UNSETTLING QUESTIONS, HYSTERICAL ANSWERS: THE WOMAN DETECTIVE IN VICTORIAN FICTION

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Although coinciding historically with the classical detective, the female detective does not simply replicate his work; instead, she investigates the cultural spaces that he cannot or will not examine, often illuminating his blindspots. While feminist theorists have begun to outline the specific function performed by women detectives in nineteenth-century fiction, their theories often label the work of these characters as either subversive or traditional, too often the latter. Rather than recognizing the shades of complexity added to representations of Victorian women by the woman detective’s disruption of institutional, especially legal, authority, many theorists reductively argue that novels of female detection end by reestablishing traditional gender boundaries. I disagree.

Examining a variety of amateur detectives—Rosa Dartle in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*; Valeria Macallan in Wilkie Collins’ *The Law and the Lady*; Mina Harker in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*; and Hilda Wade in Grant Allen’s *Hilda Wade: A Woman with Tenacity of Purpose*—I argue that the female detective investigates the origins of law and other social institutions, disclosing the hidden, often spectacular,
narrative origins of those institutions. This dissertation is not an analysis of the
detective genre, but an examination of woman characters who are involved in
detection, whose researches take them into the public realm and necessitate their
unsettling of male authority, of the male-gendering of power or knowledge. Unlike
the work of the classical detective, which supposedly creates a comforting sense of
social solidity, the female detective's investigations disclose a social system that cannot
be repaired by novel's end, one that, instead, reflects a hysterical process of endless
deferral. In her investigations of the Victorian family, the female detective discovers
that the law's unwillingness to investigate its own spectacular narrative origins limits
the types of female subjectivities it is able, or willing, to authorize. Reflecting the
hysterical social system in which she works, the woman detective is often positioned
as hysteric, a posture of open-ended questioning. Rather than enclosing subjectivity in
a false singularity, the female detective opens identities, both personal and
institutional, to multiplicity and contradiction. Her work recreates the complexity of
Victorian subjectivities, and signals the less-than-tidy boundary between masculine
and feminine identities.
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CHAPTER 1

A CASE OF CHERCHEZ LA FEMME: CLASSICAL DETECTIVES, PHALLIC MOTHERS, HYSTERICS

Walking into a supposedly empty room in a house rented by Mr. Judkins Barraclough, Dorcas Dene and her “assistant,” Mr. Saxon, are confronted with an “extraordinary sight”: “A huge cage. Is it a menagerie, or a cage for some wild animal, or what?” (84). Lying under a scarlet blanket, drugged with chloral and brandy, the “wild animal” is Mr. Judkins Barraclough’s first wife, “a dark woman who must once have been strikingly handsome” (84). After her death, Barraclough had planned to dress her in rags and plant her on the doorstep of his rented house; as he argues, “The law doesn’t trouble itself about paupers found dead on a doorstep” (97).

This scene, enacted in George Sims’ Dorcas Dene, Detective: Her Adventures (1897), delineates the blindness of law to the deaths of alcoholic women, but also its deafness to the complaints of upper-class women. Suspecting that her husband has another wife—she discovers a bite mark on his arm one night and argues that only
women, enraged women, bite—Lady Anna Barraclough, Judkins Barraclough’s current wife, asks Dorcas Dene to investigate. Lady Anna, the representative of the upper-class that Barraclough has married to give legitimacy to the money he earned in South America, fears that the police won’t investigate a millionaire merely because his wife suspects him of bigamy. While the story is critical of the law’s neglect of women, it also censures husbands, especially men who have traveled suspiciously abroad; Mr. Barraclough is described, like his first wife, as “dark,” a “wild animal” who secretly fled from England to South America in order to escape the British legal authorities, and who, after amassing a fundamentally corrupt fortune, has returned to London in “a shower of gold” with “all the worst qualities of the ostentatious parvenu” (66).

This is Lady Barraclough’s second disastrous marriage: her first husband gambled her money away, then thoughtlessly died of typhoid at the age of 27, leaving her a pauper at the age of 23. With the difficulty of choosing an acceptable husband, and with women’s lack of legal assistance when, perhaps out of desperation—Lady Barraclough, we are told, had no other option—they have made a poor choice, the female detective often “does the greatest service one woman can do for another” (67). Indeed, many of Dene’s cases hinge on the problem of unreliable or corrupt husbands: she rescues Maud Hargreaves from a husband who has gone mad; she discovers that the murderer of Mrs. Hannaford was her first husband, a corrupt financier who had pretended to
disappear during a Paris Opera fire; she learns that Mr. Charrington was forced to
steal and pawn his wife’s jewelry for his ex-mistress’ gambling husband. Indeed,
Dene’s husband, Paul, escapes criticism primarily because he is blind.

The adventures of Dorcas Dene suggest that Victorian women needed
protection from both their families and the legal authorities, so it is perhaps not
surprising that Fay Blake has discovered roughly thirty female detectives roaming the
pages of nineteenth-century British and American fiction. While fiction provided this
protection for women, Blake also reveals that real-life woman detectives and police
officers did not exist in Britain until the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919
(31).\(^1\) Michelle Slung accounts for the popularity of female detectives through two
factors: “Detective stories were the rage, and ‘lady anythings’ were equally faddish; the
combination of these two drawing cards thus meant surefire success for escapist
reading” (Pirkis xi). While female detectives can certainly be labeled as “faddish” or as
the fantastical creatures of “escapist” readings, the example of Dorcas Dene suggests
their more serious reflection of the problems of Victorian family life.

Investigating the function of the female detective in Victorian fiction and
analyzing women’s relationship to law, knowledge and theories of vision will be the

\(^1\) Though there were a few female prison matrons in the United States—one in Chicago in 1893,
another in Portland, Oregon, in 1905, and one in Los Angeles in 1910 (31-32).
goals of this dissertation. To provide historical background on the detective function generally, I will begin by analyzing the theories of classical detection produced by John Cawelti, Slavoj Zizek and Joan Copjec. Although coinciding historically with the classical detective, the female detective does not simply replicate his work; instead, she critiques his work, investigating cultural spaces that he cannot or will not examine, often illuminating his blindspots. Because theories of classical detection do not provide a model for recognizing female difference, feminist theorists have begun to hypothesize the feminist functions of women detectives, and the second part of this introduction will consider the feminist theories of nineteenth-century female detectives envisioned by Fay Blake, Joan Warthling Roberts and Kathleen Gregory Klein. These theorists question the powers of woman detectives to challenge gender stereotypes, to create a transgressive space outside of traditional sexual dichotomies. Most commonly, though, feminists claim that the woman detective serves a primarily conservative role, essentializing “womanliness.” I disagree. Instead, I discover that, unlike the classical detective’s work which supposedly creates a comforting sense of social solidity, the female detective’s investigations reveal a social system that cannot be repaired by novel’s end, one that, instead, reflects a hysterical process of boundless deferment. Reflecting the hysterical social system in which she works, the woman detective is often positioned as hysteric, a posture of open-ended questioning.
Invoking the theories of law and hysteria hypothesized by Jacques Derrida and Diana Fuss, I argue that the female detective investigates the origins of law and other social institutions, disclosing the hidden, often spectacular, narrative origins of these institutions. Rather than enclosing subjectivity in a false, phallic suture, the female detective opens identity, both personal and institutional, to reveal its multiplicities and contradictions.

i. Classical Detectives

According to an unnamed survey cited by Kathleen Gregory Klein, in 1978 one in every four US sales in books was a detective story and the sales of Agatha Christie’s novels are unrivaled: nearