowess and skills.

Crowe's novel *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence*

explores the treatment of female detectives involved with the supernatural in depth.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike, for instance, Marian and Barbara, Susan Hopley is the primary investigator

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<sup>45</sup> This book was originally published anonymously. It was subsequently republished under the title *Susan Hopley; or, the Adventures of a Maid-Servant*. Another book written by T.P. Prest in 1842 was titled *Susan Hopley: or, the Trials and Vicissitudes of a Servant Girl*, but it is a different story, cashing in on the similar titles. Crowe's *Susan Hopley* was a best seller of the day, and was adapted for stage performances. See Lucy Sussex's "The Detective Maidservant: Catherine Crowe's Susan Hopley" for further details about this book. Citations here are from the 1842 edition of the novel.



throughout the narrative, and she benefits from supernatural assistance. The novel features a combination of ghosts, a dream, and providential influence. Susan, the main character of the story and one of two narrators, finds herself investigating two murders, prompted first by the wraith of the two victims who appear to her in a dream. Crowe discusses wraiths in *The Night Side of Nature*, defining them as the spirits of people about to die or who have only just died who appear to living people (often family or friends). In *Susan Hopley*, Susan falls asleep in a chair while waiting for her master and her brother to return from a journey. She dreams that she wakes up and sees her brother who tells her that he and the master have been killed. Meanwhile, she sees men enter the room and walk behind her to search through the dressing room. As they leave, they approach her menacingly, but her brother's spirit addresses them and tells them to leave her alone. The men then leave the room and Susan awakens. She later learns that the murders occurred as the vision indicated, and that two men did in fact enter the room while she was sleeping and stole some important papers.<sup>46</sup> Susan does not tell anyone

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<sup>46</sup> Theories drawing on scientific knowledge of the time were frequently put forth in treatises on the supernatural. For instance, Crowe discusses two theories to explain the phenomena of warning dreams in *The Night Side of Nature*: either they are spiritual phenomena or they are the result of "magnetic" influences drawing on Mesmer's theories that there are magnetic forces in everything which can be manipulated or can make people aware of magnetic fluctuations around them. For instance, warning dreams may merely be the result of the dreamer becoming aware of danger while they are sleeping (*Night* 80). Alternatively, she posits that such dreams are the result of the spirit (i.e. the Holy Spirit) within the person perceiving danger and warning him or her (68). Either explanation is possible for Susan Hopley's dream vision. Harrison, writing in 1879, hypothesized that prophetic dreams are mesmeric perceptions of something in another person's or spirit's mind (90). Crowe appears to be writing her detective story according to the rules of the natural world that she discusses in *Night Side of Nature* to make Susan's experiences seem realistic to those who believe in the supernatural, and also to situate the criminal plot within a certain view of morality and justice.

else about her dream for fear that they will not believe her (*Susan* 27). The official opinion that her brother killed their employer, Mr. Wentworth, and ran away is based on a misinterpretation of the evidence at the crime scene. In particular, the fact that Mr. Wentworth's body was found and some of his things had been stolen from the inn and that Andrew Hopley's room shows signs of a hasty departure while Andrew is nowhere to be found, suggest that Andrew ran away after robbing and killing his employer. Due to her dream vision Susan believes that both men are dead (though she initially hopes that despite her dream Andrew may still be alive), but she has no way of proving that to anyone else without any physical evidence.

As with so many of the other detectives, Susan perceives a providential force guiding her through the investigation. Even when Susan tries to leave the resolution of the case to God, she is pulled back into an active role. When Miss Wentworth, the daughter of the household, calls Susan in to speak to her, Susan assures her that Andrew is innocent and asserts that "God will justify us—the day will come that Andrew will be cleared" (*Susan* 21). Miss Wentworth agrees, but advises Susan to leave the matter in God's hands rather than act on it herself because she believes that Susan should instead be concerned about her own well-being: "we must leave it to Heaven. If your brother is innocent, I believe, with you, that the truth will some day come to light and prove him so" (21). Although Susan largely does leave the investigation to providence, information and evidence continue to find her, such as the distinctive that links the theft of Mr. Wentworth's will from the inn where he was staying at the time of his death to the thief who is also presumed to be the killer. Young Harry Leeson, Mr. Wentworth's

nephew, comes to see Susan and tells her of an exchange he had with Mr. Gaveston who married Miss Wentworth and thus gained control of the Wentworth estate. Harry then gives Susan a half-crown under the pretense of keeping himself from spending it on some silly trifle. Susan notices an inscription—a date carved into the coin with a knife—and reveals that just before Mr. Wentworth left on his journey she had seen a coin with the same inscription in his possession as he placed it in the portfolio which was stolen at the time of the murder. The purloined coin somehow came into the possession of Gaveston who gave it to Harry, thus linking Gaveston to the murder. Further evidence finds its way to Susan, and she attributes these fortuitous events to God and divine justice. Coincidences and circumstantial evidence begin to accrue and Susan pieces them together. The supernatural continually tries to involve her in the investigation, and at last she decides to take a more active part. She “was resolved to neglect nothing that could throw the faintest light on the mystery she was so anxious to penetrate” (30). The truth is eventually revealed, Andrew’s body is found, and all is set right with Susan and her friends. Susan, who feels powerless and hopeless when her character is ruined, finds a new purpose and importance in her investigation. Her absolute faith in Andrew’s innocence is established by her supernatural dream. Thus, the supernatural works through Susan and carries her safely to as happy an ending as she can hope for as her reward. Crowe’s interest in the supernatural, and women’s connection to it, inform a reading in which Susan is empowered, even elevated by her position as the divine’s conduit for justice. She is not punished for her investigative activities, as wayward and fallen women tend to be in Victorian fiction. Instead, the fact

that Susan becomes a detective in a way saves her life, because as a result of the suspicion that falls on Andrew, Susan's name is ruined and her prospects for finding another job appear grim (20). In her despair, Susan wonders if it would be better to kill herself quickly rather than slowly die unemployed and scorned. She rallies, however, when she decides that she will devote her life to clearing Andrew of the murder charge.

The authors use the supernatural to guide their detectives into situations and actions that defy social conventions. In particular, the female detectives of these novels border on vulgar comportment when they flout the restrictions placed on their gender and on social interactions. In the case of Barbara Hare in *East Lynne*, she frequently ignores decorum and propriety in favor of fighting to help her brother. For instance, when Richard tells Barbara that he recently saw the elusive "Thorn" in the town of West Lynne, Barbara, in her haste to tell the news to Carlyle, is unconcerned with the unseemliness of running up the road alone and at night to catch up with a man on his way home. She runs after Carlyle to tell him the news about Thorn in the hope that he might be able to look into the matter: "Forgetting the strange appearance it would have, at that hour of the night, should she meet any one who knew her, forgetting what the consequences might be, did Justice Hare [her father] return and find her absent, Barbara set off with a fleet foot" (Wood 274). There are several other private conversations between Carlyle and Barbara, some of which are observed by a few people including Carlyle's wife, Lady Isabel, and Barbara even commits the *faux pas* of visiting Carlyle at his law offices, alone, in broad daylight (the book makes clear that it is shockingly unusual in West Lynne). Yet Barbara's reputation is only slightly tarnished as a result,

and overall she is consistently rewarded for her actions, while Lady Isabel is severely punished for her ignoble transgressions against society and the sanctity of marriage by running away with Francis Levison. Similarly, in *The Woman in White* Marian must challenge Sir Percival and his friend Count Fosco in Sir Percival's home, going so far as to interfere in his relations with his wife. Rather than upholding the status quo of social rules, the supernatural supports an alternative ideology about social interactions and perceptions of morality.

Beyond the matter of social comportment, Marian Halcombe, Barbara Hare, and Robert Audley must act outside the boundaries of the law to redress the crimes committed against those whom they seek to protect. For in their three sensation novels the crimes committed cannot be addressed by the legal system in the traditional way either because there is no proof that there even was a crime, as in *The Woman in White*, or because the initial inquest judged the wrong person to be guilty, as in *East Lynne*, or because taking the case to court would bring shame to the family and thereby possibly kill the family patriarch, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Such extralegal actions taint detectives of both genders with vulgarity, for to be outside the law is to be criminal. One of the main factors of the separation of sensation novels from other genres has to do not with the structure of the novels, but with their moral ambiguity which critics thought dangerous. Unlike the genre of melodramas with their black-and-white morality (moustache-twirling villains, purely good heroes, virtue triumphant and vice punished), sensation novels do not always end with such clear-cut support of pure virtue. In a simplified view of the "separate spheres" of Victorian society, women were relegated to

the domestic sphere. They have a great deal of influence in the home, but to enter into the male sphere of the public world is unacceptable and vulgar. Marian and Barbara both cross the line into the public world on several occasions in the pursuit of truth and justice. Yet, despite their occasional transgressions, their male counterparts perform the bulk of the work in the public sphere. This, however, does not undermine the effectiveness of these women as investigators who are the driving force behind the investigations and are willing to consider all-important evidence, even evidence from dreams and ghosts. It seems as though the women especially need divine instruction to justify their actions, and that may be true to a point, but the genre also lauds their willingness to heed untraditional evidence.

### ***Punishment and Morality***

While the dreams and ghosts point toward the truth and help investigators find physical evidence, their involvement often also leads to a conclusion that circumvents the need for courts. Justice is thus not synonymous with or solely invested in the legal system or with human actions at all. Within the stories, it appears to belong to another world that orders the natural world. The use of the supernatural by the authors also orders the genre. In stories that embrace this aspect of supernatural intervention, *dei ex machina* abound. Here the medieval idea that “murder will out,” which Ascari points to as so influential in the genre, is most clearly seen (Ascari 19). The stories featuring the clearest examples of these events of some invisible force of justice taking direct action include Collins’s “The Diary of Anne Rodway” (1856) and “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost”

(1885), Herbert's "The Haunted Homestead" (1840), Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (1864), and William Stephens Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864).<sup>47</sup>

Several of the stories do not end with a trial either because one never takes place, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*, or because the narrator feels that recounting these events are unimportant to the story. An example of the latter is "The Haunted Homestead." The story ends when the traveler's body is found buried under the old homestead. The hauntings cease, the killer is arrested, and the innocent Hartley family returns to their rightful prosperity. Yet the narrator decides that it is unimportant for the story to include the trial and punishment: "The tale is told—for it boots not to dwell upon the murderer's seizure—his agony—confession and despair" (Herbert 268). Heyer confesses, and that is sufficient for the telling of this tale, which focuses on the supernatural's involvement in the revelation of the truth and the restoration of the status quo.

Other stories do not end with a trial because the supernatural/divine/fate punishes the criminals without the aid of a human judge and jury. In Collins's "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost," the ghost takes action himself to protect his wife. When Rayburn calls on the Zants for the last time, Mrs. Zant is in a trance state indicative of the ghost's presence, and John dismisses Mr. Rayburn. John Zant refuses to call a doctor despite saying that her condition is "a nervous seizure...[s]omething resembling catalepsy" ("Mrs. Zant"

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<sup>47</sup> There has been some debate about the publication dates of *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, which is sometimes cited as first appearing in 1861 and sometimes 1864, and *The Female Detective*. Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan's book *The Lady Investigates* cites a stamp in the British Library copy of *Revelations* as the source of their 1861 citation, yet other scholars such as Dagni Bredesen disagree with the date and hold that both books were published in 1864, and that *The Female Detective* was published first.

201). Rayburn leaves, but he and the housekeeper double back and enter the adjoining room to watch John and Mrs. Zant through the curtain partition. They observe John as he approaches Mrs. Zant, who is still in her altered state, while he calls to her, saying, “[m]y love, my sweet angel, come to the heart that adores you,” confirming to Rayburn that John Zant killed his brother so that he could have Mrs. Zant for himself (202). Before anyone else acts, the ghost enacts his revenge and protects his wife: “At the instant when he attempted to embrace her...John Zant’s arms, suddenly turning rigid, remained outstretched. With a shriek of horror, he struggled to draw them back—struggled, in the empty brightness of the sunshine, as if some invisible grip had seized him” (202). John cries out, “What has got me?...Who is holding my hands? Oh, the cold of it!” (202). He then convulses and collapses. The housekeeper calls the fit a “paralytic stroke” based, presumably, on what the doctor says (202). The paralysis is “spreading upward to his face. If death spares him, he will live a helpless man” (202). Mrs. Zant rejects this medical explanation for what happened and asserts that “[n]o mortal hand held the hands of John Zant,” instead attributing the attack to her husband’s spirit (203). No physical evidence is produced in the story to make a case against John Zant, so the ghost protects his wife and ensures that another crime is not committed. Though not as grievous as murder, it was still not entirely legal for a man to marry his sister-in-law at this time. Ecclesiastically, it was frowned upon, and such a marriage would not be made entirely legal until 1921 in England.

Notably, when a *deus ex machina* intervenes to punish the wicked the investigators are spared divine punishment, even the women detectives who have



transgressed against social rules of comportment and morality. Patricia Craig, Mary Cadogan, and Lucy Sussex claim that the stories with women detectives imagine a new space for women. Building on that, I extrapolate that the supernatural interfering in criminal cases helps create that space between public and private roles, the supernatural and the natural, the human and the divine. The stories are not realist texts, but they do not have to be in order to impact society. These authors are giving their women sleuths a way to act and make a difference in the most honorable way. As D. A. Miller says, the sleuths who use unconventional types of investigative methods get closer to the truth than those who do not (“Cage” 114). Unlike *The Dead Letter*, which will be examined in the next chapter, these characters retain their moral innocence because they are not seeking power for themselves; they receive the influence of a higher or otherworldly power, and use it to help people they love, as well as themselves. In Andrew Forrester Jr.’s *The Female Detective*, a villain conveniently dies of a heart attack at the opportune moment as the detective debates about whether it is the morally right thing to do to give the police the evidence she has gathered because it might do more harm than good. The unexpected death, almost a smiting in the language of the story, solves the problem for her, and the legally and ethically right ending is realized. Yet the detective is not punished despite her untraditional behavior. William Stephens Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* also includes a memorable moment of divine intervention when the villain is struck by lightning through a hole in the roof just as he is about to throw the heroine detective to her death:

A vivid, blinding flash of lightning darted through the open space above the wheel [in the mill], and sought a victim. Zini, from his proximity to the metallic construction of the substantial part of the wheel, offered the most prominent mark, and it struck him, reducing him to a scathed mass of charred humanity. He had not time to utter a cry or a groan...and my appeal to a Higher Power had not been so disregarded as he had been pleased to think it would be. (*Revelations* 41)

Mrs. Paschal, the detective, had previously prayed that she might be delivered from her dire predicament, and she believes the lightning bolt to be the answer to that prayer. Despite the fact that Mrs. Paschal was right next to the man and only moments before was in his arms, the lightning does not harm her. Zini, the villain, is punished despite Mrs. Paschal's soft spot for him that made her waver in her decision to turn him over to the police. Although Mrs. Paschal is a professional female detective who frequently defies the constraints of her gender role (even stripping off her crinoline before following a criminal into a subterranean passage in the first case recorded in the book, "The Mysterious Countess"), she is unharmed by the supernatural smiting.

Not all detectives make it to the end of their stories without being punished for their efforts, however. In contrast to the anointed Susan, Crowe includes another woman investigator in *Susan Hopley* who actively seeks to be a detective (unlike Susan), and has a less happy ending as a result. The story of this detective, Julie Le Moine, is told in an embedded narrative. Lucy Sussex calls Julie "an example of the thwarted female detective *par excellence*" ("Detective" 61). What Sussex does not discuss is the

difference between Julie's investigation and Susan's. Whereas Susan wants to clear her brother's name but leaves things in God's hands, Julie seeks to prove the innocence of her former love, Valentine, who has been accused of attempted murder. Julie knows he is not the killer because she had been spying on Valentine at the time as he met with another woman. Based on what she has seen while spying, she has other suspects in mind. Disguising herself as a man, Julie investigates and finds all the evidence she needs. Unfortunately, she is locked in a cellar overnight and one of her captors, an older woman, accidentally falls down the cellar ladder to her death, leaving Julie alone in the dark with a corpse. This ordeal robs her of speech, rendering her "incapable of giving her testimony," and the authorities despair that "the secret will descend with her to the grave" (*Susan* 107). Julie investigates out of duty to her beloved, but also to show her superiority over Valentine's new love in the hope of winning him back. She is not "called" or chosen by the supernatural as Susan is. Julie remains mute and has an unhappy marriage to Valentine who marries her out of pity, but she eventually gets her revenge on her captors. Julie's experience in the cellar and resulting muteness may be a punishment, as many people view Marian Halcombe's illness as a punishment in *The Woman in White*, and like Marian's illness it does not mean that the case will go unsolved. In Julie's case, the fact that the old woman died saved her life. When the dead woman's son descends into the cellar to kill Julie he is shocked to find his mother dead and runs away, leaving Julie to be rescued by the police. Julie thus lives to eventually see the man caught, but the mysteries of the many entangled crimes in the novel are not cleared until Susan enters the scene as a detective assisted by the

supernatural, just as Marian sees Walter Hartright resolve the mysteries of *The Woman in White* as she recovers from her illness. Susan is not the only detective in her novel, but she is the only one through whom providence has chosen to work. Crowe makes a distinction between the two women and favors Susan, the humble but tenacious maidservant over the passionate and jealous Julie.

Not only do the women succeed in solving the cases when they follow the supernatural guidance given to them, they are praised for their work and their willingness to accept supernatural evidence along with physical evidence. In “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” Anne does not conduct the whole investigation herself since Robert joins her in her righteous task, but both are assisted by providence in finding enough evidence to take to court. Robert is rewarded financially with a good position given to him by the deceased Mary’s brother. Mary had lost touch with her brother years before, but he traces Anne after reading the newspaper report of the trial. Robert then finally has enough money to marry Anne (a long-postponed marriage due to lack of funds), and so Anne is rewarded as well. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, rather than being viewed as a tainted, or vulgarly transgressive woman for becoming involved in the investigation, questioning suspects and disregarding the decision of the inquest, Anne is literally applauded in the court room after she gives her testimony about her sleuthing, and the judge himself commends her for her work (“Diary” 36). Anne and Robert act because they are called to right the wrong done to Mary rather than acting for their own glory or out of a sense of revenge, and thus their nobility is rewarded. Although they risked being vulgar in the eyes of Victorian readers, these detectives are rewarded for

their efforts at the end of the novel, as Susan Hopley and Anne Rodway were, and they avoid vulgarity and criminality because they are working under the guidance of a supernatural power which exists outside the law of society and the courts. The authors create grey areas between the binary poles of social order (virtuous and wicked) by using the supernatural to justify the necessary actions of characters who would otherwise risk being “fallen” characters.

The dreams and ghostly visitations of these stories are examples of the supernatural intervening in the natural world of its own accord rather than being called upon (except through prayer as in *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost”) or controlled in any way by the recipients. Many of these “detectives” are actually very passive in their investigative roles. Like Susan Hopley, most of the evidence (both supernatural and physical) presents itself to the sleuths without being sought in a focused, active way. This agency through passivity means that detectives could do what was necessary to restore order without having to suffer guilt or social reproach for the transgressions they may have committed because they were compelled to act by a divine power. In this way, the stories allow the characters to reintegrate into their communities rather than remaining social outcasts. The next chapter takes up the question of agency and morality by examining the role of providence as an arbiter of morality as it defines which phenomena may be used for what purpose.

### CHAPTER III

#### CLAIRVOYANT LENSES AND CLOUDED MORALITY: MESMERISM AND CLAIRVOYANCE USED BY INVESTIGATORS

I discovered, by chance, some two or three years since, that [Lenore] had peculiar attributes. She is an excellent clairvoyant. When I first discovered it, I made use of her rare faculty to assist me in my more important labors; but I soon discovered that it told fearfully upon her health. It seemed to drain the slender stream of vitality nearly dry...For eighteen months I have not exercised my power over her in the trance state, or whatever it is, in which, with the clue in her hand, she will unwind the path to more perplexed labyrinths than those of the fair one's bower. (Register 1.219)

By the 1860s, Spiritualism had become established in the United States, and authors used elements of it in their fictional tales. The above passage from Seeley Register's 1866 American dime novel *The Dead Letter* comes from the moment when the lead investigator, Mr. Burton, tells the narrator about his daughter Lenore's clairvoyant ability, and how it is useful to his investigations.<sup>48</sup> On two occasions in the

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<sup>48</sup> Seeley Register was the penname under which Metta Fuller Victor published her novel in *Beadle's Monthly: A Magazine of Today* from January through September, 1866 as the lead story in the inaugural issues of the publication. Many modern scholars cite the story as having first been published in 1864 based on evidence in the Notes, Notices, and Gossip section of the February 1867 issue of *Beadle's* asserting that the story had not been written specifically for *Beadle's Monthly*, but "was, in fact, produced two years previous to the issue of our first installment" (195). No extant copy of this edition has been found, and it is possible that it never existed, and that the editor, likely either Victor

novel, Lenore is placed into a mesmerically induced trance to assist with her father's investigations by clairvoyantly "reading" clues. In the public mind Spiritualism and mesmerism were means for solving not only fictional crimes, but also real crimes. The supernatural has a long-standing relationship with the detection and punishment of crime. Before organized police forces, the belief that "murder will out" comforted the wronged and served as a deterrent to those contemplating a crime. Stretching back into the Middle Ages in history as well as in fiction, supernatural forces were relied on to serve justice when crimes were committed.<sup>49</sup> As we saw in the last chapter, in fiction the spirits of murdered victims appeared to denounce their killers, or dreams believed to be from God were sent to warn people of impending danger. The guilty would get their just deserts even if human laws could not identify or convict them. Detective fiction took on the conflicting forms of knowledge in the Victorian era and suggested that supernatural and scientific evidence needed to be given equal weight. This chapter will examine in depth one book, *The Dead Letter*, as an example of the combination of hope and distrust with which some fictional investigators approached clairvoyance and mesmerism as crime-solving tools. While in the texts explored in Chapter II, the supernatural assists investigators and confers agency and moral credibility upon women detectives in particular, in *The Dead Letter*, investigators who choose to harness the supernatural through mesmerism are presented as morally questionable, and the

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or her husband, lied. Alternatively, the story may well have been *produced* two years before, but that does not mean that it was *published* at that date.

<sup>49</sup> See Maurizio Ascari's *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction* for a more in-depth discussion of the longstanding connection between the supernatural and crime in fiction and in history.

supernatural itself is critiqued through the story. By viewing *The Dead Letter* as a strong example of a larger pattern carried through many of the stories discussed in the other chapters, this chapter argues that nineteenth-century detective fiction establishes a moral code for the use of the supernatural and pseudo-scientific, established by the force of providence or fate which rewards the morally good characters and punishes the morally wicked ones. The supernatural evidence assists in the solution of the crime and clairvoyance is portrayed as a positive gift. However, the introduction of mesmerism into the investigation adds shades of moral greyness and criminality even to the heroes. Regester comments on clairvoyance and the treatment of mediums in her novel, and cautions against the use of mesmerism. I will examine historical definitions of clairvoyance and mesmerism before focusing on how supernatural evidence is treated in *The Dead Letter*. Subsequently, I will discuss the moral implications of using clairvoyance and mesmerism in solving the murder to reveal Regester's stance on the transgressions of a nineteenth-century young woman, a father, and a murderer. The novel suggests that using mesmerism involves exerting too much control over other people, and that such control threatens the social order.

The supernatural's appearance in detective fiction is used not only as a sensational plot contrivance, but also as a reflection of popular interest in the supernatural and Spiritualism. Practitioners of Spiritualism consulted spirits who allegedly spoke to people gathered at séances by knocking on tables, lifting and rotating furniture, playing accordions, etc. People who claimed to be mediums brought spirits into conversation with the living, and often the spirits had something to say about crimes



from long ago, frequently their own murders. In some cases, it was hoped that the spirits would resolve baffling crimes of a more recent date. In *The Dead Letter*, the narrator has heard rumors that the ghost of the murder victim haunts his family's home. The narrator is not afraid of the man's spirit, but "[i]f such things were permitted, I should like to meet this spiritual visitant, and ask him the one question—if, indeed, he could answer it. I should like to have him point out the guilty. If his hand could reach out from the spiritual world, and stretch a blasting finger toward his murderer, that would be awful to the accursed one, but it would be welcome to me" (1.325). The narrator never has this opportunity in Regester's novel, unlike the characters in many of the stories examined in Chapter II. Instead, the book relies on other supernatural types of evidence to solve the murder. Historically, many people in the nineteenth century remained unconvinced by Spiritualism because many reports of séances involve the sitters asking fairly superficial questions of the spirits, and often receiving badly spelled, silly replies. Surely, if there were spirits abroad, and their purpose was to educate the living, they would have something more important to say.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The suggestion that spirits were communicating with the living to educate them was put forth by several writers. Notable among them are Catherine Crowe in *The Night Side of Nature* (1848) and William H. Harrison in *Spirits Before Our Eyes* (1879) who discuss the belief that the spirits educate the living to bring them closer to God. Others took a more intellectual stance, as described by Amy Lehman in Chapter 9 of her book *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance* (2009). Lehman points to Victorians who claimed that the spirits were interested in the continued advancement of living humans. For example, Lehman cites a reference to a claim that "the telegraph...was supposedly inspired by communications from the spirit of Benjamin Franklin, who continued his experiments with electricity, and his love of new inventions in the after life" (112).

For example, a letter published in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* demonstrates the connection between Spiritualism and crime in the public consciousness.<sup>51</sup> This letter's message was echoed by a score of others, according to the editor. These letters all express an interest in using Spiritualism to solve the famous Road House child murder of 1860, and were written before the case was closed in 1865.<sup>52</sup> The specific letter printed in the book is by Jas. N. Buckland, who addresses the renowned Spiritualist writer Mr. William Howitt to ask whether people would be more willing to believe in Spiritualism if the practice could do something really useful, like finding the Road House murderer. Buckland acknowledges that evidence provided by spirits will not be admissible in court, but that it could lead to more tangible evidence:

[M]ight not some information be obtained, to be privately communicated to Mr. Slack, of Bath, who has assiduously devoted himself to the fearful and mysterious case of the Road child-murder, by which he might be

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<sup>51</sup> *An Exposition of Spiritualism; Comprising Two Series of Letters, and a Review of the "Spiritual Magazine," No. 20, as Published in the "Star and Dial,"* was edited by A Sceptic, and published in London in 1862. It is composed of pieces published in *The Morning Star* between 1860 and 1861 before the periodical stopped printing the conversation. Sceptic states that the end came about "just when [the conversation] jarred with religious views very generally maintained," with the suggestion that this conflict with religion may have been the reason for the censorship (viii).

<sup>52</sup> On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1860, a four-year-old boy named Francis Saville Kent was found dead in the outhouse of his family home at Road Hill House in Road (now spelled Rode), Wiltshire. He had been stabbed to death sometime during the night. The case was investigated by Detective Inspector Jack Whicher of Scotland Yard (the inspiration for Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone*), who suspected the boy's older half-sister, Constance Kent. The case went unsolved, however, until Constance confessed in 1865. The case garnered a great deal of interest from the public, and it serves as the basis for the story "Child Found Dead, Murder or No Murder" in *The Female Detective* from 1864 (though the author had published an earlier version of the story as a stand-alone piece, as Judith Flanders discusses in her article "The Hanky-Panky Way").

assisted to prosecute further investigations?<sup>53</sup> I do not mean that any magistrate would commit, or any jury convict, on the unsupported evidence of Spiritualism; but, in such a case as this, surely some table might be persuaded to furnish a clue for transmission to him, by which the mystery should be unraveled, and the act be brought legally home by customary evidence to the criminal or criminals. This, if done, would...prove that there is a reality about the professed communications which may be turned to the good purposes of deterring from, or detecting crime. (31-32)

The tone of the letter challenges the Spiritualists, even sarcastically attributing the knowledge and speech to a table rather than a spirit, which the author probably doubts exists. At least twenty readers wrote in to suggest that, instead of ascertaining useless information from the spirits at séances, one should seek something useful, namely the solution of a baffling crime so that justice might be found for the murdered boy. This correlation between solving crimes and Spiritualism is reflected in the fiction of the day, not only lending the fiction a sense of realism, or perhaps of wish-fulfillment, but also providing a medium through which modern readers can study the Victorians' approach to the supernatural, justice, and their society. Clairvoyance and mesmerism were morally coded in the Victorian era in such a way that detective stories using these

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<sup>53</sup> Mr. Slack of Bath was, according to Kate Summerscale's *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher*, Mr. E. F. Slack, a solicitor from Bath who was commissioned to investigate the Road murder after Mr. Whicher's ignominious removal from the case.

narrative devices support the noble effort of solving a murder, but they warn of the danger inherent in taking too much power for oneself, even in the pursuit of justice.

It is unclear how often clairvoyants and mediums have been credited with helping to solve crimes in history. Several nineteenth-century texts on the supernatural reference anecdotal evidence of ghosts, dreams, and clairvoyants who helped solve or prevent crimes. For example, Rev. Frederick George Lee's book *Glimpses of the Supernatural* (1875), Catherine Crowe's *The Night Side of Nature* (first published in 1848), and Andrew Lang's "Ghosts Before the Law" (1894) mention several such stories.<sup>54</sup> The belief that clairvoyants could and did solve crimes persisted into the early twentieth century when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a related piece for *The Sunday News* on September 1, 1929. The article, "Murder Mysteries Mediums Did Solve," gives facts and dates for several cases in the late 1920s when mediums helped the police. Doyle is writing to defend his beliefs in clairvoyance and psychometry (psychically reading objects, facilitated by touch, and gleaning information about the object's history, contents, owner, etc.), and in particular focuses on cases where "the spirits of murdered girls tracked down their assassins" (9). These early twentieth-century instances bear a resemblance to their nineteenth-century predecessors in fictional crime tales such as *The*

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<sup>54</sup> Crowe (1803-1876) was an English novelist and Spiritualist. See Lucy Sussex's work for further information about Crowe's life and writings. Lang (1844-1912) was a Scottish author and anthropologist who served as the president of the Society for Psychical Research in 1911. The Reverend Frederick George Lee (1832-1902), a priest of the Church of England, published *Glimpses of the Supernatural* in 1875 as a two-volume work. A supplementary book, *More Glimpses of the World Unseen*, followed it in 1878.

*Dead Letter* and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, and more generally to the occult detective fiction subgenre.

Taking a cue from the work of Srdjan Smajić and Maurizio Ascari, who examine the use of the supernatural in detective stories, and Alison Winter, who believes that mesmerism can be a vehicle for examining the Victorians' understanding and challenging of their society, I will discuss the representations of clairvoyance and mesmerism in Victorian-era detective fiction by closely examining *The Dead Letter*, the strongest example of clairvoyance and mesmerism employed to solve a fictional crime. Smajić's approach to the supernatural in detective fiction focuses on the treatment of vision within the stories, such as clairvoyance. My approach will revolve around examining the way that the use of that supernatural sight is linked to the morality of the characters. Ascari's corrective history of the detective genre to include the supernatural tales provides the groundwork for my understanding of the detective genre as one that is rooted in spiritual concerns of right and wrong. The background insight provided by these three scholars facilitates my conclusion that authors such as Seeley Regester differentiate their treatment of the morality of mesmerism and clairvoyance. Within *The Dead Letter*, the clairvoyance and mesmerism are treated as real phenomena. By analyzing the treatment of clairvoyance and mesmerism associated with investigators from this book, we can observe how the authors use these skills that stand at the intersection of science and the supernatural. Regester grapples with the question of whether these detectives and clairvoyants should be punished for their use of mesmerism, or whether their association with it is justified as a means to a good end.

The approach to clairvoyance and mesmerism in *The Dead Letter* supports the pattern seen in Chapter II that certain supernatural abilities applied to investigations are coded as morally beneficial by the book, such as Burton's natural clairvoyant ability to read people. However, other supernatural abilities, such as mesmerism, border on the immoral because mesmerism is harmful to the medium and it grants the detective control over more information than is given to him by the providential forces he believes to be overseeing the investigation. Victorian detective fiction is rooted in a sense of right and wrong as it seeks to punish criminality and reward those who live according to the laws of society. In this way, the stories help to alleviate the Victorians' anxieties about the uncertainty of truth and the physical and spiritual laws that govern their lives. Before I begin my examination of clairvoyance and mesmerism as used by detectives, I will discuss the nineteenth-century definitions of clairvoyance and mesmerism.

### ***Clairvoyance and Mesmerism***

As discussed in the Introduction, nineteenth-century understandings of the supernatural and of science are difficult to categorize. As a result, the phenomena featured in fiction are difficult to categorize as well. Clairvoyance and mesmerism exist in a fluid relationship with each other, sometimes treated as distinct from one another and at other times treated as being in varying degrees of complicity, as in *The Dead Letter*. In the hopes of clarifying the distinctions as much as possible, I will share a few definitions from the nineteenth century. C. W. Leadbeater's 1899 book, *Clairvoyance*, explains that clairvoyance "means literally nothing more than 'clear-seeing,' and it is a

word which has been sorely misused....Even in its more restricted sense it covers a wide range of phenomena, differing so greatly in character that it is not easy to give a definition of the word which shall be at once succinct and accurate” (5).<sup>55</sup> He goes on to propose a working definition, however:

the power to see what is hidden from ordinary physical sight. It will be as well to premise that it is frequently (though by no means always) accompanied by what is called clairaudience, or the power to hear what would be inaudible to the ordinary physical ear; and we will for the nonce take our title as covering this faculty also, in order to avoid the clumsiness of perpetually using two long words where one will suffice.  
(5-6)

Another writer, Caxton Hall, provides more specifics when he says that people with clairvoyant skills “will see what are called astral or spirit forms. [They] will get telepathic communications, from friends in the physical body, and will probably find some difficulty in distinguishing such, from those of [their] friends who are out of the body, for the two subjects are so allied that there is some difficulty in separating them” (4).<sup>56</sup> Hall’s writing is representative of many other texts on the subject of clairvoyance, which claim that clairvoyant mediums can see and speak to spirits; can communicate telepathically with other mediums; can read the contents of sealed letters; can describe

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Webster Leadbeater was a priest of the Church of England before his belief in Spiritualism led him to leave his position in favor of working with the Theosophical Society.

<sup>56</sup> Although Caxton Hall wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century, his materials are very much in line with his Victorian predecessors. His pamphlet “Clairvoyance” was published in Blackpool in 1918.

the features, temperament, and character of a person they have never seen or met, but whom they have touched; and can by touching objects discern information about the person who has left the strongest impression on the object. These abilities are explained variously in terms of auras, spirits, magnetic fields, and ether. Hall describes clairvoyance as “a purely natural and simple extension of the power of physical sight” (4). Like many writers, he theorizes that clairvoyance is a skill with which some (or even all) people are born, and which may be strengthened through exercise.

Clairvoyance is, to these writers, a way of seeing things that cannot be perceived by the physical sense of sight housed in the eye and the optic nerve. It induces an “altered state” of mind, which accesses new senses and “fulfills...the mind’s greatest potential” (Winter 12, 3). The debate about whether clairvoyance is the result of supernatural powers or is a scientifically explainable sixth sense continued past the end of the nineteenth century. Many nineteenth-century novels do not attempt to define clairvoyance one way or the other, but leave it mysteriously in between science and the supernatural.

Mesmerism was first known as “animal magnetism,” the name given to it by Dr. Franz Mesmer of Germany (around 1774). He believed that an invisible magnetic force exists within and between living creatures and objects, that it can have influence over creatures and objects, and that it can be manipulated. Scientific studies trying to prove the existence of such a force focused primarily on its medical applications. In nineteenth-century Britain, the practice became popularly known as “mesmerism”



instead.<sup>57</sup> Eventually, James Braid, a Scottish surgeon and scientist, proposed that the effect of mesmerism was not due to magnetic force but to the power of suggestion over the subject. He coined the term “hypnosis” for his studies and practices, and held his first lecture on his theory in 1841. While hypnotism and mesmerism remained distinct terms and theories for years, the terms eventually began to be used interchangeably. Experiments abounded during the nineteenth century as people tried to discover the scientific truth behind mesmerism, and several of these studies connected clairvoyance with mesmerism. For example, Reverend S. R. Maitland writes in his 1849 pamphlet “Illustrations and Enquiries Relating to Mesmerism” that mesmerism, in connection with clairvoyance, is not *supernatural* but entirely natural. Rather than connecting with a spirit realm, he claims that clairvoyance is an extension of our natural influence over each other, and thus falls into the same area of study as hypnotism.

Clairvoyant mediums can perform readings of objects, people, or spirits either at will on their own in “normal clairvoyance,” or through “trance clairvoyance” in which they access the skills in a mesmeric trance (Hall 12). In an anonymous piece printed in *An Exposition of Spiritualism*, a “true clairvoyant” is declared to be “one who, by the opening of the *internal consciousness*, or spiritual sight, whether induced by an operation, or occurring spontaneously, has, while in that state of inner consciousness, and according to the degree of its development, a *sensational perception* of the objects of the inner, or spirit-world” (Sceptic 191). Mediums could see what others could not, and had access to a spirit world that others could not enter. Clairvoyance was believed

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<sup>57</sup> See Winter’s book *Mesmerized* for a more detailed discussion of the history of mesmerism and hypnotism.

to be a rare gift by some, and believed to be quite common by others, though found in varying strengths. Leadbeater, for example, writes that “the capacity for clairvoyance...lies latent in every one, and that those in whom it already manifests itself are simply in that one particular a little in advance of the rest of us” (7). Similarly, in Hall’s instructional text “Clairvoyance: Practical Instructions in the Art of Clairvoyance,” he informs the clairvoyant reader (without providing any evidence for the source of his statistics) that

many of your friends possess the power as well as yourself, so don’t think you are exceptional. You will find that one out of every four of your female friends possess the power to a limited extent, and one out of every ten of your male friends. Thus you will find clairvoyance more prevalent among females than males, probably because the former do not habitually take the positive side of anything in life, to the extent of the latter, and you will admit that sensitiveness is usually increased by a frequent state of passivity. (6)

In correlation to this frequent assertion that clairvoyance was more prevalent in women, men were believed to be better mesmerists than women because they had a stronger will to exert over the subject. For instance, William Davey’s how-to pamphlet “The Illustrated Practical Mesmerist: Curative and Scientific,” printed in 1865, states that “[i]n general, persons of superior muscular development, of broad shoulders and large heads, will mesmerize more powerfully than individuals not so distinguished, and males will usually mesmerize more effectually than females” (4). In this light, it is not surprising

that women were frequently the subjects upon whom mesmerism was practiced, especially because of their value as clairvoyants in that state.

The idea that mesmerism could lead to clairvoyance is addressed in several ways. One theory is that the mesmerized subject becomes connected to the mind of the mesmerist or the people around him or her. For example, Captain H. Hudson, William Davey, and someone writing as an Unprejudiced Observer all discuss the feat of reading a letter while blindfolded.<sup>58</sup> Hudson and the Unprejudiced Observer both suggest that it is not so much the letter that is being read, as the minds of other people in the room who know the text. Similarly, Reverend Chauncy Hare Townshend proposes that mesmeric trances and séances might lead to a medium's increased mental activity, which may amount to thought reading and other cognitive abilities:

The result, then, of our enquiry into Spirit-rapping seems to be this.

Whatever in it is contrary to sound reason, results either from fraud or error: while, whatever puzzling *residuum* may be left, is entirely accounted for by the Mesmeric Theory of an agent which sometimes produces material effects through cerebral motion, and, in rare cases, causes such increased mental perception as reaches to knowledge of distant events or of the thoughts of other persons. (209)

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<sup>58</sup> Hudson published *An Attempt to Explain Some of the Wonders and Mysteries of Mesmerism, Biology, and Clairvoyance* in 1852. Davey wrote "The Illustrated Practical Mesmerist" (1865), and the Unprejudiced Observer published *A Practical Investigation into the Truth of Clairvoyance. Containing Revelations of the Fate of Sir John Franklin, and Some Inquiry into the Mysterious Rappings of the Present Day*, in 1854.

In other words, he believes that most events at séances are fraudulent, such as tables floating in the air, people being pinched under tables, and accordions playing by themselves (supposedly being played by spirits).<sup>59</sup> Anything else, such as the revelation of information the medium could not know, is the result of a mesmeric connection to someone else in the room whose thoughts may be read.

Some writers, including Davey, use mesmerism and its scientific status to defend the existence of clairvoyance without dismissing it as mesmeric mind-reading. People in trances can contact not only spirits, but also the minds of other living people, even allowing them to know about things happening on the other side of the world. All of this is the exercise of the brain's normal ability, Davey claims, and not a result of the supernatural. "That as a fact in nature, this condition of supersensuous exaltation does really exist, cannot for a moment be seriously doubted by any one thoroughly acquainted with mesmerism, either by experimental or documentary evidence," he asserts (44). He goes on to say that clairvoyance is "much rarer than is usually supposed," implying that there are a great many frauds at work (44). For Davey, clairvoyance is only possible while the clairvoyant is in a mesmeric state, and may include several types of vision: "Under [mesmeric influence] the subject is capable of exercising perception, under conditions that in his ordinary state would render it impossible. He may be capable of prevision, postvision and distant vision, and thought-reading, and thus afford revelations

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<sup>59</sup> Townshend was an English clergyman and mesmerist. He was a friend of Charles Dickens, in part through their shared interest in mesmerism. Townshend wrote many texts about mesmerism and was an influential figure in the field. This quotation is from his *Mesmerism Proved True, and the Quarterly Reviewer Reviewed* (1854).

apparently incredible to those ignorant of the additional capability with which, while in this state, he seems to be endowed” (44).

This possibility of maneuvering through time, space, and people’s thoughts makes mesmerism and clairvoyance appealing tools for detectives. After all, as Aaron S. Hayward states, “Clairvoyance is revealing the thoughts of many hearts, and murderers, robbers and hypocrites tremble at its revelation” (169).<sup>60</sup> The ability to become a witness to a past crime, to foresee and to prevent a crime yet to happen, or to read the mind of the guilty party would make the detective’s job easier, especially before forensic science became well established.<sup>61</sup> Fingerprinting and crime scene photography would not become a standard with police forces until the very end of the century, for example, but when they were introduced the authoritative weight of physical evidence increased a great deal, thus shaping forensic science in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The more scientifically based side of the argument about mesmerism and clairvoyance explains clairvoyance in terms of unseen waves, which would have been familiar to the scientific community after the discovery of x-rays: invisible waves that allow us to produce images of the interior of objects such as the human body

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<sup>60</sup> Aaron S. Hayward’s *Nature’s Laws in Human Life: An Exposition of Spiritualism; Embracing the Various Opinions of Extremists, Pro and Con; Together with the Author’s Experience* was published in 1872 in Boston.

<sup>61</sup> See Ronald R. Thomas’s *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (2000), and Lawrence Frank’s *Victorian Detective Fiction and the Nature of Evidence* (2003) for in-depth discussions of the development of forensic methods and approaches to evidence in the nineteenth century. Both discuss the issue of the authority of evidence, though they take different approaches.

(Leadbeater 11). Leadbeater attempts to convince his skeptical readers by discussing waves and vibrations (connected to the understanding of x-rays at the time):

clairvoyance, like so many other things in nature, is mainly a question of vibrations, and is in fact nothing but an extension of powers which we are all using every day of our lives. We are living all the while surrounded by a vast sea of mingled air and ether, the latter interpenetrating the former, as it does all physical matter; and it is chiefly by means of vibrations in that vast sea of matter that impressions reach us from the outside. This much we all know, but it may perhaps never have occurred to many of us that the number of these vibrations to which we are capable of responding is in reality quite infinitesimal. (7-8)

In other words, clairvoyance works by manipulating the vibrations in the ether in ways not seen by normal physical vision in much the same way that x-rays cannot be seen by the human eye, but we can see the images produced by passing the rays through the human body (or other objects). He likens clairvoyance to light waves and sound waves, the full range of which the human eye and ear cannot perceive. From this he extrapolates that there may well be other vibrations which some underdeveloped sense organ can sometimes perceive, and which can be exercised and trained to greater receptiveness.

Among those who believed that spirits and divine influence were involved in clairvoyance, there were some who did not think that this excluded science from the explanation. Members of both the scientific and religious communities argued that the

science of clairvoyance was a natural part of God's construction of the universe. For instance, the Scottish physicists Peter Guthrie Tait and Balfour Stuart wrote in their 1875 text *The Unseen Universe* that their goal was "to show that the presumed incompatibility of Science and Religion does not exist" (vii).<sup>62</sup> Their concern is the connections among clairvoyance, Spiritualism, and the immortal soul. Similarly, William H. Harrison seeks to find proof of the truth of Spiritualism (and clairvoyance) in part to prove the "Immortality of Man" (v). He believes that mediums speaking with spirits prove that immortal souls continue to exist after death.

In the midst of this period of opinionated publication, several writers chose to represent all sides of the argument, allowing readers to decide which argument they believe. An anonymous author in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* points out that the science of the mind is still in its infancy, and the science of the external world is not much older. Therefore there are many things of which the mind is capable (such as perceiving other times and places) that science cannot yet explain, but that inability does not prove that such things are impossible (178-80). Though there was no consensus about Spiritualism and mesmerism in the nineteenth century, the theories and phenomena were part of public consciousness and public debate. Pamphlets and books about clairvoyance, mesmerism, and Spiritualism crowded shelves, magazines such as *The Spiritual Magazine* and *The Zoist: Journal of Cerebral Physiology & Mesmerism* were devoted to the various subjects suggested by their titles, and learned groups such as the Society for Psychical Research were formed to investigate psychical phenomena

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<sup>62</sup> The first edition was published anonymously, though later editions listed their names.

including clairvoyance and the possibility of communicating with the dead.

Unsurprisingly, then, clairvoyance and mesmerism made their way into detective fiction.

### **The Dead Letter Case Study**

First serialized in 1866 in the short-lived publication *Beadle's Monthly, A Magazine of Today*, this American dime novel involves several variations of the supernatural and pseudo-scientific. The novel includes many gothic-holdover mentions of ghosts and ghost lights that are always explained away when it is revealed that a living person is responsible for the eerie events, but the story also involves clairvoyant trances that are used to obtain clues vital to solving the case.

Although this is an American story, *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper* in England pirated the text within a year of its original appearance. Particulars of the setting and character names were altered to make it sound like a story of English origin and set in England rather than New York City, but no credit was given to the original author. No details of the crime or the investigation were changed in this alternate version; therefore, the English readers would have been familiar with essentially the same story as the Americans.<sup>63</sup> The editors at *Cassell's* could easily have altered the portrayal of the supernatural events along with the other edits if they had a problem with

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<sup>63</sup> The alterations to the story were probably made to appeal to British readers, and perhaps to make the story appear more respectable rather than a lowly American import. The editor of *Beadle's* appears to believe that the alterations reflect a low opinion of American literature, since he or she argues that American fiction would be recognized for its quality if only American authors were given credit for their work, and that the piracy of *The Dead Letter* and other texts indicates that the works evidently are good enough for British readers. The discussion of copyright laws and the pirated edition appears in *Beadle's* Volume 3 on pages 97, 192, and 290.



that aspect of the story. Yet these elements remain unaltered for the British audience. The Americans and British shared similar opinions about the supernatural, so the book easily enters into conversation with British texts.

A brief summary of the story may be in order before looking at the particulars of the text. *The Dead Letter* is told from the perspective of Richard Redfield, a young lawyer and friend of the Argyll family. He works for the patriarch, Mr. Argyll, and is secretly in love with the eldest daughter, Eleanor, who has recently become engaged to the very worthy and universally liked Mr. Henry Moreland. Redfield is a frequent guest in the Argyll home and is friendly with the younger daughter, Mary. He is on polite terms with James Argyll—a coworker of Redfield’s, the nephew of Mr. Argyll, and also secretly in love with Eleanor. When Moreland is murdered, Redfield is drawn into the investigation in order to comfort the Argyll family. Mr. Burton, a well-respected private investigator, is brought in as a consultant on the case. Over time, Redfield and Burton grow to respect one another and develop a friendship as they investigate together. Leesy Sullivan, a seamstress who had been in love with Moreland, is a suspect in the case, but then Redfield himself falls under suspicion and is temporarily exiled from his life in New York to work in the Washington, D.C. dead letter office. A year later, a new piece of evidence—unsurprisingly, a dead letter—comes to light, and the investigation resumes. The two detectives discover that James Argyll hired a killer in order to remove the obstacle standing between him and Eleanor. The assassin is traced, and the truth about what happened is revealed to all concerned, bringing an end to the mystery, confusion, and misinformation that led to Redfield being suspected and outcast.

Within the narrative, there are many references to ghosts, clairvoyance, mesmerism, and magnetic influences that assist the investigation. Catherine Ross Nickerson reads these Gothic moments in *The Dead Letter* as points that “stand out as disruptions in the harmony of middle-class life, as signs that something is terribly wrong” (34). The gothic suggestions of ghosts coincide with the murder of Henry Moreland, and the clairvoyance is only used when all other investigative methods and the legal system fail. On the night of the murder, Redfield claims to hear something besides rain pounding against the windows of the Argyll house, and dramatically declares that he “knew afterward what it was. It was a human soul, disembodied, lingering about the place on earth most dear to it” (1.12). Later in the text, Redfield learns of rumors that Moreland’s ghost, restless because he was murdered, is haunting his family home because ghost lights have been seen. Redfield investigates the ghost lights and the dent in Henry’s pillow indicative of someone having slept in his bed, and discovers that Leesy Sullivan has been hiding in the house to avoid the police, that her candle was responsible for the mysterious lights, and that she had lain on her beloved Henry’s bed. The peaceful middle-class prosperity of the Argylls and Morelands is disrupted by the murder. A modern reader might think that the way to restore harmony in a story where the gothic/supernatural signals disruption would be to persevere with a rational, scientific investigation in order to chase away the shadows of the gothic and leave only the explicable in its stead. Yet that is not what happens in this story. Instead, the investigators Burton and Redfield employ occult skills to fight for harmony and the return of the status quo, as Hughes and Ousby argue is the purpose of the detective in the

1860s. The gothic moments may point to disruptions, as Nickerson argues, but they also help to rectify what is “terribly wrong” (34). The greatest “wrong” is an unsolved murder, and the supernatural helps to solve it. The supernatural indeed appears at narrative moments of disruption, highlighting the tensions, but also working to ease them. Yet in the end, the supernatural defies neat categorization. Even when all other loose ends are neatly tied up as the detective reveals the solution of the mystery, the supernatural remains un(re)solved.

*The Dead Letter* is of particular interest among detective stories using supernatural investigative methods because of the rumors surrounding its origin. Not only does the plot rely on clairvoyance, but a rumor also circulated in the periodical press that the author had received the plot of the story while in a trance, and that the details of the story matched an unnamed baffling contemporary case.<sup>64</sup> The editor of *Beadle's*, likely Regester's husband, Orville James Victor, who was in charge of the magazine, published a response denying this rumor in the “Notes, Notices, and Gossip” section of the February 1867 issue. “Seeley Regester” admits that “the initial idea—the murder of young Moreland” is not purely “his” own invention, and to his knowledge, there is no other similarity to any real case (3.195). The author assures the readers “that he is no ‘clairvoyant,’ nor was his work written in any other than a normal condition of

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<sup>64</sup> I have not found the original story in the unnamed “leading daily journal” that supposedly first printed the rumor. It may well be a publicity stunt by the magazine. The editor of *Beadle's* includes an excerpt from the original in February 1867: “It is asserted that the author obtained the materials in his story while in a clairvoyant state, and so true were his delineations to the life, that the friends of the parties sought to suppress the work in its early stages, and further, that the criminal, on his death-bed, recently confessed his crime, the circumstances of which tally singularly enough with those set down in the narrative” (3.195).

mind” (195). As we have already seen from the letters reprinted in *An Exposition of Spiritualism*, popular imagination embraced the connection between clairvoyance and the detection of crime, and here the readers are ready to believe that the popular novel reflected the supposed reality in which they lived (and in which the supernatural assisted in solving crimes) more closely than it actually does. This small piece suggests that the readers took the instances of the supernatural in the story as representations of real phenomena, reflecting real events, which potentially makes the critiques made by those elements in the story more convincing. The critiques do not merely address obviously fictionalized representations of the elements, but are more readily extended to “real world” instances of clairvoyance and mesmerism as well. Alternatively, if the rumor was made up, it assists in building the myth that such supernatural assistance exists. If such supernatural assistance involves itself in real murders such as that of Francis Saville Kent, then the fictional account will seem closer to the historical world, and again, the critiques of clairvoyance and mesmerism would extend beyond the fictional world as well.

### ***Working with Supernatural Evidence***

As in the stories examined in Chapter II, supernatural forces work to assist the detectives in their work. This establishes that Redfield in particular is “called” to investigate the murder. Regester used clairvoyance and mesmerism as well as a sense of providence throughout the investigation, but she makes a distinction between the

morality of the “called” detective through whom providence works, and the immorality of the detective who relies too heavily on his own mesmeric skills.

The first suggestions of supernatural/mesmeric elements come very early in the text. *The Dead Letter* opens in the middle of the story as the narrator Redfield happens across the letter that is the next vital clue in the Moreland murder case, which had gone cold a year before. He then goes back and narrates the story from the time of the murder to the present. Redfield himself has no overt supernatural or clairvoyant abilities, and yet when he comes across this letter, which seems innocent enough, he somehow knows it has something to do with the murder. Redfield describes his discovery of the letter in terms of Spiritualism or animal magnetism as understood from a scientific stance: “I know not what magnetism passed from it, putting me, as the spiritualists say, *en rapport* with it; I had not yet cut the lappet; and the only thing I could fix upon as the cause of my attraction was, that at the date indicated on the envelope, I had been a resident of Blankville, twenty miles from Peekskill—and something about that date!” (1.8). Once he opens the letter, Redfield finds that it is simply addressed “Dear Sir” and signed “Your disappointed NEGOTIATOR,” and is a “brief epistle, neither lucid nor interesting in itself” as it discusses an old friend who has a broken toothpick in his pocket (1.8-9). The writer apologizes for not having completed the task he was asked to do. It is later discovered that the message is in code, and that it was written by the assassin who killed Moreland, addressed to the person who hired him, announcing that the deed is done and where the murder weapon (the broken toothpick) is hidden in an old tree with a hollow space in it (the pocket). Although Redfield himself suggests a reading of the situation

that draws on animal magnetism/mesmerism—that he became *en rapport* with the energy of the letter as a medium might—he also provides a more simple psychological reason for his interest in the letter. Rather than some magnetic energy drawing his attention, it is the town and date that catch his eye.<sup>65</sup> The case must always be on his mind, so it is natural that his attention would be drawn to the letter without the influence of magnetism, which was believed to be connected to the pseudo-sciences of mesmerism and clairvoyance.

Yet the connection to an underlying magnetic influence is further emphasized in Redfield's otherwise baseless conviction that the letter is the key to solving the case, even though its contents seem innocuous:

Obscure as it was...I yet felt *assured* that those vague hints had reference to the sinful tragedy which had occurred October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1857. Here was placed in my hands—at last!—a clue to that mystery which I had once sworn to unravel...I felt...an inward sense that *I held the key which was surely to unlock the awful secret.* (Register vol. 1, p. 501)

The language of *rapport* and magnetic transference, accompanied by a strong conviction that this cryptic but innocent enough letter is a clue, suggests that the letter in a way *wants* to be found and reaches out to him, the only person in the office who could guess its significance, with a magnetic pull. The letter wants to betray its writer. In this way, the letter's magnetic pull on Redfield is an example, like those discussed in the second

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<sup>65</sup> The distinction between mesmerism, psychology, biology, etc. had not yet been solidly drawn. Winter argues that mesmerism did not disappear from medical/scientific discourse, but was folded in with the emerging studies of psychology (6-7).

chapter, of supernatural forces appointing an advocate to act on behalf of justice. Redfield himself believes that finding the letter was an act of a higher will. The fact of the letter's survival alone is remarkable, as in the ordinary course of the post office if the letter had not been claimed after being mailed, it would have "been forwarded to Washington three months after its reception at Peekskill, and have long ago been consigned to the waste-basket and the flames" (Register 1.503). The letter had fallen into a crack at the post office, and was only rediscovered when the shelving unit was moved two years later. The letter's continued existence, and the fact that it found its way to Redfield, indicate that "[t]he hand of an overruling Providence seemed to be moving the men in this terrible game. At that hour [he] recognized it, and felt a solemn conviction that...the murderer would be checkmated" (503). Spurred by the letter and the belief that his efforts are aided by Providence, Redfield goes to Mr. Burton, despite the fact that the clue seems incredibly tenuous. "Fate had interposed in this singular manner, in [his] behalf and in that of Truth," Redfield asserts, and he feels compelled to serve "Justice" (503). The belief that this cryptic but meaningless message is a clue suggests that the letter has a way of communicating with Redfield on a level other than written language. The letter wants to tell its story, and Redfield knows who may be able to help—Mr. Burton and his clairvoyant eleven-year-old daughter, Lenore.

When Redfield meets with Mr. Burton to show him the letter, Burton shows off his own superbly insightful reading skills before having Lenore psychometrically read the document. Burton, like several early detective characters, is remarkable for his eyes and their penetrative gaze, which makes it seem that he is looking into one rather than at

one. This gaze, once turned on the letter, carefully studies the envelope and “peruse[d]” the contents of the letter “in one swift glance” (1.504). Afterwards, Burton sits “holding it, gazing at it, lost in thought” before he announces that he is “glad [he has] a specimen of the villain’s handwriting; it will enable [him] to know the writer when [he sees] him” (504). Burton proceeds to give a detailed description of the man’s appearance, personality, and background, much to Redfield’s astonishment. When questioned by Redfield, Burton claims that “[a]ll the acquaintance [he has] with [the writer], [he has] made through the medium of his chirography” (504). In this instance, Burton declares that his “art of reading men and women from a specimen of their handwriting” is a purely natural gift, for there is “nothing marvelous in [his skills]. Patient study and unwearied observation, with naturally quick perceptions, are the only witchcraft [he uses]” (505). Even after Burton proves his skill by describing people Redfield knows by reading their handwriting, Redfield insists on believing that “there must be some ‘*hocus-pocus*’ about it, as in the tricks which jugglers play with cards,” and yet is willing to put his faith in the “facts” his friend has produced because he has faith in his friend (505). At the conclusion of the case, Burton is less modest about some of his abilities, however, and says that they are due to some “power not possessed by all—call it instinct, magnetism, clairvoyancy, or remarkable nervous and mental perception” (2.200). This ability “enables [him], often, to *feel* the presence of criminals, as well as of very good persons, poets, artists, or marked temperaments of any kind” (200). Furthermore, Burton claims that he knew that the killer was either Redfield or James from the moment he first met them, and that very soon after, he knew that James was the guilty party: “The day on



which this case was placed before me, it was brought by two young men, [James and Redfield]. I had not been ten minutes with them when I began to perceive that *the murderer was in the room with me*; and before they had left me, I had decided which was the guilty man” (200-201). He withholds this knowledge, however, until he has gathered enough physical proof to convince a court of law. Thus, he privileges the authority of physical evidence over the ineffable evidence of his clairvoyant perceptions. Further, this course of action is the wisest because it allows him to calculate how he can trap his quarry and bring him to justice: “it would have been unpardonable rashness to denounce him without proof; by such a course I would throw him on the defensive, defeat the ends of justice, and overwhelm myself with denunciation” (201). It takes more than two years for Burton to put together his case, but at last, he has all the proof he needs, including the written confession of the hired killer (the author of the dead letter), George Thorley, the former husband of Leesy Sullivan’s deceased cousin.

Although Burton treats physical evidence as more authoritative than supernatural evidence when convincing others of the truth, he gives equal weight in his own estimation to the supernatural evidence he collects during his investigation. In the explanation and confrontation scene at the end of the novel, Burton tells Mr. Argyll, “*I have discovered the murderer of Henry Moreland, and can give you positive proof of it!*” (2.196). With Thorley’s written confession in his possession, Burton denounces James Argyll as the man who paid for the murder to take place: “[Thorley] has told the story plainly, and I have every other evidence to confirm it which a court of law could possibly require. I could hang his accomplice, without doubt” (199). Burton is aware

from his past experiences that courts of law require irrefutable physical proof to convict a criminal, and keeps Redfield, the Argylls, and the readers in suspense as we wait for him to collect his empirical evidence. While the courts require physical evidence, Burton has complete faith in the evidence he perceives clairvoyantly, and he has equal faith in the clairvoyant evidence provided by his daughter Lenore.

Among her gifts, Lenore's "intuitive perception of character" is described as being akin to Burton's own "remarkable gift that way," as he himself states (1.411). Part of Burton's success as a detective is contingent upon his knack for reading people: "When I meet people," Burton explains, "I seem to see their minds and not their bodies—I can't help it. Well, I've remarked the same thing in my child" (411). In Burton's opinion, his daughter is too young to be able to make sense of what she perceives or to express it to other people because she has not yet learned enough about society. Instead, "she has her instantaneous partialities, and [Burton has] noticed that she leans toward true natures like a flower toward the light, and away from the false as if they were shadows" (411). Nineteenth-century thinkers explained such instinctive reactions in terms of clairvoyance, and auras. In his "Somnambulism and Psycheism," J. W. Haddock, M.D., quoted in *An Exposition of Spiritualism*, says that higher states of clairvoyance reveal

that an effluvium or atmosphere surrounds the mental organism, or spiritual body of every individual. Following the general law of nature, this sphere possesses the peculiar qualities of the organism from which it emanates. And hence arises the *repugnance* which is felt to the society of

some persons, and the pleasure which is experienced in the company of others, and to it are referable all the remarkable instances of SYMPATHY and ANTIPATHY, so frequently observed. (Sceptic 194)

Burton and Lenore both have the ability to perceive things about people's characters without consciously trying. This supernaturally provided information assists in the investigation, though it cannot stand on its own as proof to convince other people, including a jury.

The ineffable evidence is not dismissed, however, nor does it carry less weight in the story. Burton uses it to further his investigation and as a starting point from which to search for the physical evidence. From the beginning he is convinced he knows who the killer is as a result of his ability to sense the presence of killers and to read people, and he doggedly pursues the physical evidence to prove what he already knows.

Mr. Burton's clairvoyance is limited to instinctive feelings and possibly to his talent for reading handwriting. Lenore Burton's skills go further, and her clairvoyance is accessed through mesmerism. Clairvoyance unlocks histories and current facts about the owners of objects. When Burton exhausts all other leads and investigative methods, he turns to his tool of last resort, Lenore's clairvoyance, and mesmerizes her into trances. Her ability is used rarely as it is detrimental to her health, draining her energy and leaving her weakened. When placed in a trance, young Lenore can examine physical clues and read the energy left on them by their owners, as a magnifying glass makes clear to the viewer otherwise imperceptible trace information.

Burton and Redfield do not treat Lenore's gift as overtly supernatural, however. Like Burton's abilities, Lenore's are described in scientific and supernatural terms. Both Burton and Redfield refer to God, fate, and providence a great deal throughout the book, and yet neither likes to call clairvoyance a supernatural gift, preferring scientific terms instead. After Lenore's first trance, for instance, the clairvoyance is spoken of as having something to do with electricity, and Burton's mesmeric ability is frequently connected to magnetism. Redfield must be familiar with trances to a certain degree, for after witnessing Lenore's first trance he is not incredulous about what he has seen. Instead, he recommends a treatment to help Lenore recover after the trance exhausts her. When Mr. Burton administers a "tiny" dose of port, which revives Lenore somewhat, Redfield suggests something stronger: "I should think the application of electricity would restore some of the vitality which has been taken from her" (1.221). His proposal implies an understanding, in keeping with the medical and scientific theories of the day, of the trance as a process involving the body's electrical energy, and it seems that the experience has removed vitality that might be restored through electrical therapy. By contrast, a purely supernatural understanding of clairvoyance would discuss clairvoyance as the work of non-natural forces from the spirit world. Burton agrees that he will try the treatment that evening, thereby indicating that he agrees with Redfield's understanding of the process. Burton's will power is connected to magnetism most explicitly when he and Redfield have found Leesy and wish to interrogate her. Burton observes to Redfield that "[s]he is frightened now, and defiant. I shall soothe her—magnetize her will, as it were—and draw from her the truth" (416). Lenore's gift is

more potent than Burton's, though she must be entranced to access that altered state of mind that allows her to read people's energies and become *en rapport* with them.

Lenore cannot, it appears, access her own clairvoyance except in the case of her instinctive affinities for people, but must submit to the mesmeric will of someone else to participate in the investigation. She is less a detective herself than a clairvoyant magnifying glass through which her father can learn more from physical clues.

Lenore's clairvoyant ability appears contingent upon having an object for her to read. Burton makes passes over Lenore with his hand in order to put her into the trance state. Once in the trance, Lenore examines Leesy's photograph on one occasion, and on a second occasion examines the dead letter. She is not looking with her physical eyes, however, for we are told that they are closed while she is in the trances. Instead, she reads "the personality of the writer" in the letter, as her father puts it, and the photograph links Lenore to Leesy in the present rather than to a time when the photograph was with Leesy or when the picture was taken, probably because her father is trying to trace where Leesy is at that moment (Register 1.508). Alternatively, psychometrically reading the letter shows Lenore the moment when the letter was last in the possession of the writer, about two years ago. The vision that Lenore experiences is guided by the information Burton is hoping to find—the identity of the hired killer.

The letter and photograph serve as "connecting mediums," according to a letter included in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* (Sceptic 191). By the definitions laid out in this anonymous letter, Lenore is a "true clairvoyant;" because she is "one who, by the opening of the *internal consciousness*, or spiritual sight, whether induced by any

operation, or occurring spontaneously, has, while in that state of inner consciousness, and according to the degree of its development, a *sensational perception* of the objects of the inner, or spirit-world” (Sceptic 191). As such, when her attention is “directed to any distant individual, and the *rapport*, or connection between them, [is] made stronger by using the hair or writing of the individual sought, or something else identified [sic] in some measure with his mind or body, *as the connecting medium*,” then the clairvoyant becomes *en rapport* with the person (191). When the photograph and the letter put Lenore *en rapport* with Leesy Sullivan and George Thorley respectively, she can see where Leesy is at that moment, and she can see the moment when the letter was last in the possession of the person who wrote it. Enough time has passed since the letter was written that the connection to Thorley may not be strong enough to show Lenore where the killer is at that moment as it had shown her Leesy. When holding the letter, Lenore can, as the anonymous writer puts it, trace through the “*living phantasmagoria* of the spirit-world, the man and his affairs...laid open to the clairvoyant’s inner vision” (Sceptic 192). The vision is experienced as if she is physically present in the moment that exists around her as a “living phantasmagoria” (192).<sup>66</sup> When Lenore follows Thorley through the stormy night in her trance, it is not the letter that she is “reading,” because the letter, if thought of as a sentient object or a passive absorber of what

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<sup>66</sup> A phantasmagoria was a type of theater or theatrical effect that was first used in the eighteenth century and continued to be used through the nineteenth century, involving the use of magic lanterns to project eerie, changing images of skeletons, ghosts, and other macabre things. A living phantasmagoria would presumably be a similar experience of seeing spirits, but without the trickery of lanterns. Lenore does not appear to be experiencing anything frighteningly macabre, but her spirit moves through spaces and times where she is not physically present.

happens around it, has no way of knowing where the writer went after it was dropped in the post box. Lenore is connecting to the writer, then. Due to the passage of time, the letter is losing its potency as a connecting medium, and Lenore has difficulty maintaining the vision. There are, therefore, limits to the information that can be gleaned by clairvoyance in Regeister's fictional world. While these limitations may serve to heighten suspense in the plot, they also fit a larger pattern in similar detective stories wherein providence, God, or the supernatural power enforcing justice places boundaries on the types of supernatural powers that can be used and the knowledge that can be thus attained. This limitation serves to prolong suspense, of course, but it also fits into the larger pattern explored by this project wherein mesmerism is never portrayed as a wholly good solution to problems. Mesmerism often crosses the boundary of acceptable practices in stories such as *The Notting Hill Mystery* and *The Parasite*, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

When Lenore is tasked with "reading" the dead letter in her trance, she has a hard time seeing the vision around her clearly at times, and in the end, cannot glean all the information for which her father hopes. "'It is useless,' exclaimed Mr. Burton, in a burst of disappointment; 'it has been too long since the letter was penned. The personality of the writer has departed from it'" (1.508). Burton's comment connects the book's treatment of clairvoyance to the theory, discussed by nineteenth-century writers such as Haddock and Townshend, that people's energy lingers on their possessions, and that mediums and clairvoyants can read that energy, or aura. That energy trace fades with

time, making it difficult for the medium to read.<sup>67</sup> The information Lenore provides is useful, but the clairvoyant visions do not always give Burton what he wants to know. He is already convinced that James hired the killer, but he still needs to trace Leesy to learn what she knows and to clear her as a suspect. Leesy has a connection to the hired killer, Thorley, and Burton needs her information to lead him to Thorley himself. The supernatural/preternatural evidence assists Burton, but he still has work to do to find the physical proof he needs and to uncover the full narrative of why Moreland was killed and why Thorley agreed to help.

Lenore's gifts are not limited to mesmerically induced clairvoyance, though. Like her father, she has instinctive reactions to people; however, she is not yet able to analyze or comprehend the significance of her reactions. Her intuitive affinity for or repulsions from new acquaintances are similar to discussions of physical reactions felt by "magnetically sensitive" people in Victorian-era treatises. In *Mesmerism Proved True, and the Quarterly Reviewer Reviewed* (1854), Townshend expresses his belief that: "Children, too...seem often to be attracted or repelled by causes that lie deeper than physiognomy. The writer of a book called *Dietetics of the Human Soul*...asserts, from facts known to him, that about a murderer breathes a sort of 'aura,' which disagreeably affects children and sensitives" (126). Regester casts Lenore as one of these sensitives, and her reactions are all the more profound because she is also a child. This Victorian belief that children made better mediums is linked to the Romantic attitudes that children were closer to God and therefore were better able the sacred and the profane. It is also

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<sup>67</sup> Haddock's work appears in *An Exposition of Spiritualism* (1862), edited by A Sceptic.



linked to the conception that because children were less educated in the ways of the world, they were better able to serve as passive mediums. When she meets Redfield, Lenore quickly takes to him, as well as to Mr. Argyll, Eleanor, and Mary, who are all morally good characters in the story. When she meets James Argyll, however, she reacts as though he frightens or repulses her. Her reaction is described in the following manner:

You have noticed, reader, how some little cloud, floating in the west at sunset, will be flushed through with rosy light, and how, instantly, while you gaze, it will turn gray, losing every particle of radiance. So the child changed when [James] approached and spoke to her. Her cheeks faded to a gray whiteness; her eyes were riveted on his, but she could not smile; she seemed to struggle with some inward repugnance and her sense of what courtesy demanded; finally she laid her little cold hand in his, without a word, suffered him to kiss her, and, clinging close to Eleanor, remained pale and quiet—her gayety and bloom were alike gone. Mr. Argyll could not rally her—she shrunk like a sensitive plant. (1.401)

Redfield's curiosity is piqued by her reaction. He assigns more significance to it than the others do because he is the only one present who knows of her clairvoyant gift. Redfield is not the only one to notice her reaction, however. James, guilty of murder, seems uncomfortably aware that Lenore can see more of him than he would like, as "the pure eyes of the child looked straight into the darker chambers of his heart, and [she] was frightened by what she saw there" (402). At this point, Redfield only knows that

James is gambling himself into debt and is hoping to win Eleanor's hand, and thus attain her money. He does not see James's discomfort as a sign of his guilt in the murder, but thinks Lenore perceives James's gambling trouble instead. Whether reacting to the gambling, greed, or murder, Lenore senses something dark and frightening in James. That James seems aware of Lenore's reaction hints at his own perceptive abilities. Regester suggests that James also has slight clairvoyant propensities since he can read Lenore's reaction and because he can read people around him well enough to know exactly how to charm them onto his side of any issue and make them like him.

Having examined how clairvoyance, mesmerism, and other elements of the supernatural have been used as evidence in conjunction with empirical, physical evidence, we will now look at how the clairvoyants and mesmerists fare in the story under the overarching judgment of a greater (reassuring) providential force and the commentary the novel makes about interactions between male and female characters as well as adults and children. I will first examine how Lenore gains increased mobility, the chance to leave her domestic sphere and to see things that she would not otherwise see as a child.

### ***Mobility and the Privilege of Gaze***

Lenore is eleven at the start of the novel and thirteen by the conclusion of the case, meaning that she is at a liminal age between childhood and womanhood. This duality means that Lenore is a child in terms of her perceptiveness as a clairvoyant and a young woman in terms of her agency; the novel empowers her in both of these

manifestations. While in the trance state, Lenore travels around New York City, effectively on her own, and participates in her father's investigations. She takes a privileged position as the witness to Leesy's location and to the moment when the dead letter was posted. When reading the photograph, she remains seated in the chair in her father's house, safely ensconced in her domestic realm, but she also walks, in her vision, in the public sphere. She finds herself in a lodging house in Brooklyn, thus standing in someone else's domestic space, before walking down several flights of stairs and out along the street to the corner without knowing where she is in the city. This is notable because Burton does not allow Lenore to travel on her own at any other point in the novel. She then goes back into the house and up the stairs to the fourth floor room where she started. Not only does she see the different surroundings of her visions, she is also physically affected by her actions and the weather. As a result of her trance walking, "Lenore began to look weary and exhausted; the sweat broke out on her brow, and she panted as if fatigued with climbing flights of stairs" (1.221). When she later "reads" the letter in a trance, she sees Moreland's assassin post the letter, and she attempts to follow the man, struggling to keep him in sight in the darkness, and the foul weather, describing the scene in the following way: "Now we are at the ferry—it is the Fulton Ferry—I know it well. Oh dear! the water rises and the wind blows—it is getting morning, but it rains so—and the water is so wild I can not make my way on to the boat" (1.508). Lenore is not able to maneuver effortlessly through her visions, but feels herself to be physically present in the experience, and thwarted by obstacles in that place. Nevertheless, she moves about New York City alone, even after dark, which she would

not as an eleven- to thirteen-year-old. The trance creates a loophole in social rules for Lenore, and lets her experience the city and her father's investigations without ever transgressing the rules. Regester's treatment of this young girl reading clues with the aid of the supernatural reveals tensions about whether clairvoyance is empowering or repressive for women mediums.

The trances place Lenore in the paradoxical position of being the eyewitness, the subject gazing at objects and reporting on them to her father who is dependent upon her interpretation, while simultaneously being little more than an instrument for her father. When Lenore is in the trance, she is given an opportunity to transgress the boundaries of acceptable behavior for young women. Marlene Tromp argues in her book *Altered States* that "Spiritualism undermined the very social structures that defined a narrow circuit of behavior for women," by taking them out of the context that is so strictly policed by codes of conduct and into a new context where the rules are not fixed (23). The cases on which Tromp focuses do not emphasize the slurs made against mediumistic women, though many such slurs were made by the general public in the nineteenth century. For example, William Stephens Hayward lists some of the many pejorative things said against mediums, including beliefs that "Spiritualists are a low set of people. They are immoral...They are licentious....The female mediums are no better than prostitutes....Mediums and the believers in Spiritualism delight in making inharmony in the marriage relation, and try to break up families," and that "[t]hey have no respect for good society, and are unfit associates for decent people" (21). The association with clairvoyance may well have led readers to think poorly of Lenore, and yet Regester

counteracts this reading by always describing Lenore as good. Lenore may not be as actively assertive of her agency as the women Tromp discusses, but she is also only a child who is still dependent on her father, so Regester presents her as an obedient angelic child who is rewarded for doing her duty.

As a middle-class child, Lenore would not have been allowed to wander the streets of New York without an adult with her, and as a woman, she would not have had much freedom to do so even as an adult. Yet she participates in an investigation, following a suspect at night, and moving about a stranger's home without her permission while in a trance. When clairvoyantly reading the dead letter, she is able to cheat chronology and insert herself as a witness at the moment the letter is posted, even though she was not really there at the time. The trance permits Lenore to take a privileged stance as the one gazing upon others, and she is able to watch those others without the risk of being gazed upon in turn. The transgressiveness of her actions seems less severe because she is never *seen* to actively defy social conventions. She is not, in fact, physically alone on the streets but remains in the comfort of her home. Her clairvoyance is never the subject of public discourse, and she does not perform for strangers as the mediums discussed in Aaron S. Hayward's list probably did, which saves Lenore's moral reputation within the novel. These privileged circumstances of mobility and gaze occur when she is in an altered state of mind. Leesy cannot see her, nor can Thorley or any of the people on the street, though she can see them. Lenore is never in danger of being harmed by the assassin or anyone else, either, because she is never physically in their presence during these investigative trance states. Lenore witnesses events and

places as if she is present and viewing them with her physical eyes rather than with her mind, and her clairvoyant excursions affect her physically. The book creates a paradox; it wants Lenore to be both obediently domestic and actively mobile. As a result, any empowerment Lenore gains is through her passive innocence, not through any active, intentional rebellion.

Although Lenore assists in the investigation, it would not be accurate to call her a full-fledged detective. Her father makes all of the deductions and decisions. However, her participation in the case makes her an outlier among fictional female detectives. She shares many of the supernatural traits we saw in female detectives in Chapter II, including intuition and clairvoyance. Viewing Lenore as an investigator raises a question: is Lenore preserving the status quo, as Patricia Craig, Mary Cadogan, and Kathleen Klein say all female detectives do, or is she challenging the status quo by working in the space created by a loophole in the rules similar to what Tromp and Amy Lehman describe?<sup>68</sup> Lenore is eleven when we first meet her, and thirteen by the end of the story, an age when girls generally had no role in the public world, yet she has some influence in the public sphere through her involvement in her father's cases. Burton's

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<sup>68</sup> See Chapter III for more information on Tromp and Lehman. Craig and Cadogan state that “[t]he Victorian lady detectives could be seen as rather romanticized symbols of liberation, but actually their creators were really intent on preserving the status quo” (17). Klein, likewise, claims that female detectives can never be entirely successful, and therefore can never be heroes in the same way that male detectives can. She claims that there is an inherent sabotage in the stories, meaning the woman has to fail because “[l]ike the criminal, she is a member of society who does not conform to the status quo” that detective fiction must preserve (4). Working against these critics, are scholars such as Joseph A. Kestner, Lucy Sussex, and Adrienne E. Gavin. Gavin asserts that Victorian women detectives, particularly the spinsters and widows, are more subversive than the later hard-boiled investigators because the nineteenth-century stories made these otherwise invisible women visible (263).

deductions are made based on his faith in her narrative authority about what she sees in the trances, for instance. Joseph A. Kestner draws on Laura Mulvey's writing about the privileging of the male gaze, which casts males as the subjects and women as the objects being gazed upon.<sup>69</sup> In stories with female detectives, Kestner argues, the positions of power are reversed, giving women the privilege of gaze, and thus challenging the social order, "for [the women's] surveillance becomes an act of challenging patriarchy and its hierarchy of genders" (18). Like many authors of women detectives, Regester places Lenore in the privileged position of gazing, but gives her greater power and security because the objects of Lenore's surveillance never gaze upon her in return. Though her father cannot see what she sees, she describes everything around her so that he can picture it, and, in a way, he is gazing through her like a specialized lens. Yet as a lens, Lenore seems to have less authority or importance, a tool used by her father, and is thus an object herself rather than a subject. However, when we consider that Burton implicitly trusts her description of her vision, Lenore retains an authoritative position in terms of narrative. In this way, Kestner's position that surveillance challenges the gender hierarchy applies to *The Dead Letter*. Even though it appears that Lenore is merely a tool used by her father rather than an investigator in her own right, we are assured that she has the potential to be a great detective. In summing up Lenore's position at the end of the novel, Redfield says that "[s]he is a rare child—almost a

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<sup>69</sup> More recent scholarship on female spectatorship allows women more of a role than Mulvey's seminal work; Mary Ann Doane's "Film and the Masquerade," for instance (1997). However, this work does not appear to have made its way into scholarship on detective fiction in any significant way. Further work on this topic would be beneficial to the field.

woman now—as talented as her father, and exceedingly lovely” (2.205). Though the statement is not a direct assertion of Lenore’s potential as a detective, since the novel has dwelt on Burton’s talents as an investigator through his ability to read people and situations, its comparison of Lenore to Burton suggests that Lenore is “as talented as her father” in the same way.

In closely examining the stance that *The Dead Letter* takes toward the patriarchy, one cannot overlook the fact that when Lenore is in her clairvoyant state, the patriarchy, in the person of her patriarch, instructs her to act and takes advantage of her clairvoyance. In her physically present state, Lenore does not gain a freedom of movement that corresponds to her trance mobility. Geographically, she sees more of the world when she travels with Burton and Redfield in search of George Thorley, but she is always chaperoned, and when Burton goes off alone, Lenore does not accompany him and is not allowed to wander on her own. As in her trances when she only travels under her father’s instructions, Lenore does not move without her father’s permission and protection out of a trance. Register also explores whether Lenore’s clairvoyance is rewarded or punished, and creates a paradox, as she wants Lenore to be both an active agent with privileged knowledge and a passive, naïve tool at the same time. Burton tells her exactly what to do as a mesmerist controlling the mind of his subject. She is exercising her ability under the direction of an adult male authority figure. He is not only her father, and thus her direct guardian, but he is also a detective in good standing with the police force, with authority over the investigation, and thus a representative of the larger social order. Lenore willingly allows her father to place her in the trances



because she trusts him and wishes to be helpful (though she is not keen on the discomfort of the trances).

Yet Burton does not command Lenore, or override her will with his own, so much as he encourages her. First, he tells her to follow the man she has described dropping the letter in the box during her second vision. When she complies and trails the man to the ferry, she fears that she will lose him, so Burton urges her on: “Don’t be discouraged, my child. I would give much to have you follow him across the river, and tell me at what house he stops” (1.508). When she says that she has lost the man on the street and that her vision grows dark, he implores her to “[t]ry again, my darling. Look well at the letter” (508). He never forcibly overrides her inclination, but we also never see Lenore make a decision on her own, further establishing that Regeister does not intend Lenore to be a revolutionary young woman. Her empowerment lies in her obedience. She appears to have little control over her own mind, because, aside from her instinctive likes and dislikes of people, the readers do not see her make any decisions on her own. Thus it is unlikely that she is claiming agency for herself. She is so accustomed to being a passive lens through which other people can gaze to see what they will that she does not put forth her own opinion about anything, whether in a trance or out of one. This passivity is largely a result of her age and gender, for children in the nineteenth-century were not encouraged to be independent, and as a girl she would have been expected to be passive. Yet these factors combine to make her a powerful clairvoyant exactly because she is passive.

Clairvoyants are given a curious, oxymoronic position in Victorian culture; they are at once passive and active readers. Drawing attention to this in fiction, Conan Doyle observes the reduction of clairvoyants to passive readers in his story “Playing with Fire.” He likens mediums to “telescopes” and those who employ them to “astronomer[s]” who require the tool (191). In his story, the clairvoyant is merely a lens through which other people can look, like Lenore in her trance when she obeys everything her father says and tells him all that she sees and experiences. Yet, as I have noted, Lenore is an active reader of her visions who interprets what she sees and puts it into words, and she is the one who carries out the spiritual surveillance. The idea of spiritual surveillance connects Lenore closely with surveillance by supernatural entities. Redfield worries that Burton has him followed at one point in the story, and remarks that such a circumstance would make him uncomfortable. Burton replies, “We are all watched by the pure and penetrating eye of the All-seeing One, and if we are not fearful before Him, whom need we shrink from?” (1.311). Elana Gomel observes the paradoxical state of the clairvoyant who is both the lens and the active viewer, saying that “[t]he irreducible ambiguity of the spiritualist women’s position consisted in the fact that they are empowered by their own powerlessness” (200). Clairvoyants are simultaneously the privileged subject gazing at objects, and the lens through which other people view the objects. As lenses, they must deny themselves in order to serve as conduits for others. Lenore’s modest amount of empowerment comes through her old-fashioned Christian humility and servitude. Regester makes Lenore’s desire to help an admirable attribute.

The illustrations in *The Dead Letter* also provide insight into the cultural attitude toward detecting and the supernatural.<sup>70</sup> The illustrations were done by Nathaniel Orr, a wood engraver working in New York.<sup>71</sup> The depiction of Lenore in her first trance of the novel is particularly interesting in relation to the question of whether or not Lenore is as transgressive a figure as Tromp and Lehman describe women clairvoyants to be. As a dime novel, particularly one that involves a murder, romance, and talk of ghosts, *The Dead Letter* is a close relative of the sensation novel. In their article “The Plot Thickens: Toward a Narratological Analysis of Illustrated Serial Fiction in the 1860s,” Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge identify certain visual tropes of sensational fiction that appear in original illustrations: “atmospheric turbulence, loose hair, light-colored garments, and unchaperoned activity by a young woman” (69). These tropes, they argue, are used when a transgression is occurring, particularly on the part of a young woman. Even in realist domestic fiction, Leighton and Surridge believe, these tropes emphasize the contrast between the traditional, conservative domestic moments, and those in which the status quo is being interrupted or challenged. The motion in the images suggests the crossing of boundaries, and the loose hair signals the sexualization of the women. The hair is not bound up in a neat, controlled, and respectable fashion, and suggests a state of partial undress, as women loosened their hair in private spaces before or after dressing for the day.

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<sup>70</sup> *The Dead Letter* as it appears in *Cassell's* is not illustrated; however, the original serialized edition in *Beadle's Monthly* is illustrated, as is the American single-volume edition, though it does not contain all of the original illustrations.

<sup>71</sup> Akiyo Okuda's article “Metta Fuller Victor's *The Dead Letter* (1866) and the Rise of Detecting Culture/Detective Fiction” discusses Orr and briefly analyzes the illustrations.

Despite the transgressiveness of Lenore's actions while in the trance, though, the illustration of the first clairvoyant session does not use the classic tropes to signal the challenge. There is no atmospheric turbulence, and Lenore's dress and hair are not shown in motion, though she is wearing light-colored clothing. Her hair hangs loose over her shoulders, but it does not appear to be in motion. Lenore looks placid in the illustration, as though she is asleep, with the photograph of Leesy Sullivan in one hand and with her father holding her other. The illustrator's choice to depict this moment is telling. He could just as easily have chosen to depict the same scene a few moments before when Lenore is said to have been writhing in discomfort as her father put her into the trance:

He made a few passes over her; when I saw their effect, I did not wonder that he shrunk from the experiment—my surprise was rather that he could be induced to make it, under any circumstances. The lovely face became distorted as with pain; the little hands twitched—so did the lips and eyelids. I turned away, not having fortitude to witness any thing so jarring to my sensibilities. When I looked again, her countenance had recovered its tranquility; the eyes were fast closed, but she appeared to ponder upon the picture which she held. (Register 1.220)

It is in that moment when Lenore is passing between a wakeful state and the trance that she is most transgressive—crossing the line between the visible and the invisible, the scientific and the pseudo-scientific, the known and the occult. Instead, the illustrator shows her after she has gone into the trance and is placid, as seen in figure 1. In this

peaceful state, she follows her father's instructions to look around the stranger's rooms, go outside, down the street, and then back again. The illustrator may be glossing over the moment when the child is in pain lest it should upset the genteel sensibilities of the readers, much as it does Redfield's. Like Redfield's, the reader's gaze is averted from that scene.



Fig. 1. Burton Mesmerizing Lenore. (Register 1.220).

The illustration makes Lenore's clairvoyant investigation more palatable because the child is not shown to be in pain, nor is her body contorting in unnatural, painful, or suggestive ways. By contrast, in 1892 Ernest Hart published a piece called "Hypnotism, Animal Magnetism, and Hysteria," in *The British Medical Journal*.<sup>72</sup> The article

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<sup>72</sup> *The British Medical Journal* published numerous articles about hypnotism in the nineteenth century, several of which were written by Ernest Hart, a British medical journalist. Disagreements among the authors can be found in the *Journal* as well. For instance, Dr. G. C. Kingsbury of Blackpool wrote in the "Notes, Letters, etc." section of

includes illustrations of people in different stages or types of trances, including the image of a subject with her back arched so far that she is barely touching her bed, while the bottom of her nightdress is raised to reveal two-thirds of her legs, as seen in figure 2. Her body is very much the focus of the image, and it is presented in a sexualized way, whereas the focus of the illustration from *The Dead Letter* is, as the caption says, Burton mesmerizing Lenore and the evidence that her clairvoyant vision will reveal. Furthermore, Regester says that Lenore's bodily contortions are limited to twitches of pain in her face and hands. The illustration in *The British Medical Journal* is not accompanied by a textual explanation of the image to state whether the subject's body is in convulsions rather than having gone into a submissive hypnotic state, or whether the hypnotist instructed a submissive subject to assume this pose.

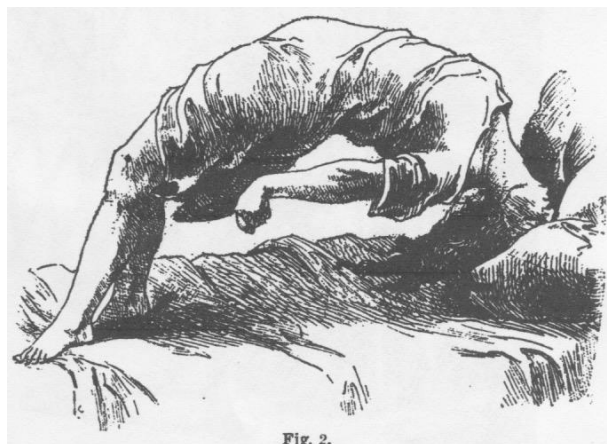


Fig. 2. Hypnotism Contortions. (Hart 1215).

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the Dec. 17, 1892 edition to disagree with much of what Hart had published about hypnotism.

Other illustrations of hypnotized women in *The British Medical Journal* likewise depict the subjects in nightclothes and in poses that reveal a great deal of their legs in what appears to be a sexualized portrayal. By illustrating Lenore Burton in such a calm, demure, domestic image, Orr makes it appear that she is not transgressing at all but is peaceful and under her father's care. If Lenore is not shown writhing, then the illustration does not show her departing from her social role. Further, in a more troubling complicity with Burton's actions, it also makes it appear that Burton is not transgressing by placing his daughter in a trance when he knows how much harm it does her, a topic to which I will return shortly. The illustration serves primarily to reassure readers that Lenore is not promiscuous, sexually exploited or manipulated, or offending against the social rules.<sup>73</sup> As a result, the trance seems acceptable, as does her role as a deputy detective. If the illustration chooses not to make her seem transgressive, it suggests that it, and the publishers, condone her actions. In the grander scheme of the novel, however, the illustration cannot be trusted, because Regester makes clear at the end of the novel that she does not condone Burton's mesmeric exercises.

Regester does not describe Lenore as an overtly transgressive female clairvoyant at least in part because she ties Lenore firmly to the belief that mediums had to remain passive in order to be good mediums. To return to a quotation from my examination of the definitions of clairvoyance, the early twentieth-century writer Caxton Hall affirms his belief that passivity leads to stronger clairvoyance: "you will find clairvoyance more prevalent among females than males, probably because the former do not habitually take

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<sup>73</sup> Lenore's slack posture might indicate a physical passivity in addition to a mental passivity, though. Nickerson does read this scene in a sexualized light.

the positive side of anything in life, to the extent of the latter, and you will admit that sensitiveness is usually increased by a frequent state of passivity” (6). If Lenore exerted more agency, according to Hall’s view, she would not be as useful as a clairvoyant lens. A clairvoyant, then, *cannot* exhibit agency and independent decision-making tendencies. Regester treats Lenore in a similar fashion; she is a strong clairvoyant precisely because she is innocent and passive, and her mind remains a clear lens, untainted by her own opinions and impressions. Lenore’s strength as a clairvoyant is also reliant on her virtue, which is described as being linked to her passivity. Leadbeater believes that a clairvoyant must “strive to maintain [a] high standard of moral purity and mental balance” (21). Lenore is a vision of nineteenth-century childhood innocence. She is small and delicate with golden curls of a light and ethereal quality rarely seen outside of infants. Her eyes are “celestial blue—celestial, not only because of the pure heavenliness of their color, but because you could not look into them without thinking of angels” (Regester 1.219). She dotes on her father; she is sweet, shy, and perfectly suited to be a passive medium. Lenore appears to be the ideal image of feminine, childish innocence, and yet her gift places her in positions that ought to taint her. Caxton Hall warns clairvoyants that “when you are passive, you are open to the slightest adverse influence. You may be compared to a calm lake, in which the surroundings are reflected as in a mirror. If a gust of wind disturbs the surface, the reflection is blurred, and your experience will have already proved to you that you must be free from disturbing influences if satisfactory work is to be accomplished” (13). Lenore’s value in the story requires her to remain passive, a trait that should also save her from being punished for



transgressing against the social order. However, she is not saved from punishment, as evidenced by the harm the trances do to her health. Regester draws concepts of Victorian femininity into her text in order to test the understanding and its boundaries. Like the women in Chapter II, Lenore has a gift, and she wants to use it to help people she loves, especially her father. This selflessness causes her to forego her own well-being in order to oblige others, even if it means temporarily crossing the boundaries of her gender role. Victor, through Lenore, makes a case for the goodness of traditional femininity and a child's obedience to her father. At the end of the novel, Lenore is expected to live happily ever after as a reward for her goodness, yet she is punished for her involvement with mesmerism until she stops exercising that supernatural skill.

### ***The Punishment***

After her first trance when she looks for Leesy Sullivan, Lenore physically crumples. She is weakened by the experience, not just from climbing the stairs in the vision, but from having been in the trance at all. The scene is described in the following way: "A few more of those cabalistic touches, followed by the same painful contortions of those beautiful features, and Lenore was herself again. But she was pale and languid; she drooped against her father's breast, as he held her in his arms, the color faded from her cheeks, too listless to smile in answer to his caresses" (1.221). Mr. Burton tells Redfield that "[s]he will be like a person exhausted by a long journey, or great labor, for several days" (221). This description in the novel matches what people studying mesmerism and clairvoyance reported. In the appendix to 1862's *An Exposition of*

*Spiritualism*, it is observed that subjects placed into trances frequently feel weakened by the experience. The author of the appendix offers the following explanation for this weakening:

A state of ecstasy or trance, the being *en pneumatic*, is a temporary suspension of the external senses; the mental faculties being still active. This suspension of the senses being the result of reduced vital power, if too much prolonged, would terminate in the total extinction of the spirit (pneuma)—in other words, death would ensue. The mind being the manifestation of the living organism, *i.e.* cerebral phenomena, must necessarily perish. (313)

Likewise, the trance state weakens Lenore so much that doctors have forbidden further trances. It is possible, as explained in the *Exposition*, that Lenore may die if she is placed in the trance state too often. The fact that the details of clairvoyance in *The Dead Letter* coincide so well with what was being published on the subject suggests that Regester had researched clairvoyance before writing her novel. Her portrayal of clairvoyance and mesmerism, and the treatment of the characters who exercise them, are carefully constructed to show that Burton is not as wholly good as he appears, and that Lenore may be too self-sacrificing for obediently allowing herself to be mesmerized, something for which she and Burton are punished in the text.

Nineteenth-century novels tend to punish the characters who act wrongly as a way of reinforcing social order. If the pain Lenore experiences is a punishment for using her clairvoyance, then she is being punished for obeying her father, not for defying the

patriarchy. In this way, the novel makes a subtle stand to suggest that the patriarch may not always be right, and that passive obedience to him may not always be best, even if it is done with good intentions. Lenore's self-sacrifice is therefore criticized, and through it the feminine ideal of self-sacrifice in the Victorian era. The loss of her father at the close of the novel may well be another punishment of Lenore, as well as of Burton. We are told that she is "overwhelmed with grief" over his death (2.205). Nevertheless, her ending has a positive note as well, because Redfield, Mary, and the saintly Eleanor will raise her. It is implied that Lenore has ceased using her clairvoyance, which may be why she is allowed a relatively happy ending wherein the middle-class domestic harmony is restored as she waits to be claimed in marriage. Victorian women detectives often marry at the conclusion of their novels, and thus cease their transgressive behavior.<sup>74</sup> Lenore is removed from the position of feeling obliged to allow her father to place her in a mesmerized state, and she will be under the influence of morally good characters "until some lover comes in the future to rob [them] of her" (205). The end returns Lenore to respectability. In Redfield's view, the ending of the story is a happy one.

Unlike the women discussed by Tromp and Lehman, Lenore does not take advantage of the personal freedom afforded by the boundary-blurring space of a trance.

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<sup>74</sup> The most striking example of this is Leonard Merrick's 1888 novel *Mr. Bazalgette's Agent*, wherein the woman detective, Miriam Lea, spends much of the novel anxiously worrying about her shocking decision to become a detective working for Mr. Bazalgette as she trails a criminal to foreign countries. To her dismay, she finds herself falling for this criminal. All is well at the end of the novel because it turns out she was following the wrong man all along so she can happily marry her beloved and give up her life of investigation to be restored to respectability.

Instead, she uses the space to maneuver around the obstacles standing between the detective and the solution of his case. Lenore gains a small amount of power, or, more accurately, she is offered greater power by her supernatural abilities, but does not exercise most of it. Register pulls back from making Lenore a progressive feminist figure, and writes her instead as a gifted young woman who does not overtly challenge the patriarchal status quo. She is, therefore, a more palatable character for nineteenth-century readers, inasmuch as she subtly works through loopholes in order to serve the higher cause of justice. Lenore remains a model of passive nineteenth-century childhood innocence, though that is not portrayed entirely favorably since it puts her in a punishable, dangerous position. She does not find agency and freedom through clairvoyance, as historical mediums did according to Tromp and Lehman. Although it appears that the patriarchy may have been restored to its position of power in the status quo, in fact it is also brought into question by the novel. Lenore's innocent trust in her father places her in danger that might have claimed her life if not for her father's death.

### ***Burton, the Detective Mesmerist***

On the surface of the story, Mr. Burton is presented to the reader as an admirable man who fights for justice and not just the law. Redfield informs the reader that Burton “[chose] his present occupation” as a private investigator and consultant with the police “out of a consciousness of his fitness for it. He was in independent circumstances, and accepted no salary for what was with him a labor of love” and only rarely accepts a repayment of the expenses he incurs on a case (1.114). He belonged to the “secret

detective-police; only working up such cases as demanded the benefit of his rare powers” (115). Previously, he had been a forwarding-merchant, but there had been a fire in which he lost a great deal of uninsured merchandise.<sup>75</sup> As a result, he was nearly bankrupted. He suspected that the fire had not been an accident, and found enough proof to convict the guilty parties in court, but “[a]las! for the pure, white statue of Justice which beautifies the desecrated chambers of the law. Banded together, with inexhaustible means of corruption at their command, the guilty were triumphant” (114). Burton gave up his business and devoted himself to working as a detective, bringing his “peculiar faculties of mind” to bear (115). He is also described as a widower who dotes on his young daughter. Even before he meets Lenore, Redfield is aware of Burton’s devotion to her: “I had never seen this daughter...but I could guess, without particular shrewdness, that his heart was wrapped up in her. He could not mention her name without a glow coming into his face; her frail health appeared to be the anxiety of his life” (218-19). Burton’s moral troubles began, however, when he discovered “by chance, some two or three years since, that she had peculiar attributes. She is an excellent clairvoyant...[he] made use of her rare faculty to assist [him] in [his] more important labors” (219).

Burton’s backstory establishes him as a champion of justice, and the reader is inclined to trust him at this early stage.<sup>76</sup> However, later in the story we have reason to

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<sup>75</sup> A forwarding-merchant is one who receives merchandise and forwards it. The merchant receives commission for housing goods in a warehouse and for transporting the goods.

<sup>76</sup> Nickerson points to Burton’s backstory as an indication that “Victor clearly means to distinguish her detective from the morally ambiguous detective figures that her readers

question his moral rectitude. Despite being a detective, and a force for justice, Burton also falls into a literary tradition of malevolent mesmerists. In literature, the fictional figure of the criminal mesmerist became clichéd by the time George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, perhaps the best known of the villainous-mesmerist books, was published in 1894. As Mary Elizabeth Leighton discusses in "Under the Influence: Crime and Hypnotic Fictions of the *Fin de Siècle*," readers of the day noticed the trend and resented the predictable pattern that meant all hypnotists in books were sure to be criminals (215). More often than not, these mesmerists were men, which introduces the danger of these men using their power to abuse their predominantly female subjects. As Leighton writes, "fictional representations of the malevolent hypnotist registered popular anxieties about the power of the hypnotist and challenged the implementation of hypnotism as a viable medical therapy" (204). Popular attitudes toward mesmerism shifted during the second half of the nineteenth century, especially toward the end of the century, which Leighton attributes to the prevalence of criminal mesmerists in fiction. In the 1860s when *The Dead Letter* appeared, the negative attitudes had not yet been established so firmly. Yet the anxiety about whether mesmerists could be trusted or whether mesmerism was safe existed at the time and is reflected in the novel. For instance, the novel picks up on one of the concerns about hypnotism discussed in medical journals

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might have known from the newspapers and the newly popular genre of the detective memoir" (31). Although Nickerson also sees that Burton mistreats Lenore by mesmerizing her, she does not address the significance of the shift between this portrayal of the good Burton, and the revelation of the abusive Burton. Instead, she says that Victor "makes Burton a man of unquestionable morals in part by making him a palpably fictional hero" (32).

and treatises, namely that a person's moral compass could be altered as a result of the mesmerist's suggestions during a trance.<sup>77</sup>

Burton uses mesmerism to help promote justice and the moral good, yet there is also a moral greyness to his methodology. Placing Lenore in the trance, as Burton himself admits, is detrimental to Lenore's health. Doctors have strongly advised against it, but Burton decides that he will place her in the trance in order to solve his current case. In fact, he tells Redfield that he *must not* entrance her and that he *will* entrance her in the same paragraph with barely a pause between the two thoughts. He cannot resist the temptation to mesmerize her and solve his case. His devotion to his cases is almost addictive. It was not long after he first learned of her usefulness on his cases that he "discovered that it told fearfully upon her health. It seemed to drain the slender stream of vitality nearly dry" (Register 1.219). As a result, the doctor "told me that I must desist, entirely, [from] all experiments of the kind with her" (219). Burton sounds slightly offended that the physician "was peremptory about it, but he had need only caution [him]" (219). He even goes so far as to gallantly declare that he "would sooner drop a year out of [his] shortening future than to take one grain from that...strength which [he] watch[es] from day to day with deep solicitude" (219). He becomes sentimental, and tells Redfield that Lenore is the image of her mother, that Lenore is his only daughter, and that he has not placed her in a trance in the eighteen months since

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<sup>77</sup> Arthur Edward Waite's 1891 book *The Occult Sciences: A Compendium of Transcendental Doctrine and Experiment: Embracing an Account of Magical Practices; of Secret Sciences in Connection with Magic; of the Professors of Magical Arts; and of Modern Spiritualism, Mesmerism and Theosophy*, for example, addresses mesmerism's ability to either improve a person's moral character or lower it (245-46).

that meeting with the physician. To further demonstrate his devotion to his daughter's well-being, he declares "that if...she could point out to me pots of gold, or the secret of diamond mines, I would not risk her slightest welfare, by again exhausting her recruiting energies" (219). However, the pursuit of justice takes precedence over material gain and Lenore's health in Burton's mind. Redfield observes that for Burton, "justice was what he loved best," and the use of mesmerism indicates that he loves justice more than Lenore's health (312). In the very next sentence he says that he will place her in a trance to solve the mystery of Moreland's murder: "Nevertheless, so deeply am I interested in the tragedy to which you have called my attention—so certain am I that I am on the eve of the solution of the mystery—and such an act of justice and righteousness do I deem it that it should be exposed in its naked truth before those who have suffered from the crime—that I have resolved to place Lenore once more in the clairvoyant state" (219). Redfield is fully aware of the danger to Lenore, and Burton's "announcement took away the remnant of [his] appetite" (219). Redfield's moral sensibilities are sickened by the idea that Lenore will suffer, even for the sake of justice; but he makes no move to stop Burton. As a result, Redfield too may be punished in the narrative, in his case via exile. Burton's treatment of Lenore reflects the undecided attitude toward mesmerism in the 1860s.

When Lenore answers his summons, Burton gently tells her, "Father wants to put his little girl to sleep again" (220). Calling himself "Father" and Lenore "his little girl" should comfort Lenore. The father, the caretaker, should protect his child from danger. However, the language also reinforces his position as the Patriarch and hers as the



submissive Little Girl charge. His statement is a lulling lie, said in a way that a parent would tell a child that he is doing something for her own good even if she does not like it. Lenore at first seems disinclined to obey, but accepts the instruction as coming from a loving father: “An expression of unwillingness just crossed her face; but she smiled, instantly, looking up at him with the faith of affection which would have placed her life in his keeping, and said, ‘Yes, papa,’ in assent” (220). Not only does Burton place his daughter in danger on that occasion, but he also places her in a trance on another occasion, and unsuccessfully attempts to do so once more. Burton’s desire to solve the murder and protect the Argyll family is admirable, but his willingness to risk his daughter for the case introduces a degree of complexity to the hero/detective. He harms someone he cherishes and whom he is supposed to protect in order to chase a killer whom he ultimately allows to escape without a trial, because a trial would cause further distress to the Argyll family and damage the family name. Burton cares for the well-being and standing of Mr. Argyll and his daughters, but he also allows Thorley and James to go free, leaving them at liberty to kill again. Indeed, it is entirely possible that James or the assassin he hired *does* strike again, against Burton himself, before the end of the narrative.

If Lenore’s discomfort during, and weakness after, a trance are punishments for using mesmerism, then Burton’s death is a punishment for his misuse of mesmerism. His mistreatment of his daughter in his persistent need to solve his case is a neglect of his duty as her father. Burton not only dies, he is murdered—poisoned—and the criminal is never found (at least, not by the time Redfield records his narrative, and as a

result, the reader will never know the solution). He had previously escaped being poisoned on seven other occasions, so it is arguable that his punishment caught up with him after he misused his daughter several times. The frequent attempts on his life are believed to be perpetrated by criminals Burton had previously pursued, or the relatives of those criminals out for revenge. Redfield laments Burton's passing, saying, "It wrings my heart to think that great and good soul is no more of this world. He was so active, so powerful, of such a genial temperament, it is hard to conceive him dead" (2.204). Redfield, then, sees no hint that Burton's death is a divine punishment, but continues to view him as a great man working with Providence for the greater good. Redfield may not be entirely reliable in his opinion here, however. For a significant portion of the book, Redfield questions whether Burton really trusts him or if he believes him to be guilty, for example, and he does not make the connection that James is the one who hired Thorley until the moment James confesses, despite having all the necessary evidence. A character within a novel, even the narrator of a novel, does not necessarily see what the author is saying about the story.

Burton's life had been in danger many times before as a result of his work, "but his acute perceptions had, hitherto, warned him of danger" (205). The narrative shows us two examples of Burton's uncanny perceptions saving him from being killed. In his pursuit of George Thorley, the hired killer, Burton stops in Mexico where his life is twice in danger. The first attempt on his life occurs when Burton and "Dr. Seltzer" (Thorley's alias) travel through a rocky canyon together and Thorley attacks Burton to keep his part in the murder a secret. However, just before the attack, "[t]he subtle

perceptions of the detective, a magnetism which amounted almost to the marvelous” alerted him to danger, for he “felt a curious, prickly sensation run along his nerves” and he defends himself just in time (Regester 2.125). After Thorley flees, Burton has another escape, though not as a result of any supernatural warnings. He buys some oranges from an old woman who comes to his hotel with her wares. He decides not to eat any of them, though, after “he observed that she did *not* offer the fruit to any other customer” (129). Burton feeds one of the oranges to a nearby pig that dies shortly thereafter. It is presumed that Thorley or his father-in-law hired the woman to poison Burton in revenge.

In the end, Burton’s “perceptions,” which are part of his own supernatural gifts, let him down and his own murder will go unsolved, perhaps especially because there is no suggestion that Lenore’s abilities will be called upon once again. Lenore is liberated from her father’s misuse and can look forward to a happy life, while Burton, the morally grey hero detective, is punished for his actions. After Lenore’s first trance leads them to Leesy’s lodgings, Redfield and Burton accidentally spook Leesy into running to a new hiding place. Redfield wonders whether their ill-luck there is a result of misusing Lenore, who is more than usually ill after her efforts: “Perhaps it was from our selfishness in making use of this exquisite instrument for purposes so earthly that we are punished by the fruitlessness of the results” (1.314). Lenore is the “exquisite instrument” Redfield refers to as he realizes that he and Burton may have been wrong to reduce her to a clairvoyant lens because they are punished for selfishly disregarding Lenore’s health. Burton, however, laughs at Redfield’s suggestion. “Perhaps,” he says;

“Punishment, however, seldom appears fitly meted out, this side of the Stygian river” (314). His belief that punishment is not delivered fairly in life, supernaturally or otherwise, might put a different view on the end of the story if the reader were to believe him. Yet his next statement makes his judgment seem more fallible than Redfield’s. Looking forward to his next move, Burton says that Leesy must be “a lunatic—only an insane person could have the consummate cunning to thwart me so long” (314). Redfield disagrees with him, claiming that “[t]here never was one less insane” (314). Since Redfield has interacted with Leesy and Burton has not, and since the reader was privy to those interactions, Redfield’s assessment seems more accurate. Later interactions prove Redfield right, and Burton admits that she is not a lunatic, but is clever, with a “powerful brain,” and that she is driven by a “powerful emotional force” (416). Redfield’s concern that they might be punished for their “selfish” use of Lenore is realized at the end of the novel. Redfield suffers a year of exile because his friends believe him guilty, and he gives up the start of a promising career in law when he leaves. As for Burton, there is no explanation offered for why his incredible perceptions failed him, and his murder goes unsolved. Redfield wonders if either James or Thorley is responsible or if one of Burton’s many other enemies killed him. The man who was so driven to solve crimes that he put his daughter’s health at risk receives a fitting end. Regester portrays Burton’s behavior toward his daughter as abusive. This abuse is directly tied to his ability to mesmerize her and his power over her as her father. To solidify Burton’s criminal behavior, his mesmeric ability is compared to that of the only other mesmerically-gifted character in the story: the murderer James Argyll.

### *The Battle of Wills*

By working under her father's permission and his will, Lenore ought to be able to avoid the association with any undesirable female traits in the eyes of her Victorian readers. She remains passive and obedient, as a young woman should. That passivity, however, also leaves her vulnerable to being tainted by the immorality of the men who hold sway over her. Burton not only dictates when his obedient daughter will go into a trance, but he must then compete with James Argyll as the dominant influence over her. There may be more to Lenore's change of attitude toward James than simple charm, after all. Despite her initial reaction against James, she comes around to liking him, and follows his lead when he turns against Redfield. Burton observes that James's influence over her is strong—so strong, that for the first time in his experience, he is unable to place her in a trance. He attributes this fact to the exercise of another person's will over Lenore:

Do you know...[James Argyll] is performing a marvel with my little Lenore? He has gained a great ascendancy over her in these few days. This morning, for a purpose which you will realize I considered highly important, I endeavored, alone with her in my own apartment, to place her in the clairvoyant state. For the first time, I failed. Her mind is no longer a pellucid mirror, reflecting truths without color or refraction. She is under the influence of a counter-will, as strong as my own—and mine moves mountains. (Register 1.411)

Burton's will, which is strong enough to "move mountains," cannot influence Lenore's mind while it is under James's influence. Burton speaks of James's charm as a force of "will" in a way that recalls Crowe's definition in *The Night Side of Nature*, wherein a person's will power is connected to his or her ability to manipulate other people magnetically. When Redfield asks Burton if he is concerned about James's influence that muddies Lenore's mirror-like mind, Burton is confident that his own influence over her will become dominant once again when Lenore returns home to him and stops seeing James so often.<sup>78</sup>

Lenore, in short, is a pawn being fought over by two men—the detective and the killer. If clairvoyants are "open to the slightest adverse influence" (Hall 13), then it seems likely that while their minds reflect, they might also absorb and be tainted by the thoughts and will of someone like James Argyll. And indeed, although as Burton has anticipated, Lenore returns to her usual self once she returns to her father's home, James soon reasserts his influence over her, Mr. Argyll, and Eleanor when he turns them against Redfield by convincing them that Redfield is the one who had Moreland killed.

Although the readers already suspect James Argyll's guilt, it is not surprising that he becomes a favorite with Lenore. Redfield tells the reader early on that his own dislike of James is an unusual response. Ordinarily, James is widely liked: "He [is] an almost universal favorite. At least, he seldom [fails] to please and win those for whom

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<sup>78</sup> Nickerson connects the imagery of the struggle between Burton and James over Lenore with the struggle of a father and a suitor. James's treatment of Lenore is similar to a man courting a young woman, wooing her with presents and compliments. In my reading, the battle of wills may be a metaphor for the anxious father seeking to preserve his daughter's innocence before marriage in the face of a seductive suitor.

he [exerts] himself to be agreeable” (Register 1.106). Furthermore, we are told that James’s “voice [is] soft and well modulated—such a voice as, should one hear it from another apartment, would make him wish to see the speaker” (106). James is alluring and, when he exerts himself to be agreeable, he usually succeeds. It is his will that makes him attractive to people, as well as his voice and manner, which are “gracious and...flattering” (106). As Redfield says, James rarely fails to make himself liked when he exerts his powers to please. James’s influence over Lenore in particular suggests that his charming will has inherent, unconscious hypnotic abilities.<sup>79</sup> James makes Lenore incapable of using her abilities against him. However, the taint in Lenore is not permanent. A year after Redfield is banished from his life with the Argylls, he finds the dead letter and returns to Burton for assistance. Even though Lenore may still think that Redfield is guilty, the effect of James’s charm has weakened because she does not spend much time in his company and spends more time with her father. As a result, her mind is once again clear enough for Burton to place her in a trance to “read” the letter. By the end of the novel, James’s influence over the Argylls is broken when Burton can submit physical proof of James’s guilt, and James confesses his guilt to them. It is this hard evidence of the truth that finally breaks James’s hold over them.

The discussions of Lenore’s clouded mirror of a mind create troubling implications for mesmeric influence over children. James is, so far as the reader knows, unaware of Lenore’s ability as a clairvoyant, so it is unlikely that he is knowingly

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<sup>79</sup> A similar unconscious hypnotic ability is exercised by the swindler preacher from the *Experiences of Loveday Brooke: Lady Detective* adventure, “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” (1894), as will be discussed in the next chapter.

exerting his own will power over her in order to foil her father's investigation; yet he is concerned that this young girl should like him. If she does not, the others in the group might wonder why and begin to distrust him themselves and wonder what he is hiding. This points toward a power struggle between the detective and the criminal through the medium of a little girl. The girl in this instance has no agency but is a passive object being acted upon and through. In order for one man to gain dominance over the other by controlling information about the crime, one of them must have dominance over Lenore as a conduit of truth. If James can confuse Lenore so that she no longer functions as a clairvoyant lens, he can blind Burton, Redfield, and the Argylls to his guilt. Unfortunately for James, Burton's clairvoyant ability has already perceived his guilt, and he is collecting the evidence to prove it. James's misuse of his magnetic will is punished when he is caught and exiled from the United States.

Clairvoyance and mesmerism in *The Dead Letter* demonstrate that the patriarchy is not always benevolent and good, and also shows that traditionally self-sacrificing feminine ideals can be dangerous. Clairvoyance and mesmerism also link the story to the long tradition of the supernatural's capacity for ensuring that justice is done. After Moreland's murder, Redfield vows to find the killer for the sake of the bereaved Eleanor. He says that his actions "could not give life to the dead—but the voice of Justice called aloud, never to permit this deed to sink into oblivion until she had executed the divine vengeance of the law upon the doer" (Register 1.18). He invokes the concept of divine justice even before the investigation really gets underway. He, and



thus perhaps Victor, are consciously part of the continuing belief in the divine's—or the supernatural's—role in human justice.

Although the ghost lights at Moreland's home are proven to be of natural origin, and Redfield's wish that he could ask Henry's ghost to denounce with pointed finger and "blast" his killer is not literally fulfilled, both providence and Henry's spirit make their presence known in the text. Eleanor Argyll, still very much in love with Henry, goes through with the wedding ceremony by herself, and holds herself to be Henry's wife for the rest of her life. From that point on, she seems to exist as if half-ascended to heaven in order to be with her husband's spirit. Her own moral goodness in conjunction with this leads Redfield to describe her as "one of Christ's anointed" (2.204). When James is named as the killer, there is a stunned, still moment, but then "Eleanor arose from her chair, and, lifting up her hand, looked with awful eyes at the cowering murderer. Her look blasted him. He had been writhing under Mr. Burton's grasp; but now, as if in answer to her gaze, he said, 'Yes—I did it, Eleanor,' and dropped to the floor in a swoon" (199). The repetition of the word "blast" and the image of a pointing finger link Redfield's comment about how he would like Henry's ghost to point out and blast his killer with Eleanor's reaction to the news. The coupling of the scenes evokes the idea that Henry's spirit is working through his "wife" to point out his killer, cause him to confess, and "blast" him into a swoon. In this moment, Eleanor is described as the conduit of providence. Alternatively, one could read this as a moment in which Eleanor exercises the compelling will of mesmerism and forces James to confess his crime. The fact that Eleanor has a happy ending, however, suggests that either she is not exercising

mesmerism or that she does so without abusing her power for her own gain. Though Redfield probably wanted a more permanent “blasting,” Eleanor and Mr. Argyll are more forgiving. Burton leaves it to Mr. Argyll whether he will arrest James or let him go, and Mr. Argyll chooses to be merciful with the condition that James leaves the United States. Justice, then, is less the ultimate object of the investigation than is knowledge of the truth. The crime must be solved and the wronged parties must be made aware of the criminals’ identities, while the criminals must know that they have been found out.

Supernatural phenomena such as intuitive feelings, clairvoyance, and providence bring about a solution to the story, and those who abuse their powers, such as James and Mr. Burton, are punished. Yet those who selflessly sought to serve others before themselves, particularly Lenore and Redfield, are rewarded. Mr. Burton does selflessly pursue justice for the Argylls, but in the process he abuses his daughter when he places her in the trance even though he knows it could kill her. Regester’s novel moves away from the literal, direct involvement of ghosts that we saw in stories such as “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost,” and toward a more methodical, earthly investigation. Even still, a hint of ghostly retribution lingers in the story as Henry and Eleanor blast James. The supernatural still assists in the investigation, as in the stories examined in Chapter II, but Regester introduces the idea that not all supernatural techniques and skills are acceptable. Mesmerism taints those involved with a shade of moral greyness, and Regester kills off Burton in punishment for his abuse of his daughter and for abusing his

mesmeric talents. In doing so, Register treats Burton more harshly than the two killers who escape trial.

*The Dead Letter* is a case study of nineteenth-century detective fiction's approaches to morality when science and the supernatural are involved. While grappling with conflicting modes of knowledge and evidence, the genre also considers the effects on the morality of the characters of the supernatural and of the pseudo-scientific abilities that grant characters greater agency, concerns about gender related to mesmerism, and the way that providence/fate figures as the judge of the right and wrong uses of these mysterious phenomena—clairvoyance and mesmerism. When characters take it upon themselves to wield supernatural or pseudo-scientific forces rather than only acting when the supernatural has called them, they may be portrayed as criminals themselves. In the next chapter, I look to the conflict between mesmerism and providence as a metaphor for the Victorian struggle for individual agency as well as social order.

## CHAPTER IV

### “NEFARIOUS ENDS”:

#### CRIMINAL MESMERISTS AND PROVIDENCE

Every body is alike interested in fair play being afforded to the propounders of the strange facts and theories connected with Mesmerism. It is to be borne in mind, that it may be used for evil as well as for good; and that, if we obstinately refuse even to examine the subject, we expose ourselves, defenceless, to the abuse of a power capable of being perverted to the most nefarious ends. (Esdaile xii)

These remarks made by David Esdaile in the preface to his brother James Esdaile’s book *Mesmerism in India and its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine* (1846) express a prevalent concern in Victorian culture. While portions of Victorian society were excited by the beneficial possibilities of mesmerism, prompting experiments and numerous monographs on the healthful benefits of the practice, there were those who were less optimistic about the emerging pseudo-science.<sup>80</sup> All angles of the topic were discussed at great length without a consensus ever being reached in the nineteenth century as to the veracity of the practice or how it worked. Many writers were concerned that the power afforded by mesmerism might be abused and that crimes

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<sup>80</sup> Examples of books on the medical use of mesmerism include Harriet Martineau’s “Letters on Mesmerism” (1844), Esdaile’s *Mesmerism in India*, Jacob Dixon’s *Clairvoyance: Hygienic and Medical* (1861), as well as many articles in *The Zoist* journal and several pieces published in the *British Medical Journal*.

might be committed under its influence.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, as Esdaile's statement indicates, there were those who believed that ethically conducted research might help scientists and doctors to understand how mesmerism works so that it can be practiced more safely and be more easily regulated. Since mesmerism prompted research into what were viewed as new mysteries of the mind, it is not surprising that it found its way into detective fiction where it came under further investigation. As with clairvoyance, Spiritualism, prophetic dreams and other supernatural/pseudo-scientific phenomena discussed in the preceding chapters, the Victorians did not collectively agree on any definitions for mesmerism and hypnotism.<sup>82</sup> The closest they came to agreeing even on a category for mesmerism was that it was either pseudo-science or a hoax; it was not generally believed to be supernatural. The debate about definitions and categorization is connected to the anxiety the Victorians felt in the face of newly proposed modes of knowledge that challenged the long-held beliefs that ordered their world.

In this chapter I seek to demonstrate how Victorian detective stories involving mesmeric criminality portray the conflict between mesmerism and order (in the form of either providence or accepted knowledge) through the struggle for narrative authority

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<sup>81</sup> "Restriction of Hypnotic Performances," printed in *The British Medical Journal* on May 31, 1890, calls for stricter regulations on public displays of hypnotism, and by extension, hypnotism in general, because real damage could be done to the physical and mental well-being of the subjects: "quacks and impostors have been quick to add imposture to empiricism, and to traffic in a practice which the most careful investigators in all countries have agreed to be one of very rare and irregular utility, and fraught with many dangers to the nervous equilibrium and psychological soundness of the subject. Hypnotism is apt to be a dangerous mental poison, and as such it needs to be fenced round with as many restrictions as the traffic in other kinds of poison" (1264).

<sup>82</sup> Hypnotism was originally a term that indicated a more medical approach than mesmerism, but the two terms became interchangeable later in the century. See Alison Winter's book for a further discussion of the history.

between the criminals and the detectives. These tensions serve as a microcosmic treatment of the macrocosmic mysteries faced by Victorians whose modes of knowledge were challenged as well as their conceptions of morality. These stories dramatize the anxiety that many Victorians felt and leave the answer to the question of mesmerism up to the readers, encouraging them to act as detectives to solve the mystery of mesmerism in order to allay their anxieties.

Most detective fiction in the nineteenth century uses a plot structure in which the ordered existence of a community is disrupted by a criminal occurrence (often murder or theft). The narrative of this crime, including how it occurred, who committed it, and why they committed it, is initially obscured. This state of an unknown narrative causes anxiety in the surrounding community. The community may fear that the criminal will strike again or that someone they know and love may be the culprit. The order of the community is threatened in part because they do not know who or what they can trust. A detective or group of detectives then enters the situation to uncover the narrative of the crime, effect justice, and restore order to the affected community. As Ronald R. Thomas describes it, “the detective’s goal is to tell the story of a past event that remains otherwise unknown and unexplained by fixing the identity of a suspect and filling in the blanks of a broken story” (4). Early in the nineteenth century, the prevalent Christian worldview in England meant that many people believed there was providential guidance in the world. Thomas Vargish calls the appearance of such a providential narrative in fiction the “providential aesthetic,” a term which he uses “to mean those devices or conventions characteristics of literary works in which the assumption of providential

design and intention at work in the fictional world is a major premise or concern” (6). This aesthetic can be found in detective fiction as well as the realist fiction Vargish discusses. In the stories examined in this chapter, the idea of providence is treated as a divine supernatural force that intercedes in the narratives. Vargish argues that with the increased interest and trust in scientific advancements later in the century, this providential view of the world began to falter and the presence of providence is taken less for granted by the narrators of the later stories than by those of earlier texts. However, in contrast to Vargish’s argument, providence remains a palpable force in the narratives of these mesmeric detective stories, and is in conflict with the power of the mesmerists.

In the nineteenth century, providence was believed to have a plan for people and events, in effect a narrative for the world. Mesmerists in detective fiction were feared because they could use their mesmeric ability to rewrite the narratives of their lives and the lives of those around them. The detective’s job is then to counteract the mesmerist’s rewriting of events to restore order and justice. However, this ill-defined and misunderstood power wielded by the criminals cannot be fought against with the detective’s usual methods. Because there is no physical evidence that mesmerism has been used, it is almost impossible to prove the mesmerist’s guilt. Breaking the mesmerist’s influence over his or her subject is also next to impossible. The struggle for agency in these stories becomes entwined with the struggle for metaphorical authorial control over events. In Charles Warren Adams’s *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1862-1863), Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), Ernest Henry Clark Oliphant’s *The Mesmerist*

(1890), Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Parasite* (1894), and "The Ghost of Fountain Lane" in Catherine Louisa Pirkis's *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894), mesmerism is used to carry out crimes, though it is not used in the solution of the crimes. The solution is left to providence. Because mesmerism is ill-defined and exists between accepted and unaccepted modes of knowledge, it was feared in England and thus acts as an exemplar of the anxiety Victorians felt for changing modes of knowledge and changing ideas of order. The pseudo-science of mesmerism (for it is treated as such in all five stories rather than as a supernatural phenomenon) is often pitted against the supernatural force of providence in the struggle to restore order. The criminals defy the providential narrative to write their own, and in so doing they rob the readers of the "securities and reassurances" of a novel with an intact providential aesthetic (Vargish 32). While the novels all conclude with the mesmerist losing their control over their victims, which is usually brought about by providence, the conclusions are not as neatly tied off as the other stories discussed in this study. Providence intercedes to defeat the mesmerist, but the characters and, it is implied, the readers are left with an uneasy feeling of having had their faith in their own agency, in knowledge, and in divine will challenged. This challenge encourages readers to assess critically the narrative they have just read and also to assess critically similar tales they hear outside of the realm of fiction. Victorian detective fiction encourages readers to work through the investigation alongside the fictional detectives, and the stories with supernatural and pseudo-scientific phenomena encourage readers to weigh evidence and make up their own minds. Life does not always present one with reassuring conclusions and a neatly tied-off narrative.



I will begin by examining why mesmerism was feared as a threat to order and providence, the struggle to control mesmerism as a practice, and the concerns that the practice of mesmerism may lower the morality of the people involved. As a way to combat this mesmeric challenge to order, the victims of mesmerism struggle to prove their innocence when the legal system does not recognize mesmerism as a real phenomenon. I will examine the victims' turn to writing and orally telling their experiences (their narratives) in an effort to regain control of their lives. At the ends of the five stories I will examine, the return to stability and order in the fictional worlds is brought about either because the investigators are willing to consider that mesmerism may be true, or because of their inability to make sense of the dichotomy between accepted modes of science and an unproven pseudo-science. Providence intervenes in the form of a *deus ex machina*. There is no unified pattern to the solutions proposed by the stories to deal with criminal mesmerism except that they make an appeal to the readers to reach their own conclusions about the narratives and thus about mesmerism and providence.

### ***A Threat to Order and Morality***

*The Parasite*, *The Mesmerist* and "The Ghost of Fountain Lane" were published at the end of the nineteenth century when science was on the ascent as the privileged seat of knowledge and truth, but these ascendant sciences did not necessarily include

mesmerism.<sup>83</sup> Mary Elizabeth Leighton says in her article “Under the Influence” that the study of mesmerism fell out of favor in England perhaps in part due to the influence of literature wherein the mesmerist is almost invariably a criminal (205). At the end of the century, the most significant research on mesmerism was conducted in Germany and France, making it a foreign field of knowledge both metaphorically and literally. Building on Leighton’s observations, I propose that these stories not only served to warn of the possible criminal applications of mesmerism but also focused on the instability of how Victorians understood providence and order. Concerns about charlatan mesmerists and the danger posed by public lectures/demonstrations undermined the authority of the field as a science, which hints at the anxiety behind the fear.<sup>84</sup> Within the detective fiction tradition, mesmerism is treated with more distrust than other forms of pseudo-scientific/preternatural phenomena such as prophetic dreams because the act of mesmerism implies a troubling disturbance to the balance of power in interpersonal

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<sup>83</sup> Further exploration of the shift toward a scientific conception of the world can be found in Dale’s book *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art, and Society in the Victorian Age*.

<sup>84</sup> “Mesmerism, Alias Hypnotism” in *The British Medical Journal* (April 3, 1886) blames literature for hypnotism being so popular in past decades, and complains that the portrayal of mesmerism is inaccurate (though most of the fiction I have read matches what the pamphlets and books said on the subject at the time). The author also asserts that mesmerism is real and that there is good work being done in Germany and France on the subject, but cautions that one should always be suspicious of public demonstrations of mesmerism (654-55). He ends by saying that the demonstrations do nothing to further the field, and that they give the public the wrong idea of what mesmerism is. Another piece from Sept. 17, 1887 warns against inexperienced mesmerists, citing the harm done to people whose minds are permanently damaged by the practice (“Dangers” 636). This warning is repeated in another piece published on Feb. 14, 1891 (391). Ladd’s article in *The Yale Law Journal* echoes these concerns, and observes that Belgium has passed a law making public demonstrations illegal and placing other restrictions on the practice including outlawing practicing on people under the age of 18 and those of unsound mind (189).

interactions. Many of the detectives who use mesmerism for good are even tainted and are left, at best, morally ambiguous because they take control of another person and rate that person's well-being as beneath the fulfillment of the mesmerists' desires.

Meanwhile, there are also characters who are not exercising mesmeric control but are still morally tainted by their contact with it, usually as mesmeric subjects. Mr. Burton in *The Dead Letter* and the Indians in *The Moonstone* are examples of morally tainted mesmerists as they pursue noble goals but mesmerize children to find their quarries. In addition, the criminals unabashedly use their ability to commit crimes, often by making other people perform the deeds for them. The ambiguity between the taint that falls on the mesmerists and that which falls on their subjects is too ambiguous for most Victorians to understand, and so their anxiety about the taint turns all association with mesmerism into criminality. Taking into consideration texts from 1862 to 1894, a pattern spanning the decades shows that mesmerism was feared not only as a kind of invasion of the self, but also because it defies accepted modes of knowledge and puts too much power in one person's hands.

Mesmerism was treated as an abuse of power that could be used for criminal means in detective fiction. As a result, there was an effort to find ways to control it and render it less dangerous. Because it was not fully understood and the Victorians disagreed about whether or not it was real, they were anxious about how to combat its pernicious influence. In scientific circles as early as 1846, this fear was a topic of conversation while advocates of the beneficial properties of mesmerism tried to argue to the public that mesmerism could be used for good as well as for evil. James Esdaile, an

English physician working in India for many years, became interested in exploring the medical uses of mesmerism such as placing a patient in a trance *in lieu* of using anesthetic before an operation. In the course of his work, however, he also encountered the criminal uses of mesmerism. In his book he describes a curious court case in which he became involved as an expert witness. His attention drawn by a commotion at the police station in India near where he worked, Esdaile learned that a man had been arrested for attempting to kidnap a boy. Esdaile stepped forward to examine the boy who declared that he had met a stranger on the road, a barber as it transpired, who had approached him, “muttering charms” and taking the boy’s hand while making passes over the boy’s eyes (Esdaile 87). As a result, the boy had been obliged to follow him though he did not know why he should. He had followed the man some distance before being roused to his senses. The barber, for his part, claimed that he had come across the disoriented boy and had tried to help him by giving him water, and that the boy had begun to follow him, telling the barber that he was somehow obliged to do so.

The story piqued Esdaile’s interest as a medical man. He drew a connection between that case and other mysterious kidnappings in India at the time.<sup>85</sup> Esdaile hypothesized that mesmerism was to blame for the boy’s alleged kidnapping, and set about experimenting with his patients at the hospital to see if he could put them into trances and convince them to follow him, hoping to prove whether mesmerism is real and whether the barber could have induced the boy to follow him (89). When the

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<sup>85</sup> Ladd cites Jules Denis, Baron du Potet’s “Complete Treatise of Magnetism” (1821), which reports that there were several kidnapping cases of a similar kind in India (178). The original French title is “Traité Complet de Magnétisme Animal.” Du Potet was a prominent mesmerist from France, though he lived in London for a time.

kidnapping case came before the court, Esdaile was brought in to demonstrate that mesmerism was possible. His book does not make his opinion of the barber's guilt known, but focuses on Esdaile's contribution to the trial. In order to prove the validity of mesmerism, Esdaile put three random men in the courtroom into trances and had them follow him about or go where he told them. He observed that he "became deeply impressed with a conviction of [mesmerism's] power for evil as well as for good" as a result of his involvement in the case (Esdaile 93). His purpose for relating the story in his book was to "rous[e] the public mind to a sense of the dangers, as well as benefits, that may be expected from [mesmerism]; and [he] trust[s] the day is not distant, when public opinion will strongly condemn all those who practice the art, except for philosophic and medical purposes" (93-4). Written in 1846, this book foreshadowed further concerns that continued to appear in fiction and non-fiction alike about the criminal application of mesmerism and the trouble of not understanding mesmerism.

In the preface to *Mesmerism in India*, David Esdaile goes so far as to make a call for legal action regarding mesmerism in light of his brother James's findings:

And if from this case, corroborated by the general impression in India of the frequency of far more detestable crimes, the public arrive at the conviction that Mesmerism is a terrible engine in the hands of a villain, as we have good reason for believing it to be, surely our legislators, who spend laborious nights in perfecting bills of pains and penalties against the felonious abductors of favourite poodles and the various members of the canine race, will see it to be their duty to make the practice of

Mesmerism penal, save by regularly educated medical men. If my brother's book do nothing more than rouse the public to a sense of danger, it will not have been written in vain. (xii-xiii)

As this chapter will show, however, not even restricting the practice of mesmerism to “regularly educated medical men” would solve the problem of mesmerism being used for nefarious ends. For even medical men, in fiction at least, are subject to the temptations that lead to crime. Baron R\*\* in Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery*, for example, is a chemist and a highly respected mesmerist exercising his skills medically, and yet he causes the deaths of three people so that he might inherit a fortune and collect large sums of life insurance.<sup>86</sup> Detective fiction does not entirely support the idea that medical men can be trusted with mesmerism, however. Instead, there is an appeal to the readers to learn more about what frightens them—mesmerism—so that it will not seem as frightening or dangerous anymore.

Mary Elizabeth Leighton discusses the historical repercussions of the calls for restrictions on mesmerism. She argues that as a result of the distrust of hypnotism sown by tales of misdeeds perpetrated under the influence, the study of the field dwindled in England, and it never gained the serious respect that so many of its practitioners, including James Esdaile, desired, and therefore the restrictions were never formalized in the nineteenth century. She discusses several novels in relation to her argument, but not

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<sup>86</sup> First published serially in *Once a Week* from November 29, 1862 through January 17, 1863 and then printed by Saunders, Otley & Co., in 1865. The author, first named in the 1865 edition, was Charles Felix. American collector Paul Collins determined that Felix was the pseudonym for Charles Warren Adams, the proprietor of Saunders, Otley at the time. This information is courtesy of Mike Ashley's introduction to the British Library's facsimile edition of *The Notting Hill Mystery* published in 2012.

*The Notting Hill Mystery*. This novel is a good example of a story that would make the public mistrust mesmerism and the non-fiction writings about it since the criminal in the story was inspired by an article in the *Zoist* about mesmerism used as a treatment for a chronically ill woman. The article referenced in *The Notting Hill Mystery* is a real article written by a Rev. Barrett in *The Zoist*, a journal dedicated to the study of mesmerism, appearing in the October 1854 issue, as cited in the novel, and the excerpt in the novel matches the text in the article. The article is central to the narrator's reluctant theory that mesmerism is responsible for the murders. Perhaps the article inspired the author with his plot in the same way that it inspires the Baron with his murderous plan. The very idea that a journal devoted to the discussion of mesmerism from a more or less scientific stance might inspire murder is painted as a terrible possibility in *The Notting Hill Mystery*. In fact, the narrator/investigator, Ralph Henderson, calls the article the "monstrous assertions of the 'mesmeric' journal" which he faults for planting the seed of the murderous plot in the Baron's mind (Adams 211). A journal dedicated to this branch of knowledge, which Henderson persists in denying as a fact, is described as "monstrous," as are the suggestions of the articles recorded therein. Henderson's resistance to mesmerism, and his desire to find another, any other, solution to the case, is part of what makes mesmerism so dangerous in the Victorians' opinion. Part of the threat, according to Esdaile's book, was that not everyone took mesmerism seriously enough or understood what it may have been capable of doing. *The Notting Hill Mystery* can be interpreted as (fictional) supporting evidence of such a stance. The novel reads as Henderson's report of his investigation into the mysterious deaths, but Henderson

remains unconvinced by the evidence he has found. At its conclusion, the novel does not reassure the readers that the Baron is tried and convicted of murder; the readers are instead left with Henderson's resistance to accept the evidence.

In *The Notting Hill Mystery* Henderson is an investigator hired by an insurance company to look into the mysterious death of Mme. Rosalie R\*\* whose life had been insured for a considerable sum. This investigation leads Henderson to look into the mysterious death of Mrs. Gertrude Anderton as well. Henderson and the Baron R\*\*\*, husband of Mme. Rosalie discovers that Rosalie is in fact Catherine Boleton, the younger twin of Gertrude Anderton, née Boleton. Their family noticed a strange sympathy between the twins at a young age: when one of them was hurt or ill, the other would feel it. Gertrude was always weaker than Catherine, though, and felt the ill effects more profoundly. When the girls were orphaned, a woman named Helen Ward kept an eye on the girls and reported in one of her letters to the girls' great-aunt that she had "often heard of the strong physical sympathies between twins, but never met [herself] with so marked an instance" (Adams 26).<sup>87</sup> When the girls were four, the woman caring for them took them for an outing and Catherine was stolen by gypsies. Gertrude continued to be plagued by illnesses with no source, and it is supposed that it is Catherine who is ill and that Gertrude feels sympathetic pains. Gertrude has a natural

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<sup>87</sup> Harrison's *Spirits Before Our Eyes* (1879) discusses the long history of the belief in psychic links between twins, and references a Dr. Burthogge's writings on the subject. "Dr. Richard Burthogge, in his *Essay upon the Nature of Spirits* (John Dunton: London, 1694), states that the twin sons of Mr. Henry Tracy, of Exeter...had such community of sensation that, 'if Nicholas were sick or grieved, Andrew felt the like pain, though far distant and remote in their persons, and that too without any intelligence given to either party'" (Harrison 101).



“delicacy of...constitution,” and so is generally ill, which leads her and her husband Mr. Anderton to seek a variety of medical treatments (26). They are introduced to the Baron R\*\* who seems to help Mrs. Anderton a great deal. Eventually, he brings in his assistant, whom he calls Rosalie, and he mesmerizes Rosalie directly while she holds hands with Mrs. Anderton. As suggested in the *Zoist* article mentioned in the story, mesmerism is imagined capable of working through a proxy in this way while the effects will be transferred to another person at one remove. It is suggested that this works so well for Rosalie and Mrs. Anderton because they already share such a strong psychic link as twins, though neither woman is aware of their relationship. The Baron hears from Mr. Anderton that his wife Gertrude has a twin who was lost and who was never mentioned so as not to upset Gertrude. Due to the strength of Mrs. Anderton’s connection with Rosalie, the Baron suspects that she might be the missing Catherine. The Baron digs into Rosalie’s past and becomes convinced of her identity. He plots to get his hands on the large inheritance due to be settled on Gertrude, which would pass to Catherine in the event of Gertrude’s death and the death of her husband and any children. The Baron marries Rosalie, and then takes advantage of the connection between the sisters by administering doses of antimony to Rosalie/Catherine, which Gertrude feels more acutely. Eventually, Gertrude dies while Rosalie survives the poisoning and recovers. The Baron then drives Mr. Anderton to suicide and finally he uses mesmerism to force Rosalie to kill herself. In addition to the ability to control people’s actions, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Parasite* and “The Ghost of Fountain

Lane,” reflected the Victorian concern that association with mesmerism could change people’s personalities.

One of the reasons the Victorians were concerned with conversations about controlling mesmerism was that they worried about mesmerism’s ability to tempt users to commit crimes and its ability to taint the morality of anyone who became involved with mesmeric practices. It was feared that a hypnotist could permanently alter a person’s moral compass through repetitive influences of mesmeric trances. Thus, the characters of otherwise innocent subjects of mesmeric treatments or influence might be changed far enough that they commit crimes through posthypnotic suggestion. Additionally, it was theorized that subjects’ morality could be altered temporarily or permanently without posthypnotic suggestion. For example, Pirkis’s “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” presents an example of changes in morality.<sup>88</sup> In the story, the Reverend Steele, a fraudulent preacher with innate hypnotic abilities, is so moving in his sermons that extol his congregation to give generously to support their cause of supporting the living saints who are traveling to Jerusalem to be assumed into heaven in accordance with a prophecy, that at least one member of the congregation steals a large sum of money to donate. Loveday Brooke, the detective, feels certain that the woman in question, Maria Lisle, would never have stolen anything if not for the preacher’s influence. After witnessing the preacher’s sermons herself, Loveday “did not wonder at

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<sup>88</sup> “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” is one of the short stories by Pirkis featuring the detective Loveday Brooke. The stories were printed serially in *The Ludgate Illustrated Magazine* (November 1892-November 1893) before being printed in a single volume in 1894. That book, *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*, marks the first appearance of a fictional professional female detective written in English by a woman.

weak-minded persons like Maria Lisle, swayed by such eloquence, setting up new standards of right and wrong for themselves” (Pirkis 273). This demonstrates either that Maria Lisle is acting under post-hypnotic suggestion to do whatever necessary to procure large sums of money to be donated, or that the preacher has, in a sense, brainwashed her so that she truly believes that this theft is not immoral. She is not being actively controlled by the mesmerist at the moment when she steals the check, unlike Rosalie when she drinks the acid in *The Notting Hill Mystery*; nor does it appear that Rev. Steele gave a specific post-hypnotic suggestion to steal the check such as when Miss Penelosa directs Agatha to break off her engagement in Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite*. It is most likely that Pirkis intended to suggest that Maria Lisle is stealing the check because her own moral compass has been altered and she believes that the theft is a righteous act. This fear that mesmerism might be capable of making a permanent change in an individual’s character was addressed in several non-fiction studies of hypnotism as well as in detective fiction, and was a concern for lawmakers.<sup>89</sup>

For example, in his booklet, “The Illustrated Practical Mesmerist” (1856), William Davey describes the practice of phreno-mesmerism, which consists of

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<sup>89</sup> In 1902, George Trumball Ladd wrote a paper for the *Yale Law Journal* discussing the dangers of hypnotism to people’s health, morality, and its uses for possible criminal activity in relation to the question of whether or not new laws were needed to regulate the practice and to determine how criminal cases involving hypnotism would be handled. He states that hypnotism has been proven as a true science and that repeated hypnotic sessions can alter a person’s personality and morality: “By continued practice of this special form of influence very considerable changes can gradually be brought about in the opinions, the current thoughts, and the ruling principles of conduct” (177). He cites the writings of several well-reputed European criminologists, psychologists, and lawmakers as well as several court cases from the late 1800s through to his present date in support of his argument.

mesmerically “exciting” various phrenological “organs” in order to heighten a given quality in the subject. He describes how the mesmerist could excite different organs such as the organs of hope, veneration, caution, firmness, etc., by holding his or her hand over the appropriate place on the subject’s skull. If conducted in a regular enough manner, these excitations were theorized to have lasting effects on peoples’ characters. Davey does not address the more dangerous effects of altering one’s personality for the worse, which other mesmerists attempted to do in their demonstrations. Arthur Edward Waite (1891) asserts that “[i]t is undoubtedly possible by the process of hypnotic experiment to impress upon a patient the design of committing a murder, and when he has to all appearances returned into his normal life and senses, that impression will remain, and he will commit that murder in exact accordance with the directions laid down by the mesmerist” (245-6).<sup>90</sup> While Waite and Davey discuss the possibility in theoretical terms, *The British Medical Journal* records reports of experiments along these lines in public demonstrations. One volunteer supposedly “acted on what was described as a post-hypnotic suggestion, and whilst taking his neighbor for his father enjoyed killing him in cold blood” (“Public Exhibitions” 1176).<sup>91</sup> Another article from February 14, 1891 discusses with concern a series of demonstrations in Manchester

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<sup>90</sup> Waite’s book *The Occult Sciences: A Compendium of Transcendental Doctrine and Experiment: Embracing an Account of Magical Practices; of Secret Sciences in Connection with Magic; of the Professors of Magical Arts; and of Modern Spiritualism, Mesmerism and Theosophy* was published London. Waite was a British author who worked on a systematic history of the occult by approaching mysterious phenomena from a spiritual stance rather than from a scientific one.

<sup>91</sup> One hopes that the volunteer only thought that he killed his neighbor and did not in fact do so. Surely if he had committed murder, there would have been an uproar about the event and more horror expressed in this article. This article appeared in the November 24, 1888 issue.

where “one of the most attractive features of the shows was a demonstration of how [the hypnotist] could induce a subject to steal or commit murder” (“Public Hypnotic” 391). Through all of these nineteenth-century writings it is believed, as Esdaile suggests, that mesmerism is a neutral force which can be used for good purposes such as alleviating physical pain, as Mr. Blakenny does in *The Mesmerist*, or for criminal purposes, such as the Baron R\*\* causing the deaths of three people in *The Notting Hill Mystery*. What was to be done, though, in those cases in which mesmerism was used to commit a crime? Who should be punished, the mesmerist, the subject, or both? Several detective stories take up the popular concern and explore the threats posed to the people whose very morality might be changed as a result of mesmerism.

Chapter III discussed how the detective Mr. Burton in Seeley Regester’s *The Dead Letter* (1866) is made morally ambiguous because of his use of mesmerism to solve the crime. Similarly, in Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), the scene where the Indians mesmerize the boy continues the troubling of the heroic detective figures who are associated with mesmerism.<sup>92</sup> In this case, however, it is not solely the employment of mesmerism that makes the three men morally dubious. It is arguable that the Indians are justified in returning the diamond to the temple from which it was stolen; the stone is theirs by right. However, the Indians commit murder to recover the

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<sup>92</sup> *The Moonstone* was originally published serially in *All the Year Round* from January 4, 1868 to August 8, 1868. The Tinsley Brothers publishing house in London then printed the novel in a three-volume format in 1868.

Moonstone from the thief, making them less morally upstanding.<sup>93</sup> The moral ambiguity of the three Indians is foreshadowed by their use of mesmerism and their manipulation of a child long before it is confirmed by their act of murder. Not only are they willing to kill a man, but they take advantage of an innocent (English) child and, the novel suggests, they have mysterious foreign knowledge that does not coincide with accepted modes of knowledge in England. As Mary Elizabeth Leighton has pointed out, “the hypnotist is represented as a threatening, and often foreign, figure,” as in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Moonstone*, and *The Parasite* featuring the German Baron R\*\*, the trio of Indians seeking the eponymous diamond, and the mysterious Miss Penelosa from Trinidad respectively.<sup>94</sup> Since so much of the research on mesmerism had moved to the Continent where the subject was taken more seriously as a science, the presence of foreign practitioners felt like a threat to Englishness and an invasion of dangerous and mysterious forces at least in part because they represented a different system of knowledge. In India, there was a long-standing tradition of mesmerism that was, to the British, perhaps threatening because their conception of Indian mesmeric practice was tied to the Indian’s non-Christian religious world-views (mostly Hindu traditions).

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<sup>93</sup> The connections between race, imperialism and mesmerism in *The Moonstone* are discussed at length in Willey’s essay “Wilkie Collins’s ‘Secret Dictate’: *The Moonstone* as Response to Imperialist Panic.”

<sup>94</sup> Miss Penelosa’s name appears as Miss Penclosa in the 1895 Harper Brothers edition in America, but is spelled “Penelosa” in the 1894 first edition published by A. Constable & Co. in England as well as in subsequent British editions such as the 1897 Constable printing. Many scholarly references to the story prefer the American spelling, such as Bruce Wyse’s article “The Equivocal Erotics of Mesmerism in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite*.” However, I prefer the original British spelling based on the assumption that the American change was not due to a correction originating with Conan Doyle.

These foreign mesmerists accepted as fact, and held a deeper understanding of, a field of knowledge that was not well understood or well perceived in England.

The Indians' mesmeric powers defy the understanding of the English characters, even the hero Franklin Blake who has travelled abroad. The Indians, who can be read as both detectives and criminals, perform mesmerism and yet remain more morally ambiguous at the end of the novel than the other mesmeric criminals discussed in this chapter.<sup>95</sup> The three Indian Brahmins, who have made it their sacred duty to find the Moonstone, use mesmerically induced clairvoyance to track the stone. Early in the story, Mr. Betteredge narrates the events of the day leading up to the Moonstone's arrival at the Verinder home where he serves as butler. The Indians arrive at the home, disguised as "strolling conjurors," and ask if the lady of the house would enjoy their entertainment (*Moonstone* 42). Mr. Betteredge warns them away, however, mistrusting them. Shortly thereafter, his daughter, Penelope, and the lodge-keeper's daughter follow the three Indians and the "little delicate-looking light-haired English boy" who is with them (42). The young ladies had, as Betteredge puts it, "tak[en] it into their heads that the boy was ill-used by the foreigners—for no reason that [he] could discover, except that he was pretty and delicate-looking" (42). The young English boy rouses pity and

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<sup>95</sup> Ladd cites a case that is curiously similar to the solution of the mystery in *The Moonstone*. The case involved a maid who was convicted for stealing from her mistress. However, the maid had previously been hypnotized regularly by Dr. G erault, and it is discovered that she is "still subject to somnambulistic attacks." In order to discover the truth, Dr. G erault hypnotizes the maid again, and from her "he learned...that in a somnambulistic sleep she had removed her mistresses' valuables to what she was convinced would be a safer place of deposit, and had then on waking forgotten entirely about the occurrence" (184). Unfortunately, Ladd does not include a date or citation for this event.

concern in the young women, perhaps particularly because there is a contrast between him and the three “mahogany-coloured Indians” who are foreign and have an air of mystery as “strolling conjurors” (42). The original readers’ interest may have been roused as well by this curious combination, especially in light of other literary instances of children being kidnapped by social “others” such as gypsies (as in *The Notting Hill Mystery*). These mysterious foreigners become even more threatening in the minds of the country English women when they witness the men’s “extraordinary tricks” (42).

Penelope relates how the three men:

all turned to their little English boy, as if they expected HIM to help them. And then the chief Indian, who spoke English, said to the boy, ‘Hold out your hand.’ ...the boy shrunk back, and shook his head, and said he didn’t like it. The Indian, thereupon, asked him (not at all unkindly), whether he would like to be sent back to London, and left where they had found him, sleeping in an empty basket in a market—a hungry, ragged, and forsaken little boy. This, it seemed, ended the difficulty. The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy’s hand. The Indian—first touching the boy’s head, and making signs over it in the air—then said, ‘Look.’ The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand. (43)



The “chief Indian” then asks the boy specific questions to guide his vision, telling him to see the “English gentleman from foreign parts” and ascertain if he is coming to the Verinder house (*Moonstone* 43). The boy answers that the man, Blake, is coming, and he does have the diamond with him. Penelope and her friend are concerned about the delicate and fair boy and the way he is being treated.

The threat to return the boy to his impoverished existence is enough to convince him to comply with the men’s request. His helpless state in life makes him easily manipulated by the Indians who can either choose to return him to his homeless state, or keep him with them, where presumably he is better off or else this would not be much of a threat. When asked to go into the trance, the boy recoils, stating that he does not like it, yet the Indians submit him to the process anyway. The boy is homeless, probably uneducated, and was apparently fending for himself in London when the Indians found him. No more is known about the circumstances of how he came to be travelling with the men, or how they knew that he would suit their purposes as a medium. Because of his class, this nameless boy with an unknown fate (for he is never mentioned again in the story) is little more than an object of pity, fascination, and utility to the people around him. The story suggests that because the Indians put their own needs above the boy’s, they are not wholly good characters.

Although most of the mesmerism detective stories in this chapter focus on the dangerous criminality of mesmerism, Oliphant’s *The Mesmerist: A Novel* (1890) takes a

different approach.<sup>96</sup> The killer, Cecil Wilson, is a dangerous mesmerist acting out of his own greed, as are the Baron R\*\*, Miss Penelosa, and the mesmeric preacher in the Loveday Brook story, but *The Mesmerist* also presents a better side of mesmerism. The novel features both the wicked mesmerist and to the detective mesmerist who catches him (though Mr. Blakenny, the detective mesmerist admits that he would kill the man who first seduced his daughter if he ever met with him, and thus is perhaps not a completely moral character). The novel tells the story of Allan Campbell whose trouble begins when his older brother, Hugh, goes sailing with one of their sisters and her family, but there is an accident, and Hugh is the only survivor. Hugh returns to the family home where Allan, their surviving sister Annie, and her new husband Cecil Wilson reside. Hugh brings in Mr. Blakenny, a mesmerist, to treat his pain. Allan, meanwhile, falls in love with Hugh's fiancée Mary, and as a result of the guilt he feels for this, he has trouble sleeping. One morning, Hugh is discovered dead, poisoned by strychnine. The inquest reveals evidence that Allan may have been the murderer. He was seen in Hugh's room that night, and Hugh had told Annie later that night that Allan had given him his nightly brandy. Allan thus falls under suspicion as the murderer. The "good" mesmerist, Mr. Blakenny, uses his abilities for medical purposes and does not use it to solve the case as Mr. Burton does in *The Dead Letter* (which makes Burton a morally ambiguous character), although his own experience as a mesmerist allows him to recognize that Allan is in a trance on the night of the death. His knowledge of mesmerism is what saves Allan from being convicted of murder. Wilson may not put

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<sup>96</sup> Oliphant was an Australian who relocated to England for a time as an adult, and there published *The Mesmerist: A Novel* in London in 1890.

Allan into a trance, but he takes advantage of the mesmerized state into which Allan has put himself and instructs him to kill Hugh. It comes to light that Wilson has been known to defraud people through mesmerism in the past, and so has experience using mesmerism to commit crimes. Unlike Burton and Blakenny, Wilson is portrayed as a heartless criminal whose only regret in the whole affair is that he did not sufficiently think things through, because if he had he would have “made Allan cut his own throat” (Oliphant 247). When Allan learns the truth, he blames himself for being a “fool in [Wilson’s] hands” because Wilson “had moulded [him] as he thought fit” (254). Wilson fooled everyone in the case and manipulated them without ever arousing a suspicion against himself except to the other mesmerist. Oliphant’s novel warns against the misuse of mesmerism, but it also uses the two mesmerist characters to reflect the ambivalent nature of mesmerism so that it does not support an argument that all mesmerism is bad. The novel thus suggests that knowledge of mesmerism and the practice thereof may be beneficial, and the practice should not be wholly feared, for such fear breeds ignorance, and that ignorance may be dangerous.

Despite the successful conclusion to the case, the story does not return to a happy status quo. Allan finishes his narrative by describing the unhappy aftermath of the murder. Mary no longer loves Allan, and he and his sister Annie cannot bear to be near each other. He resents her for so easily believing that he could have been the killer, and she resents that he allowed her to marry a killer. When Allan’s friend Val Medaway, who has been investigating the murder, ends his journal, he is relieved and optimistic: “Well, fool as I have been, I have at least *helped* to restore my poor friend to his peace of

mind, and to extricate him from his unpleasant position. Once more is happiness his portion” (Oliphant 251). Val even goes so far as to praise God for the outcome: “I thank God everything has ended so satisfactorily!” (251). In stark contrast to this, the next page resumes Allan’s narrative where he says that he “was released from the horrible position...only to find [himself] in one ten times more horrible” (252). Allan does not feel that he was redeemed or rescued, but instead now has “the misery of knowing [himself] to be guilty” (252). A curious aspect of this is that he does not lay the blame for his current misery at Cecil Wilson’s feet, but instead blames himself and fate. “Do you believe in fate?” he asks the reader; “I do. I was born to be unhappy. But Heaven was just. I speculated on the benefit I should derive from my brother’s death, and—he died. Heaven was just, I say again, but it was not merciful” (253). Despite being acquitted by the law and despite the fact that he did not intend to murder his brother, he still blames himself rather than the man who was the real killer. Allan was, effectively, the murder weapon rather than the murderer. He recalls his deceased older sister’s warning that he should not allow Annie to marry Cecil so quickly, and blames himself for allowing Wilson into the family: “I—I—I was responsible for all the misery that has overtaken us” (253). Allan feels himself cut off from other people because of his guilt, and emigrates to New South Wales where he lives a lonely, gloomy life. He changes his name and tells no one of his past, and he “soon felt more at home...where [he] knew nobody, where [he] had no friends;” he tries to forget his past narrative and create a new life, but cannot wholly succeed (256). “Even here I cannot forget,” he says (257). In a strikingly different conclusion to that of *The Parasite*, Allan believes that he is a

murderer even though he has no memory of the event and was not acting under his own agency. In *The Parasite* and *The Notting Hill Mystery* there is no suggestion that the mesmeric subjects feel guilt for the crimes they have committed except perhaps for their inability to throw off the control of the mesmerist. Allan is an example of a victim who blames himself for actions he did not consciously make. Allan considers his own morality tainted by the events of that night even though the court later clears him of guilt. *The Parasite*, *The Mesmerist*, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Moonstone*, and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” all engage with the Victorian anxiety about mesmerism and morality. The alterations to the characters’ morality are brought about through the mesmerists’ ability to invade the mind of the subject, which is when the struggle for control begins.

### ***The Fear of Invasion and Loss of Agency***

Victorians viewed mesmerism as an invasion of public spaces, private spaces, and of the individual’s mind. The influence of mesmerists was far reaching in Victorian society. In their detective fiction, Conan Doyle, Oliphant, Pirkis, Adams, and Collins reflected heightened the fear of what criminal mesmerists could do while they also explored how mesmerism dramatized the intellectual skirmish between scientific, pseudo-scientific, and spiritual knowledge. The fear of having one’s mind invaded is a fear of loosing one’s individuality and identity. Likewise, the fear resulting from the invasion of public and private spaces reflects a fear of the loss of community identity,

extending even to national identity since so many of the mesmerists in the stories are foreign.

Public demonstrations and lectures on mesmerism were popular in the Victorian era and drew large crowds, but mesmerism was not confined to the public sphere. Interested people not only attended public lectures, they also invited mesmerists to give demonstrations at private parties and to administer mesmeric medical treatments in private homes, bring the “invasion” of mesmerism’s influence into the private sphere. In Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite* (1894) and Oliphant’s *The Mesmerist* (1890), the hypnotist characters give demonstrations of their skills at private parties, which are social events that bridge the public and private. In *The Parasite*, Miss Penelosa offers to prove the veracity of mesmerism by giving a demonstration during a party, and in *The Mesmerist* Mr. Blakenney offers to demonstrate his skills to the family when he is brought in to treat the injured Hugh. In *The Parasite*, the narrator, Austin Gilroy’s, reaction is one of amazement with some fear about the power the woman seems to possess. In *The Mesmerist*, Allan’s immediate reaction to the exercise of mesmerism in his home is one of fear. He wonders if his brother Hugh is safe in the hands of Blakenney, for “[w]hat crimes might not a man with such power make an unfortunate commit?” (Oliphant 66). These wary reactions to the private demonstrations foreshadow the greater trouble to be caused by mesmerism once the connection between the criminals and the household is strengthened. In *The Parasite* and *The Notting Hill Mystery* the criminals are soon able to exercise mesmeric influence over members of the household on a regular schedule as part of either treatments or experiments.

The greatest fear addressed by the five stories addressed in this chapter is the fear of the mesmerist's invasion of the subject's mind. For the Victorians, mesmerism held the potential of a new kind of knowledge, but in the hands of devious practitioners the power might alter the character and morality of a mesmerized subject, and threaten their sense of self. Worst of all, then, these devious practitioners could enter one's most personal of spaces—one's mind and body—and temporarily take the place of one's soul. While some treatises say that the subject can access the mesmerist's open mind as well, the stories I am examining only show mesmeric mental access moving in one direction.<sup>97</sup> In this way, the narratives may be attempting to distinguish between the morality of the criminal and the victim. Though some taint is associated with the mesmeric subjects, the act of controlling other people and forcing them to act criminally is presented as more immoral. The subjects are less immoral because they never invade the mesmerists' minds. Mesmerism in these stories is an intrusion, a power play, not a door through which one can pass from either side.

These criminal invasions of the mind strengthen the connections between these detective novels and the sensation and Gothic traditions. In her discussion of sensation novels, Winifred Hughes differentiates between the sensation genre and the traditions of melodrama and the Gothic by pointing out that the sensation novel brought the same sense of scandal from the earlier traditions but moved it into the present day, making it

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<sup>97</sup> For example, in her pamphlet "Letters on Mesmerism," Harriet Martineau says that the subject's mind is strongly influenced by the mesmerizer, but she also observes that the mesmerist's mind may be affected by the subject's (19-38). This is the sort of two-way connection that forms between Mina Harker and Dracula, for instance, in Bram Stoker's novel.

all the more uncomfortable. The novels suggest that the strange events and criminal activities portrayed in the stories were happening behind the doors of the readers themselves. If sensation fiction was more scandalous and dangerous than Gothic novels because it brought the scandal closer to home, often *within* a home very similar to the readers', then detective fiction continues this trend and the mesmerist criminal brings the scandal closer. The mesmerist, who brings the instability of crime and scandal, enters into one's mind and body, overriding one's sense of self. The mesmerist is not just interfering with the victim's home/private/domestic space; he or she is invading an even more private space: the mind—the very interior/private/domestic space of a person's self. Often he or she accomplishes this by physically entering the personal space of the home and family to build a *rapport* with the subjects. With the advantage of this proximity, he or she then strengthens his or her grasp on the subjects. Once the link is created, the mesmerist may manipulate the subjects from further away so that his or her involvement in any criminal activity of the subject will not be suspected. The extreme proximity in space leads to mental proximity, and then the physical distance no longer matters. The mesmerist can be further away and still access the subject's mind as in *The Parasite* and *The Notting Hill Mystery*. Looking at this invasive power over subjects' minds in greater depth, *A Practical Investigation into the Truth of Clairvoyance* (1854), written by An Unbiased Observer, states that the author practiced his mesmeric skills regularly and found he could induce the mesmeric state from greater and greater distances: "As my patient grew more susceptible to my influence, I found that at any moment I wished, I could induce the mesmeric state from the next room, outside of the



house, or even at the distance of a mile” (15). This extended power reflects an anxiety about the breakdown of natural laws of space and time and the self as mesmeric advances challenged long-held beliefs. In *The Parasite*, Miss Penelosa says the subject’s will power “would be overridden by another, stronger one” if the subject is one who lends him or herself readily to mesmeric influence and forms a connection with the mesmerist (Adams 52). In such a case, the operator can “gain complete command over his subject,” and “[w]ithout any previous suggestion he may make him do whatever he likes” (52).

For the purposes of this chapter, detective fiction is defined more loosely than some scholars prefer because I choose to include penny dreadfuls, crime-centric ghost stories, and sensation novels along with the more strictly defined “detective novel” wherein the main plot of the narrative is the crime that must be solved and in which a professional (or, at times, an amateur) detective investigates the case. The boundaries of these genres should not be maintained so rigorously as some scholars do because doing so excludes stories that fall between genres, like most of the stories I am discussing. These novels blend Gothic and sensation genre conventions with those of the fledgling detective genre. Eugenia C. DeLamotte’s observations about the Gothic are particularly relevant as we consider the criminal mesmerist. DeLamotte says that “Gothic terror has its primary source in an anxiety about boundaries and...Gothic romance offers a symbolic language congenial to the expression of psychological, epistemological, religious, and social anxieties that resolve themselves most fundamentally into a concern about the boundaries of the self” (12-13). These anxieties are also central to criminal

mesmeric detective stories. In her book *Perils of the Night*, DeLamotte claims that there are two main fears in the Gothic literary world: “fear of terrible separateness and the fear of unity with some terrible Other” (22). These same fears operate in the mesmeric crime novels. The fear of unity with a terrible other appears when the mesmerized subjects fear the influence of the mesmerist who can access their minds and make them do things against their wills. Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite* best expresses this fear as the mesmerist’s soul enters into Gilroy’s body like a parasite and overrides his agency, making him little more than an automaton. The fear of separateness then emerges as the victim grapples with communication as he or she tries to tell others that they are victims but fail to do so. How does one prove that one is the victim of a criminal mesmerist? How does one prove that while one’s body committed a murder, one’s spirit or mind was not in control at the time? This inability to communicate what has happened leaves the victim isolated and separate from the rest of society in these novels. They are locked, alone, in a struggle for control of their own lives, their own morality, and their own selves. This isolation is seen in *The Parasite* as Gilroy realizes why he has been acting so strangely:

[Miss Penelosa], by her own explanation can dominate my nervous organism. She can project herself into my body and take command of it. She has a parasitic soul—yes, she is a parasite, a monstrous parasite. She creeps into my frame as the hermit crab does into the whelk’s shell. I am powerless! What can I do? I am dealing with forces of which I know

nothing. And I can tell no one of my trouble. They would set me down as a madman. (*Parasite* 59)

Gilroy laments that he is unable to maintain control of himself when Miss Penelosa exerts her mesmeric will over him. Furthermore, he does not think anyone will believe him if he tells his story, so he decides not to try to convince them. He feels compelled to face the situation alone. DeLamotte argues that Gothic vision has always been focused on social relations and social institutions. The focus on the dark depths of the psyche is always connected to the social realities, which create these demons of the psyche. The mesmeric elements of detective novels link the detective tradition to the Gothic and reflect the underlying anxiety about the psyche and society.

The power wielded by the mesmerists in these stories challenges and destroys traditional, stable conceptions of agency. There is no safe space to which one can run; the victim becomes a sort of Gothic heroine fleeing in terror through the corridors of the mind, pursued by a villain and with no means of escape. Having formed a strong enough *rapport* with Gilroy during their in-person sessions, Miss Penelosa can control him at will and can command him from across town. One night while he is spending the evening with friends, she takes control of him, and while he is playing whist he “[is] dragged away, as if the noose of a rope had been cast around [him],” and he abruptly leaves the house (*Parasite* 59). On another occasion, after several evenings of being thus called to Miss Penelosa’s side, Gilroy has locked himself in his room, but the power “pounced” on him: “I clawed at the coverlet. I clung to the woodwork. I believe that I screamed out in my frenzy. It was all useless—hopeless. I must go” (64). Gilroy

experiences the terror of losing himself. He no longer has control over his bodily actions and is reduced to an automaton. Gilroy is brought to tears by his circumstances when he sees the green paint on the sleeve of his coat, announcing that he is the man who attempted to break into the bank: “It is many a long year since I shed tears, but all my nerve was gone, and I could but sob and sob in impotent grief and anger” (73). He realizes that he committed a crime during the night and has no memory of it. He is so distraught by his loss of agency that he wishes he were dead rather than under someone else’s control (73).

A similar trouble strikes the victims of the Baron R\*\* in *The Notting Hill Mystery*. When Mrs. Anderton’s mysterious cases of gastritis strike in the Baron’s absence, they are always preceded by a deep slumber. The slumber is the mark of the Baron placing Rosalie into a trance state, and through her, Mrs. Anderton as well, despite being in different cities. With their psychic link formed, the Baron poisons Rosalie with a dose of antimony, and her twin suffers from the same symptoms of the illness, just as she has since their infancy. The Baron does not have to be in the same location in order to influence Mrs. Anderton. Similarly, one of the nurses who tends to Rosalie in her “illnesses” reports that she fell asleep while on her nighttime vigil, though she has never done so before in her whole career. Each time she falls asleep it is on a night when Rosalie, by then the Baron’s wife, has another bout of sickness. The Baron is in the room next to Rosalie’s on each of these occasions. Prior to the first incident, the nurse had told the Baron she did not believe in mesmerism and so he offered to try to put her in a trance. The nurse reports that she “said he might try if he could. He looked hard

at [her], ever so long, and made some odd motions with his hands. [She] did go to sleep,” though she stubbornly refuses to believe it is mesmerism (Adams 216). This first trance seems to make the nurse more susceptible to the Baron’s influence, and the readers are given to understand that the Baron mesmerizes the nurse, putting her to sleep on several nights so that he can administer the dose of poison to Rosalie without being witnessed. The nurse suspects that something strange is happening, but cannot think what except that “somebody [is] playing tricks upon [her]. It was so strange, coming every fortnight” (218). At the end when the Baron causes Rosalie to kill herself, he has complete control over her. It appears that she is sleepwalking to those who see her as she walks down to the Baron’s lab late at night to drink the poison. Fortunately, they see the Baron lurking behind her as well. The mesmerists in the stories may be able to invade the minds of their subjects and control their actions, but the subjects fight against them. The mesmerists and their victims not only seek to control the victims’ actions, but also the course of the narrative and, by extension, the order of the society in which the characters live.

### ***The Struggle for Order and Control***

The criminals in *The Moonstone*, *The Mesmerist*, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Parasite* and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” are not content with their circumstances and choose to use mesmerism to alter their lives to their advantage. If one views their lives as having been planned and organized by a providential force, then changing their lives can be seen as wresting narrative control away from a divine force for themselves. The

criminals mesmerize people to act according to their will (either controlling them in a trance state or through posthypnotic suggestion), and to change the moral compass of a subject or cloud their judgment, thereby altering the narratives of their subjects' lives as well.

The mesmerists gain access to their victims most often by exploiting their trust. The subjects/victims in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Mesmerist*, *The Parasite*, and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” story in *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke*, *Lady Detective* all grow to trust the mesmerists because of their association with an institution that is usually a source of order in society: religion, law, and science/medicine. The Baron is a medical mesmerist who is recommended to the Andertons by their medical advisor. The young couple is primarily occupied by their attempts to improve their poor health. The Baron is the foremost mesmerist in Europe and the Andertons are pleased with the initial improvements he produces in Mrs. Anderton's health. In *The Mesmerist* the criminal Cecil Wilson ingratiates himself with the family as a friend, and then as the husband of their beloved sister, Annie. In *The Parasite* Miss Penelosa grows close to Gilroy as they work together on his scientific experiments on mesmerism. Gilroy strives to be a great scientist and agrees to be the subject of experiments in eager pursuit of scientific breakthroughs. In “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” the mesmerist is a preacher who affects his congregation through his sermons. He convinces them to give money to support the supposed saints who will be assumed into heaven, even inspiring people to steal in order to get the money to donate. The whole religious movement is a scam as it turns out, and the preacher and his cronies were preparing to run with the money. Maria

Lisle, the thief being pursued by the police, stole a check and gave the money to the reverend. Loveday observes, however, that “[s]he is not one of the criminal classes, but a religious enthusiast,” which is why she was so influenced by the reverend’s power (Pirkis 267). Thus, religion, science, and medicine are the means by which the mesmerists gain the trust of their victims before taking advantage of them. In turn, the victims cannot rely on these pillars of order to help them. The criminals find the weak places in the subjects’ defenses and exploit them for their own gain. Once the link is forged, the mesmerists in these books are able to influence and control their subjects, all the while protected by the fact that mesmerism is not taken seriously by society, and criminal charges against the mesmerists cannot easily be proven. As a result, the legal system does not provide protection for the victims in these stories. Characters such as Gilroy do not believe the law will be able to help him, and Mr. Bruff in *The Moonstone* asserts that the legal system will not believe stories of mesmerism and clairvoyance. Mr. Bruff, a lawyer, makes quite clear that “the theory of clairvoyance” in connection to the theft of the Moonstone “would carry no conviction whatsoever...in [*his*] mind” (*Moonstone* 299). As a representative of the law, Mr. Bruff indicates through his dismissal that clairvoyance and mesmerism are not accepted forms of knowledge in the legal system. With these three pillars of order compromised by mesmerism in these stories, the outcome of the tales—the restoration of order—comes down to a struggle between the mesmerist and his or her victims or the detectives like Loveday Brooke who are investigating the crimes the mesmerist has committed. The inability of the characters to prove their cases in court or to other people is a central concern in these

stories and points strongly to the authors using mesmeric crime as a microcosmic statement about the larger anxiety about modes of knowledge and order in the Victorian era.

Reflecting on the powerlessness of mesmeric subjects, David Esdaile remarks, “[w]hat a power, then, is this for evil as well as for good! How foolish in people to expose themselves to the machinations of the wicked, by treating Mesmerism as a fraud or a delusion! *It is a fact*, proved by incontestable evidence; and capable of being applied to the relief of suffering humanity, or perverted so as to accomplish the designs of villainy” (xvii). Despite David Esdaile’s assertions, it had not been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt for the Victorians, even though researchers like James Esdaile claimed to have demonstrated the power of the skill in court. Mesmerism existed in a gap between objective fact and the fantastic in the Victorian era. In detective fiction, mesmerism challenges accepted modes of knowledge just as it did historically. Its existence outside of accepted knowledge makes mesmerism a dangerous weapon in the hands of a criminal because the burden of proof of the crime falls on the subject who was mesmerized and manipulated; they have to prove that such a thing *could* happen as well as the fact that it *did*.

The challenge of proving that characters were mesmerized reflects the skepticism about mesmerism in the real world. In her book *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*, Alison Winter discusses contemporary accounts of the brutal methods used by skeptical members of the audience at mesmeric demonstrations and lectures to test whether the subjects were really asleep. Members of the audience wanted proof that



what they were seeing in the demonstrations were real. Members of the audience and the mesmerists themselves “fired pistols near the subject’s ears, pricked her skin with needles, and waved smelling salts beneath her nostrils” (Winter 3). Some went further, however, resorting to “crueler tests...acid poured on her skin, knives thrust under her fingernails, electric shocks run through her arms, and noxious substances placed in her mouth” (3). As Winter points out, the stakes of these experiments were much higher than mesmerism itself because these public demonstrations were “a testing ground of faith and doctrine,” centered around the unanswered questions of whether “the effects were natural or supernatural” (4). Audience members were not just concerned with ascertaining whether or not the subject in a particular session was truly in a trance; they wanted to know if mesmerism was real, and if it was, what did that mean for the science they already believed which could not fully explain mesmerism? The public stage addressed large questions about accepted modes of knowledge and how the world is ordered; questions at the very root of English culture, morality, and understanding.

Even within the pages of *The British Medical Journal*, opinions on the capabilities of mesmerism vary. A piece appearing in the February 28, 1891 issue, “An Investigation of Hypnotism,” points out that no proof exists that anyone has ever committed a crime as a result of post-hypnotic suggestion. The report states that a Committee of Inquiry was appointed by the Medico-Legal Society of New York, and that their studies found that ““the illusory impressions created by hypnosis may be made to dominate and tyrannise the subsequent actions of the subject’ is far from being established. We have not yet seen sufficient proof that post-hypnotic suggestion has led

to actual crime, or that ‘illusory impressions’ (hallucination?) have been either lasting or post-hypnotic” (qtd. in *BMJ* 476). Empirical, physical evidence cannot be produced to prove the existence or influence of mesmerism in a given case. In the five stories discussed in this chapter, mesmerism also exists in a state between truth and hoax because some characters believe it to be true and others adamantly believe it is nonsense. In these stories there is no physical empirical evidence to be presented in court to solve these cases and catch these criminals.

In his handbook “Criminal Investigation,” translated by John Adam and J. Collyer Adam in 1906, Hans Gross addresses the trouble of dealing with hypnotism in real world legal proceedings.<sup>98</sup> In the first edition, Gross says that “[t]his theory of hypnotism partakes of the destiny of all problems which have been treated in a premature and unscientific way by people of doubtful learning and character; it is difficult to say whether, in giving their so-called opinions, they have been influenced by a desire to speak the truth or by other more or less obscure motives,” and thus that some experts believe hypnotism is real and “a positive science while others have only asked with regard to it, who is the cheat or who the dupe” (175). Thus from the view of an authoritative early criminologist (perhaps the foremost of his time), the experts in the field of hypnotism are not to be believed. The authors of criminal mesmerist mysteries

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<sup>98</sup> Hans Gross was a prominent Austrian criminologist, who is often considered the father of the field. He was a criminal jurist and a professor in Prague. The handbook *Criminal Investigation* is a translation of an earlier text, though I am not sure if it is a compilation of several of his texts for investigators as well as for coroners as the title does not directly match any of the original German titles. I am therefore uncertain of the original publication date, but his first book was published in 1893, placing his work in the same time period as *The Parasite*, *The Mesmerist*, and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane.”

reflect this skeptical attitude in many of their fictional characters in addition to the victims' beliefs that no one will believe their stories. Gross does not completely dismiss hypnotism, however, but recommends that further study is needed, for "[n]ow-a-days jurists cannot nor ought to take action in the matter; as yet they have not sufficient scientific material at their disposal, and it is beyond doubt that the premature adoption of a point of view which has not yet been made clear would cause more harm than the conservative ignorance of a person who holds himself aloof" (175). By the time the second edition was printed, Gross had changed his stance. Naming several authoritative texts (in German, French, and other European languages, but none in English), Gross says that the books "have cleared up the question in a scientific manner; the existence of hypnotism can no longer be doubted, and the jurist ought to consider how he must deal with it" (176). He goes further to recommend that jurists, magistrates, and others involved in criminal investigations "must study, however superficially, the very essence of hypnotism; otherwise the Investigating Officer will be incapable of knowing when he is face to face with a case of hypnotism and must consequently have recourse to an expert" (177). George Trumball Ladd makes the same recommendation to legal professionals in his article in *The Yale Law Journal*, saying that "what is needed is more enlightenment on the part of the lawyers and judges concerning the phenomena and laws of hypnotism itself" so that the courts can handle hypnosis cases correctly (186-7). Within the novels I am examining, such an acceptance of hypnotism by the courts has not yet come about, though several of the stories strongly suggest that readers need to learn more about hypnosis.

Yet the stories do not present learning more about mesmerism as a guaranteed solution to the problem of being a victim who cannot throw off the control of the mesmerist. In *The Parasite* Gilroy writes his belief that “[n]o magistrate would listen to [him]” because hypnotism is not acknowledged as a science, and if he were tried for his attempted theft at the bank or his assault on his friend, he would not be able to prove his innocence (*Parasite* 72). Gilroy comes to understand the mesmeric process as the soul of the operator inhabiting the body of the subject. His position leaves him powerless to fight Miss Penelosa, and isolated from the rest of society (which will not credit his assertions). He expresses his frustration that he is powerless because he knows nothing about the forces at work, but earlier in the story Miss Penelosa assured him that it is “a terrible power...and the more you know of it the more terrible it will seem to you,” suggesting that knowing more may not help him fight but will make this terrible power seem all the more unbeatable (51).

The victims’ fear that they cannot prove their victimhood is a theme in *The Parasite*, *The Mesmerist* (to a degree), and *The Notting Hill Mystery*. *The Parasite* is written in the form of journal entries kept by Gilroy, a professor of physiology who records his daily thoughts and observations as he begins exploring mesmerism. In his journal, Gilroy laments his helplessness and the way that his position under Miss Penelosa’s power isolates him from the rest of society:

And the most dreadful part of it all is my own loneliness. Here I sit in a commonplace English bow-window looking out upon a commonplace English street...and behind me there hangs a shadow which is out of all

keeping with the age and place. In the home of knowledge I am weighted down and tortured by a power of which science knows nothing. No magistrate would listen to me. No paper would discuss my case. No doctor would believe my symptoms. My own most intimate friends would only look upon it as a sign of brain derangement. I am out of touch with my kind. (*Parasite* 72)

Like Mr. Bruff in *The Moonstone*, he does not believe any representative of the law, such as a magistrate, would believe a story of mesmerism. Even his friends (many of whom are presumably fellow scientists) would think he was mentally ill for believing that he is being controlled by Miss Penelosa. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses the metaphorical boundary that prevents clear communication in Gothic fiction, the “barrier of unspeakableness...an interpersonal barrier where no barrier ought to be—language is properly just the medium that should flow between people migrating their physical and psychic separateness” (17). Gilroy feels the strain of this boundary, and tries to find a way around or through it by communicating with himself, even if with no one else. His immediate recourse is to record what is happening to him, but he also feels desperate enough that he contemplates death, both his own and that of Miss Penelosa, as the only means of escape. “Let her have a care!” Gilroy writes, “[s]he may push me too far. When the law cannot help a man he may make a law for himself” (72). Fortunately, Gilroy does not have to resort to such violence since the end is brought about by her own greed and desire for revenge.

If the burden of proof rests with the victim to prove his or her innocence of crimes committed under hypnosis, then standard forms of evidence are not sufficient to meet the case because they cannot be used to prove something as invisible and intangible as mesmeric influence. Instead, Gilroy, Rosalie, and Allan try to reclaim their own agency through narrative efforts such as written or verbal communications of their stories. These narratives seek to convince the reader of the truth by combining enough circumstantial evidence and witness statements to show that no other explanation but mesmerism is possible. Such a narrative effort is undertaken by Henderson as well in his attempt to prove that Rosalie and Gertrude were murdered.

In “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” the detective Loveday Brooke makes an explicit connection between hypnotism and metaphorical writing:

The world, it seems to me, abounds in people who are little more than blank sheets of paper, on which a strong hand may transcribe what it will; hypnotic subjects others would say; really the line that divides the hysteric condition from the hypnotic is a very hazy one. (Pirkis 270)

Loveday likens people who are susceptible to suggestive mesmerism to “blank sheets of paper” and mesmerists to “strong hands” that can “transcribe what [they] will” on those sheets (270). In this way she directly links mesmeric control to narrative control.

Through an act of metaphoric writing, the mesmerists can invent whatever story they like for the person on whom they are working. When these people realize that they are being, in effect, rewritten, they struggle against it, fearing their loss of self and their loss of agency. Unable to assert their willpower to act against the influence in most cases,

the subjects turn to narrative efforts to tell their own stories, and in some cases in hopes of breaking the hold of the power by “keeping their head” through writing (*Parasite* 59).<sup>99</sup>

Conan Doyle, Pirkis, Oliphant, and Adams liken mesmeric control to rewriting aspects of the narrative of life such as who will have what and who will do what. The idea of a “narrative of life” is drawn from an understanding that some providential or fateful influence has control over events in the world. The criminal mesmerists in *The Parasite*, *The Mesmerist*, “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” and *The Notting Hill Mystery* all seek to take control of that narrative and shape it according to their own greedy wills. The victims of the stories not only view the act of writing or telling their story as the only means to convince other people, often the implied reader of their text, that they are being controlled by mesmerists and forced to act against their wills, but they also turn to narrative efforts as a way to retain their agency and pit their (narrative) wills against the wills of the mesmerists. None of the victims succeed in reclaiming their agency in this way, however. As I will show, the resolutions of the stories come about most often through the act of a *deus ex machina* as the providential agency reasserts its control (its narrative) over the characters.

*The Parasite* is the most explicit example of the victim’s turn to narrative in an effort to fight the mesmerist’s influence. *The Parasite* is not, strictly speaking, a detective story. However, it is a crime story revolving around the use of mesmerism,

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<sup>99</sup> Though approaching the idea of characters writing their lives from a different perspective, Thoms also addresses the connection between Wilkie Collins’s characters’ writings and their attempts to control their lives in *The Windings of the Labyrinth*.

and speaks well with the detective stories of the era that also focus on mesmerism. Unlike the other stories I have discussed, the mesmerist in this case is a woman and one of her subjects is a man, Austin Gilroy. Gilroy starts as a strong skeptic, believing that the field is not scientific enough and that there is no proof that mesmerism is a real phenomenon. His opinion changes very quickly, however, when his friend Professor Wilson (an avid proponent of mesmerism) introduces him to Miss Penelosa, a mesmerist and clairvoyant from Trinidad who has only just arrived in England. In order to convince Gilroy, Miss Penelosa asks him to choose a subject on whom she can demonstrate and whom Gilroy trusts not to be unbalanced or in collusion with her. Gilroy chooses his fiancée Agatha as the subject, and Miss Penelosa succeeds in putting her in a trance and planting a posthypnotic suggestion that is then carried out the next day. Gilroy is satisfied that she is entranced and not merely asleep. His scientific curiosity is aroused by the possibilities of the field of inquiry into mesmerism, which at that time was included in the fledgling science of psychology (*Parasite* 41). Gilroy combines his work on physiology with the mysteries of mesmerism, and works with Professor Wilson and Miss Penelosa on experiments. Since Gilroy is such a susceptible subject, unlike Wilson, he himself becomes the trustworthy subject of the experiments. Unfortunately, when Wilson is out of town on business, Gilroy comes to the realization that “[i]n [his] eagerness for scientific facts [he has] been foolishly blind to the human relations between Miss Penelosa and [himself]... The unhappy woman appears to have formed an attachment for [him]” (55-56).



Gilroy uses his journal as a self-reflective and analytical tool. Upon waking from his mesmeric sleep during one of their sessions, Gilroy finds himself compelled to take Miss Penelosa's hand, and "the horrible thing was that [he] felt impelled to say what she expected [him] to say," and declare his love for her (*Parasite* 56). Gilroy struggles against the urge to woo Miss Penelosa on that and other occasions, and at first fears that this is a part of his own nature coming to the surface. By writing out his thoughts about his predicament in his journal, Gilroy comes to the somewhat comforting realization that he is merely saying what she wants him to say, that he is an automaton following her instructions, and that what he is saying is not originating from himself. He tries fighting against her influence without success until she becomes ill and can no longer maintain her dominance over him. He takes this opportunity to vehemently tell her his real opinion of her, that "the very sight of [her] and the sound of [her] voice fill [him] with horror and disgust" (66).

Miss Penelosa gets her revenge against Gilroy by humiliating him and then making him a criminal. She exerts her full power by taking over him so completely that he has no memory of what he is doing while she is in control. Under this influence, she makes him attempt to break into a bank, to attack a friend on another occasion (who had warned Gilroy against Miss Penelosa), and finally, she threatens Agatha. Gilroy is driven to a desperate state as he struggles to retain control of himself through all of these events, and warns Miss Penelosa that "[a]s sure as there is a God in heaven, I swear that if you try another of your devilries upon me I will have your life for it. Come what may, I will have your life. I have come to the end of what a man can endure" (*Parasite* 76).

Since he believes he cannot succeed in making anyone believe him about her mesmeric influence, he looks for a solution to his trouble outside the normal course of the law, and feels he is justified in doing so. This murderous desperation suggests that his association with mesmerism has altered his morality, but also clarifies that he believes he will never be able to resist her will as long as both of them are alive.

Conan Doyle wrote three scenes that make the link between Gilroy's self-control and his writing most explicit, the first is at the beginning of the novella, the second is in the middle, and the third comes close to the end of the story. In his first entry, written before he meets Miss Penelosa, Gilroy explains his motivation for keeping the journal:

This diary-keeping of mine is, I fancy, the outcome of the scientific habit of mind about which I wrote this morning. I like to register impressions while they are fresh. Once a day at least I endeavour to define my own mental position. It is a useful piece of self-analysis, and has, I fancy, a steadying effect upon the character. Frankly, I must confess that my own needs what stiffening I can give it. I fear that after all my neurotic temperament survives, and that I am far from that cool, calm precision which characterises [other scientists I admire]. (*Parasite* 43)

Gilroy's reference to his discussion of his "scientific habit of mind" points to his description of his temperament at the beginning of the journal, and he calls the journal a "piece of self-analysis," thus explicitly linking the recording of his life's story to a desire to understand, control, and develop himself as a scientist (43). He writes that he has striven to become a "materialist," interested in provable facts rather than anything

imprecise and spiritual (42). However, he admits that he believes this is “the effect of education upon temperament, for by nature [he] is...a highly psychic man. [He] was a nervous, sensitive boy, a dreamer, a somnambulist, full of impressions and intuitions” (42). This underlying nature is hinted at by his appearance, which falls in line with the physiognomic thoughts of the day. His Celtic looks (though he later describes himself as Spanish-looking) make him look sensitive and spiritual as opposed to the “phlegmatic Saxon temperament” of his friend Charles Sadler who had experience with Miss Penelosa. Sadler had escaped his connection with Miss Penelosa without her forming an attachment to him, which suggests his own superior resistance to her influence (60). Gilroy’s writing is, by his own assertion, a further attempt to tame his “psychic” side and enforce his “materialist” side. This desire to tame his psychic side is a symptom of a greater motivation that becomes apparent throughout the entries: Gilroy’s desire for control. This desire plays out in his writing as he attempts to take authority over what is happening to him by writing it from his own perspective. It is an attempt to take authorial command over the narrative and how it is told if not over the events themselves, which, try as he might, he cannot alter.

The second scene in which Conan Doyle links Gilroy’s writing to self-agency is in Gilroy’s entry for April 7<sup>th</sup>, in which he describes how he was impelled to leave his friends abruptly in the middle of a card game and attend Miss Penelosa. He begins the eleven pm portion of his entry by saying: “God help me! What is the matter with me! Am I going mad? Let me try and be calm and reason with myself. First of all I shall set down exactly what occurred” (*Parasite* 58). Through his writing that evening, Gilroy

comes to the realization that his actions are not his own and that he is being controlled by Miss Penelosa. He takes comfort from this realization and the next day he confirms his conclusion in “broad daylight, writing coolly and with time for reflection” (59). Nevertheless, he is still shaken and confused, and is determined to master himself, for he is “no silly puppet to dance at the end of a string,” and he is determined to keep his head and “pit [his] intellect against her powers” (59). His first step in this counter-move is to “try to reason this out” in writing (59). Though the writing helps him to think through his situation (generally to realize how helpless he is), his authorial efforts to maintain control of himself are ineffective against Miss Penelosa’s influence. This becomes clear in the third scene that most closely links writing to agency.

Two days before the end of the story, Gilroy writes that he intends to speak with his friend Charles Sadler, who lives in the rooms below him, as soon as Sadler returns home. “I think I hear his step in the street now,” Gilroy writes, “and I will go down and let him in. If he will——” and his entry ends there (*Parasite* 75). The next day’s entry then picks up: “Why did I break off in this way last night? I never went downstairs after all—at least I have no recollection of doing so. But on the other hand, I cannot remember going to bed” (75). He then observes that one of his hands is swollen, but does not remember injuring it. When he picks up his narrative again at midday, he explains that Miss Penelosa had taken control of him, caused him to go downstairs, and to attack Sadler at the door. His efforts to control his narrative are literally cut off in midsentence, and Miss Penelosa can take control of him and write his story for him in a metaphorical sense by directing his next actions to be recorded. Narrative efforts, then,

are not enough to counteract mesmerism in Conan Doyle's story, highlighting the difficulty of counteracting a force that is reported to be as strong as mesmerism is, and exemplifying the type of anxiety Victorians felt about some of the new innovations and fields of science that were being explored in their time.

In *The Mesmerist*, Allan Campbell narrates the story of the unfortunate events that led to his present gloomy circumstances. His narrative is written after the conclusion of events, however, and his writing lacks the fighting spirit of Gilroy's journal. Oliphant takes a different approach to the act of narrating one's experiences as the victim of mesmerism to explore the way in which such a narrative may be intended to convince an intended reader of the truth of a story that seems impossible. Furthermore, the narrator writes to inspire pity and in the hopes of gaining sympathy and absolution from the reader for the guilt he feels about his involvement in the crime. Unlike Gilroy, Allan reaches out to a nameless reader in the hopes of forming a bond of community despite his social isolation. In his telling of the story, for example, Allan accepts a guilt that his story has probably convinced his readers that he does not deserve. By venting his feelings of guilt he is taking control of his story by acknowledging his underlying guilt for wishing his brother dead. He addresses the reader as his friend, a reader who is "so young and happy" and "his only friend" (257). His narrative is his attempt to find a connection with a friend; someone whom he hopes will pity him. He lists the reasons why he deserves pity in his final words and ends on a gloomy note: "You will pity me, will you not? I have lost a brother, sisters, a sweetheart; I am lonely; I am a murderer; my wealth was achieved by my brother's murder. The Almighty has not

let me die. 'Tis only those who suffer never who tell you God is good—and I have suffered” (258). The conclusion of the novel makes an appeal to the readers, calling them to evaluate their reaction to the tale they have just read. While he may be writing to try to convince himself that he is innocent and thereby regain some control over his life, he is also trying to convince others of his innocence and thus regain control over his reputation and position in society.

Similarly, in *The Notting Hill Mystery* narrative control is also of paramount importance. Unlike in *The Parasite* and *The Mesmerist* where the narrator was the victim of the mesmerist’s influence in carrying out crimes, someone entirely outside the events of the story narrates this novel. The novel is presented in the form of Ralph Henderson’s report to his employers, including all relevant original materials such as witness statements, documents, letters, newspaper clippings, and journal articles. Within his narrative, the reader discerns traces of an important untold story, that of the Baron’s wife, Rosalie. She attempts to tell her story on several occasions, as Gilroy and Allan do in their own novels, but Rosalie is thwarted at every turn. In each new home she and the Baron settle in, he carefully creates the illusion that he is a doting husband and a charming man, so that nearly everyone thinks that he was a good person and that his wife is unjustly cold to him. This illusion is created in part through the Baron’s control over Rosalie. For instance, one of the landladies reports to Henderson that:

[The Baron] was very attentive to [his wife]. Never left her alone for a minute hardly. She did not seem very fond of him. I think she was afraid of him, but I don’t know why. He was very kind to her, and always

particularly civil. Sometimes she seemed quite put out like by his civility. I thought sometimes she would have flown out at him. She never did fly out. He always seemed able to stop her. I don't know how he did it. He never said anything; only looked at her; and it was quite enough. (Adams 110-111)

This statement suggests to Henderson that the Baron mesmerically polices Rosalie's actions as well as her communications. Her emotions and her body are not her own and she is not permitted to make any choices for herself. It is possible that the Baron uses his mesmeric influence to make these witnesses think well of him, but no evidence of this is given in the novel.

In addition to thwarting Rosalie's desire to fly out at him so that she could physically assert her agency and demonstrate her great dislike of him in front of witnesses, the Baron also prevents her from verbally communicating with anyone who might help remove her from his power. Rosalie's old friend from the circus, Julie, tells Henderson that she had heard from Rosalie that she was going to be married, but could not tell her to whom. Rosalie never wrote to Julie again, but Julie is convinced that Rosalie could not have been set to marry the Baron because "[s]he disliked him too much" (Adams 59). This is the only instance in the novel in which Rosalie is able to explicitly communicate her dislike of the Baron. Henderson discovers that, in spite of Rosalie's aversion, it is likely that the Baron mesmerized Rosalie to force her into marrying him. Julie reveals further pieces of Rosalie's narrative when she tells Henderson information from Rosalie's past letters, including Rosalie's statement that she

“stayed with [the Baron] because he paid her well. Partly that, and partly because she said she couldn’t help doing what he told her. She said he really did mesmerize her” (59). Rosalie wrote once more to Julie and wrote a letter to Gertrude Anderton as well, but these letters were intercepted and destroyed. On the only occasion when the Baron leaves Rosalie alone for any length of time, she takes the opportunity to try to reach out for help. The landlady lent her the writing materials, because “[t]here were none in the sitting-room. There usually were, but the gentleman had sent the inkstand downstairs. He said it was sure to be upset” (111). The Baron tries to prevent Rosalie from writing by making sure there is no ink with which to write. Rosalie gives the letters to the landlady to post, one to Notting Hill (to Gertrude) and one to a theater (to Julie). The landlady does not post them, but gives them to the Baron when he returns because she does not think it right that a lady should be writing to a theater. She assumes that Rosalie is writing to a lover under the cover of a woman at the theater. The Baron of course destroys the letters, silencing Rosalie once more.

Furthermore, the Baron prevents Rosalie from orally communicating with others. When Rosalie is first introduced to the Andertons, the Baron explains that she does not speak English and cannot engage in conversation with them. Gertrude feels sorry for Rosalie; their rapport with one another leaves Gertrude with the impression that something is bothering Rosalie. Gertrude records in her journal that she is “sure there is something wrong, and that she wants to speak to me about it, but is afraid of him. It certainly is strange that he should never leave us alone” (Adams 73). She asks her husband to distract the Baron so that she can try to speak with Rosalie for a few minutes.



Rosalie can speak enough English that she begins to confide in Gertrude, but all she gets out before the Baron returns is “[d]on’t seem to listen. I am...” (77). Henderson discovers that this conversation took place just a day before Rosalie’s marriage to the Baron, and it is implied that Rosalie is depressed and anxious about the upcoming nuptials. The Baron polices Rosalie’s communications so that she cannot speak for herself and cannot tell anyone the truth of what is happening or ask for help. Whereas Gilroy in *The Parasite* worried that no one would believe him and thus kept his own counsel for so long, Rosalie wants to reach out for help, but cannot. Either there is a language barrier or she is never left alone with anyone long enough to say anything. Since Rosalie has not been able to convey her side of the story by speaking to anyone, she attempts to write her story in the letters that were destroyed. Like the other victims I have discussed, she turns to written narrative efforts to try to stop the mesmerist from committing criminal acts. On a practical level, if she could have told someone about the Baron’s actions, such as the slow poisoning of Gertrude through her mesmerist connection to Rosalie, then she might have saved the life of both Mr. and Mrs. Anderton as well as her own life. On a symbolic level, Rosalie strove to tell her story in order to assert her own agency and her own interpretation of the narrative of crime being plotted and enacted by the Baron. Like Gilroy and Allan, Rosalie is trapped in a gap of knowledge surrounding mesmerism because she does not know how to resist the Baron’s influence.

Despite Rosalie’s enforced silence, Ralph Henderson pieces the narrative together. He carefully tracks down statements from every pertinent witness, checks their

stories when he can, and carefully reconstructs what happened by bringing the fragments of information and knowledge together to tell one unified story. This almost succeeds in counteracting the Baron's influence by bringing in multiple perspectives like mirrors set up around an object that is partially obscured so that he can see more of the object despite the obstacles. However, even the unified narrative is not enough to convince Henderson to abandon his strong skepticism about mesmerism as a real power. He tells his reader at the insurance company that he has attempted not to favor one interpretation of events over another in his presentation of the evidence because he does not wish to sway the reader's judgment. In his opening remarks of his report, he says that he has found only "two alternatives" for interpreting the information:

In the first we must altogether ignore a chain of circumstantial evidence so complete and close-fitting in every respect, as it seems almost impossible to disregard; in the second, we are inevitably led to a conclusion so at variance with all the most firmly established laws of nature as it seems almost equally impossible to accept...Between these alternatives I am constrained to confess my inability, after long and careful study, to decide. I have determined, therefore, simply to submit for your consideration the facts of the case as they appear in the depositions of the several parties from whom my information has been obtained. These I have arranged, as far as possible, in the form in which they would be laid before counsel, should it ultimately be deemed advisable to bring the affair into Court. (Adams 6-7)

Henderson places his trust in the “facts” he has gathered, but does not trust his interpretation because he cannot bring himself to believe in mesmerism. Throughout his report he repeatedly asserts his belief that mesmerism is not true and suggests that the Baron has on occasion produced results through the power of suggestion and nothing more. Henderson also thinks ahead to a possible court case, and tries to arrange his facts and information accordingly. He admits that the evidence he has gathered only makes sense under the assumption that mesmerism is true, but that version of the story is, as he says, “at variance with all the most firmly established laws of nature” (6).

Henderson concludes his report with the following message to his reader, the Secretary of the \_\_\_\_ Life Assurance Association:

My task is done. In possession of the evidence thus placed before you, your judgment of its result will be as good as mine. Link by link you have now been put in possession of the entire chain. Is that chain one of purely accidental coincidences, or does it point with terrible certainty to a series of crimes, in their nature and execution almost too horrible to contemplate? That is the first question to be asked, and it is one to which I confess myself unable to reply. The second is more strange, and perhaps even more difficult still. Supposing the latter to be the case—are crimes thus committed susceptible of proof, or even if proved, are they of a kind for which the criminal can be brought to punishment? (Adams 283-284).

Henderson's final question is a profound one; one that also haunts the other detective stories with mesmeric criminals. Are these crimes "susceptible of proof," and if they can be proven, "are they of a kind for which the criminal can be brought to punishment?" (284). The legal system has no set way of handling a case of this nature, in large part because the evidence which can be produced is not definitive in a court of law. Circumstantial evidence is all that Henderson can produce, and it is not favored in the legal system. As Ronald R. Thomas says, "the detective fiction is fundamentally preoccupied with physical evidence," rather than circumstantial evidence or witness statements (9). There is, however, no way to prove in a tangible way that the twins had a psychic link, and that it would be at all possible for Gertrude to be poisoned by mesmeric proxy. The Baron appears to have won, for he has the advantage of using a skill that is not universally accepted as a real skill. Even with all the narrative pieces put into place, Henderson will not believe what the narrative says. Yet he also cannot believe that it is all coincidence. The narrative he has reconstructed is a paradox he cannot unravel. The readers take the place of the intended recipient of the report and are left to make their own decision between the two alternatives presented by Henderson in the quote above. The novel does not provide the same sense of an accomplished return to order as dictated by the detective, judge, narrator or author as do "The Ghost of Fountain Lane," *The Moonstone* and most of the detective fiction genre. Instead, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Parasite* and *The Mesmerist* all leave the conclusion of the cases more ambiguous than is usually expected in the genre.

The criminal mesmerist is in a uniquely privileged position because his or her crime is nearly impossible to prove. In *The Notting Hill Mystery*, “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” and *The Mesmerist* the truth about the crimes is, ostensibly, pieced together by the detective and presented to the reader. The narrative authority of the victims may not be strong enough to counteract hypnotic influence in the moment, but it can convince the implied readers, and it can tell the “truth,” no matter how implausible. The narratives may not provide enough empirical evidence to take to a court of law to prove the solution of the case, but in this way the mesmerist still loses and their victims succeed. In discussing narrative force in the Gothic tradition, Peter K. Garrett says that “[i]n the alarms and struggles of characters, their efforts to make sense of their disturbing experiences, to tell their stories or impose their versions, and in the reader’s corresponding agitation, sympathy, or resistance, we can find reflections of fundamental cultural concerns” (26). He goes on to say that “sheer power” is the only thing that “can decide between opposing narrative versions” (27). Though Garrett does not directly discuss mesmerism in detective stories, his statement applies to the force of the mesmerist’s will which may be strong enough to rewrite his or her life and the lives of the people around him or her. Yet the narratives produced by the narrators in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Mesmerist* and *The Parasite* in particular write their narratives with enough force to convince their readers that the crimes were committed through mesmeric influence. Garrett also says that “[t]his nightmare of a world where all transcendental support of guarantees of the intrinsic have disappeared may be the deepest terror of nineteenth-century Gothic” (27). This Gothic concern that the main

structures of order in the world, in particular a sense of divine structure and truth, are crumbling is the cause of much of the anxiety in these stories of mesmeric criminality. The rise of particular forms of science as the arbiters of truth in the world began to preclude the conception of a “transcendental support of guarantees of the intrinsic,” that is, the idea of a providential force in the world (27). The victims of mesmerism in the novels experience this fear of having no way of fighting the influences of the mesmerists who are masters of a pseudo-science not recognized by the courts or the accepted fields of science. Yet these stories also modify this Gothic anxiety of the loss of “transcendental support” by blending it with the detective genre in which order must be restored at the conclusion of the tale, and thereby provide reassurance to the readers (27). *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Mesmerist* and *The Parasite* rely on the supernatural to end the narrative struggle and defeat the revisionist mesmerists. The detective genre’s quest for order is still important and it is resolved in these mixed genre stories by retaining and invoking the disappearing supernatural (providence) in the service of fighting the criminal who makes use of the natural skill of mesmerism. The nightmare of the disappearance of transcendental support in the form of a divine or fateful power is allayed as providence works against the human criminals.

### ***Restoration of Order***

Providence, or what I term a *deus ex machina* as providence’s active form in these texts, thwarts the mesmerists and asserts its own narrative plan so forcefully that it overrides both the criminals’ and the victims’ narrative efforts. In Chapter II, I

examined examples of supernatural forces assisting the investigators in the form of clairvoyance, dreams, and the intervention of ghosts all working for justice and the restoration of order. In Chapter III, *The Dead Letter* provided an example of how a good detective who has similar gifts of clairvoyance and perception then becomes morally tainted by mesmerizing his daughter to make use of her less accessible clairvoyance. Burton takes too much power for himself in using mesmerism in a way that means he has control over another person. In *The Moonstone*, *The Parasite*, *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Mesmerist*, and “The Ghost of Fountain Lane,” Burton’s pattern is continued. The criminal mesmerists in these stories are not exercising supernaturally or divinely appointed gifts to help other people; they are controlling other people by asserting their wills over them. By transferring their souls into other peoples’ bodies, invading their minds, and robbing them of agency, the mesmerists act out of their own self-interest with no regard for the well-being of others. The law and the other characters seem impotent in the face of this criminality. Thwarted by flawed knowledge systems and an inability to fight on their own, they rely on providence to rewrite the stories in favor of the innocent and to restore order.

In *The Parasite*, the *deus ex machina* materializes, appropriately enough, in the form of a vicar. In the end, Gilroy does not have to kill Miss Penelosa or himself to sever the mesmeric link because Miss Penelosa dies as a result of what may be viewed as providential interference. Gilroy finds himself one day in his fiancée Agatha’s boudoir with no recollection of how he arrived. The clock is striking half-past three and he finds to his horror that he is holding a bottle of sulphuric acid, which he immediately

thinks of as the “thick reeking liquid with which jealous women had been known to mar the beauty of their rivals” (*Parasite* 78). The bottle is still full, though he is convinced that under Miss Penelosa’s influence he would have “dashed” it on Agatha as soon as she entered the room (78). Agatha joins him shortly, apologizing for having kept him waiting half an hour, but the vicar had come to call. She knows Gilroy does not care for the vicar’s company and thought it best not to ask him to join them in the drawing room (79). Gilroy then runs to Miss Penelosa’s where the maid informs him that “Miss Penelosa died this afternoon at half-past three” (80). This is, jarringly, the end of the story. If the vicar had not called on Agatha that afternoon, she would have joined Gilroy more promptly, and he, under Miss Penelosa’s influence, would have thrown acid into her face. Due to the delay, Agatha is safe, and Miss Penelosa fortuitously (providentially) dies, and Gilroy has control of himself once again.

The closing is curiously ambiguous. How did Miss Penelosa die? Did her nervous fever return? Was the nervous fever a result of her exercising her mesmeric powers too often? Did she kill herself? Did Gilroy somehow kill her in the trance under her own suicidal directions? Miss Penelosa had earlier made a statement about the toll on the mesmerist of controlling other people, which may explain her death. She says that the mesmerist has “to be careful never to let [her] own consciousness absolutely go, otherwise [she] might experience some difficulty in finding [her] way back again” (*Parasite* 52). Perhaps while Miss Penelosa was in control of Gilroy and he/they waited for Agatha to arrive, she lost her connection with her own body and died. Her revenge against Gilroy, attempting to ruin his life by denying him self-control, resulted in her



losing herself instead. If the readers assume that Gilroy did not kill her while in a trance (if he had, it seems likely that he would have continued writing to record the stresses of worrying about being arrested for the crime), then the readers are left to believe that she either took her own life, died of natural causes, or died as a result of some mesmeric repercussions. Whatever the cause of her death, the story ends at the moment when Gilroy realizes he will no longer be under her control. Her death is a fortuitous coincidence releasing the hero from the nightmare he has been living, but curiously it is not because he, in Gothic fashion, learned the hidden truth he had been searching for throughout the tale. Her death appears to be a *deus ex machina* instead.

In *The Mesmerist*, Allan is not named as the killer at the inquest for his brother's death, but his friends and family are divided in their opinions. Even those who at first believed in his innocence turn against him. The only ones who continue to believe in his innocence are his brother-in-law Wilson and his old friend Val Medway who is a clerk with the Metropolitan Police. Val takes it upon himself to investigate and prove Allan's innocence. However, no other suspect can be found. Just as Val exhausts all of his options and Allan is arrested, the mesmerist Blakenny returns claiming to know who the killer is. In a variation of the other stories in this chapter, the professional mesmerist is the one who solves the case because of his knowledge of mesmerism's power, realizing that even though he himself saw Allan in Hugh's room the night of the murder, Allan was not in control of his actions. Blakenny is also something of a *deus ex machina* in the plot. When Val fails to solve the case, Blakenny steps in with the answer, and meets with Val in an improbably fortuitous way. Val is on his way to London to follow a

possible (dead-end) lead, and his up-train stops at a station for a refreshment break. Ordinarily, the down-train passes through the station first, but “owing to some delay that the [down-train] had met with, [Val’s] train came in first” (Oliphant 232). Furthermore, Val chooses not to leave his compartment, but is looking out the window as the down-train comes to a stop next to it. In the opposite compartment he sees Mr. Blakenny, who also happens to spot him. Blakenny, it transpires, was on his way to see Val because he knows who the murderer is and needs help to catch him. The two men would have caught up with each other eventually, but there would have been a significant delay if they had not met in such a coincidental fashion. The meeting is providential, as is the fact that Blakenny and Val extract a confession from Cecil Wilson. Before meeting with Val, Blakenny realized that mesmerism was likely behind the murder and he discovered that Wilson has a history of defrauding people through mesmerism. Allan had been in the habit of using a mesmeric trick to lull himself to sleep on nights when he could not rest, and Wilson, knowing this, approached Allan while he was in the trance sleep state and told him to poison his brother. Allan obeys but has no memory of his movements that night. Wilson, who has nearly run through his own inheritance, marries Annie Campbell for her money but feels that her dowry is not enough and thus attempts to take out both of her brothers at once (with the expectation that Allan would be hanged for murdering his brother) so that the entire family estate would pass to Annie. The final legal proceedings of the case are not discussed in the book beyond the fact that Allan was cleared of suspicion because Blakenny and Val’s witness statements about Wilson’s confession is accepted (rather surprising considering Wilson killed himself and could not

give the confession in person). *The Mesmerist* is the only one of the stories discussed here that ends after the legal system has become involved, let alone has believed that mesmerism was responsible for the crimes.

As with *The Mesmerist*, which is addressed to the readers, and *The Parasite* in which Gilroy acknowledges that his journal may need to be read by someone else if the situation with Miss Penelosa continues to escalate, the readers of *The Notting Hill Mystery* take the place of a judge assigning guilt to the appropriate characters. At the end of *The Notting Hill Mystery* it is not known if the Baron is ever brought to trial or convicted. The readers of *The Parasite* know nothing about the circumstances of Miss Penelosa's death or if Gilroy falls under suspicion. If readers of *The Mesmerist* agree with Allan Campbell's belief that he is guilty of his brother's death because he once hoped his brother would die so that he could marry his fiancée, then the readers should surely carry the same logic to Gilroy who declares he will kill Miss Penelosa if she interferes with him again. He may even intend to kill her when he travels to her house only to discover she is already dead. His intention to kill her should render him as guilty as Allan. Instead, the sensations the readers feel at the end of *The Parasite* are shock that she died so inexplicably and relief that the ordeal is over. Similarly, in *The Mesmerist*, the readers probably do not believe that Allan is guilty of his brother's murder since he found the idea of killing his brother abhorrent and he did not choose to act on the thought. The lack of legal proceedings in the stories indicates that the decisions of the courts are not what these stories are concerned with portraying. They are instead concerned with the readers and how they understand the story. Do the

readers believe the chain of circumstantial evidence that binds the Baron to the deaths of three people? Do they believe in the dangers of mesmerism experienced by Austin Gilroy? The readers share the position of a judge with the providential force that restores order at the end of the stories. The appeal to the readers to act as judges also points the readers toward the necessity of believing that mesmerism is real, at least within the stories.

“The Ghost of Fountain Lane” is the only story discussed in this chapter that does not rely on any form of the supernatural to reach its conclusion; not even providence plays a part. Instead, Loveday reaches her conclusion by carefully observing connections between her original case of the ghost sightings in Fountain Lane and the case of the check stolen by Maria Lisle. Of all the detectives discussed in this chapter, Loveday is the closest to the ratiocinative Sherlock Holmes type of detective. Loveday believes that the preacher, perhaps unconsciously, exerted hypnotic influence over his congregation to get more money. When Loveday and Inspector Clampe, who invites her to work on the case, first experience the mesmeric power of the Reverend Steele’s oratory, Loveday says, ““That audience is as completely hypnotized by him as if they had surrendered themselves to a professional mesmerist”” (Pirkis 264). The Reverend is preaching on the battle of Armageddon, and “described [the battle] as vividly as if it were being fought out under his very eye, and it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that he made the cannon roar in the ears of his listeners and the tortured cries of the wounded wail in them. He drew an appalling picture of the carnage of that battle-field” (264). He then likens the anti-Christ to Napoleon, thus explaining why people in his

congregation, including those who live in Fountain Lane, saw the ghost of Napoleon and caused a sensation. The power of suggestion and ghost sightings are likened to the power of religious belief as well, because the truth of religion cannot be proven with empirical evidence, either. Religion does not come off very well in the story, however, as many characters of different denominations are in conflict with each other and the preacher is a con artist. Loveday's rational solution to the case is what the readers are challenged to believe because it is the only interpretation of events presented to them. The restoration of order in the story is the result of Loveday's investigation and her acceptance of mesmerism as a real skill. Pirkis draws a greater distinction between supernaturalism as false on the one hand, while on the other hand mesmerism and science are true.

In "The Ghost of Fountain Lane," Loveday Brooke solves a haunting by proving that the ghost was the result of mesmeric suggestion planted by a fraudulent preacher who puts his congregation in a hysterical state with his moving speeches about the coming of the anti-Christ. Loveday is not concerned with her ability to prove in court that the Reverend Steele was mesmerically swaying his congregation into seeing ghosts and stealing money. The solution of the case is authoritatively settled once Loveday explains it to Inspector Clampe. Loveday asserts her belief that Maria Lisle, who stole money to donate to the cause, will only be viewed as "a religious enthusiast" who can "plead religious conviction as an extenuating circumstance," and so Loveday does not have to prove mesmerism is responsible for Maria's behavior because there is a readily acceptable solution at hand that is very nearly the whole truth (Pirkis 267). Inspector

Clampe, though, expresses some lingering trouble crediting the narrative Loveday has laid out as the explanation for the strange events, saying: “I have no doubt there’s something in your theory of the hypnotic power...of such men as Richard Steele, although, at the same time, it seems to me a trifle far-fetched and fanciful” (273).

Loveday explains that people saw the ghost in Fountain Lane, even though they had not heard one of the Reverend’s sermons, through a case of catching hysterics: “Don’t you think that ghost-seeing is quite as catching as scarlet fever or measles?...Let one member of a family see such a much-individualized and easily described ghost, such as the one these good people saw, and ten to one others in the same house will see it before the week is over” (274). Her closing line of the story is a thought-provoking one: “We are all in the habit of asserting that ‘seeing is believing.’ Don’t you think the converse of the saying is true also, and that ‘believing is seeing?’” (274). This statement casts belief and facts in a dubious light. What does such a statement suggest for detectives who believe evidence can tell them more than they reveal on the surface, and then find what they expected to find? Does believing that the detective’s narrative of a case is true make it so?<sup>100</sup> Does it alter the readers’ and the detectives’ ability to exegetically see evidence and then make a decision? Loveday’s query about believing and seeing is the last line of the story, ending the case on a question. It may be posed to Clampe, but the readers are invited to ponder it as well. Does the reader believe it is true? Does the reader believe Loveday’s assertions that the preacher is a hypnotist or do they doubt her version of the narrative?

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<sup>100</sup> See Smajić’s book and Miller’s “Language of Detective Fiction: Fiction of Detective Language” for further discussions of this aspect of detective fiction.

Stepping back to look at the Victorian tension between science and the supernatural, Ronald R. Thomas addresses the division between the two in his book *Victorian Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*. The book explores the development of detective fiction alongside the development of forensics and technology in relation to narrative construction, identity, and the reading of bodies to find evidence. He is most concerned with Holmesian detectives who rely on their forensic technology, their specialized knowledge and trained gaze to read the bodies of victims and suspects as well as other evidence. Through their specialized reading ability, they glean information that others around them miss, and the detectives are therefore obliged to explain their reasoning which, to the other characters, seem to be “uncanny act[s] of second sight” (Thomas 3). Though Thomas does not directly address literary detectives who are actually able to use “second sight,” his statement implies that the rise of forensic science replaced the detective’s supernatural modes of investigating with scientific and medical ways of reading and understanding (3). By extension, all supernatural influence is presumed to be removed from the scientific and ratiocinative fiction Thomas is discussing, including providence. While his statement implies that the mesmeric crime stories are outmoded members of a less important subgenre, I see these stories as part of the move toward a greater understanding of the pseudo-science that is mesmerism (even if only to prove it is fake) because they present an argument for the need of deeper knowledge of a science that has not yet been fully recognized, to the detriment of the public’s safety. “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” and *The Notting Hill Mystery* move toward recommending that people keep an open mind because accepting the possibility

of mesmerism can make sense of the crimes and restore order to the narrative. On the other hand, *The Parasite* takes a more cautionary stance in demonstrating the dangers of experimenting with the unknown. In this way *The Parasite* strongly demonstrates the anxiety the Victorians felt about the disparity between old and new knowledge in England. Thomas says that the “developments in [the] literary history [of detective fiction]...coincide with periods of unprecedented inventiveness in developing practical forensic devices that extended the power of the human senses to render visible and measurable what had previously been undetectable” (6). He is referencing advancements in science and technology in a broad sense as well as the narrower sense of forensic science. However, the same is true of the development of detective fiction that involves the supernatural and pseudo-sciences in addition to the rational, positivist stories of Holmes and similar detectives. Detective stories involving the supernatural (like providence) and pseudo-scientific (like mesmerism) were written in what Thomas calls a time of “unprecedented inventiveness” in which scientific fields were being defined and new discoveries called into question long-held beliefs and laws (6). The stories suggest that such inventiveness includes modes of knowledge outside the established ones of both providence and science.

Although Thomas’s observation that the increasing reliance on technology to read the truth on the bodies of criminals and victims is accurate, the stories I have examined here caution against a reliance on purely technological and scientific evidence because it cannot always find the truth. Instead, the stories invite the readers to determine whether or not they believe the truth of mesmerism, of providence, and the



solution of the mysteries presented by the narratives. This move reflects the general uncertainty about mesmerism and providence, especially toward the end of the century. Gilroy's desire to learn more about mesmerism for scientific advancement places him in the power of a jealous, devious mesmerist, and his scientific mind cannot help him. The only solution he can see for himself is to resort to violence rather than to outsmart his persecutor. In *The Mesmerist* the court accepts the mesmeric solution with little more than a statement delivered at second-hand, yet the court's decision does not absolve Allan of the guilt he feels. In this instance, the anxiety of proving mesmerism is less the focus than the irrevocable action he was induced to perform. The legal court's judgment is less important to Allan than God's judgment and punishment. Whether there were real mesmeric crimes being committed or not is less important than the way that these stories highlight a concern about a shift in accepted modes of knowledge in England.

The presence of providence in several of the mesmeric mystery stories lends some reassurance or at least allows for the compilation of a complete narrative of the crimes. Providence does not always completely solve the problems, however. In *The Notting Hill Mystery*, for instance, the Baron is unaware that his last murder was witnessed by the maid and her gentleman caller who give statements to Henderson that contradict the Baron's own official statement about that night. The contradiction brings all of the Baron's statements into question. This fortuitous, or providential, event provides the strongest evidence of the Baron's guilt that Henderson has found. The case is solved, but providence acts too late to save Rosalie, Gertrude, and Mr. Anderton from the Baron's plan. Despite the anxiety felt by the characters about how they can prove

their case in court, the emphasis in the stories is more on convincing one's self and convincing the reader that the crime was effected through mesmerism. The narrators of these stories appeal to the readers to decide if their narrative is believable or not rather than asserting that it is true and forcing the reader to believe it. In the face of such upheaval in understandings of knowledge, truth, order, and control, these narrators, several of whom are also detectives, are denied a sense of authorial control over the events they record. Mesmerism has undermined them. Traditionally, in detective fiction, the detective figure is granted a privileged authority over narrative interpretation. Thomas says "the detective hero's function is to identify that contested narrative space [where heroism ends and criminality begins] and to occupy it with his truth-telling voice, with his 'solution' to the case" (9). In the mesmeric detective tales, however, the detective's voice is not always the authoritative "truth-telling voice" that determines the final narrative of the solution to a crime (9).

The mesmeric crime novels suggest that proving the truth of their cases would require something between empirical evidence and the ineffable. The stories suggest that the detectives/victims in the stories and the readers, invited to act as a judge, need a type of knowledge that allows for authoritative communication on the subject of mesmerism. Such knowledge would accommodate the nature of human understanding and our desire for facts as well as the nature of the invisible forces of the supernatural and hypnotism. The novels do not, however, provide a guide for what it is that exists between one pole and the other and that would allow humanity to handle these cases more successfully on our own without the aid of the supernatural. As Reverend Lee

wrote in 1875, “the Materialism of these latter days is blinding men’s eyes, that they cannot see, and successfully destroying their faith in all that is beyond their cramped and narrow temporal range” (193). The criminal mesmerist stories do not make a concerted statement about a particular religious system, but instead caution against being too blinded by a narrow kind of materialism that does not accept that people can commit crimes through or by mesmerism. In the meantime, it is enough that the reader may be convinced by the narrative, which permits the victims to triumph over the mesmerists. Although much of the detective genre moved away from the supernatural and toward rational scientific inquiries and empirical data, there are still works in the genre that explore the dangers of ignoring what cannot be proven with science. In the stories, this mesmeric influence still requires a reliance on a supernatural or divine influence away from which the culture was moving. The stories are concerned with the increasing uncertainty of knowledge and conceptions of how the world works. This is presented through the struggle between mesmerism, providence, and science. In the end, there is no definite pattern to the solutions proposed by the stories except to appeal to the readers, having presented as much narrative evidence as possible. The detectives and heroes of the stories do not always come out on top in these stories, indicating just how complicated the idea of the “order” they are meant to restore really is.

Rather than ending with a definitive statement of closure, all five of the stories end by posing a question to or prompting a question from the readers. Thus the readers are invited to respond to or continue questioning what they have read. “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” closes with Loveday’s question: “We are all in the habit of asserting that

‘seeing is believing.’ Don’t you think the converse of the saying is true also, and that ‘believing is seeing?’” (Pirkis 274). *The Mesmerist* ends with Allan’s question to the reader, “You will pity me, will you not?” (Oliphant 258). Henderson concludes his report by asking: “are crimes thus committed [by mesmerism] susceptible of proof, or even if proved, are they of a kind for which the criminal can be brought to punishment?” (Adams 284). Murthwaite poses a rhetorical question at the end of *The Moonstone*: “What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?” (482). Conan Doyle’s *The Parasite* comes to a shocking end as the maid says, “Miss Penelosa died this afternoon at half-past three” (80). Surely this unresolved ending prompts every reader to ask the same question: How did she die? These questions leave the narratives open-ended. What if readers disagree with Loveday’s assertions about believing and seeing? Do readers pity Allan Campbell? What happened to Gilroy after Miss Penelosa’s death? The readers’ minds are kept engaged with these endings and they are invited to challenge the authority of the narratives. After all, the mesmerist maintained control of much of the narratives in several of these stories, and in the case of *The Moonstone*, the detectives do not solve the mystery of whether or not clairvoyance and mesmerism are true. “[W]e have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism,” Murthwaite declares, “or with anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry that we are now pursuing. My object in following the Indian plot, step by step, is to trace results back, by rational means, to natural causes” (*Moonstone* 299). Murthwaite is correct that they do not need to explain the instances of clairvoyance and mesmerism used by the Indians to find the missing diamond, so the men leave it be—a

mystery that endures beyond the resolution of the crime and the narrative. In each of these stories, the verdicts on mesmerism and providence are mysteries left to the readers to solve. The readers leave the fictional world behind as they turn the last page, and reenter a world that, in much the same way, challenges them to reach their own conclusions about the mysteries therein.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The Victorian era saw the rise of the detective genre in literature, and although many scholars look to the ratiocinative detective armed with superior logic and science as the pinnacle of the form, this concentration neglects the preponderance of stories that rely on the supernatural instead. From early efforts in the genre, such as Catherine Crowe's 1841 *Adventures of Susan Hopley; or, Circumstantial Evidence*, through the end of the century when the eponymous heroine of Catherine Louisa Pirkis's *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* debunks a ghost by proving that mesmeric influence was responsible for the mysterious hauntings experienced in the 1894 story, Victorian detective fiction includes, and occasionally relies on, elements of life that defy scientific explanation. The early connection between the supernatural and detective fiction grew naturally from a worldview in which the supernatural and/or divine was often involved in righting human wrongs and ensuring justice. In this study I have investigated the tension between the supernatural and the scientific modes of knowledge, the repercussions of the tension in the stories on accepted knowledge and morality, the stories' refusal to resolve doubts and questions about the supernatural by converting it to rationality, and the genre's concern with providing readers with the reassuring sense that the world still had order and morality.

A study following on this one would include stories from what is called the occult detective fiction genre, including those in the early twentieth century. Occult detective stories are those in which detectives are solving supernatural events such as

hauntings, curses, and similar phenomena; these events do not (usually) involve criminal activity that can be brought before a court of law. The detectives may use supernatural abilities to solve the crimes, but most often they use scientific and occult knowledge to solve or resolve the supernatural phenomena. Occult detective fiction was not included here because this study focused on nineteenth century examples of stories that focus on a crime committed by a human which is either (re)solved with the assistance of supernatural or pseudo-scientific influences or is committed with the assistance of the pseudo-scientific, rather than putting a spirit to rest by following its clues to find the wealth that needs to be restored to its family, as in occult detective fiction (O'Brien). Peter Orford and Marilena Parlati have written articles on the occult detective genre that address how the occult detectives' methods overlap with those of the traditional detective solving murders (Orford) and the way the genre deals with different types of knowledge and technology (Parlati). Their works provide a foundation based on investigative methodology on which to further investigate occult detective fiction in connection with the supernatural detective stories examined here. One marked difference between the stories I have examined and occult detective stories is that the stories examined in this dissertation present a skeptical approach to the supernatural and the pseudo-scientific in tension with the acceptance of them (no matter how hesitant or reluctant), while occult detective fiction does not generally allow room for skepticism. In occult detective fiction the supernatural is generally accepted very readily, but as I have demonstrated, the stories I examined do not always work to prove definitively that the supernatural is true (in fact, very few of the stories attempt this). The stories I

examined end with the possibility that the supernatural is real, while occult detective fiction works on the assumption that the supernatural must be real and there is no other interpretation. Thus, occult detective fiction does not challenge readers in the same way as detective stories such as *The Notting Hill Mystery*.

Occult detective fiction is thought to have begun in 1855 when Fitz-James O'Brien published his short story "Pot of Tulips" in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Sheridan Le Fanu is perhaps the first to include the scientist/medical man, Martin Hesselius, who investigates the occult in the book *In a Glass Darkly* (1869). The scientist/medical man occult detective became a trope of the genre, pitting an educated man against occult mysteries. After Le Fanu, most works in the genre's canon were written between the 1890s and the 1920s. These include Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) featuring Abraham Van Helsing; E. and H. Heron's detective Flaxman Low stories about a psychic detective, first appearing in *Pearson's Magazine* (1898-1899); Algernon Blackwood's detective John Silence who appeared in *John Silence, Physician Extraordinary* (1908); William Hope Hodgson's detective Mr. Carnacki who featured in several stories in *The Idler* (1910-1912); and Arthur Henry Ward's detective Moris Klaw who appeared first in *The New Magazine* (1913-1914), published under the pseudonym Sax Rohmer. John Silence is a physician as well as a detective who combines occult knowledge with scientific and natural knowledge. He is one of the few occult detectives who solves natural crimes (such as murder) as well as supernatural crimes, and a comparison between him, his methods, and the way he is treated in his stories and Mr. Burton's methods and treatment in *The Dead Letter* could be enlightening. Would the



narrative still have punished Burton for his behavior if the story had been written in 1908 along with the John Silence stories? Another interesting comparison to make would be between the stories I have discussed and the Moris Klaw stories. Klaw solves crimes that are committed by humans just as all of the detectives discussed in this study do, and yet Klaw uses “odic force” to solve the mysteries (Parlati, 217).<sup>101</sup> The occult detective story tradition has some overlap with the stories examined in the preceding chapters, but takes a different approach to the subject of the supernatural. In a way, occult detective stories take a more direct approach to solving the mysteries of the supernatural than *The Notting Hill Mystery*, *The Dead Letter*, and “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” yet they do not place as much emphasis on the connection between human crimes, the concept of providence, and a debate between science and the supernatural. Stories like “The Pot of Tulips” are very open-minded about the supernatural and there is little skepticism or discussion about whether or not the ghost is real or a figment of imagination.

The interplay between detective fiction and the supernatural is not limited to the nineteenth century, but persists even to the present. In the early twentieth century, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, Spiritualism was a popular field of study and practice because, in the wake of the First World War, the bereaved sometimes tried to communicate with their lost loved ones. Some of the detective stories still took a skeptical stance in relation to the supernatural, such as Dorothy L. Sayer’s novel *Strong Poison* (1930), which features a faked séance designed to locate a last will and testament

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<sup>101</sup> Baron Karl von Reichenbach proposed his theory of what he called the Odic force in 1845. He believed there was a life force common to all living things. His theories seem very similar to Mesmer’s animal magnetism and to Braid’s hypnotism. See *The Odic Force* for more information.

that will prove the motive of the murderer. Since that time, ghosts, clairvoyance, Spiritualism and hypnotism have continued to appear in detective fiction and, more recently, in film and television programs. In recent years, there have been multiple detective fiction series featuring clairvoyant/psychic investigators, sleuths assisted by detective ghosts, and mysteries involving séances, hypnotism, etc. For example, there are several series featuring ghosts who help to solve mysteries such as Alice Kimberly's Haunted Bookshop Mystery series, which began with *The Ghost and Mrs. McClure* (2004), and E. J. Copperman's Haunted Guesthouse Mystery series, which began with *Night of the Living Deed* (2010). Kay Hooper's *Stealing Shadows* is the first in the Bishop/Special Crimes Unit series about a psychic detective (2000). Several mystery novels of the last few decades take a nostalgic look back at Victorian interests in Spiritualism such as Emily Brightwell's *The Ghost and Mrs. Jeffries* (1993) which involves a Spiritualist who predicts the victim's death, and Barbara Michaels's *The Wizard's Daughter* (1980) which revolves around the Spiritualist culture in Victorian England and a character loosely based on Daniel Dunglas Home, one of the most famous mediums of the era.<sup>102</sup>

Even television detective series that usually take very rational approaches to their investigative methods occasionally have cases in which clairvoyance or ghosts play a part. The Australian TV series *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, for example, includes a Spiritualist episode, "Death Comes Knocking," set in the 1920s. The Phryne Fisher stories are set in the time when S. S. Van Dine published his detective fiction rules, and

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<sup>102</sup> For more information about Home, see Peter Lamont's works such as his article "Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence."

yet the story follows the pattern of the nineteenth-century mysteries described in Chapter II. The characters consult a clairvoyant and hold a séance to try to contact the spirit of a family member who died during the First World War, only to discover that the deceased was murdered rather than killed in action. Set in modern times, the British TV show *Midsomer Murders* has several ghost and clairvoyant episodes such as “The Silent Land” and “Second Sight.” Despite the inspector’s healthy skepticism about ghosts and clairvoyance, the episodes all end with lingering suggestion that the supernatural might be real. None of these are gritty realist stories detective stories and are not viewed by critics as serious expositions of the modern human condition, which may be why the writers and creators feel they can use the supernatural, something that may be viewed as outlandish. Although the division between the realistic detective stories that reflect the darker side of humanity (which are taken more seriously by critics) and the stories that use the supernatural in their mysteries appears starkly delineated, within the context of the individual shows and series, the supernatural is still used in the fiction to explore the differences between supernatural and ratiocinative investigations. In the case of *Miss Fisher’s Murder Mysteries*, the fact that the stories are set in the past allows them to critique modern culture from a safe distance. Viewed through the eyes of characters in the 1920s, viewers are given a new perspective on their assumptions about science and the supernatural. Other nostalgic mysteries such as the Guy Richie *Sherlock Holmes* movie and the BBC’s modern *Sherlock* set the titular detective against what appear to be supernatural powers, and, following Conan Doyle’s formula for Sherlock Holmes, the phenomena are given rational explanations. In the film, Lord Blackwood asserts that he

has occult abilities, but Holmes explains all of the occult incidents away with science (*Sherlock Holmes*). In “The Hounds of Baskerville,” the characters only see the gigantic hound because they have been exposed to a hallucinogenic gas, and in “The Abominable Bride,” the ghost of the bride is created through optical illusion and the coordinated effort of many women all dressed as the ghost (*Sherlock*). Although the modern world is viewed as increasingly secular, the belief in and questioning of the supernatural has not been exorcised completely.

The interest in blurring the distinction between science and the supernatural has not waned since the nineteenth century. The approaches to the subjects have undoubtedly changed over the years, but the detective genre has never cut off its association with what is generally defined as the supernatural. While some of the stories use the supernatural for its sensation factor, many of the stories treat the subject more seriously. Detective fiction featuring supernatural and pseudo-scientific evidence, investigative methods and modes of committing crime were not external to the archetypal form of the genre, neither was the supernatural only used as a source of sensational thrills in the stories. From the beginning of the genre, the stories have thrived on the struggle between “rationalism” and the “otherworldly” and sought to solve mysteries beyond the murders and thefts committed within their pages. The detective genre has historically been a fictional space in which the chaos and dangers of the world are resolved into comforting order and justice. As conceptions of justice, order, and truth came into question due to scientific discoveries and a shift toward secularization, the supernatural phenomena in the genre became vehicles for reassessing

how one knows what one knows about the order of the world. We still debate about science, the supernatural, clairvoyance/psychic abilities, and hypnosis today. Detective fiction will continue to encourage readers to critically engage with questions of knowledge types well into the future.

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**APPENDIX A**

**TAGGING THE SUPERNATURAL:**

**A DIGITAL EXPERIMENT**

There has been an increase in scholarship on the supernatural in Victorian literature and on Victorian detective fiction. Very little has been done on the intersection of the two interests, however. As I discussed in the Introduction, a flaw in the existing scholarship has arisen from a misunderstanding of what the Victorians meant by the terms “science,” “supernatural,” and all the related phenomena. My research into the historical understandings revealed a number of conflicting theories and definitions throughout the nineteenth-century in England and the United States. This tension between the definitions of Spiritualism, mesmerism, clairvoyance and the other phenomena discussed in this dissertation inspired a digital approach to tracking the definitions and the use of these elements in Victorian detective fiction. It is my intention that this digital project will facilitate future research on science, the supernatural and the pseudo-scientific in Victorian detective fiction. Modern scholars are just as interested in categorizing and understanding the Victorian era as the Victorians themselves were. When I began the preparations for this project of analyzing the use of supernatural and/or scientific phenomena in detective stories, I decided to develop a custom set of TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) tags to describe the phenomena as they occurred in the texts to facilitate finding patterns and to help define the phenomena in the stories as I developed my analyses presented in the preceding chapters. Employing these tags further enlightens one on the Victorians’ debates about differing types of knowledge.

I had two main goals at the outset of this project. First, I hoped that the process of this project would help me to understand the research I was conducting on the supernatural in Victorian detective fiction, and that this act of creation would help me to think through the topics. Secondly, I wanted to create a means for scholars to come together to work on understanding the supernatural in detective fiction. As Ramsay and Rockwell observe, if building a project results in textual “interventions...as a result of building” that are of the same quality “as those that are typically established through writing, then that activity is...scholarship” (83). I sought to set up a system on which other scholars could build, using my work and adapting it to fit their own research interests—a system that would generally encourage more research on the topic. Eventually, as more texts are marked up with these supernatural-specific TEI tags, they can be used with visualization software to trace the links, patterns, anomalies, and definitions of the supernatural and scientific in Victorian detective fiction to facilitate and inspire analysis of the genre. This appendix reflects on why I chose TEI as the format for this endeavor, how the customized schema is used, and what I hope will come of this project in the future. Appendix B contains the complete data dictionary for the customized schema including examples for each element and attribute. Full examples of detective story transcriptions marked up with these tags can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D.

### *Choosing a Method*

The first step was to decide what digital tool set or methodology would be best suited to my goals. I considered multiple options, including qualitative analysis software, topic modeling, and TEI tags. Qualitative analysis software like ATLAS.ti allows users to upload documents into a “project,” and then assign “codes” to passages in the documents. These codes are terms created by the user and there can be many different codes within a project. For instance, I could have created codes for “supernatural,” “scientific,” “clairvoyance,” “mesmerism,” “ghost,” “detective,” “criminal,” etc. In short, I could have used the same labels I chose for my TEI tags in the ATLAS.ti system. I could code the same passage of text with multiple codes (much as I use multiple TEI tags on the same passage, as I will discuss shortly). Once the codes are in place, the software allows one to look at the list of coded quotes or the quotes with all their codes, and there are multiple methods for the software to parse information in the quotes and codes to facilitate a qualitative analysis of the texts in the project. If I had been interested in only analyzing the texts for my own research, this would have been a viable option. However, because I wanted to create a method that might encourage other scholars to conduct similar research or even to use my own coded texts, qualitative analysis software was not the best choice. ATLAS.ti information can be exported in what are called “copy bundles” and shared, but they are removed from the context of the documents. There are other ways to share, but they are complicated, require sharing files and/or cloud-based save space, which is not practical for all types of digital humanities research. While qualitative analysis software like ATLAS.ti would

encourage knowledgeable researchers to hand-code the texts in which they are interested, the codes and quotes are too easy to completely remove from their larger context and the software does not allow for easy sharing. Thus, my second goal would not be met.

Another alternative is a method that is growing in popularity in digital humanities circles: topic modeling. Topic modeling is a text mining method used in Big Data research performing what is called distant reading on larger corpora of texts to look for patterns.<sup>103</sup> Topic modeling is defined as the process of taking “your corpus and run[ning] it through a tool which groups words across the corpus into ‘topics’” (Brett). Furthermore, topic modeling “provides a suite of algorithms to discover hidden thematic structure in large collections of texts. The results of topic modeling algorithms can be used to summarize, visualize, explore, and theorize about a corpus” (Blei). Topic modeling, then, uses algorithms to try to find patterns by finding clusters of words that appear together frequently. A topic in this context is “a probability distribution over terms,” or, more simply, the clusters of words that frequently relate to each other (Blei). For instance, a corpus made up of texts about British naval history during the eighteenth-century would produce a topic such as: “navy, ship, Britain.” Presumably, then, the algorithms would find topics related to acts of detection, crime, and perhaps would even detect clusters of terms about the supernatural and scientific phenomena I am researching. This approach could be a method for discovering new nuances to the patterns of the supernatural in detective stories, and lends itself to use with visualization

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<sup>103</sup> See Moretti’s *Graphs, Maps, Trees* for further discussion of distant reading, its techniques, and usefulness.



software. Indeed, visualizations may be necessary to make sense of the results which are not “entirely human readable” (Brett). As with TEI and ATLAS.ti, the scholar still plays an important role in this methodology, and it is important that he or she understands the content and context of the corpus, and has a theory of what the topic modeling output should look like so as to recognize any errors arising from a flaw in the settings. Topic modeling tools can help scholars to understand the texts, but the interpretation and analysis of the results are the responsibility of the scholar, not the program (Blei).

There are, however, several reasons why topic modeling was not an ideal first choice for my project. First, it is too Big Data for the small corpus with which I am currently working. It is recommended that the corpus being modeled “have at least 1,000 items,” and I have not identified one thousand Victorian detective stories involving the supernatural (Blei). This could be worked around by dividing each book or story into smaller sections such as by chapter or individual page, but it might make it difficult to visualize the results by story. Secondly, topic modeling requires the use of special software (MALLET is the most popular among humanities scholars—MAchine Learning for Language Toolkit), and these mostly require that the user be familiar with using the command line and Python, the programming language.<sup>104</sup> There are walkthrough guides and instructions available online, produced by humanities scholars and computer scientists, but topic modeling is not as user-friendly and accessible to scholars who are not heavily involved in digital humanities or programming. In addition to the topic modeling tool, the researcher must use a different tool to produce a

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<sup>104</sup> See the MALLET website by McCallum (2016) for further information on the software: <http://mallet.cs.umass.edu/topics.php>.

visualization of the results. The topic modeling tool must be “trained,” meaning the scholar must go through a process of trial and error with the parameters of the algorithms, such as defining a limit to the number of topics to be found (Brett). Thirdly, the results of topic modeling are not always accurate, sometimes “return[ing] some bizarre results,” and interpreting the output can introduce errors as well (Brett). Due to the possibility of nonsensical results, “[t]opic modeling is not necessarily useful as evidence,” and while “it makes an excellent tool for discovery,” I want the results of this project to serve as evidence that can more reliably support literary and cultural analysis (Brett). Meanwhile, the TEI option opens the project and research up to a larger group of scholars who might be interested in working on a similar project by facilitating the sharing of information without requiring specialized software (though specialized software designed to facilitate the creation and editing of TEI documents is available). Choosing to use TEI tags to describe the supernatural and scientific phenomena does not preclude the possibility of using topic modeling as a supplementary method for discovering patterns by using the transcripts of the texts.

I decided that the best approach would be to define a set of XML (extensible markup language) tags to work with the TEI standards used to describe the structure and contextual aspects of the documents. TEI is a standardized set of XML tags designed for use in the humanities, so digital transcripts of the texts should be marked with TEI regardless of whether they were initially created for use with this supernatural phenomena project or not. The transcripts created for this project can easily be stripped of the customized tag set and be used by scholars interested in using standard TEI-

marked transcriptions, making the TEI encoded documents a useful and flexible choice for this project that will work with other digital humanities projects.<sup>105</sup>

Thinking through what aspects of the supernatural and scientific debate would be most useful to track and what contextual aspects I wanted to describe, I developed the new set of elements and attributes found at the end of this chapter. While TEI has become increasingly useful for textual studies, the existing tags do not cover all possible editorial interests, such as describing the supernatural and scientific phenomena in a text. As Barney argues, there are “textual phenomena that are not easily handled by the current recommendations” of the TEI guidelines even though it has been in development since 1988 (39). It is possible to create new tags (hence *extensible* markup language) that will still work with the TEI standards which are particularly important when sharing information and building tools to interact with the files, and so I developed a specific set of elements and attributes to describe the phenomena I analyze throughout this project. The new tags include a parent, or root element for supernatural phenomena, <phenom> for the sake of brevity, and within that element I designed a set of child elements and attributes to specify what kind of supernatural or scientific event is occurring, to whom it happens or who causes it to happen, what gender that person is, whether the event assists the detective or assists in the committing of a crime, and the attributes can also break down larger concepts such as clairvoyance to clarify if it is a natural trance or a mesmerically induced trance.

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<sup>105</sup> See Amy Earhart’s (2015) and Barney’s (2012) work for more details about the history of TEI, its goals, and its inadequacy for textual scholarship. See also McGann (2001) for a brief history of digital humanities and textual scholarship.

In XML, text is tagged using elements and their attributes, which are enclosed within opening and closing angle brackets: < >. An element is the base of a descriptive tag and can either contain a string of text or can be empty (in some rare cases) (TEI xxvii). In my customized set of tags, all of the elements must contain text. Elements can contain other elements, and certain elements must appear within another element—the child elements of the parent elements. The child elements are nested within the parent element tag, marking additional information about the same portion of text being described by the parent element. Elements existing at the same level of the hierarchy are referred to as siblings of each other. In my set of tags, the phenomenon tag is a root element, meaning it is the required parent element of all other elements in the set. None of the other elements can appear without being nested in the <phenom> element. However, the <phenom> element can be used on its own without any of the other elements if the editor wishes to employ a very simple tagging strategy. Elements can be made more specific by choosing from the available set of attributes. An attribute “is used to describe information that is in some sense descriptive of a specific element occurrence but not regarded as part of its content” (xxxiv). As a simple example, <phenom> is the root element, but it can be modified with attributes to specify what type of phenomenon it is, such as <phenom type=“supernatural”>, <phenom type=“scientific”>, <phenom type=“pseudoscientific”>, or <phenom type=“undefined”>. The inclusion of one of these attributes of the root element is not mandatory. Another element can be added to further describe the phenomenon, such as <clairvoyance>, and these can be further clarified with attributes as well. Combined,

these tags could describe Lenore Burton’s trances to psychometrically read clues in *The Dead Letter* (1866) in the following way:

```
<phenom type=“scientific”>
```

```
  <clairvoyance type=“mesmTrance”>
```

```
    He made a few passes over her; when I saw their effect, I did  
    not wonder that he shrunk from the experiment...
```

```
  </clairvoyance>
```

```
</phenom>106
```

In this example, <phenom> has the attribute “scientific,” and nested within the <phenom> element is another element to describe the clairvoyance discussed in the passage of text. The <clairvoyance> element has the attribute “mesmTrance” (short for mesmeric trance) attached to it, but could in another situation have “naturalTrance” as the attribute such as when Mrs. Zant goes into a trance, without mesmeric influence, and sees her husband’s ghost in “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost” by Wilkie Collins (1885).

Attributes are chosen from a pre-set list defined in the schema in order to ensure the consistency of a controlled vocabulary across transcriptions. The clairvoyance element then closes with the </clairvoyance> end tag at the conclusion of the pertinent passage of text, and then the closing </phenom> tag comes at the end to mark the end of the set of elements describing that passage of text. Like Russian nesting dolls whose tops and bottoms must match up so that the smaller doll is inside the larger doll, the opening and closing tags of an element must nest correctly within the tags of the other elements.

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<sup>106</sup> Regester 1.220.

In the next section, I will discuss the editorial process before explaining in greater depth the elements and attributes I have chosen. This customization to the TEI schema will require further work, testing, and feedback before it is finalized for general use; therefore, I have chosen not to develop a full formal schema for the customization at this stage.<sup>107</sup>

### *Editorial Decisions and the Customized TEI Tags*

Selecting the types of information I want to be able to mark with my customized tags was fairly straightforward. I knew the questions I wanted to ask of the texts as part of my larger research project. I was interested in defining the phenomena, who was involved in the phenomena and in what role, the gender of the people in the various roles, whether the phenomena were solving, committing, or preventing crimes, how the phenomena were described (positively, negatively, neutrally), whether the phenomena was real or a hoax, and how characters reacted to the events. The process of deciding how these tags would be employed was more difficult. Deciding how to use the tags to define the phenomena was the first step that determined how all the other elements would be established and used. In part, the difficulty of deciding how to define the tags was due to the fact that I am not attempting to describe structural elements of the texts, or to conduct textual scholarship concerned with the construction and appearance of the

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<sup>107</sup> Information about the creation of custom schemas can be found in the TEI P5 version 3.0.0 at the TEI website. A completed schema can be made available for download online so that scholars can download it and build their documents in a document associated with that schema. In software programs like Oxygen, documents can be created according to a particular schema and the software can then validate that the document is well-formed according to the rules of that schema.

text as most TEI tags are designed to do. I am instead undertaking a very specific exercise in literary scholarship to describe elements of the narrative. A second challenge arose from the definitions themselves. As I read more nineteenth-century texts on the various phenomena, I realized that I would not be able to determine one neat, definitive definition for various phenomena. This caused some difficulty in the conception of the tags. Tagging is describing, but to be useful, standard definitions for those tags—a controlled vocabulary—are necessary, which means that the passage being described is either X, Y, or Z. A controlled vocabulary may not work as well when it says: “From perspective A, it is X with a bit of Y. From perspective B, it is Z with a bit of Y, only Y in B’s context is not the same as Y in A’s context.” This is what the tagging was beginning to look like when I tried to apply a definitive and rigid set of definitions to the texts. For instance, if clairvoyance is defined as “clear-seeing, the supernatural ability to see visions of the past, present or of the future,” the problem is that some texts treat clairvoyance as a supernatural ability and some treat it as a scientifically explainable natural ability. In some texts, the clairvoyant vision comes unbidden as from providence and in some texts it is a skill that can only be exercised with the clairvoyant is in a mesmeric trance. Clairvoyance is sometimes linked to dreams and sometimes to trances, while in other instances, the clairvoyant perceptions are the result of a sensitive medium coming into contact with an object that puts them *en rapport* with the spirit of another person. The Victorians never determined fixed definitions for these phenomena, and no definitive definitions have been agreed on to this day. Therefore, a definitive definition of clairvoyance does not always work in this case. Flexibility was the best way to ensure

accuracy, so many of the aspects of clairvoyance and the other phenomena are defined by choice of attributes and child elements rather than using just a few elements.

Compounding the multiplicity of definitions, the authors of the stories often left the definitions and veracity of the phenomena indefinite in their writing and treat the same phenomena differently in different stories, so definitional frames could not be established around each author. For instance, Wilkie Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway" relies heavily upon the idea that the divine will ensure that justice is done, but by the time he wrote *The Woman in White*, Count Fosco ventriloquized Collins's own belief that the idea that murder will out is "moral clap-trap" and nonsense (Yates 152). It is also not necessarily the case that an author would write a fictional world that would adhere to the rules he or she believes to be true about the real world. Collins could have believed that providential influences were claptrap even when he wrote "The Diary of Anne Rodway," but used the generic convention to tell a story that would sell. Decisions about the tags cannot be left to the editor's personal beliefs about the events, either. If an editor believes that the supernatural is real, he or she might be inclined to interpret fictional events according to that view. Alternatively, an editor who strongly believes that there is no such thing as the supernatural might be inclined to mark all vaguely described phenomena as either hoaxes or something that has a scientific explanation that is not explicitly stated in the story. Most scholars would not be likely to indulge such biases, but the guidelines should facilitate the most accurate tagging possible.



The most effective way to employ descriptive tags, then, is to describe each phenomenon as it is understood in its contextual moment. To combat the possibility of too much editorial bias, I sought to tag only the parts of the text that are explicitly connected to a supernatural or scientific phenomenon within the narrative. Otherwise, in “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” one could tag Robert’s precipitate departure from America as an act of providence, even though Anne (the narrator) never refers to it as such. This would be an insertion of the reader’s understanding of the situation into the tagging rather than tagging based on a reading of the evidence within the text. Such tagging would not necessarily be erroneous, but it would be taking a liberty with editorial interpretation.

Another difficulty arose from deciding if one should use tags that reflect the understanding of a reader who has read the entire book, or if one should use tags that describe how the phenomenon is understood at that moment in the text. In *The Leavenworth Case*, for example, does one tag the narrative about the dream vision as a hoax since it turns out that the character who claimed to have had the dream is lying? I decided to describe the phenomenon in its immediate context to most accurately reflect that moment in the narrative. Therefore, when the dream is first mentioned, it is tagged as a prophetic dream. When it is mentioned again at the conclusion of the story when it is revealed to have been a lie, that passage about the dream is tagged as a hoax. Similarly, a single event in a story can be described in different ways as the text progresses, and thus the tags describing the various references to the event change as well. For instance, as “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” starts, the reports of the ghost seen

in Fountain Lane are treated as ghost sightings, though not everyone agrees that ghosts are real. The account reported in a newspaper article, which is titled “AUTHENTIC GHOST STORY,” does not take as objective a stance as one might expect, so the phenomenon tag is modified with the “supernatural” attribute. Alternatively, one could tag the story with an “undefined” attribute. Within the article, the account given by the witnesses can be tagged as “supernatural” because the witnesses believe they did see a ghost. Mr. Clampe, the policeman with whom Loveday shares the article makes clear that he does not believe in ghosts, so his references to the ghost-sightings are tagged with a straightforward <phenom> tag and the child element <response type=“disbelief”>. Later, when Loveday explains to Mr. Clampe, the policeman, that the ghost sightings were the result of hypnotic suggestion, the attribute is changed to “scientific” because hypnosis is treated as a natural scientific force within the story.

The elements designed to describe the context of the phenomena should also be assigned after considering how the events are understood and treated at its particular moment in the narrative. For instance, in “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” when Anne has her dream that the end of the cravat found in her dying friend’s hand led her on for months until she found the solution of the mystery, I tagged the text to indicate that Anne is the recipient of the dream, and that she is a woman, but I did not add the attribute describing her as a detective in that same set of tags. At that moment in the narrative, Anne has not decided to investigate her friend’s death. It is not until after she has found the other end of the cravat at the rag-and-bottle shop—a find which she believes to be an act of providence—that “a kind of fever got possession of [her]—a

vehement yearning to go on from this first discovery and find out more, no matter what the risk might be,” and she determines to act as a detective (“Diary” 33). This change in context is reflected in the next instance of a phenomenon tagged in the story, which is when Anne goes to speak to Mr. Horlick, the previous owner of the cravat. The first passage is tagged in this way (as can be seen in full context in Appendix B):

<phenom type=“supernatural”>

<dream type=“promonitory”>

<context type= “recipient” “woman”>

<rolePhenom type=“solvingCrime”>

I don’t remember my mind running once on the end of the cravat yesterday, and I am certain I never looked at it. Yet I had the strangest dream concerning it at night. I thought it was lengthened into a long clue, like the silken thread that led to Rosamund’s Bower

</rolePhenom>

</context>

</dream>

</phenom><sup>108</sup>

In the passage in which Anne questions Mr. Horlick, she describes the event as though she were being controlled by an unseen force, the hand of fate, guiding her now that she has decided to investigate:

<phenom type=“supernatural”>

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<sup>108</sup> “Diary” 14.32.

<handFate>

<context type="medium" "detective" "woman">

I stopped without meaning it. The minute before, there had been no idea in me of speaking to him. I did not know how to speak, or in what way it would be safest to begin. And yet, the moment I came face to face with him something out of myself seemed to stop me, and to make me speak, without considering before-hand, without thinking of consequences, without knowing, I may almost say, what words I was uttering till the instant when they rose to my lips.

</context>

</handFate>

</phenom><sup>109</sup>

There are also phenomena that are difficult to describe or define succinctly. When Anne finds the end of the cravat in Mary's hand, for instance, she describes feeling a "chill" that she believes is significant, like a supernatural premonition ("Diary" 14.4). Yet that moment is not described as a premonition of something to come, but is instead described as though the scrap of cravat announces that Mary was the victim of violence. Anne writes in her diary that when she finds the cravat in Mary's hand, "[a] chill ran all over [her] when [she] looked at it; for that poor, stained, crumpled end of a cravat seemed to be saying to [her], as though it had been in plain words, 'If [Mary] dies, she has come to her death by foul means, and I am the witness of it'" ("Diary" 14.4).

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<sup>109</sup> "Diary" 14.33-34.

Describing this phenomenon is difficult, and I could find no more succinct or accurate way to describe it than to call it a premonition even though it occurs in a curiously in-between moment that is not necessarily before the pertinent event occurs. Although Mary has already suffered the fatal blow, she has not yet died, but the doctor says that there is no hope that she will recover. In this moment of the story is her murder a future or past tense event? The cravat telling Anne (for lack of a better verb) that Mary's death, "if" she dies, was not an accident, is in the conditional tense but speaks to a definite result of an event that has already happened. Yet a premonition usually refers to an event yet to come, not one that has already occurred. Due to the uncertainty of time in this instance, "premonition" is as good a descriptor as is available. Another consideration is whether or not it is a supernatural event, or if it is a pseudoscientific event related to animal magnetism or Spiritualism? Specifically, is it a magnetic rapport between Anne and the clue in the same way that Redfield has a magnetic rapport with the letter in *The Dead Letter*? In both cases the characters claim that they feel a strong conviction that otherwise meaningless objects are the keys to solving murders. Redfield describes his discovery of the dead letter of the title in the following way: "I know not what magnetism passed from it, putting me, as the spiritualists say, *en rapport* with it" (Register 1.8). He further says that he feels "an inward sense *that I held the key which was surely to unlock the awful secret*" (1.501). Here is further evidence for the necessity of tagging the events according to their own context. Although similar language is used to describe the events in *The Dead Letter* and "The Diary of Anne Rodway," and the similarity of the phenomena, the two stories treat the phenomena very differently. In

Collins's story, the supernatural events are tied strongly to Anne's understanding of providence and divine justice, or "righteous retribution" ("Diary" 35). Anne's experience with the cravat is connected to her dream, which is presented in a spiritual light as a prophetic dream similar to those described in the Bible. In contrast, Redfield's *rapport* with the letter is connected to clairvoyance, mesmerism, and a scientific view of how these phenomena work. It would be detrimental to the tagging process if I, for instance, decided that I did not believe that the supernatural exists even within a fictional story, and decided to tag everything as "scientific" or a "hoax" instead.

### ***Editorial Bias***

Using these TEI tags cannot and should not be automated; the tagging must be completed by a human editor who is familiar with the texts and the history of the conversation about supernatural phenomena. Although I initially shrank from the possibility of editorial bias, it is exactly an informed interpretation/bias that makes a successful markup of these texts possible. Editors who use my tags to describe their texts must bring their own best judgment to bear. In 1999, Ian Small expressed a concern that digital editors (mostly in the textual criticism tradition) "must cease to edit, in the sense of exercising any form of control or judgment. The postmodernist hypertext editor apparently needs only to supply data; he or she need not order it" (qtd. in Earhart 16). Such a digital editor would not succeed with the tags I have developed. This project values the editor, and the editor remains an important entity to be known (through the metadata in the header of the transcriptions if nothing else), because different editors

may mark the same text differently. What one editor describes as fate, for instance, another might describe as providence (see the dictionary of tags for definitions). The editors are not, as Small says, “stripped of any effective agency, authority, or responsibility,” but are given full authority and responsibility for the description (qtd. in Earhart 16). It is important to remember that TEI is meant to *describe* texts, not to *define* the texts. As I demonstrated in the preceding chapters, there is not only one right interpretation or definition for the supernatural phenomena. For the editor, the process of assigning tags can be a scholarly endeavor as they must think through which tags to choose and why, and what the process reveals about other parts of the same text or other stories in comparison. If other editors/scholars become involved in the project of tagging transcriptions of Victorian detective fiction that use the supernatural, a follow-up project would be to trace and analyze the differences in tagging choices.

As a means of testing and demonstrating the efficaciousness of the new TEI elements, I selected two Victorian short stories for which I created a complete TEI document. These two stories are Wilkie Collins’s “The Diary of Anne Rodway” (1856) as it was first published in *Household Words*, and Catherine Louisa Pirkis’s “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” as it appears in the book *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894). Appendix C includes the full text of the TEI encoded transcription of “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” and Appendix D includes “The Ghost of Fountain Lane.” I chose to begin with short stories because the concentration of supernatural/scientific phenomena is greater than in a longer novel such as *The Woman in White*, and because the phenomena in the stories provided testing grounds for all of the customized elements

but one (clairvoyance), and most of the attributes. As the corpus of encoded texts grows, using visualization tool software will help scholars find patterns in the way the supernatural and scientific phenomena are treated in Victorian detective fiction. For instance, I chose to include tags to trace the gender of people involved in the phenomena because, as I discussed in Chapter III, the supernatural appears to be most frequently associated with women detectives. These tags could be particularly useful for analyzing patterns in gender roles and the supernatural roles in these stories involving female detectives. Visualizations can help to clarify whether or not the pattern holds true in the larger corpus if scholars broaden the scope to include occult detective fiction or stories from the early decades of the twentieth century when Spiritualism was also popular. The visualization software could identify shifts in the use of the phenomena in stories over time. Digitizing texts, encoding them with my TEI elements, and employing visualization and other data mining software tools on the documents can help scholars find new questions to ask of the texts, leading to new answers. These efforts will help to bring the literature together as a collection of related texts and put them into conversation with each other once more so that scholars can see how the texts work with and against each other.

It is my hope that this suggested set of customized TEI elements and attributes will encourage further scholarship on the intersection between Victorian detective fiction, the supernatural, and the scientific. The tags are the first step of a possible loosely collaborative project to build a corpus of TEI encoded documents that can then



be analyzed using distant and close reading methods to uncover new understandings of the tradition.

## APPENDIX B

### DICTIONARY OF ELEMENTS AND ATTRIBUTES

The definitions for these tags are based on research into nineteenth-century British and American understandings of supernatural, scientific, and pseudoscientific events. To be applied to similar twentieth-century stories, the definitions might need to be adjusted to accommodate changes such as the development of the field of psychology to include hypnosis. In the present instance of this schema, mesmerism, hypnotism, and animal magnetism are treated as interchangeable terms for the same event.

Note: The root element alone is mandatory of these elements. A few of the elements require that an attribute be assigned, attributes are not mandatory for all elements. If an attribute is required, it is marked in the table.

Root Element	phenom
<b>Definition</b>	Short for phenomenon. Parent element within which all other elements for describing supernatural/scientific phenomena are included. An attribute is not required, but is highly recommended unless it is unhelpful or inaccurate to assign one specific attribute.
<b>Possible Attributes</b> <b>type=""</b>	
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>
supernatural	An event that is or appears to be the work of forces outside the natural world order. This may include, for example, divine forces, ghosts, or fate.
scientific	An event that can be explained by natural and scientific laws. This may include phenomena involving the spiritual and mental events such as mesmerism depending on the context.
pseudoscientific	An event that is treated as part of a fledgling science, but which may also involve an element of superstition.
undefined	An event about which the narrative does not reveal enough to be described as belonging to the above types. This may also be an event the context of which makes it impossible to

	describe as only one type of phenomenon. For example, if the narrator is uncertain of what to make of the phenomena they have witnessed and does not put forth one explanation or theory as the most likely.	
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: Yes	Attribute: No

### Classes of Phenomena

<b>Element</b>	<b>ghost</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	An event in which a ghost is seen and/or felt and/or heard. The ghost may also be called a spirit, wraith, or presence. This visitation may occur during dreams, trances, or while the visitant is awake.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type="“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
vision	The event is described in terms of a vision, often when the visitation happens during a trance.	The ghostly visitations in Collins's "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost."
wraith	The term applied to the vision of the spirit of a person who is about to die or has just died. Often connected to clairvoyance. Often occurs when the visited person is sleeping and is awakened by the spirit of a loved one.	Susan Hopley is visited by the wraiths of her murdered brother and employer while half asleep in Crowe's <i>Susan Hopley</i> .
mesmBelief	The ghost is seen as a result of mesmeric suggestion.	The ghost seen in Pirkis's "The Ghost of Fountain Lane."
apparition	The ghost is physically seen, may include the ghost being heard and felt.	The ghost of the murder victim in Dickens's "The Trial for Murder."
auditory	The ghost is heard but not seen.	The ghost in Herbert's "The Haunted Homestead."
felt	The ghost's presence is felt, but is not seen or heard.	The ghost of Mr. Zant in Collins's "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost."
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>clairvoyance</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Clear-seeing. The ability to see visions of the past, present or of the future. Also includes psychometry (see attribute below), as well as the ability to read minds, and the ability to see and/or communicate with the spirits of the deceased. May involve being <i>en rapport</i> with something or someone.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type="“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
mesmTrance	The clairvoyant ability is exercised when the clairvoyant is in a trance produced by mesmerism.	Mr. Burton mesmerizes his daughter Lenore into clairvoyant trances in Regester’s <i>The Dead Letter</i> .
naturalTrance	The clairvoyant ability is exercised when in a trance that is not brought about by mesmeric influence.	Mrs. Zant’s vision of her husband’s ghost in Collins’s “Mrs. Zant and the Ghost.”
psychometry	Reading of an aura or impression of the personality of a person left upon an object. May also refer to clairvoyantly reading text that the clairvoyant cannot see with his or her eyes such as a sealed letter.	Lenore Burton reading the personality of the writer of a letter in Regester’s <i>The Dead Letter</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>mesmerism</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	May include ability or phenomena defined as mesmerism, hypnotism, or animal magnetism. The exercise of a mesmerist’s will or magnetism over a subject’s body and mind.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type="“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
possession	An event in which the mesmerist’s mind/spirit takes control of the subject’s body/mind.	Miss Penelosa’s mind/spirit taking control of Professor Gilroy’s body in Conan Doyle’s <i>The Parasite</i> .
suggestion	Post-hypnotic suggestion	Agatha breaking off her engagement with Professor Gilroy in

		Conan Doyle's <i>The Parasite</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>dream</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Prophetic dreams and vision dreams in which the dreamer receives a message from people living or dead, or sees a future event. Often connected to clairvoyance.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type="“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
premonitory	The dreamer sees or is told about future events.	In Wood's <i>East Lynne</i> , Mrs. Hare's dream shows a meeting with a murder suspect which later comes to pass as she saw it.
mindConnection	The dreamer's mind connects to the mind of another living person. Often connected to clairvoyance and to wraiths.	Possible interpretation of Marian Halcombe's dream in which Walter Hartright speaks to her in Collins's <i>The Woman in White</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>premonition</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A sense or impression of something that has not yet come to pass. A prediction or foreboding. The sense that an object or piece of information is important. Not interchangeable with being <i>en rapport</i> with something or someone.
<b>Example</b>	Anne Rodway's conviction that the scrap of cravat found in Mary's hand is the key to solving the murder in Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway."
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>handFate</b>
<b>Definition</b>	An event in which a person feels that the hand of fate or the divine is controlling their actions. May overlap with the concept of providence (see below).
<b>Example</b>	Anne Rodway questions a suspect but describes the event as though she were not in control of herself at the time. She feels the divine is working through her to effect justice in Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway."
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No

<b>Element</b>	<b>providence</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	An event directed by a supernatural force such as the divine. May be similar to coincidences. Evidence becoming available to the detective at the right moment, etc. May overlap with the concept of the hand of fate (see above).	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>	<b>Type=""</b>	
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
called	Detectives feel that they have been called or directed to investigate a crime by providence.	Anne Rodway feels that providence is directing and assisting her investigation in Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway."
deusExMachina	The divine taking action without working through a human. In these stories it is often the divine acting to save an innocent person or to punish a criminal.	The lightning bolt striking the criminal just as he was about to kill the detective in W. S. Hayward's <i>Revelations of a Lady Detective</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: No

### Contextual Elements

<b>Element</b>		<b>rolePhenom</b>
<b>Definition</b>	The role played by the phenomenon in the investigation. Attribute(s) are required for this element.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b> Type="“”		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
solvingCrime	The phenomenon assists in solving a crime.	The prophetic dream that points Robert Audley in the right direction to begin his investigation in Braddon's <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> .
committingCrime	The phenomenon assists in the commission of a crime.	The Baron using mesmerism to commit murder in Adams's <i>The Notting Hill Mystery</i> .
preventingCrime	The phenomenon assists in preventing a crime by providing warning or directly intervening.	The ghost of Mr. Zant warns his wife that he was murdered and that she is in danger. The directly intervenes and attacks the killer to protect Mrs. Zant in Collins's "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost."
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: Yes

<b>Element</b>		<b>context</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Describes the context of the phenomena by identifying who is involved based on how they are connected to the phenomena. Attribute(s) are required for this element. More than one attribute may be used in a single <context> element tag.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b> Type="“”		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
medium	A clairvoyant medium or medium	Lenore Burton is a

	able to communicate with spirits. May overlap with “mesmSubject” if the clairvoyant ability is effected by mesmerism.	clairvoyant medium in Regester’s <i>The Dead Letter</i> .
mesmSubject	A person who is a mesmeric subject. May overlap with “medium” if the mesmeric trance enables clairvoyance.	The boy put into a mesmeric trance by the Indians in Collins’s <i>The Moonstone</i> .
recipient	The person who is on the receiving end of a phenomenon.	The narrator of Dickens’s “The Trial for Murder” who is one of the few people who can see the ghost of the murder victim.
mesmerist	The person exerting mesmeric or hypnotic influence over a subject or multiple subjects.	Mr. Blakenney, the mesmerist brought in to medically treat a patient in Oliphant’s <i>The Mesmerist</i> .
detective	The character acts as a detective in the story, investigating a crime.	Anne Rodway decides to act as a detective to solve her friend’s murder in Collins’s “The Diary of Anne Rodway.”
criminal	The character has committed a crime which is being investigated in the story.	Baron R*** is the criminal in Adams’s <i>Notting Hill Mystery</i> .
man	The character described is a man.	
woman	The character described is a woman.	
child	The character described in a child.	
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: Yes

<b>Element</b>	<b>treatment</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Describes how the phenomenon is treated in a passage of text. An attribute must be assigned to this element.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type=“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
positive	The phenomenon is described in	The dream that



	positive terms. Often when the phenomenon acts for justice.	convinces Anne Rodway that the cravat will help her solve her friend's murder in Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway."
negative	The phenomenon is described in negative terms. Often when the phenomenon facilitates a crime.	Using mesmerism to force someone to commit murder as in Oliphant's <i>The Mesmerist</i> .
neutral	The phenomenon is described in neutral terms.	Loveday Brooke describes the story of the ghost in neutral terms at the beginning of Pirkis's "The Ghost of Fountain Lane."
uncertain	The phenomenon is described in vague or uncertain terms.	Redfield is uncertain of how to view Lenore's mesmerically induced clairvoyance in Regester's <i>The Dead Letter</i> because the trances provide evidence but also harm Lenore.
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: Yes

<b>Element</b>	<b>verdictPhenom</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Describes whether the phenomenon is believed to be a true phenomenon, the effect of imagination, a faked phenomenon, or if the veracity of the phenomenon is unknown. An attribute must be assigned to this element.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type="“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
truth	The phenomenon is (believed to be) a true phenomenon.	Dirk believes the flames at Heyer's homestead are a supernatural indication that Heyer is guilty of murder in Herbert's

		“The Haunted Homestead.”
imagination	The phenomenon is (believed to be) the result of overactive imagination and is not supernatural or scientific.	Mr. Clampe in Pirkis’s “The Ghost of Fountain Lane” initially believes the ghost to be the result of imagination.
hoax	The phenomenon is (believed to be) a hoax, deliberately faked.	Mr. Harwell’s faked prophetic dream in Green’s <i>The Leavenworth Case</i> .
undetermine	The veracity of the phenomenon is uncertain in the passage.	The prophetic nature of Mrs. Hare’s dream is not known when she first describes it to her daughter in Wood’s <i>East Lynne</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: Yes

<b>Element</b>	<b>reaction</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Describes how a character or group of characters reacts to a phenomenon. An attribute is required for this element. More than one attribute may be used in a single <reaction> element tag.	
<b>Possible Attributes</b>		
<b>Type=“”</b>		
<i>Attribute Name</i>	<i>Attribute Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
fear	The character reacts with fear	The inhabitants of Fountain Lane react with fear to the apparition of a ghost in Pirkis’s “The Ghost of Fountain Lane.”
disbelief	The character reacts with disbelief	Mr. Clampe does not believe the ghost sightings are real at the beginning of Pirkis’s “The Ghost of Fountain Lane.”
exhaustion	The character reacts with exhaustion	Lenore Burton is exhausted after being mesmerized in

		Regester's <i>The Dead Letter</i> .
reluctance	The character is reluctant to believe the phenomenon	Barbara Hare is reluctant to believe that her mother's dreams are prophetic in Wood's <i>East Lynne</i> .
uncertainty	The character reacts with uncertainty	Mr. Henderson is unsure that he believes in mesmerism in Adams's <i>The Notting Hill Mystery</i> .
belief	The character believes that the phenomenon is true.	Mr. Burton believes in Lenore's clairvoyant ability in Regester's <i>The Dead Letter</i> .
curiosity	The character is curious about the phenomenon.	Professor Gilroy's professional curiosity about mesmerism is aroused when he is convinced that it is real in Conan Doyle's <i>The Parasite</i> .
excitement	The character is excited about the phenomenon.	Mrs. Anderton is excited by the improvement in her health after being mesmerically treated in Adams's <i>The Notting Hill Mystery</i> .
<b>Mandatory</b>	Element: No	Attribute: Yes

## APPENDIX C

### TEI-ENCODED TRANSCRIPTION OF “THE DIARY OF ANNE RODWAY”

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        <author>Wilkie Collins</author>
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          <name>Laura Perrings</name>
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        <date>2016</date>
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or non-profit product, in print or from an information server.</hi>
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      </publicationStmt>
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        <respStmt>
          <resp>Founding Editor</resp>
          <name>Laura Perrings</name>
        </respStmt>
      </seriesStmt>
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    </titleStmt>
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      <head>THE DIARY OF ANNE RODWAY.</head>
      <head>IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER THE FIRST.</head>

      <p>MARCH 3rd, 1840. A long letter to-day
from Robert, which surprised and vexed and
fluttered me so, that I have been sadly
behind-hand with my work ever since. He
writes in worse spirits than last time, and

```

absolutely declares that he is poorer even than when he went to America, and that he has made up his mind to come home to London. How happy I should be at this news, if he only returned to me a prosperous man! As it is, though I love him dearly, I cannot look forward to the meeting him again, disappointed and broken down and poorer than ever, without a feeling almost of dread for both of us. I was twenty-six last birthday and he was thirty-three; and there seems less chance now than ever of our being married. It is all I can do to keep myself by my needle; and his prospects, since he failed in the small stationery business three years ago, are worse, if possible, than mine. Not that I mind so much for myself; women, in all ways of life, and especially in my dress-making way, learn, I think, to be more patient than men. What I dread is Robert's despondency, and the hard struggle he will have in this cruel city to get his bread—let alone making money enough to marry me. So little as poor people want to set up in house-keeping and be happy together, it seems hard that they can't get it when they are honest and hearty, and willing to work. The clergyman said in his sermon, last Sunday evening, that all things were ordered for the best, and we are all put into the stations in life that are properest for us. I suppose he was right, being a very clever gentleman who fills the church to crowding; but I think I should have understood him better if I had not been very hungry at the time, in consequence of my own station in life being nothing but Plain Needlewoman. </p>

<p>March 4th. Mary Mallinson came down to my room to take a cup of tea with me. I read her bits of Robert's letter, to show her that if she has her troubles, I have mine too; but I could not succeed in cheering her. She says she is born to misfortune, and that, as long

back as she can remember, she has never had the least morsel of luck to be thankful for <sic></sic><corr>.</corr> I told her to go and look in my glass, and to say if she had nothing to be thankful for then; for Mary is a very pretty girl, and would look still prettier if she could be more cheerful and dress neater. However, my compliment did no good. She rattled her spoon impatiently in her tea-cup, and said, "If I was only as good a hand at needlework as you are, Anne, I would change faces with the ugliest girl in London." "Not you!" says I, laughing. She looked at me for a moment, and shook her head, and was out of the room before I could get up and stop her. She always runs off in that way when she is going to cry, having a kind of pride about letting other people see her in tears.</p>

<p>March 5th.—A fright about Mary. I had not seen her all day, as she does not work at the same place where I do; and in the evening she never came down to have tea with me, or sent me word to go to her. So just before I went to bed I ran up-stairs to say good-night. She did not answer when I knocked; and when I stepped softly into the room I saw her in bed, asleep, with her work not half done, lying about the room in the untidiest way. There was nothing remarkable in that, and I was just going away on tip-toe, when a tiny bottle and wine-glass on the chair by her bed-side caught my eye. I thought she was ill and had been taking physic, and looked at the bottle. It was marked in large letters, "Laudanum—Poison." My heart gave a jump as if it was going to fly out of me. I laid hold of her with both hands, and shook her with all my might. She was sleeping heavily, and woke slowly, as it seemed to me—but still she did not wake. I tried to pull her out of bed, having heard that people ought to be always walked up and down when they have

taken laudanum; but she resisted, and pushed me away violently. </p>

<p>"Anne!" says she in a fright. "For gracious sake, what's come to you! Are you out of your senses?" </p>

<p>"O, Mary! Mary!" says I, holding up the bottle before her, "If I hadn't come in when I did—" And I laid hold of her to shake her again. </p>

<p>She looked puzzled at me for a moment—then smiled (the first time I had seen her do so for many a long day)—then put her arms round my neck. </p>

<pb/>

<p>"Don't be frightened about me, Anne," she says, "I am not worth it, and there is no need." </p>

<p>"No need!" says I, out of breath. "No need, when the bottle has got Poison marked on it!" </p>

<p>"Poison, dear, if you take it all," says Mary, looking at me very tenderly; "and a night's rest if you only take a little." </p>

<p>I watched her for a moment; doubtful whether I ought to believe what she said, or to alarm the house. But there was no sleepiness now in her eyes, and nothing drowsy in her voice; and she sat up in bed quite easily without anything to support her. </p>

<p>"You have given me a dreadful fright, Mary," says I, sitting down by her in the chair, and beginning, by this time, to feel rather faint after being startled so. </p>

<p>She jumped out of bed to get me a drop of water; and kissed me, and said how sorry she



was, and how undeserving of so much interest being taken in her. At the same time, she tried to possess herself of the laudanum-bottle which I still kept cuddled up tight in my own hands. </p>

<p>"No," says I. "You have got into a low-spirited despairing way. I won't trust you with it."</p>

<p>"I am afraid I can't do without it," says Mary, in her usual quiet, hopeless voice. "What with work that I can't get through as I ought, and troubles that I can't help thinking of, sleep won't come to me unless I take a few drops out of that bottle. Don't keep it away from me, Anne; it's the only thing in the world that makes me forget myself." </p>

<p>"Forget yourself!" says I. "You have no right to talk in that way, at your age. There's something horrible in the notion of a girl of eighteen sleeping with a bottle of laudanum by her bedside every night. We all of us have our troubles. Haven't I got mine?" </p>

<p>"You can do twice the work I can, twice as well as me," says Mary. "You are never scolded and rated at for awkwardness with your needle; and I always am. You can pay for your room every week; and I am three weeks in debt for mine." </p>

<p>"A little more practice," says I, "and a little more courage, and you will soon do better. You have got all your life before you—"</p>

<p>"I wish I was at the end of it," says she, breaking in. "I'm alone in the world, and my life's no good to me." </p>

<p>"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for saying so," says I. "Haven't you got me for a friend. Didn't I take a fancy to you when first you left your stepmother, and came to lodge in this house? And haven't I been sisters with you ever since? Suppose you are alone in the world, am I much better off? I'm an orphan, like you. I've almost as many things in pawn as you; and, if your pockets are empty, mine have only got nine-pence in them, to last me for all the rest of the week." </p>

<p>"Your father and mother were honest people," says Mary, obstinately. "My mother ran away from home, and died in a hospital. My father was always drunk, and always beating me. My stepmother is as good as dead, for all she cares about me. My only brother is thousands of miles away in foreign parts, and never writes to me, and never helps me with a farthing. My sweetheart—" </p>

<p>She stopped, and the red flew into her face. I knew, if she went on that way, she would only get to the saddest part of her sad story, and give both herself and me unnecessary pain. </p>

<p>"My sweetheart is too poor to marry me, Mary," I said. "So I'm not so much to be envied, even there. But let's give over disputing which is worst off. Lie down in bed, and let me tuck you up. I'll put a stitch or two into that work of yours while you go to sleep." </p>

<p>Instead of doing what I told her, she burst out crying (being very like a child in some of her ways), and hugged me so tight around the neck, that she quite hurt me. I let her go on, till she had worn herself out, and was obliged to lie down. Even then, her last few

words, before she dropped off to sleep, were such as I was half-sorry, half-frightened, to hear.</p>

<p>"I won't plague you long, Anne," she said. "I haven't courage to go out of the world as you seem to fear I shall. But I began my life wretchedly, and wretchedly I am sentenced to end it." </p>

<p>It was of no use lecturing her again, for she closed her eyes. I tucked her up as neatly as I could, and put her petticoat over her; for the bed-clothes were scanty, and her hands felt cold. She looked so pretty and delicate as she fell asleep, that it quite made my heart ache to see her, after such talk as we had held together. I just waited long enough to be quite sure that she was in the land of dreams; then emptied the horrible laudanum-bottle into the grate, took up her half-done work, and, going out softly, left her for that night.</p>

<p>March 6th. Sent off a long letter to Robert, begging and entreating him not to be so down-hearted, and not to leave America without making another effort. I told him I could bear any trial except the wretchedness of seeing him come back a helpless, broken-down man, trying uselessly to begin life again, when too old for change. It was not till after I had posted my own letter, and read over parts of Robert's again, that the suspicion suddenly floated across me, for the first time, that he might have sailed for England immediately after writing to me. There were expressions in the letter which seemed to indicate that he had some such headlong</p><pb/>

<p>project in his mind. And yet, surely if it were so, I ought to have noticed them at the first reading. I can only hope I am wrong

in my present interpretation of much of what he has written to me—hope it earnestly for both our sakes.</p>

<p>This has been a doleful day for me. I have been uneasy about Robert and uneasy about Mary. My mind is haunted by those last words of hers: "I began my life wretchedly, and wretchedly I am sentenced to end it." Her usual melancholy way of talking never produced the same impression on me that I feel now. Perhaps the discovery of the laudanum-bottle is the cause of this. I would give many a hard day's work to know what to do for Mary's good. My heart warmed to her when we first met in the same lodging-house, two years ago; and, although I am not one of the over-affectionate sort myself, I feel as if I could go to the world's end to serve that girl. Yet, strange to say, if I was asked why I was so fond of her, I don't think I should know how to answer the question. </p>

<p>March 7th. I am almost ashamed to write it down, even in this journal, which no eyes but mine ever look on; yet I must honestly confess to myself, that here I am, at nearly one in the morning, sitting up in a state of serious uneasiness, because Mary has not yet come home. I walked with her, this morning, to the place where she works, and tried to lead her into talking of the relations she has got who are still alive. My motive in doing this was to see if she dropped anything in the course of conversation which might suggest a way of helping her interests with those who are bound to give her all reasonable assistance. But the little I could get her to say to me led to nothing. Instead of answering my questions about her stepmother and her brother, she persisted at first, in the strangest way, in talking of her father, who was dead and gone, and of one Noah Truscott, who had been the worst of all the bad

friends he had, and had taught him to drink and game. When I did get her to speak of her brother, she only knew that he had gone out to a place called Assam, where they grew tea. How he was doing, or whether he was there still, she did not seem to know, never having heard a word from him for years and years past. As for her stepmother, Mary, not unnaturally, flew into a passion the moment I spoke of her. She keeps an eating-house at Hammersmith, and could have given Mary good employment in it; but she seems always to have hated her, and to have made her life so wretched with abuse and ill-usage, that she had no refuge left but to go away from home, and do her best to make a living for herself. Her husband (Mary's father) appears to have behaved badly to her; and, after his death, she took the wicked course of revenging herself on her step-daughter. I felt, after this, that it was impossible Mary could go back, and that it was the hard necessity of her position, as it is of mine, that she should struggle on to make a decent livelihood without assistance from any of her relations. I confessed as much as this to her; but I added that I would try to get her employment with the persons for whom I work, who pay higher wages, and show a little more indulgence to those under them, than the people to whom she is now obliged to look for support. I spoke much more confidently than I felt, about being able to do this; and left her, as I thought, in better spirits than usual. She promised to be back to-night to tea, at nine o'clock, and now it is nearly one in the morning, and she is not home yet. If it was any other girl I should not feel uneasy, for I should make up my mind that there was extra work to be done in a hurry, and that they were keeping her late, and I should go to bed. But Mary is so unfortunate in everything that happens to her, and her own melancholy talk

about herself keeps hanging on my mind  
so, that I have fears on her account which  
would not distress me about any one else.

<phenom type="supernatural">

<premonition>

It  
seems inexcusably silly to think such a thing,  
much more to write it down; but I have a  
kind of nervous dread upon me that some  
accident—

</premonition>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>What does that loud knocking at the street  
door mean? And those voices and heavy  
footsteps outside? Some lodger who has lost  
his key, I suppose. And yet, my heart—  
What a coward I have become all of a  
sudden! </p>

<p>More knocking and louder voices. I must  
run to the door and see what it is. O, Mary!  
Mary! I hope I am not going to have  
another fright about you; but I feel sadly  
like it. </p>

<p>March 8th.</p>

<p>March 9th.</p>

<p>March 10th.</p>

<p>March 11th. O, me! all the troubles I  
have ever had in my life are as nothing to  
the trouble I am in now. For three days I have  
not been able to write a single line in  
this journal, which I have kept so regularly,  
ever since I was a girl. For three days I  
have not once thought of Robert—I, who am  
always thinking of him at other times. My  
poor, dear, unhappy Mary, the worst I feared  
for you on that night when I sat up alone  
was far below the dreadful calamity that has  
really happened. How can I write about it,  
with my eyes full of tears and my hand all

of a tremble? I don't even know why I am sitting down at my desk now, unless it is habit that keeps me to my old everyday task, in spite of all the grief and fear which seem to unfit me entirely for performing it. </p>

<p>The people of the house were asleep and lazy on that dreadful night, and I was the first to open the door. Never, never, could I describe in writing, or even say in plain talk, though it is so much easier, what I felt when I saw two policemen come in, carrying </p>  
<pb/>

<p>between them what seemed to me to be a dead girl, and that girl Mary! I caught hold of her and gave a scream that must have alarmed the whole house; for, frightened people came crowding down-stairs in their night-dresses. There was a dreadful confusion and noise of loud talking, but I heard nothing, and saw nothing, till I had got her into my room, and laid on my bed. I stooped down, frantic-like, to kiss her, and saw an awful mark of a blow on her left temple, and felt, at the same time, a feeble flutter of her breath on my cheek. The discovery that she was not dead seemed to give me back my senses again. I told one of the policemen where the nearest doctor was to be found, and sat down by the bedside while he was gone, and bathed her poor head with cold water. She never opened her eyes, or moved, or spoke; but she breathed, and that was enough for me, because it was enough for life. </p>

<p>The policeman left in the room was a big, thick-voiced, pompous man, with a horrible unfeeling pleasure in hearing himself talk before an assembly of frightened, silent people. He told us how he had found her, as if he had been telling a story in a tap-room, and began with saying, "I don't think

the young woman was drunk." Drunk! My Mary, who might have been a born lady for all the spirits she ever touched—drunk! I could have struck the man for uttering the word, with her lying, poor suffering angel, so white and still and helpless before him. As it was, I gave him a look; but he was too stupid to understand it, and went droning on, saying the same thing over and over again in the same words. And yet the story of how they found her was, like all the sad stories I have ever heard told in real life, so very, very short. They had just seen her lying along on the kerb-stone, a few streets off, and had taken her to the station-house. There she had been searched, and one of my cards, that I give to ladies who promise me employment, had been found in her pocket, and so they had brought her to our house. This was all the man really had to tell. There was nobody near her when she was found, and no evidence to how the blow on her temple had been inflicted. </p>

<p>What a time it was before the doctor came, and how dreadful to hear him say, after he had looked at her, that he was afraid all the medical men in the world could be of no use here! He could not get her to swallow anything; and the more he tried to bring her back to her senses, the less chance there seemed of his succeeding. He examined the blow on her temple, and said he thought she must have fallen down in a fit of some sort, and struck her head against the pavement, and so have given her brain what he was afraid was a fatal shake. I asked what was to be done if she showed any return to sense in the night. He said, "Send for me directly;" and stopped for a little while afterwards stroking her head gently with his hand, and whispering to himself, "Poor girl, so young and so pretty!" I had felt, some minutes before, as if I could have



struck the policeman; and I felt now as if I could have thrown my arms round the doctor's neck and kissed him. I did put out my hand, when he took up his hat, and he shook it in the friendliest way. "Don't hope, my dear," he said, and went out. </p>

<p>The rest of the lodgers followed him, all silent and shocked, except the inhuman wretch who owns the house, and lives in idleness on the high rents he wrings from poor people like us. "She's three weeks in my debt," says he, with a frown and an oath. "Where the devil is my money to come from now?" Brute! brute! </p>

<p>I had a long cry alone with her that seemed to ease my heart a little. She was not the least changed for the better when I had wiped away the tears, and could see her clearly again. I took up her right hand, which lay nearest to me. It was tight clenched. I tried to unclasp the fingers, and succeeded after a little time. Something dark fell out of the palm of her hand as I straightened it. I picked the thing up, and smoothed it out, and saw that it was an end of a man's cravat. </p>

<p>A very old, rotten, dingy strip of black silk, with thin lilac lines, all blurred and deadened with dirt, running across and across the stuff in a sort of trellis-work pattern. The small end of the cravat was hemmed in the usual way, but the other end was all jagged, as if the morsel then in my hands had been torn off violently from the rest of the stuff.

<phenom type="supernatural">

<premonition>

<treatment type="positive">

<rolePhenom type="solvingCrime">

A chill

ran all over me as I looked at it; for that poor, stained, crumpled end of a cravat

seemed to be saying to me, as though it had been in plain words, "If she dies, she has come to her death by foul means, and I am the witness of it."

</rolePhenom>

</treatment>

</premonition>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>I had been frightened enough before, lest she should die suddenly and quietly without my knowing it, while we were alone together; but I got into a perfect agony now for fear this last worst affliction should take me by surprise. I don't suppose five minutes passed all that woeful night through, without my getting up and putting my cheek close to her mouth, to feel if the faint breaths still fluttered out of it. They came and went just the same as at first, though the fright I was in often made me fancy they were stilled for ever. Just as the church clocks were striking four, I was startled by seeing the room door open. It was only Dusty Sal (as they call her in the house) the maid-of-all-work. She was wrapped up in the blanket off her bed; her hair was all tumbled over her face; and her eyes were heavy with sleep, as she came up to the bedside where I was sitting. </p>

<p> "I've two hours good before I begin to work," says she, in her hoarse, drowsy voice,</p>  
<pb/>

<p>"and I've come to sit up and take my turn at watching her. You lay down and get some sleep on the rug. Here's my blanket for you—I don't mind the cold—it will keep me awake." </p>

<p>"You are very kind—very, very kind and thoughtful, Sally," says I, "but I am too wretched in my mind to want sleep, or rest,

or to do anything but wait where I am, and try and hope for the best." </p>

<p>"Then I'll wait, too," says Sally. "I must do something; if there's nothing to do but waiting, I'll wait." </p>

<p>And she sat down opposite me at the foot of the bed, and drew the blanket close round her with a shiver. </p>

<p>"After working so hard as you do, I'm sure you must want all the little rest you can get," says I. </p>

<p>"Excepting only you," says Sally, putting her heavy arm very clumsily, but very gently at the same time, round Mary's feet, and looking hard at the pale, still face on the pillow. "Excepting you, she's the only soul in this house as never swore at me, or give me a hard word that I can remember. When you made puddings on Sundays, and give her half, she always give me a bit. The rest of 'em calls me Dusty Sal. Excepting only you, again, she always called me Sally, as if she knowed me in a friendly way. I ain't no good here, but I ain't no harm neither; and I shall take my turn at the sitting up—that's what I shall do!" </p>

<p>She nestled her head down close at Mary's feet as she spoke those words, and said no more. I once or twice thought she had fallen asleep, but whenever I looked at her, her heavy eyes were always wide open. She never changed her position an inch till the church clocks struck six; then she gave one little squeeze to Mary's feet with her arm, and shuffled out of the room without a word. A minute or two after, I heard her down below, lighting the kitchen fire just as usual. </p>

<p>A little later, the doctor stepped over

before his breakfast time, to see if there had been any change in the night. He only shook his head when he looked at her, as if there was no hope. Having nobody else to consult that I could put trust in, I showed him the end of the cravat, and told him of the dreadful suspicion that had arisen in my mind, when I found it in her hand. </p>

<p> "You must keep it carefully, and produce it at the inquest," he said. "I don't know though, that it is likely to lead to anything. The bit of stuff may have been lying on the pavement near her, and her hand may have unconsciously clutched it when she fell. Was she subject to fainting fits?" </p>

<p>"Not more so, sir, than other young girls who are hard-worked and anxious, and weakly from poor living," I answered. </p>

<p>"I can't say that she may not have got that blow from a fall," the doctor went on, looking at her temple again. "I can't say that it presents any positive appearance of having been inflicted by another person. It will be important, however, to ascertain what state of health she was in last night. Have you any idea where she was yesterday evening?" </p>

<p>I told him where she was employed at work, and said I imagined she must have been kept there later than usual. </p>

<p>"I shall pass the place this morning," said the doctor, "in going my rounds among my patients, and I'll just step in and make some inquiries." </p>

<p>I thanked him, and we parted. Just as he was closing the door, he looked in again. </p>

<p>"Was she your sister?" he asked. </p>

<p>"No, sir, only my dear friend." </p>

<p>He said nothing more; but I heard him sigh, as he shut the door softly. Perhaps he once had a sister of his own, and lost her? Perhaps she was like Mary in the face?</p>

<p>The doctor was hours gone away. I began to feel unspeakably forlorn and helpless. So much so, as even to wish selfishly that Robert might really have sailed from America, and might get to London in time to assist and console me. No living creature came into the room but Sally. The first time she brought me some tea; the second and third times she only looked in to see if there was any change, and glanced her eye towards the bed. I had never known her so silent before; it seemed almost as if this dreadful accident had struck her dumb. I ought to have spoken to her, perhaps, but there was something in her face that daunted me; and, besides, the fever of anxiety I was in began to dry up my lips as if they would never be able to shape any words again. I was still tormented by that frightful apprehension of the past night, that she would die without my knowing it—die without saying one word to clear up the awful mystery of this blow, and set the suspicions at rest for ever which I still felt whenever my eyes fell on the end of the old cravat. </p>

<p>At last the doctor came back. </p>

<p>"I think you may safely clear your mind of any doubts to which that bit of stuff may have given rise," he said. "She was, as you supposed, detained late by her employers, and she fainted in the work-room. They most unwisely and unkindly let her go home alone, without giving her any stimulant, as soon as she came to her senses again. Nothing

is more probable, under these circumstances, than that she should faint a second time on her way here. A fall on the pavement, without any friendly arm to break it, might have produced even a worse injury than the injury we see. I believe that the only ill-usage to which the poor girl was exposed was the neglect she met with in the work-room." </p>

<p>"You speak very reasonably, I own, sir," said I, not yet quite convinced. "Still, perhaps she may—"</p><pb/>

<p>"My poor girl, I told you not to hope," said the doctor, interrupting me. He went to Mary, and lifted up her eyelids, and looked at her eyes while he spoke, then added: "If you still doubt how she came by that blow, do not encourage the idea that any words of hers will ever enlighten you. She will never speak again." </p>

<p>"Not dead! O, sir, don't say she's dead!" </p>

<p>"She is dead to pain and sorrow—dead to speech and recognition. There is more animation in the life of the feeblest insect that flies, than in the life that is left in her. When you look at her now, try to think that she is in Heaven. That is the best comfort I can give you, after telling the hard truth." </p>

<p>I did not believe him. I could not believe him. So long as she breathed at all, so long I was resolved to hope. Soon after the doctor was gone, Sally came in again, and found me listening (if I may call it so) at Mary's lips. She went to where my little hand-glass hangs against the wall, took it down, and gave it to me. </p>

<p>"See if the breath marks it," she said. </p>

<p>Yes; her breath did mark it, but very faintly. Sally cleaned the glass with her apron, and gave it back to me. As she did so, she half stretched out her hand to Mary's face, but drew it in again suddenly, as if she was afraid of soiling Mary's delicate skin with her hand, horny fingers. Going out, she stopped at the foot of the bed, and scraped away a little patch of mud that was on one of Mary's shoes. </p>

<p>"I always used to clean 'em for her," said Sally, "to save her hands from getting blacked. May I take 'em off now, and clean 'em again?" </p>

<p>I nodded my head, for my heart was too heavy to speak. Sally took the shoes off with a slow, awkward tenderness, and went out. </p>

<p>An hour or more must have passed, when, putting the glass over her lips again, I saw no mark on it. I held it closer and closer. I dulled it accidentally with my own breath, and cleaned it. I held it over her again. O, Mary, Mary, the doctor was right! I ought to have only thought of you in Heaven! </p>

<p>Dead, without a word, without a sign,—without even a look to tell the true story of the blow that killed her! I could not call to anybody, I could not cry, I could not so much as put the glass down and give her a kiss for the last time. I don't know how long I had sat there with my eyes burning, and my hands deadly cold, when Sally came in with the shoes cleaned, and carried carefully in her apron for fear of a soil touching them. At the sight of that—</p>

<p>I can write no more. My tears drop so

fast on the paper that I can see nothing. </p>

<p>March 12th. She died on the afternoon of the eighth. On the morning of the ninth, I wrote, as in duty bound, to her stepmother, at Hammersmith. There was no answer. I wrote again: my letter was returned to me this morning, unopened. For all that woman cares, Mary might be buried with a pauper's funeral. But this shall never be, if I pawn everything about me, down to the very gown that is on my back. The bare thought of Mary being buried by the workhouse gave me the spirit to dry my eyes, and go to the undertaker's, and tell him how I was placed. I said, if he would get me an estimate of all that would have to be paid, from first to last, for the cheapest decent funeral that could be had, I would undertake to raise the money. He gave me the estimate, written in this way, like a common bill:

<list>  
<item>A walking funeral complete . . 1 13 8</item>  
<item>Vestry . . . . . 0 4 4</item>  
<item>Rector . . . . . 0 4 4</item>  
<item>Clerk . . . . . 0 1 0 </item>  
<item>Sexton . . . . . 0 1 0 </item>  
<item>Beadle . . . . . 0 1 0 </item>  
<item>Bell . . . . . 0 1 0 </item>  
<item>Six feet of ground . . . . 0 2 0</item>  
<item> \_\_\_\_\_ </item>  
<item> Total . . £2 8 4 </item>  
</list></p>

<p>If I had the heart to give any thought to it, I should be inclined to wish that the Church could afford to do without so many small charges for burying poor people, to whose friends even shillings are of consequence. But it is useless to complain; the money must be raised at once. The charitable doctor—a poor man himself, or he would not be living in our neighbourhood—has subscribed ten shillings towards the expenses;



and the coroner, when the inquest was over, added five more. Perhaps others may assist me. If not, I have fortunately clothes and furniture of my own to pawn. And I must set about parting with them without delay; for the funeral is to be to-morrow, the thirteenth. The funeral—Mary's funeral! It is well that the straits and difficulties I am in, keep my mind on the stretch. If I had leisure to grieve, where should I find the courage to face to-morrow?</p>

<p>Thank God, they did not want me at the inquest. The verdict given—with the doctor, the policeman, and two persons from the place where she worked, for witnesses—was Accidental Death. The end of the cravat was produced, and the coroner said that it was certainly enough to suggest suspicion; but the jury, in the absence of any positive evidence, held to the doctor's notion that she had fainted and fallen down, and so got the blow on her temple. They reprov'd the people where Mary worked for letting her go home alone, without so much as a drop of brandy to support her, after she had fallen into a swoon from exhaustion before their eyes. The coroner added, on his own account, that he thought the reproof was thoroughly deserved. After that, the cravat-end was given back to me, by my own </p><pb/>

<p>desire; the police saying that they could make no investigations with such a slight clue to guide them.

<phenom type="supernatural">

<providence>

<rolePhenom type="solvingCrime">

<treatment type="positive">

They may think so, and the coroner, and doctor, and jury may think so; but, in spite of all that has passed, I am now more firmly persuaded than ever that there

is some dreadful mystery in connection with that blow on my poor lost Mary's temple which has yet to be revealed, and which may come to be discovered through this very fragment of a cravat that I found in her hand. I cannot give any good reason for why I think so; but I know that if I had been one of the jury at the inquest, nothing should have induced me to consent to such a verdict as Accidental Death.

</treatment>  
</rolePhenom>  
</providence>  
</phenom>  
</p>

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</div>

<div type="chapter" n="2">  
<head>THE DIARY OF ANNE RODWAY.</head>  
<head>IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER THE SECOND.</head>  
<p>1840. March 12th (continued). After I had pawned my things, and had begged a small advance of wages at the place where I work, to make up what was still wanting to pay for Mary's funeral, I thought I might have had a little quiet time to prepare myself as I best could for to-morrow. But this was not to be. When I got home, the landlord met me in the passage. He was in liquor, and more brutal and pitiless in his way of looking and speaking than ever I saw him before. </p>

<p>"So you're going to be fool enough to pay for her funeral, are you?" were his first words to me. </p>

<p>I was too weary and heart-sick to answer—I only tried to get by him to my own door. </p>

<p>"If you can pay for burying her," he went on, putting himself in front of me, "you can

pay her lawful debts. She owes me three weeks' rent. Suppose you raise the money for that next, and hand it over to me? I'm not joking, I can promise you. I mean to have my rent; and if somebody don't pay it, I'll have her body seized and sent to the workhouse!" </p>

<p>Between terror and disgust, I thought I should have dropped to the floor at his feet. But I determined not to let him see how he had horrified me, if I could possibly control myself. So I mustered resolution enough to answer that I did not believe the law gave him any such wicked power over the dead. </p>

<p>"I'll teach you what the law is!" he broke in; "you'll raise money to bury her like a born lady, when she's died in my debt, will you! And you think I'll let my rights be trampled upon like that, do you? See if I do! I give you till to-night to think about it. If I don't have the three weeks she owes before to-morrow, dead or alive, she shall go to the workhouse!" </p>

<p>This time I managed to push by him, and get to my own room, and lock the door in his face. As soon as I was alone, I fell into a breathless, suffocating fit of crying that seemed to be shaking me to pieces. But there was no good and no help in tears; I did my best to calm myself, after a little while, and tried to think who I should run </p>  
<pb/>

<p>to for help and protection. The doctor was the first friend I thought of; but I knew he was always out seeing his patients of an afternoon. The beadle was the next person who came into my head. He had the look of being a very dignified, unapproachable kind of man when he came about the inquest;

but he talked to me a little then, and said I was a good girl, and seemed, I really thought, to pity me. So to him I determined to apply in my great danger and distress. </p>

<p>Most fortunately I found him at home. When I told him of the landlord's infamous threats, and of the misery I was in in consequence of them, he rose up with a stamp of his foot, and sent for his gold-laced cocked-hat that he wears on Sundays, and his long cane with the ivory top to it.</p>

<p>"I'll give it him," said the beadle. "Come along with me, my dear. I think I told you you were a good girl at the inquest—if I didn't, I tell you so now. I'll give it to him! Come along with me." </p>

<p>And he went out, striding on with his cocked-hat and his great cane, and I followed him. </p>

<p>"Landlord!" he cries the moment he gets into the passage, with a thump of his cane on the floor. "Landlord!" with a look all round him as if he was king of England calling to a beast, "come out!" </p>

<p>The moment the landlord came out and saw who it was, his eye fixed on the cocked-hat and he turned as pale as ashes. </p>

<p>"How dare you frighten this poor girl?" said the beadle. "How dare you bully her at this sorrowful time with threatening to do what you know you can't do? How dare you be a cowardly, bullying, braggadocio of an unmanly landlord? Don't talk to me—I won't hear you! I'll pull you up, sir! If you say another word to the young woman, I'll pull you up before the authorities of this metropolitan parish! I've had my eye on you, and the authorities have had their eye on

you, and the rector has had his eye on you. We don't like the look of your small shop round the corner; we don't like the look of some of the customers who deal at it; we don't like disorderly characters; and we don't by any manner of means like you. Go away! Leave the young woman alone! Hold your tongue, or I'll pull you up! If he says another word, or intereferes with you again, my dear, come and tell me; and, as sure as he's a bullying, unmanly, braggadocio of a landlord, I'll pull him up!" </p>

<p>With those words, the beadle gave a loud cough to clear his throat, and another thump of his cane on the floor—and so went striding out again before I could open my lips to thank him. The landlord slunk back into his room without a word. I was left alone and unmolested at last, to strengthen myself for the hard trial of my poor love's funeral to-morrow. </p>

<p>March 13th. It is all over. A week ago, her head rested on my bosom. It is laid in the churchyard now—the fresh earth lies heavy over her grave. I and my dearest friend, the sister of my love, are parted in this world for ever. </p>

<p>I followed her funeral alone through the cruel, bustling streets. Sally, I thought, might have offered to go with me; but she never so much as came into my room. I did not like to think badly of her for this, and I am glad I restrained myself—for, when we got into the churchyard, among the two or three people who were standing by the open grave, I saw Sally, in her ragged grey shawl and her patched black bonnet. She did not seem to notice me till the last words of the service had been read, and the clergyman had gone away. Then she came up and spoke to me. </p>

<p>"I couldn't follow along with you," she said, looking at her ragged shawl; "for I hav'nt a decent suit of clothes to walk in. I wish I could get vent in crying for her, like you; but I can't; all the crying's been drudged and starved out of me, long ago. Don't you think about lighting your fire when you get home. I'll do that, and get you a drop of tea to comfort you." </p>

<p>She seemed on the point of saying a kind word or two more, when, seeing the Beadle coming towards me, she drew back, as if she was afraid of him, and left the churchyard. </p>

<p>"Here's my subscription towards the funeral," said the Beadle, giving me back his shilling fee. "Don't say anything about it, for it mightn't be approved of in a business point of view, if it came to some people's ears. Has the landlord said anything more to you? No, I thought not. He's too polite a man to give me the trouble of pulling him up. Don't stop crying here, my dear. Take the advice of a man familiar with funerals, and go home." </p>

<p>I tried to take his advice; but it seemed like deserting Mary to go away when all the rest forsook her. I waited about till the earth was thrown in, and the man had left the place—then I returned to the grave. Oh, how bare and cruel it was, without so much as a bit of green turf to soften it! Oh, how much harder it seemed to live than to die, when I stood alone, looking at the heavy piled-up lumps of clay, and thinking of what was hidden beneath them! </p>

<p>I was driven home by my own despairing thoughts. The sight of Sally lighting the fire in my room eased my heart a little.

When she was gone, I took up Robert's letter again to keep my mind employed on the only subject in the world that has any interest for it now. This fresh reading increased the doubts I had already felt relative to his having remained in America after writing to me. My grief and forlornness have made a strange alteration in my former feelings about his coming back. I seem to have lost all my  
<pb/>

<p>prudence and self-denial, and to care so little about his poverty, and so much about himself that the prospect of his return is really the only comforting thought I have now to support me. I know this is weak in me, and that his coming back poor can lead to no good result for either of us. But he is the only living being left me to love, and—I can't explain it—but I want to put my arms round his neck and tell him about Mary. </p>

<p>March 14th. I locked up the end of the cravat in my writing-desk. No change in the dreadful suspicions that the bare sight of it rouses in me. I tremble if I so much as touch it. </p>

<p>March 15th, 16th, 17th. Work, work, work. If I don't knock up, I shall be able to pay back the advance in another week; and then, with a little pinching in my daily expenses, I may succeed in saving a shilling or two to get some turf to put over Mary's grave—and perhaps even a few flowers besides, to grow round it. </p>

<p>March 18th. Thinking of Robert all day long. Does this mean that he is really coming back? If it does, reckoning the distance he is at from New York, and the time ships take to get to England, I might see him by the end of April or the beginning of May. </p>

<p>March 19th.  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
 <dream type="premonitory">  
 <context type="recipient" "woman">  
 <rolePhenom type="solvingCrime">

I don't remember my mind  
running once on the end of the cravat yester-  
day, and I am certain I never looked at it.  
Yet I had the strangest dream concerning it  
at night. I thought it was lengthened into a  
long clue, like the silken thread that led to  
Rosamund's Bower. I thought I took hold  
of it, and followed it a little way, and then  
got frightened and tried to go back, but  
found that I was obliged, in spite of myself,  
to go on. It led me through a place like the  
Valley of the Shadow of Death, in an old  
print I remember in my mother's copy of the  
Pilgrim's Progress. I seemed to be months  
and months following it, without any respite,  
till at last it brought me, on a sudden, face  
to face with an angel whose eyes were like  
Mary's. He said to me, "Go on, still; the  
truth is at the end, waiting for you to find it."  
I burst out crying, for the angel had Mary's  
voice as well as Mary's eyes, and woke with  
my heart throbbing and my cheeks all wet.

<response type="uncertainty">

What is the meaning of this? Is it always  
superstitious, I wonder, to believe that  
dreams may come true?

</response>  
 </rolePhenom>  
 </context>  
 </dream>  
</phenom>

</p>

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<p>\* \* \* \* \*</p>

<p>April 30th. I have found it! God knows  
to what results it may lead; but it is as  
certain as that I am sitting here before my



journal, that I have found the cravat from which the end in Mary's hand was torn! I discovered it last night; but the flutter I was in, and the nervousness and uncertainty I felt, prevented me from noting down this most extraordinary and most unexpected event at the time when it happened. Let me try if I can preserve the memory of it in writing now. </p>

<p>I was going home rather late from where I work, when I suddenly remembered that I had forgotten to buy myself any candles the evening before, and that I should be left in the dark if I did not manage to rectify this mistake in some way. The shop close to me, at which I usually deal, would be shut up, I knew, before I could get to it; so I determined to go into the first place I passed where candles were sold. This turned out to be a small shop with two counters, which did business on one side in the general grocery way, and on other in the rag and bottle and old iron line. There were several customers on the grocery side when I went in, so I waited on the empty rag side till I could be served. Glancing about me here at the worthless-looking things by which I was surrounded, my eye was caught by a bundle of rags lying on the counter, as if they had just been brought in and left there. From mere idle curiosity, I looked close at the rags, and saw among them something like an old cravat. I took it up directly, and held it under a gas-light. The pattern was blurred lilac lines, running across and across the dingy black ground in a trellis-work form. I looked at the ends: one of them was torn off. </p>

<p>How I managed to hide the breathless surprise into which this discovery threw me, I cannot say; but I certainly contrived to steady my voice somehow, and to ask for my

candles calmly, when the man and woman serving in the shop, having disposed of their other customers, inquired of me what I wanted. As the man took down the candles, my brain was all in a whirl with trying to think how I could get possession of the old cravat without exciting any suspicion. Chance, and a little quickness on my part in taking advantage of it, put the object within my reach in a moment. The man, having counted out the candles, asked the woman for some paper to wrap them in. She produced a piece much too small and flimsy for the purpose, and declared, when he called for something better, that the day's supply of stout paper was all exhausted. He flew into a rage with her for managing so badly. Just as they were beginning to quarrel violently, I stepped back to the rag-counter, took the old cravat carelessly out of the bundle, and said, in as light a tone as I could possibly assume—

"Come, come! don't let my candles be the cause of hard words between you. Tie this ragged old thing round them with a bit of string, and I shall carry them home quite comfortably."

The man seemed disposed to insist on the stout paper being produced; but the woman, as if she was glad of an opportunity of spiting him, snatched the candles away, and tied them up in a moment in the torn old cravat. I was afraid he would have struck her before

my face, he seemed in such a fury; but, fortunately, another customer came in, and obliged him to put his hands to peaceable and proper uses.

"Quite a bundle of all-sorts on the opposite counter there," I said to the woman, as I paid her for the candles.

<p>"Yes, and all hoarded up for sale by a poor creature with a lazy brute of a husband, who lets his wife do all the work while he spends all the money," answered the woman, with a malicious look at the man by her side. </p>

<p>"He can't surely have much money to spend, if his wife has no better work to do than picking up rags," said I. </p>

<p>"It isn't her fault if she hasn't got no better," says the woman, rather angrily. "She is ready to turn her hand to anything. Charing, washing, laying-out, keeping empty houses—nothing comes amiss to her. She's my half-sister; and I think I ought to know." </p>

<p>"Did you say she went out charing?" I asked, making believe as if I knew of somebody who might employ her. </p>

<p>"Yes, of course I did," answered the woman; "and if you can put a job into her hands, you'll be doing a good turn to a poor hard-working creature as wants it. She lives down the Mews here to the right—name of Horlick, and as honest a woman as ever stood in shoe-leather. Now then, ma'am, what for you?" </p>

<p>Another customer came in just then, and occupied her attention. I left the shop, passed the turning that led down to the Mews, looked up at the name of the street, so as to know how to find it again, and then ran home as fast as I could. Perhaps it was the remembrance of my strange dream striking me on a sudden, or perhaps it was the shock of the discovery I had just made, but I began to feel frightened without knowing why, and anxious to be under shelter in

my own room. </p>

<p>If Robert should come back! O, what a relief and help it would be now if Robert should come back! </p>

<p>May 1st. On getting in-doors last night, the first thing I did, after striking a light, was to take the ragged cravat off the candles and smooth it out on the table. I then took the end that had been in poor Mary's hand out of my writing-desk, and smoothed that out too. It matched the torn side of the cravat exactly. I put them together, and satisfied myself that there was not a doubt of it. </p>

<p>Not once did I close my eyes that night.  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
    <providence type="called">  
A kind of fever got possession of me—a vehement yearning to go on from this first discovery and find out more, no matter what the risk might be. The cravat now really became, to my mind, the clue that I thought I saw in my dream—the clue that I was resolved to follow. I determined to go to Mrs. Horlick this evening on my return from work.  
    </providence>  
</phenom>  
</p>

<p>I found the Mews easily. A crook-backed dwarf of a man was lounging at the corner of it smoking his pipe. Not liking his looks, I did not enquire of him where Mrs. Horlick lived, but went down the Mews till I met with a woman, and asked her. She directed me to the right number. I knocked at the door, and Mrs. Horlick herself—a lean, ill-tempered, miserable-looking woman—answered it. I told her at once that I had come to ask what her terms were for charing.

She stared at me for a moment, then answered my question civilly enough. </p>

<p>"You look surprised at a stranger like me finding you out," I said. "I first came to hear of you last night from a relation of yours, in rather an odd way." And I told her all that had happened in the chandler's shop, bringing in the bundle of rugs, and the circumstance of my carrying home the candles in the old torn cravat, as often as possible. </p>

<p>"It's the first time I've heard of anything belonging to him turning out any use," said Mrs. Horlick, bitterly. </p>

<p>"What, the spoilt old neck-handkerchief belonged to your husband, did it?" said I at a venture. </p>

<p>"Yes; I pitched his rotten rag of a neck-anderkercher into the bundle along with the rest; and I wish I could have pitched him in after it," said Mrs. Horlick. "I'd sell him cheap at any rag-shop. There he stands, smoking his pipe at the end of the Mews, out of work for weeks past, the idlest hump-backed pig in all London!" </p>

<p>She pointed to the man whom I had passed on entering the Mews. My cheeks began to burn and my knees to tremble; for I knew that in tracing the cravat to its owner I was advancing a step towards a fresh discovery. I wished Mrs. Horlick good evening, and said I would write and mention the day on which I wanted her. </p>

<p>What I had just been told put thought into my mind that I was afraid to follow out. I have heard people talk of being light-headed, and I felt as I have heard them say they felt, when I retraced my steps up the Mews.

My head got giddy, and my eyes seemed able to see nothing but the figure of the little crook-back man still smoking his pipe in his former place. I could see nothing but that; I could think of nothing but the mark of the blow on my poor lost Mary's temple. I know that I must have been light-headed, for as I came close to the crook-backed man,

<phenom type="supernatural">

<handFate>

<context medium="woman" "detective">

I stopped without meaning it.

The minute before, there had been no idea in me of speaking to him. I did not know how to speak, or in what way it would be safest to begin. And yet, the moment I came face to face with him something out of myself seemed to stop me, and to make me speak, without considering before-hand, without

</p>

<p>thinking of consequences, without knowing, I may almost say, what words I was uttering till the instant when they rose to my lips.

</context>

</handFate>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>"When your old neck-tie was torn, did you know that one end of it went to the rag-shop and the other fell into my hands?" I said these bold words to him suddenly, and, as it seemed, without my own will taking any part in them. </p>

<p>He started, stared, changed colour. He was too much amazed by my sudden speaking to find an answer for me. When he did open his lips it was to say rather to himself than me: </p>

<p>"You're not the girl." </p>

<p>"No," I said, with a strange choaking at my heart. "I'm her friend." </p>

<p>By this time he had recovered his surprise, and he seemed to be aware that he had let out more than he ought. </p>

<p>"You may be anybody's friend you like," he said brutally, "so long as you don't come jabbering nonsense here. I don't know you, I don't understand your jokes." He turned quickly away from me when he had said the last words. He had never once looked fairly at me since I first spoke to him. </p>

<p>Was it his hand that had struck the blow? </p>

<p>I had only sixpence in my pocket, but I took it out and followed him. If it had been a five-pound note, I should have done the same in the state I was in then. </p>

<p>"Would a pot of beer help you to understand me?" I said, and offered him the sixpence. </p>

<p>"A pot ain't no great things," he answered, taking the sixpence doubtfully. </p>

<p>"It may lead to something better," I said. </p>

<p>His eyes began to twinkle, and he came close to me. Oh, how my legs trembled!—how my head swam! </p>

<p>"This is all in a friendly way, is it?" he asked in a whisper. </p>

<p>I nodded my head. At that moment, I

could not have spoken for worlds. </p>

<p>"Friendly, of course," he went on to himself, "or there would have been a policeman in it. She told you, I suppose, that I wasn't the man?" </p>

<p>I nodded my head again. It was all I could do to keep myself standing upright. </p>

<p>"I suppose it's a case of threatening to have him up, and making him settle it quietly for a pound or two? How much for me if you lay hold of him?" </p>

<p>"Half." I began to be afraid that he would suspect something if I was still silent. The wretch's eyes twinkled again, and he came yet closer. </p>

<p>"I drove him to the Red Lion, corner of Dodd Street and Rudgey Street. The house was shut up, but he was let in at the Jug-and-Bottle-door, like a man who was known to the landlord. That's as much as I can tell you, and I'm certain I'm right. He was the last fare I took up at night. The next morning master gave me the sack. Said I cribbed his corn and his fares. I wish I had!" </p>

<p>I gathered from this that the crook-backed man had been a cab-driver. </p>

<p>"Why don't you speak," he asked suspiciously. "Has she been telling you a pack of lies about me? What did she say when she came home?" </p>

<p>"What ought she to have said?" </p>

<p>"She ought to have said my fare was drunk, and she came in the way as he was going to get into the cab. That's what she



ought to have said to begin with." </p>

<p>"But, after?" </p>

<p>"Well, after, my fare by way of larking with her, puts out his leg for to trip her up, and she stumbles and catches at me for to save herself, and tears off one of the limp ends of my rotten old tie. 'What do you mean by that, you brute,' says she, turning round as soon as she was steady on her legs, again, to my fare. Says my fare to her, 'I means to teach you to keep a civil tongue in your head. And he ups with his fist, and— What's come to you, now? What are you looking at me like that, for? How do you think a man of my size was to take her part, against a man big enough to have eaten me up? Look as much as you like, in my place you would have done what I done—drew off when he shook his fist at you, and swore he'd be the death of you if you didn't start your horse in no time.'" </p>

<p>I saw he was working himself into a rage; but I could not, if my life had depended on it, have stood near him, or looked at him any longer. I just managed to stammer out that I had been walking a long way, and that, not being used to much exercise, I felt faint and giddy with fatigue. He only changed from angry to sulky, when I made that excuse. I got a little further away from him, and then added, that if he would be at the Mews entrance the next evening, I should have something more to say and something more to give him. He grumbled a few suspicious words in answer, about doubting whether he should trust me to come back. Fortunately, at that moment, a policeman passed on the opposite side of the way, he slunk down the Mews immediately, and I was free to make my escape. </p>

<p>How I got home I can't say, except that I think I ran the greater part of the way. Sally opened the door, and asked if anything was the matter the moment she saw my face. I answered, "Nothing! nothing!" She stopped me as I was going into my room, and said, </p>

<p>"Smooth your hair a bit, and put your collar straight. There's a gentleman in there waiting for you." </p>

<p>My heart gave one great bound—I knew </p>  
<pb/>

<p>who it was in an instant, and rushed into the room like a mad woman. </p>

<p>"Oh, Robert! Robert!" </p>

<p>All my heart went out to him in those two little words. </p>

<p>"Good God, Anne! has anything happened? Are you ill?" </p>

<p>"Mary! my poor, lost, murdered, dear, dear Mary!" </p>

<p>That was all I could say before I fell on his breast. </p>

<p>May 2nd. Misfortunes and disappointments have saddened him a little; but towards me he is unaltered. He is as good, as kind, as gently and truly affectionate as ever. I believe no other man in the world could have listened to the story of Mary's death with such tenderness and pity as he. Instead of cutting me short anywhere, he drew me on to tell more than I had intended; and his first generous words, when I had done, were to assure me that he would see himself to the grass being laid and the flowers planted on

Mary's grave. I could have almost gone on my knees and worshipped him when he made me that promise. </p>

<p>Surely, this best, and kindest, and noblest of men cannot always be unfortunate! My cheeks burn when I think that he has come back with only a few pounds in his pocket, after all his hard and honest struggles to do well in America. They must be bad people there when such a man as Robert cannot get on among them. He now talks calmly and resignedly of trying for any one of the lowest employments by which a man can earn his bread honestly in this great city—he, who knows French, who can write so beautifully! Oh, if the people who have places to give away only knew Robert as well as I do, what a salary he would have, what a post he would be chosen to occupy! </p>

<p>I am writing these lines alone, while he has gone to the Mews to treat with the dastardly, heartless wretch with whom I spoke yesterday. He says the creature—I won't call him a man—must be humoured and kept deceived about poor Mary's end, in order that we may discover and bring to justice the monster whose drunken blow was the death of her. I shall know no ease of mind till her murderer is secured, and till I am certain that he will be made to suffer for his crimes. I wanted to go with Robert to the Mews; but he said it was best that he should carry out the rest of the investigation alone; for my strength and resolution had been too hardly taxed already. He said more words in praise of me for what I have been able to do up to this time, which I am almost ashamed to write down my own pen. Besides, there is no need—praise from his lips is one of the things that I can trust my memory to preserve to the latest day of my life. </p>

<p>May 3rd. Robert very long last night before he came back to tell me what he had done. He easily recognised the hunchback at the corner of the mews by my description of him; but he found it a hard matter, even with the help of money, to overcome the cowardly wretch's distrust of him as a stranger and a man. However, when this had been accomplished, the main difficulty was conquered. The hunchback, excited by the promise of more money, went at once to the Red Lion to enquire about the person whom he had driven there in his cab. Robert followed him, and waited at the corner of the street. The tidings brought by the cabman were of the most unexpected kind. The murderer—I can write of him by no other name—had fallen ill on the very night when he was driven to the Red Lion, had taken to his bed there and then, and was still confined to it at that very moment. His disease was of a kind that is brought on by excessive drinking, and that affects the mind as well as the body. The people at the public-house called it the Horrors. Hearing these things, Robert determined to see if he could not find out something more for himself, by going and enquiring at the public-house, in the character of one of the friends of the sick man in bed up-stairs. He made two important discoveries. First, he found out the name and address of the doctor in attendance. Secondly, he entrapped the barman into mentioning the murderous wretch by his name. This last discovery adds an unspeakably fearful interest to the dreadful catastrophe of Mary's death. Noah Truscott, as she told me herself in the last conversation I ever had with her, was the name of the man whose drunken example ruined her father, and Noah Truscott is also the name of the man whose drunken fury killed her.

<phenom type="supernatural">

<providence type="called">

<role type="solvingCrime">

<context type="subject" "man" "woman" "detective">

There is something that makes one shudder, something fatal and supernatural in this awful fact. Robert agrees with me that the hand of Providence must have guided my steps to that shop from which all the discoveries since made took their rise. He says he believes we are the instruments of effecting a righteous retribution; and, if he spends his last farthing, he will have the investigation brought to its full end in a court of justice.

</context>

</role>

</providence>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>May 4th. Robert went to-day to consult a lawyer whom he knew of former times. The lawyer much interested, though not so seriously impressed as he ought to have been, by the story of Mary's death and of the events that have followed it. He gave Robert a confidential letter to take to the doctor in attendance on the double-dyed villain at the Red Lion. Robert left the letter, and called again and saw the doctor, who said his patient was getting better, and would most likely be up again in ten days or a fortnight. This statement Robert communicated to the lawyer, and the lawyer has undertaken to have the public-house properly watched, and the hunchback (who is the most important witness) sharply looked after for the next fortnight, or longer if necessary. </p>

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<p>Here, then, the progress of this dreadful business stops for a while. </p>

<p>May 5th. Robert has got a little temporary employment in copying for his friend

the lawyer. I am working harder than ever at my needle to make up for the time that has been lost lately. </p>

<p>May 6th. To-day was Sunday, and Robert proposed that we should go and look at Mary's grave. He, who forgets nothing where a kindness is to be done, has found time to perform the promise he made to me on the night when we first met. The grave is already, by his orders, covered with turf, and planted round with shrubs. Some flowers, and a low headstone, are to be added to make the place look worthier of my poor lost darling who is beneath it. Oh, I hope I shall live long after I am married to Robert! I want so much time to show him all my gratitude! </p>

<p>\* \* \* \* \*</p>

<p>May 20th. A hard trial to my courage to-day. I have given evidence at the police-office, and have seen the monster who murdered her. </p>

<p>I could only look at him once. I could just see that he was a giant in size, and that he kept his dull, lowering, bestial face turned towards the witness-box, and his bloodshot, vacant eyes staring on me. For an instant I tried to confront that look; for an instant I kept my attention fixed on him—on his blotched face, on the short grizzled hair above it—on his knotty, murderous right hand hanging loose over the bar in front of him, like the paw of a wild beast over the edge of his den. Then the horror of him—the double horror of confronting him, in the first place, and afterwards of seeing that he was an old man—overcame me; and I turned away faint, sick, and shuddering. I never faced him again; and at the end of my evidence, Robert considerably took me out. </p>

<p>When we met once more at the end of the examination, Robert told me that the prisoner never spoke, and never changed his position. He was either fortified by the cruel composure of the savage, or his faculties had not yet thoroughly recovered from the disease that had so lately shaken them. The magistrate seemed to doubt if he was in his right mind; but the evidence of the medical man relieved his uncertainty, and the prisoner was committed for trial on a charge of manslaughter. </p>

<p>Why not on a charge of murder? Robert explained the law to me when I asked that question. I accepted the explanation, but it did not satisfy me. Mary Mallinson was killed by a blow from the hand of Noah Trustcott. That is murder in the sight of God. Why not murder in the sight of the law also? </p>

<p>\* \* \* \* \* </p>

<p>June 18th. To-morrow is the day appointed for the trial at the Old Bailey. Before sunset this evening I went to look at Mary's grave. The turf has grown so green since I saw it last; and the flowers are springing up so prettily. A bird was perched dressing his feathers, on the low white headstone that bears the inscription of her name and age. I did not go near enough to disturb the little creature. He looked innocent and pretty on the grave, as Mary herself was in her life-time. When he flew away, I went and sat for a little by the headstone, and read the mournful lines on it. Oh, my love, my love! what harm or wrong had you ever done in this world, that you should die at eighteen by a blow from a drunkard's hand? </p>

<p>June 19th. The trial. My experience of

what happened at it is limited, like my experience of the examination at the police-office, to the time occupied in giving my own evidence. They made me say much more than I said before the magistrate. Between examination and cross-examination, I had to go into almost all the particulars about poor Mary and her funeral that I have written in this journal; the jury listening to every word I spoke with the most anxious attention. At the end, the judge said a few words to me approving of my conduct, and then there was a clapping of hands among the people in court. I was so agitated and excited that I trembled all over when they let me go out into the air again. I looked at the prisoner both when I entered the witness-box and when I left it. The lowering brutality of his face was unchanged, but his faculties seemed to be more alive and observant than they were at the police-office. A frightful blue change passed over his face, and he drew his breath so heavily that the gasps were <sic>distictly</sic><corr>distinctly</corr> audible, while I mentioned Mary by name, and described the mark of the blow on her temple. When they asked me if I knew anything of the prisoner, and I answered that I only knew what Mary herself had told me about his having been her father's ruin, he gave a kind of groan, and struck both his hands heavily on the dock. And when I passed beneath him on my way out of the court, he leaned over suddenly, whether to speak to me or to strike me I can't say, for he was immediately made to stand upright again by the turnkeys on either side of him. While the evidence proceeded (as Robert described it to me),  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
the signs that he was suffering under superstitious terror became more and more apparent; until, at last, just as the lawyer appointed to defend him was rising to speak,



he suddenly cried out, in a voice that startled every one, up to the very judge on the bench, "Stop!" There was a pause, and all eyes looked at him. The perspiration was pouring over his face like water, and he made strange, uncouth signs with his hands to the judge opposite. "Stop all this!" he cried again; "I've been the ruin of the father and the death of the child. Hang

<pb/>

me before I do more harm! Hang me, for God's sake, out of the way!"

</phenom>

As soon as the shock produced by this extraordinary interruption had subsided, he was removed, and there followed a long discussion about whether he was of sound mind or not. The point was left to the jury to decide by their verdict. They found him guilty of the charge of manslaughter, without the excuse of insanity. He was brought up again, and condemned to transportation for life. All he did on hearing the sentence was to reiterate his desperate words, "Hang me before I do more harm! Hang me, for God's sake, out of the way<sic>?</sic><corr>!</corr>"

<p>June 20th. I made yesterday's entry in sadness of heart, and I have not been better in my spirits to-day. It is something to have brought the murderer to the punishment that he deserves. But the knowledge that this most righteous act of retribution is accomplished, brings no consolation with it. The law does indeed punish Noah Truscott for his crime; but can it raise up Mary Mallinson from her last resting-place in the churchyard? </p>

<p>While writing of the law, I ought to record that the heartless wretch who allowed Mary to be struck down in his presence with-

out making any attempt to defend her, is not likely to escape with perfect impunity. The policeman who looked after him to insure his attendance at the trial, discovered that he had committed past offences, for which the law can make him answer. A summons was executed upon him, and he was taken before the magistrate the moment he left the court after giving his evidence. </p>

<!--extra break between paragraphs-->  
<p>I had just written these few lines, and was closing my journal, when there came a knock at the door. I answered it, thinking Robert had called in his way home to say good-night, and found myself face to face with a strange gentleman, who immediately asked for Anne Rodway. On hearing that I was the person inquired for, he requested five minutes' conversation with me. I showed him into the little empty room at the back of the house, and waited, rather surprised and fluttered, to hear what he had to say. </p>

<p>He was a dark man, with a serious manner, and a short stern way of speaking. I was certain that he was a stranger, and yet there seemed something in his face not unfamiliar to me. He began by taking a newspaper from his pocket, and asking me if I was the person who had given evidence at the trial of Noah Truscott on a charge of manslaughter. I answered immediately that I was. </p>

<p>"I have been for nearly two years in London seeking Mary Mallinson, and always seeking her in vain," he said. "The first and only news I have had of her I found in the newspaper report of the trial yesterday." </p>

<p>He still spoke calmly, but there was something in the look in his eyes which showed me that he was suffering in spirit. A sudden

nervousness overcame me, and I was obliged to sit down. </p>

<p>"You knew Mary Mallinson, sir?" I asked, as quietly as I could. </p>

<p>"I am her brother." </p>

<p>I clasped my hands and hid my face in despair. O! the bitterness of heart with which I heard him say those simple words! </p>

<p>"You were very kind to her," said the calm, tearless man. "In her name and for her sake, I thank you." </p>

<p>"O! sir," I said, "why did you never write to her when you were in foreign parts?"</p>

<p>"I wrote often," he answered, "but each of my letters contained a remittance of money. Did Mary tell you she had a step-mother? If she did, you may guess why none of my letters were allowed to reach her. I now know that this woman robbed my sister. Has she lied in telling me that she was never informed of Mary's place of abode?" </p>

<p>I remembered that Mary had never communicated with her step-mother after the separation, and could therefore assure him that the woman had spoken the truth. </p>

<p>He paused for a moment, after that, and sighed. Then he took out a pocket-book and said: </p>

<p>"I have already arranged for the payment of any legal expenses that may have been incurred by the trial; but I have still to reimburse you for the funeral charges which you so generously defrayed. Excuse

my speaking bluntly on this subject, I am accustomed to look on all matters where money is concerned purely as matters of business." </p>

<p>I saw that he was taking several bank-notes out of the pocket-book, and stopped him. </p>

<p>"I will gratefully receive back the little money I actually paid, sir, because I am not well off, and it would be an ungracious act of pride in me to refuse it from you," I said. "But I see you handling bank-notes, any one of which is far beyond the amount you have to repay me. Pray put them back, sir. What I did for your poor lost sister, I did from my love and fondness for her. You have thanked me for that; and your thanks are all I can receive." </p>

<p>He had hitherto concealed his feelings, but I saw them now begin to get the better of him. His eyes softened, and he took my hand and squeezed it hard. </p>

<p>"I beg your pardon," he said. "I beg your pardon, with all my heart."</p>

<p>There was silence between us, for I was crying; and I believe, at heart, he was crying too. At last, he dropped my hand, and seemed to change back, by an effort, to his former calmness. </p>

<p>"Is there no one belonging to you to whom </p>  
<pb/>

<p>I can be of service?" he asked. "I see among the witnesses on the trial the name of a young man who appears to have assisted you in the enquiries which led to the prisoner's conviction. Is he a relation?" </p>

<p>"No, sir—at least, not now—but I hope—" </p>

<p>"What?" </p>

<p>"I hope that he may, one day, be the nearest and dearest relation to me that a woman can have." I said those words boldly, because I was afraid of his otherwise taking some wrong view of the connection between Robert and me. </p>

<p>"One day?" he repeated. "One day may be a long time hence." </p>

<p>"We are neither of us well off, sir," I said. "One day, means the day when we are a little richer than we are now." </p>

<p>"Is the young man educated? Can he produce testimonials to his character? Oblige me by writing his name and address down on the back of that card." </p>

<p>When I had obeyed, in a handwriting which I am afraid did me no credit, he took out another card, and gave it to me. </p>

<p>"I shall leave England to-morrow," he said. "There is nothing now to keep me in my own country. If you are ever in any difficulty or distress (which, I pray God, you may never be), apply to my London agent, whose address you have there." He stopped, and looked at me attentively—then took my hand again. "Where is she buried?" he said suddenly, in a quick whisper, turning his head away. </p>

<p>I told him, and added that we had made the grave as beautiful as we could with grass and flowers. </p>

<p>I saw his lips whiten and tremble. </p>

<p>"God bless and reward you!" he said, and drew me towards him quickly and kissed my forehead. I was quite overcome, and sank down and hid my face on the table. When I looked up again he was gone. </p>

<p>\* \* \* \* \*</p>

<p>June 25th, 1841. I write these lines on my wedding morning, when little more than a year has passed since Robert returned to England. </p>

<p>His salary was increased yesterday to one hundred and fifty pounds a-year. If I only knew where Mr. Mallinson was, I would write and tell him of our present happiness. But for the situation which his kindness procured for Robert, we might still have been waiting vainly for the day that has now come. </p>

<p>I am to work at home for the future, and Sally is to help us in our new abode. If Mary could have lived to see this day! I am not ungrateful for my blessings; but, oh, how I miss that sweet face, on this morning of all others! </p>

<p>I got up to-day early enough to go alone to the grave, and to gather the nosegay that now lies before me from the flowers that grow round it. I shall put it in my bosom when Robert comes to fetch me to the church. Mary would have been my bridesmaid if she had lived; and I can't forget Mary, even on my wedding-day. </p>

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## APPENDIX D

### TEI-ENCODED TRANSCRIPTION OF “THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE”

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 <head>VI.</head>  
 <head>THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE.</head>

<p>"WILL you be good enough to tell me how you procured my address?" said Miss Brooke, a little irritably. "I left strict orders that it was to be given to no one."</p>

<p>"I only obtained it with great difficulty from Mr. Dyer; had, in fact, to telegraph three times



before I could get it," answered Mr. Clampe, the individual thus addressed. "I'm sure I'm awfully sorry to break into your holiday in this fashion, but--but pardon me if I say that it seems to be one in little more than name." Here he glanced meaningly at the newspapers, memoranda, and books of reference with which the table at which Loveday sat was strewn. </p>

<p>She gave a little sigh.</p>

<p>"I suppose you are right," she answered; "it is a holiday in little more than name. I verily believe that we hard workers, after a time, lose our capacity for holiday-keeping. I thought I was pining for a week of perfect  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 233</fw>

laziness and sea-breezes, and so I locked up my desk and fled. No sooner, however, do I find myself in full view of that magnificent sea-and-sky picture than I shut my eyes to it, fasten them instead on the daily papers, and set my brains to work, <foreign xml:lang="it" rend="italic">con amore</foreign>, on a ridiculous case that is never likely to come into my hands." </p>

<p>That "magnificent sea-and-sky picture" was one framed by the windows of a room on the fifth floor of the Métropole, at Brighton, whither Loveday, overtaxed in mind and body, had fled for a brief respite from hard work. Here Inspector Clampe, of the Local District Constabulary, had found her out, in order to press the claims of what seemed to him an important case upon her. He was a neat, dapper-looking man, of about fifty, with a manner less brusque and business-like than that of most men in his profession.  
</p>

<p>"Oh, pray drop the ridiculous case," he said earnestly, "and set to work, '<foreign xml:lang="it" rend="italic">con amore</foreign>,'<!--italic Latin--> upon another, far from ridiculous, and most interesting." </p>

<p>"I'm not sure that it would interest me one quarter so much as the ridiculous one." </p>

<p>"Don't be sure till you've heard the particulars. Listen to this." Here the inspector <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">234 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

took a newspaper-cutting from his pocket-book and read aloud as follows:

<!--block quote-->"A cheque, the property of the Rev. Charles Turner, Vicar of East Downes, has been stolen under somewhat peculiar circumstances. It appears that the reverend gentleman was suddenly called from home by the death of a relative, and thinking he might possibly be away some little time, he left with his wife four blank cheques, signed, for her to fill in as required. They were made payable to self or bearer, and were drawn on the West Sussex Bank. Mrs. Turner, when first questioned on the matter, stated that as soon as her husband had departed, she locked up these cheques in her writing-desk. She subsequently, however, corrected this statement, and admitted having left them on the table while she went into the garden to cut some flowers. In all, she was absent, she says, about ten minutes. When she came in from cutting her flowers, she immediately put the cheques away. She had not counted them on receiving them from her husband, and when, as she put them into her davenport, she saw there were only three, she concluded that that was the number he had left with her. The loss of the cheque was not discovered until her husband's return, about a week later on. As soon as he was aware of the fact, he telegraphed to the West Sussex Bank to stop payment, only, however, to make the unpleasant discovery that the cheque, filled in to the amount of six hundred

pounds, had been presented and cashed (in gold) two days previously. The clerk who cashed it took no particular notice of the person presenting it, except

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 235</fw>

that he was of gentlemanly appearance, and declares himself to be quite incapable of identifying him. The largeness of the amount raised no suspicion in the mind of the clerk, as Mr. Turner is a man of good means, and since his marriage, about six months back, has been refurnishing the Vicarage, and paying away large sums for old oak furniture and for pictures." <!--end block quote-->

<p>"There, Miss Brooke," said the inspector as he finished reading, "if, in addition to these particulars, I tell you that one or two circumstances that have arisen seem to point suspicion in the direction of the young wife, I feel sure you will admit that a more interesting case, and one more worthy of your talents, is not to be found." </p>

<p>Loveday's answer was to take up a newspaper that lay beside her on the table. "So much for your interesting case," she said; "now listen to my ridiculous one." Then she read aloud as follows:--</p>

<p><!--block quote-->"  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
    <ghost>  
        <verdictPhenom type="truth">  
AUTHENTIC GHOST STORY.  
    </verdictPhenom>  
    </ghost>  
</phenom>  
--The inhabitants  
of Fountain Lane, a small turning leading off Ship Street, have been greatly disturbed by the sudden appearance of a  
<phenom type="supernatural">

<ghost type="apparition">  
 ghost  
 </ghost>  
 </phenom>  
 in their midst. Last Tuesday  
 night, between ten and eleven o'clock,  
 <phenom>  
   <context type="medium" "woman" "child">  
 a little girl  
 named Martha Watts,  
   </context>  
 </phenom>  
 who lives as a help to a shoe-  
 maker and his wife at No. 5 in the lane, ran out  
 into the streets in her night-clothes  
 <phenom type="supernatural">  
   <reaction type="fear">  
 in a great state of  
 terror,  
   </reaction>  
 </phenom>  
 saying that a  
 <phenom type="supernatural">  
   <ghost type="apparition">  
 ghost  
   </ghost>  
 </phenom>  
 had come to her bedside.  
 <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">236 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

The child refused to return to the house to sleep, and  
 was accordingly taken in by some neighbours. The  
 shoemaker and his wife, Freer by name, when ques-  
 tioned by the neighbours on the matter, admitted,  
 <phenom type="supernatural">  
   <reaction type="reluctance">  
 with great reluctance,  
   </reaction> that  
   <context type="medium" "man" "woman">  
 they  
   </context>  
 , too, had seen the

<ghost type="apparition">  
apparition, which they described as being a soldier-  
like individual, with a broad, white forehead and  
having his arms folded on his breast. This descrip-  
tion is, in all respects, confirmed by the child, Martha  
Watts, who asserts that the ghost she saw reminded  
her of pictures she had seen of the great Napoleon.

</ghost>

The Freers state that it first appeared in the course  
of a prayer-meeting held at their house on the  
previous night, when it was distinctly seen by Mr.  
Freer. Subsequently, the wife, awakening suddenly  
in the middle of the night, saw the

<ghost type="apparition">

apparition

</ghost>

</phenom>

stand-

ing at the foot of the bed. They are quite at a loss  
for an explanation of the matter. The affair has  
caused quite a sensation in the district, and, at the  
time of going to press, the lane is so thronged and  
crowded by would-be ghost-seers that the inhabitants  
have great difficulty in going to and from their houses." <!--end block quote-->

</p>

<p>"A scare--a vulgar scare, nothing more,"  
said the inspector as Loveday laid aside the  
paper. "Now, Miss Brooke, I ask you seri-  
ously, supposing you get to the bottom of such  
a stupid, commonplace fraud as that, will you in  
any way add to your reputation?" </p>

<p>"And supposing I get to the bottom of such  
a stupid, commonplace fraud as a stolen cheque,  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 237</fw>

how much, I should like to know, do I add to  
my reputation?" </p>

<p>"Well, put it on other grounds, and allow  
Christian charity to have some claims. Think

of the misery in that gentleman's house unless suspicion can be lifted from the young wife and directed to the proper quarter."

</p>

<p>"Think of the misery of the landlord of the Fountain Lane houses if

<phenom type="supernatural">

<reaction type="fear">

all his tenants decamp

in a body, as they no doubt will, unless the ghost mystery is solved."

</reaction>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>The inspector sighed. "Well, I suppose I must take it for granted that you will have nothing to do with the case," he said. "I brought the cheque with me, thinking you might like to see it."

</p>

<p>"I suppose it's very much like other cheques?" said Loveday indifferently, and turning over her memoranda as if she meant to go back to her ghost again.

</p>

<p>"Ye-es," said Mr. Clampe, taking the cheque from his pocket-book and glancing down at it. "I suppose the cheque is very much like other cheques. This little scribble of figures in pencil at the back--144,000--can scarcely be called a distinguishing mark."</p>

<p>"What's that, Mr. Clampe ? " asked Love-  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">238 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

day, pushing her memoranda on one side.

"144,000, did you say?" </p>

<p>Her whole manner had suddenly changed from apathy to that of keenest interest.</p>

<p>Mr. Clampe, delighted, rose and spread the cheque before her on the table.</p>

<p>"The writing of the words, 'six hundred pounds,'" he said, "bears so close a resemblance to Mr. Turner's signature, that the gentleman himself told me he would have thought it was his own writing if he had not known that he had not drawn a cheque for that amount on the given date. You see it is that round, schoolboy's hand, so easy to imitate, I could write it myself with half an hour's practice; no flourishes, nothing distinctive about it."</p>

<p>Loveday made no reply. She had turned the cheque, and was now closely scrutinizing the pencilled figures at the back.</p>

<p>"Of course," continued the inspector, "those figures were not written by the person who wrote the figures on the face of the cheque. That, however, matters but little. I really do not think they are of the slightest importance in the case. They might have been scribbled by some one making a calculation as to the number of pennies in six hundred pounds--<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 239</fw>

there are, as no doubt you know, exactly 144,000." </p>

<p>"Who has engaged your services in this case, the Bank or Mr. Turner?" </p>

<p>"Mr. Turner. When the loss of the cheque was first discovered, he was very excited and irate, and when he came to me the day before

yesterday, I had much difficulty in persuading him that there was no need to telegraph to London for half a dozen detectives, as we could do the work quite as well as the London men. When, however, I went over to East Downes yesterday to look round and ask a few questions, I found things had altogether changed. He was exceedingly reluctant to answer any questions, lost his temper when I pressed them, and as good as told me that he wished he had not moved in the matter at all. It was this sudden change of demeanour that turned my thoughts in the direction of Mrs. Turner. A man must have a very strong reason for wishing to sit idle under a loss of six hundred pounds, for, of course, under the circumstances, the Bank will not bear the brunt of it." </p>

<p>"Some other motives may be at work in his mind,--consideration for old servants, the wish to avoid a scandal in the house." </p><pb/>

<fw type="header">240 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

<p>"Quite so. The fact, taken by itself, would give no ground for suspicion, but certainly looks ugly if taken in connection with another fact which I have since ascertained, namely, that during her husband's absence from home Mrs. Turner paid off certain debts contracted by her in Brighton before her marriage, and amounting to nearly £500. Paid them off, too, in gold. I think I mentioned to you that the gentleman who presented the stolen cheque at the Bank preferred payment in gold." </p>

<p>"You are supposing not only a confederate, but also a vast amount of cunning as well as of simplicity on the lady's part." </p>

<p>"Quite so. Three parts cunning to one of simplicity is precisely what lady criminals are



composed of. And it is, as a rule, that one part of simplicity that betrays them and leads to their detection." </p>

<p>"What sort of woman is Mrs. Turner in other respects?" </p>

<p>"She is young, handsome, and of good birth, but is scarcely suited for the position of vicar's wife in a country parish. She has lived a good deal in society and is fond of gaiety, and, in addition, is a Roman Catholic, and, I am told, utterly ignores her husband's church and drives every Sunday to Brighton to attend mass." </p>  
<pb/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 241</fw>

<p>"What about the servants in the house? Do they seem steady-going and respectable?" </p>

<p>"There was nothing on the surface to excite suspicion against any one of them. But it is  
<!--image-->

"DRIVES EVERY SUNDAY TO ATTEND MASS." <!--caption-->

precisely in that quarter that your services would be invaluable. It will, however, be impossible to get you inside the vicarage walls. Mr. Turner, I am confident, would never open his doors to you." </p>

<pb/>

<fw type="header">242 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

<p>"What do you suggest?"</p>

<p>"I can suggest nothing better than the house of the village schoolmistress, or rather, of the village's schoolmistress's mother, Mrs. Brown. It is only a stone's throw from the vicarage; in fact, its windows overlook the vicarage grounds. It is a four-roomed cottage,

and Mrs. Brown, who is a very respectable person, turns over a little money in the summer by receiving lady lodgers desirous of a breath of country air. There would be no difficulty in getting you in there; her spare bedroom is empty now." </p>

<p>"I should have preferred being at the vicarage, but if it cannot be, I must make the most of my stay at Mrs. Brown's. How do we get there?" </p>

<p>"I drove from East Downes here in a trap I hired at the village inn where I put up last night, and where I shall stay to-night. I will drive you, if you will allow me; it is only seven miles off. It's a lovely day for a drive; breezy and not too much dust. Could you be ready in about half an hour's time, say?" </p>

<p>But this, Loveday said, would be an impossibility. She had a special engagement that afternoon; there was a religious service in the town that she particularly wished to attend.  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 243</fw>

It would not be over until three o'clock, and, consequently, not until half-past three would she be ready for the drive to East Downes.</p>

<p>Although Mr. Clampe looked unutterable astonishment at the claims of a religious service being set before those of professional duty, he made no demur to the arrangement, and accordingly half-past three saw Loveday and the inspector in a high-wheeled dog-cart rattling along the Marina in the direction of East Downes. </p>

<p>Loveday made no further allusion to her ghost story, so Mr. Clampe, out of politeness, felt compelled to refer to it. </p>

<p>"I heard all about the  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
    <ghost type="apparition">  
Fountain Lane ghost  
    </ghost>  
yesterday, before I started for East Downes,"  
he said; "and it seemed to me, with all  
deference to you, Miss Brooke,  
    <reaction type="disbelieve">  
        <verdictPhenom type="imagination">  
an every-day  
sort of affair, the sort of thing to be explained  
by a heavy supper or an extra glass of beer."  
    </verdictPhenom>  
    </reaction>  
</phenom>  
</p>

<p>  
<phenom type="supernatural">  
    <reaction type="curiosity">  
"There are a few points in this  
    <ghost>  
ghost story  
    </ghost>  
that separate it from the every-day ghost story,"  
    </reaction>  
answered Loveday. "For instance, you would  
expect that such emotionally religious people,  
as I have since found the Freers to be,  
    <ghost type="vision">  
would  
have seen a vision of angels, or at least a  
solitary saint.  
    </ghost>  
Instead, they see a soldier! A  
soldier, too, in the likeness of a man who is  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">244 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

anathema maranatha to every religious mind  
--the great Napoleon."

</phenom>

</p>

<p>"To what denomination do the Freers belong?" </p>

<p>

"To the Wesleyan. Their fathers and mothers before them were Wesleyans; their relatives and friends are Wesleyans, one and all, they say; and, most important item of all, the man's boot and shoe connection lies exclusively among Wesleyan ministers. This, he told me, is the most paying connection that a small boot-maker can have. Half a dozen Wesleyan ministers pay better than three times the number of Church clergy, for whereas the Wesleyan minister is always on the tramp among his people, the clergyman generally contrives in the country to keep a horse, or else turns student, and shuts himself up in his study." </p>

<p>"Ha, ha! Capital!" laughed Mr. Clampe; "tell that to the Church Defence Society in Wales. Isn't this a first-rate little horse? In another ten minutes we shall be in sight of East Downes." </p>

<p>The long, dusty road down which they had driven was ending now in a narrow, sloping lane, hedged in on either side with hawthorns and wild plum trees. Through these the  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 245</fw>

August sunshine was beginning to slant now, and from a distant wood there came a faint sound of fluting and piping, as if the blackbirds were thinking of tuning up for their evening carols. </p>

<p>A sudden, sharp curve in this lane brought

them in sight of East Downes, a tiny hamlet of about thirty cottages, dominated by the steeple of a church of early English architecture. Adjoining the church was the vicarage, a goodly-sized house, with extensive grounds, and in a lane running alongside these grounds were situated the village schools and the schoolmistress's house. The latter was simply a four-roomed cottage, standing in a pretty garden, with cluster roses and honeysuckle, now in the fulness of their August glory, climbing upwards to its very roof. </p>

<p>Outside this cottage Mr. Clampe drew rein. </p>

<p>"If you'll give me five minutes' grace," he said, "I'll go in and tell the good woman that I have brought her, as a lodger, a friend of mine, who is anxious to get away for a time from the noise and glare of Brighton. Of course, the story of the stolen cheque is all over the place, but I don't think any one has, at present, connected me with the affair. I am supposed to be a gentleman from Brighton, <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">246 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

who is anxious to buy a horse the Vicar wishes to sell, and who can't quite arrange terms with him." </p>

<p>While Loveday waited outside in the cart, an open carriage drove past and then in through the vicarage gates. In the carriage were seated a gentleman and lady whom, from the respectful greetings they received from the village children, she conjectured to be the Rev. Charles and Mrs. Turner. Mr. Turner was sanguine-complexioned, red-haired, and wore a distinctly troubled expression of countenance. With Mrs. Turner's appearance Loveday was not favourably impressed. Although a decidedly handsome woman, she was

hard-featured, and had a scornful curl to her upper lip. She was dressed in the extreme of London fashion. </p>

<p>They threw a look of inquiry at Loveday as they passed, and she felt sure that inquiries as to the latest addition to Mrs. Brown's ménage would soon be afloat in the village. </p>

<p>Mr. Clampe speedily returned, saying that Mrs. Brown was only too delighted to get her spare-room occupied. He whispered a hint as they made their way up to the cottage door between borders thickly planted with stocks and mignonette. </p>  
<pb/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 247 </fw>

<p>It was:</p>

<p><!--block quote-->"Don't ask her any questions, or she'll draw herself up as straight as a ramrod, and say she never listens to gossip of any sort. But just let her alone, and she'll run on like a mill-stream, and tell you as much as you'll want to know about every one and everything. She and the village postmistress are great friends, and between them they contrive to know pretty much what goes on inside every house in the place." <!--end block quote--></p>

<p>Mrs. Brown was a stout, rosy-cheeked woman of about fifty, neatly dressed in a dark stuff gown with a big white cap and apron. She welcomed Loveday respectfully, and introduced, evidently with a little pride, her daughter, the village schoolmistress, a well-spoken young woman of about eight-and-twenty. </p>

<p>Mr. Clampe departed with his dog-cart to the village inn, announcing his intention of calling on Loveday at the cottage on the following morning before he returned to

Brighton.</p>

<p>Miss Brown also departed, saying she would prepare tea. Left alone with Loveday, Mrs. Brown speedily unloosed her tongue. She had a dozen questions to ask respecting Mr. Clampe and his business in the village. Now, was it  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">248 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

true that he had come to East Downes for the whole and sole purpose of buying one of the Vicar's horses? She had heard it whispered that he had been sent by the police to watch the servants at the vicarage. She hoped it was not true, for a more respectable set of servants were not to be met with in any house, far or near. Had Miss Brooke heard about that lost cheque? Such a terrible affair! She had been told that the story of it had reached London. Now, had Miss Brooke seen an account of it in any of the London papers? </p>

<p>Here a reply from Loveday in the negative formed a sufficient excuse for relating with elaborate detail the story of the stolen cheque. Except in its elaborateness of detail, it differed but little from the one Loveday had already heard. </p>

<p>She listened patiently, bearing in mind Mr. Clampe's hint, and asking no questions. And when, in about a quarter of an hour's time, Miss Brown came in with the tea-tray in her hand, Loveday could have passed an examination in the events of the daily family life at the vicarage. She could have answered questions as to the ill-assortedness of the newly-married couple; she knew that they wrangled from morning till night; that the chief subjects of their disagree-  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 249 </fw>





Sunday into Brighton to a Catholic church to say her prayers to candles and images? I'm glad you like the room, ma'am. Feather bolster, feather pillows, do you see, ma'am? I've nothing in the way of flock or wool on either of my beds to make people's heads ache." Here Mrs. Brown, by way of emphasis, patted and pinched the fat pillows and bolster showing above the spotless white counterpane. </p>

<p>Loveday stood at the cottage window drinking in the sweetness of the country air, laden now with the heavy evening scents of carnation and jessamine. Across the road, from the vicarage, came the loud clanging of a dinner-gong, and almost simultaneously the church clock chimed the hour--seven o'clock. </p>

<p>"Who is that person coming up the lane?" asked Loveday, her attention suddenly attracted by a tall, thin figure, dressed in shabby black, with a large, dowdyish bonnet, and carrying a basket in her hand as if she were returning <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 251 </fw> from some errand. Mrs. Brown peeped over Loveday's shoulder. </p>

<p>"Ah, that's the peculiar young woman I was telling you about, ma'am--Maria Lisle, who used to be old Mrs. Turner's <!--start of the image captioned MARIA LISLE. set to the right--> maid. Not that she is over young now; she's five-and-thirty if she's a day. The Vicar kept her on to be his wife's maid after the old lady died, but young Mrs. Turner will have nothing to do with her, she's not good enough for her; so Mr. Turner is just paying her £30 a-year for doing nothing. And what Maria

does with all that money it  
would be hard to say. She  
doesn't spend it on dress, that's  
certain, and she hasn't kith nor  
kin, not a soul belonging to  
her to give a penny to." </p>

<p>"Perhaps she gives it to <!--end image-->  
charities in Brighton. There are plenty of out-  
lets for money there." </p>

<p>"She may," said Mrs. Brown dubiously;  
"she is always going to Brighton whenever  
she gets a chance. She used to be a Wesleyan

<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">252 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

in old Mrs. Turner's time, and went regularly  
to all the revival meetings for miles round;  
what she is now, it would be hard to say.  
Where she goes to church in Brighton, no one  
knows. She drives over with Mrs. Turner  
every Sunday, but every one knows nothing  
would induce her to go near the candles and  
images. Thomas--that's the coachman--says  
he puts her down at the corner of a dirty little  
street in mid-Brighton, and there he picks  
her up again after he has fetched Mrs. Turner  
from her church. No, there's something very  
queer in her ways." </p>

<p>Maria passed in through the lodge gates  
of the vicarage. She walked with her head  
bent, her eyes cast down to the ground. </p>

<p>"Something very queer in her ways,"  
repeated Mrs. Brown. "She never speaks  
to a soul unless they speak first to her, and gets  
by herself on every possible opportunity. Do  
you see that old summer-house over there in  
the vicarage grounds?--it stands between the  
orchard and kitchen garden--well, every even-

ing at sunset, out comes Maria and disappears into it, and there she stays for over an hour at a time. And what she does there goodness only knows!"

"Perhaps she keeps books there, and studies."

THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 253

"Studies! My daughter showed her some new books that had come down for the fifth standard the other day, and Maria turned upon her and said quite sharply that there was only one book in the whole world that people ought to study, and that book was the Bible."

"How pretty those vicarage gardens are," said Loveday, a little abruptly. "Does the Vicar ever allow people to see them?"

"Oh, yes, miss; he doesn't at all mind people taking a walk round them. Only yesterday he said to me, 'Mrs. Brown, if ever you feel yourself circumscribed'--yes, 'circumscribed' was the word--' just walk out of your garden-gate and in at mine and enjoy yourself at your leisure among my fruit trees.' Not that I would like to take advantage of his kindness and make too free; but if you'd care, ma'am, to go for a walk through the grounds, I'll go with you with pleasure. There's a wonderful old cedar hard by the pond people have come ever so far to see."

"It's that old summer-house and little bit of orchard that fascinate me," said Loveday, putting on her hat.

"We shall frighten Maria to death if she sees us so near her haunt," said Mrs. Brown as she led the way downstairs. "This way,"

<fw type="header">254 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

if you please, ma'am, the kitchen-garden leads straight into the orchard." </p>

<p>Twilight was deepening rapidly into night now. Bird notes had ceased, the whirl of insects, the croaking of a distant frog were the only sounds that broke the evening stillness. </p>

<p>As Mrs. Brown swung back the gate that divided the kitchen-garden from the orchard, the gaunt, black figure of Maria Lisle was seen approaching in an opposite direction. </p>

<p>"Well, really, I don't see why she should expect to have the orchard all to herself every evening," said Mrs. Brown, with a little toss of her head. "Mind the gooseberry bushes, ma'am, they do catch at your clothes so. My word! what a fine show of fruit the Vicar has this year! I never saw pear-trees more laden!" </p>

<p>They were now in the "bit of orchard" to be seen from the cottage windows. As they rounded the corner of the path in which the old summer-house stood, Maria Lisle turned its corner at the farther end, and suddenly found herself almost face to face with them. If her eyes had not been so persistently fastened on the ground, she would have noted the approach of the intruders as quickly as they had noted hers. Now, as she saw them for  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 255 </fw>

the first time, she gave a sudden start, paused for a moment irresolutely, and then turned sharply and walked rapidly away in an opposite direction. </p>

<p>"Maria, Maria!" called Mrs. Brown, "don't

run away; we sha'n't stay here for more than a minute or so." </p>

<p>Her words met with no response. The woman did not so much as turn her head. </p>

<p>Loveday stood at the entrance of the old summer-house. It was considerably out of repair, and most probably was never entered by any one save Maria Lisle, its unswept, undusted condition suggesting colonies of spiders and other creeping things within. </p>

<p>Loveday braved them all and took her seat on the bench that ran round the little place in a semi-circle. </p>

<p>"Do try and overtake the girl, and tell her we shall be gone in a minute," she said, addressing Mrs. Brown." I will wait here meanwhile. I am so sorry to have frightened her away in that fashion." </p>

<p>Mrs. Brown, under protest, and with a little grumble at the ridiculousness of "people who couldn't look other people in the face," set off in pursuit of Maria. </p>

<p>It was getting dim inside the summer-house <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">256 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

now. There was, however, sufficient light to enable Loveday to discover a small packet of books lying in a corner of the bench on which she sat. </p>

<p>One by one she took them in her hand and closely scrutinized them. The first was a much read and pencil-marked Bible; the others were, respectively, a "congregational hymn-book," a book in a paper cover, on which was printed a flaming picture of a red and yellow

angel, pouring blood and fire from out a big black bottle, and entitled "The End of the Age," and a smaller book, also in a paper cover, on which was depicted a huge black horse, snorting fire and brimstone into ochre-coloured clouds. This book was entitled "The Year Book of the Saints," and was simply a ruled diary with sensational mottoes for every day in the year. In parts, this diary was filled in with large and very untidy handwriting. </p>

<p>In these books seemed to lie the explanation of Maria Lisle's love of evening solitude and the lonely old summer-house. </p>

<p>Mrs. Brown pursued Maria to the servants' entrance to the house, but could not overtake her, the girl making good her retreat there.</p>

<p>She returned to Loveday a little hot, a little  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OR FOUNTAIN LANE. 257 </fw>

breathless, and a little out of temper. It was all so absurd, she said; why couldn't the woman have stayed and had a chat with them? It wasn't as if she would get any harm out of the talk; she knew as well as every one else  
<!--image-->

<!--mark as a caption-->THE FIRST WAS A PENCIL-MARKED BIBLE. <!--caption-->

in the village that she (Mrs. Brown) was no idle gossip, tittle-tattling over other people's affairs. </p>

<p>But here Loveday, a little sharply, cut short her meanderings. </p>

<p>"Mrs. Brown," she said, and to Mrs. Brown's fancy her voice and manner had  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">258 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE.</fw>

entirely changed from that of the pleasant, chatty lady of half an hour ago, "I'm sorry to say it will be impossible for me to stay even one night in your pleasant home. I have just recollected some important business that I must transact in Brighton to-night. I haven't unpacked my portmanteau, so if you'll kindly have it taken to your garden-gate, I'll call for it as we drive past--I am going now, at once, to the inn, to see if Mr. Clampe can drive me back into Brighton to-night." </p>

<p>Mrs. Brown had no words ready wherewith to express her astonishment, and Loveday assuredly gave her no time to hunt for them. Ten minutes later saw her rousing Mr. Clampe from a comfortable supper, to which he had just settled himself, with the surprising announcement that she must get back to Brighton with as little delay as possible; now, would he be good enough to drive her there?</p>

<p>"We'll have a pair if they are to be had," she added. "The road is good; it will be moonlight in a quarter of an hour; we ought to do it in less than half the time we took coming." </p>

<p>While a phaeton and pair were being got ready, Loveday had time for a few words of explanation. </p><pb/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 259 </fw>

<p>Maria Lisle's diary in the old summer-house had given her the last of the links in her chain of evidence that was to bring the theft of the cheque home to the criminal. </p>

<p>"It will be best to drive straight to the

police station," she said; "they must take out three warrants, one for Maria Lisle, and two others respectively for Richard Steele, late Wesleyan minister of a chapel in Gordon Street, Brighton, and John Rogers, formerly elder of the same chapel.

<phenom type="supernatural">

<ghost>

<rolePhenom type="solvingCrime">

And let me tell

you," she added with a little smile, "that these three worthies would most likely have been left at large to carry on their depredations for some little time to come if it had not been for that 'ridiculous ghost' in Fountain Lane."

</rolePhenom>

</ghost>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>More than this there was not time to add, and when, a few minutes later, the two were rattling along the road to Brighton, the presence of the man, whom they were forced to take with them in order to bring back the horses to East Downes, prevented any but the most jerky and fragmentary of additions to this brief explanation. </p>

<p>"I very much fear that John Rogers has bolted," once Loveday whispered under her breath. </p>

<p>And again, a little later, when a smooth bit  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">260 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

of road admitted of low-voiced talk, she said:--</p>

<p>"We can't wait for the warrant for Steele; they must follow us with it to 15, Draycott Street." </p>



<p>"But I want to know about the ghost," said Mr. Clampe; "I am deeply interested in that 'ridiculous ghost.'" </p>

<p>"Wait till we get to 15, Draycott Street," was Loveday's reply: "when you've been there, I feel sure you will understand everything." </p>

<p>Church clocks were chiming a quarter to nine as they drove through Kemp Town at a pace that made the passers-by imagine they must be bound on an errand of life and death. </p>

<p>Loveday did not alight at the police station, and five minutes' talk with the inspector in charge there was all that Mr. Clampe required to put things <foreign xml:lang="fr" rend="italic">en train</foreign> for the arrest of the three criminals. </p>

<p>It had evidently been an "excursionists' day" at Brighton. The streets leading to the railway station were thronged, and their progress along the bye streets was impeded by the overflow of traffic from the main road.</p>

<p>"We shall get along better on foot; Draycott Street is only a stone's throw from here," said Loveday; "there's a turning on the north <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 261 </fw>

side of Western Road that will bring us straight into it." </p>

<p>So they dismissed their trap, and Loveday, acting as cicerone still, led the way through narrow turnings into the district, half town, half country, that skirts the road leading to the Dyke. </p>

<p>Draycott Street was not difficult to find. It

consisted of two rows of newly-built houses of the eight-roomed, lodging-letting order. A dim light shone from the first-floor windows of number fifteen, but the lower window was dark and uncurtained, and a board hanging from its balcony rails proclaimed that it was "to let, unfurnished." The door of the house stood slightly ajar, and, pushing it open, Loveday led the way up a flight of stairs--lighted halfway up with a paraffin lamp--to the first floor. </p>

<p>"I know the way: I was here this afternoon," she whispered to her companion. "This is the last lecture he will give before he starts for Judæa; or, in other words, bolts with the money he has managed to conjure from other people's purses into his own."</p>

<p>The door of the room for which they were making, on the first floor, stood open, possibly on account of the heat. It laid bare to view <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">262 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

a double row of forms, on which were seated some eight or ten persons in the attitude of all-absorbed listeners. Their faces were upturned, as if fixed on a preacher at the farther end of the room, and wore that expression of rapt, painful interest that is sometimes seen on the faces of a congregation of revivalists before the smouldering excitement bursts into flame. </p>

<p>As Loveday and her companion mounted the last of the flight of stairs, the voice of the preacher--full, arrestive, resonant--fell upon their ear; and, standing on the small outside landing, it was possible to catch a glimpse of that preacher through the crack of the half-opened door. </p>

<p>He was a tall, dignified-looking man, of

about five-and-forty, with a close crop of white hair, black eyebrows and remarkably luminous and expressive eyes. Altogether his appearance matched his voice: it was emphatically that of a man born to sway, lead, govern the multitude. </p>

<p>A boy came out of an adjoining room and asked Loveday respectfully if she would not like to go in and hear the lecture. She shook her head. </p>

<p>"I could not stand the heat," she said.  
"Kindly bring us chairs here." </p>  
<pb/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 263 </fw>

<p>The lecture was evidently drawing to a close now, and Loveday and Mr. Clampe, as they sat outside listening, could not resist an occasional thrill of admiration at the skilful  
<!--image-->  
<!--caption of the image A MAN BORN TO SWAY.-->  
manner in which the preacher led his hearers from one figure of rhetoric to another, until the oratorical climax was reached. </p>

<p>"That man is a born orator," whispered  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">264 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

Loveday;  
<phenom type="scientific">  
<mesmerism>  
"and in addition to the power of  
the voice has the power of the eye.  
<context type="mesmSubject">  
That  
audience  
</context>  
is as completely hypnotised by  
<context type="mesmerist">

him

</context>

as if they had surrendered themselves to a professional mesmerist."

</mesmerism>

</phenom>

</p>

<p>To judge from the portion of the discourse that fell upon their ear, the preacher was a member of one of the many sects known under the generic name, "Millenarian." His topic was Apollyon and the great battle of Armageddon. This he described as vividly as if it were being fought out under his very eye, and it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that he made the cannon roar in the ears of his listeners and the tortured cries of the wounded wail in them. He drew an appalling picture of the carnage of that battle-field, of the blood flowing like a river across the plain, of the mangled men and horses, with the birds of prey swooping down from all quarters, and the stealthy tigers and leopards creeping out from their mountain lairs. "And all this time," he said, suddenly raising his voice from a whisper to a full, thrilling tone, "gazing calmly down upon the field of slaughter, with bent brows and folded arms, stands the imperial Apollyon. Apollyon did I say? No, I will give him his right name,

<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 265 </fw>

the name in which he will stand revealed in that dread day, Napoleon! A Napoleon it will be who, in that day, will stand as the embodiment of Satanic majesty. Out of the mists suddenly he will walk, a tall, dark figure, with frowning brows and firm-set lips, a man to rule, a man to lead, a man to kill! Apollyon the mighty, Napoleon the imperial, they are one and the same----" </p>

<p>Here a sob and a choking cry from one of the women in the front seats interrupted the discourse and sent the small boy who acted as verger into the room with a glass of water. </p>

<p>"That sermon has been preached before," said Loveday.  
<phenom type="scientific">  
 <mesmerism type="suggestion">  
 <ghost type="mesmBelief">  
 <rolePhenom type="committingCrime">  
"Now can you not understand the origin of the ghost in Fountain Lane?"  
 </rolePhenom>  
 </ghost>  
 </mesmerism>  
</phenom>  
</p>

<p>"Hysterics are catching, there's another woman off now," said Mr. Clampe; "it's high time this sort of thing was put a stop to. Pearson ought to be here in another minute with his warrant." </p>

<p>The words had scarcely passed his lips before heavy steps mounting the stairs announced that Pearson and his warrant were at hand. </p>

<p>"I don't think I can be of any further use," said Loveday, rising to depart. "If you like to come to me to-morrow morning at my hotel  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">266 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

at ten o'clock I will tell you, step by step, how I came to connect a stolen cheque with a 'ridiculous ghost.'" </p>

<p>"We had a tussle--he showed fight at first," said Mr. Clampe, when, precisely at ten o'clock

the next morning, he called upon Miss Brooke at the Métropole. "If he had had time to get his wits together, and had called some of the men in that room to the rescue, I verily believe we should have been roughly handled, and he might have slipped through our fingers after all. It's wonderful what power these 'born orators,' as you call them, have over minds of a certain order." </p>

<p>"Ah, yes," answered Loveday thoughtfully; "we talk glibly enough about <phenom type="scientific"><mesmerism>'magnetic influence,' but scarcely realise how literally true the phrase is. It is my firm opinion that the 'leaders of men,' as they are called, have as absolute and genuine hypnotic power as any modern French expert, although perhaps it may be less consciously exercised. </mesmerism></phenom>Now tell me about Rogers and Maria Lisle." </p>

<p>>"Rogers had bolted, as you expected he would have done, with the six hundred pounds he had been good enough to cash for his reverend colleague. Ostensibly he had started <pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 267 </fw>

for Judæa to collect the elect, as he phrased it, under one banner. In reality, he has sailed for New York, where, thanks to the cable, he will be arrested on his arrival and sent back by return packet. Maria Lisle was arrested this morning on a charge of having stolen the cheque from Mrs. Turner. By the way, Miss Brooke, I think it is almost a pity you didn't take possession of her diary when you had the chance. It would have been invaluable evi-

dence against her and her rascally colleagues." </p>

<p>"I did not see the slightest necessity for so doing. Remember, she is not one of the criminal classes, but a religious enthusiast, and when put upon her defence will at once confess and plead religious conviction as an extenuating circumstance--at least, if she is well advised she will do so. I never read anything that laid bare more frankly than did this diary the mischief that the sensational teaching of these millenarians is doing at the present moment. But I must not take up your time with moralising. I know you are anxious to learn what, in the first instance, led me to identify a millenarian preacher with a receiver of stolen property." </p>

<p>"Yes, that's it; I want to know about the ghost: that's the point that interests me." </p>  
<pb/>

<fw type="header">268 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE </fw>

<p>"Very well. As I told you yesterday afternoon, the first thing that struck me as remarkable in this ghost story was the soldierly character of the ghost. One expects emotionally religious people like Freer and his wife to see visions, but one also expects those visions to partake of the nature of those emotions, and to be somewhat shadowy and ecstatic. It seemed to me certain that this <phenom type="scientific">

<ghost>

Napoleonic ghost must have some sort of religious significance to these people.

</ghost>

</phenom>

It was this conviction that set my thoughts running in the direction of the millenarians, who have attached a religious significance (although not a polite one) to the name of Napoleon by

embodying the evil Apollyon in the person of a descendant of the great Emperor, and endowing him with all the qualities of his illustrious ancestor. I called upon the Freers, ordered a pair of boots, and while the man was taking my measure, I asked him a few very pointed questions on these millenarian notions. The man prevaricated a good deal at first, but at length was driven to admit that

<phenom type="scientific">

<ghost type="mesmBelief">

he and his

wife were millenarians at heart, that, in fact, the prayer-meeting at which the Napoleonic ghost had made its first appearance was a millenarian one,

</ghost>

</phenom>

held by a man who had at one

<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 269 </fw>

time been a Wesleyan preacher in the chapel in Gordon Street, but who had been dismissed from his charge there because his teaching had been held to be unsound. Freer further stated that this man had been so much liked that many members of the congregation still seized every opportunity that presented itself of attending his ministrations, some openly, others, like himself and his wife, secretly, lest they might give offence to the elders and ministers of their chapel." </p>

<p>"And the bootmaking connection suffer proportionately," laughed Mr. Clampe. </p>

<p>"Precisely. A visit to the Wesleyan chapel in Gordon Street and a talk with the chapel attendant enabled me to complete the history of this inhibited preacher, the Rev. Richard Steele. From this attendant I ascertained that a certain elder of their chapel, John Rogers



by name, had seceded from their communion, thrown in his lot with Richard Steele, and that the two together were now going about the country preaching that the world would come to an end on Thursday, April 11th, 1901, and that five years before this event--viz., on the 5th of March, 1896, one hundred and forty-four thousand living saints would be caught up to heaven. They furthermore announced that

<fw type="header">270 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

this translation would take place in the land of Judæa, that, shortly, saints from all parts of the world would be hastening thither, and that in view of this event a society had been formed to provide homes--a series, I suppose --for the multitudes who would otherwise be homeless. Also (a very vital point this), that subscriptions to this society would be gladly received by either gentleman. I had arrived so far in my ghost inquiry when you came to me, bringing the stolen cheque with its pencilled figures, 144,000." </p>

<p>"Ah, I begin to see!" murmured Mr. Clampe. </p>

<p>"It immediately occurred to me that <phenom type="scientific">  
<mesmerism>  
<rolePhenom type="committingCrime">  
the  
man who could make persons see an embodiment of his thought at will, would have very little difficulty in influencing other equally receptive minds to a breach of the ten commandments.

</rolePhenom>  
<context type="mesmSubject">  
The world, it seems to me, abounds in people who are little more than blank sheets of paper, on which a strong hand may transcribe

what it will; hysteric subjects, the doctors would call them; hypnotic subjects others would say; really the line that divides the hysteric condition from the hypnotic is a very hazy one.

</context>

</mesmerism>

</phenom>

So now, when I saw your stolen cheque, I said to myself, 'There is a sheet of  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 271 </fw>

blank paper somewhere in that country vicarage: the thing is to find it out.'" </p>

<p>"Ah, good Mrs. Brown's gossip made your work easy to you there." </p>

<p>"It did. She not only gave me a complete summary of the history of the people within the vicarage walls, but she put so many graphic <!--this sounds reminiscent of Rev. Steele's ability-->

touches to that history that they lived and moved before me. For instance, she told me that Maria Lisle was in the habit of speaking <!-- we're hearing of this for the first time-->

>  
of Mrs. Turner as a 'Child of the Scarlet Woman,' a 'Daughter of Babylon,' and gave me various other minute particulars, which enabled me, so to speak, to see Maria Lisle going about her daily duties, rendering her mistress reluctant service, hating her in her heart as a member of a corrupt faith, and thinking she was doing God service by despoiling her of some of her wealth, in order to devote it to what seemed to her a holy cause. I would like here to read to you two entries which I copied from her diary under dates respectively, August 3rd (the day the cheque was lost), and August 7th (the following Sunday), when Maria no doubt found opportunity to meet Steele at some prayer-meeting in Brighton." </p>

<p>Here Loveday produced her note-book and read from it as follows:--</p>  
<pb/>

<fw type="header">272 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

<p>"To-day I have spoiled the Egyptians! Taken from a Daughter of Babylon that which would go to increase the power of the Beast!" </p>

<p>"And again, under date August 7th, she writes:--</p>

<p>"I have handed to-day to my beloved pastor that of which I despoiled a Daughter of Babylon. It was blank, but he told me he would fill it in so that 144,000 of the elect would be each the richer by one penny. Blessed thought! this is the doing of my most unworthy hand.'"</p>

<p>  
"A wonderful farrago, that diary of distorted Scriptural phraseology--wild eulogies on the beloved pastor, and morbid ecstasies, such as one would think could be the outcome only of a diseased brain. It seems to me that Portland or Broadmoor, and the ministrations of a sober-minded chaplain, may be about the happiest thing that could befall Maria Lisle at this period of her career. I think I ought to mention in this connection that when, at the religious service yesterday afternoon (to attend which I slightly postponed my drive to East Downes), I heard Steele pronounce a fervid eulogy on those who had strengthened his hands for the fight which he knew it would shortly fall to his lot to wage against Apollyon,  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">THE GHOST OF FOUNTAIN LANE. 273 </fw>

<phenom type="scientific">

<mesmerism type="suggestion">  
<context type="mesmSubject">  
<rolePhenom type="committingCrime">

I did not wonder at weak-minded persons like Maria Lisle, swayed by such eloquence, setting up new standards of right and wrong for themselves."

</rolePhenom>  
</context>  
</mesmerism>  
</phenom>  
</p>

<p>"Miss Brooke, another question or two. Can you in any way account for the sudden payment of Mrs. Turner's debts--a circumstance that led me a little astray in the first instance?" </p>

<p>"Mrs. Brown explained the matter easily enough. She said that a day or two back, when she was walking on the other side of the vicarage hedge, and the husband and wife in the garden were squabbling as usual over money-matters, she heard Mr. Turner say indignantly, 'Only a week or two ago I gave you nearly £500 to pay your debts in Brighton, and now there comes another bill!' </p>

<p>"Ah, that makes it plain enough. One more question and I have done.

<phenom type="scientific">  
<mesmerism type="suggestion">  
<verdictPhenom type="truth">  
<reaction type="reluctance">

I have no doubt there's something in your theory of the hypnotic power (unconsciously exercised) of such men as Richard Steele, although, at the same time, it seems to me a trifle far-fetched and fanciful.

</reaction>  
</verdictPhenom>  
</mesmerism>

</phenom>

But even admitting it, I don't  
see how you account for the girl, Martha  
Watts, seeing the ghost. She was not present  
at the prayer-meeting which called the ghost  
<pb break="no"/>

<fw type="header">274 EXPERIENCES OF LOVEDAY BROOKE. </fw>

into being, nor does she appear in any way to  
have come into contact with the Rev. Richard  
Steele." </p>

<p>"Don't you think that

<phenom type="scientific">

<ghost type="mesmBelief">

<verdictPhenom type="imagination">

ghost-seeing is quite  
as catching as scarlet fever or measles?" an-  
swered Loveday, with a little smile. "Let one  
member of a family see a much-individualized  
and easily described ghost, such as the one  
these good people saw, and ten to one others  
in the same house will see it before the week  
is over. We are all in the habit of asserting  
that 'seeing is believing.' Don't you think  
the converse of the saying is true also, and that  
'believing is seeing'?"

</verdictPhenom>

</ghost>

</phenom>

</p>

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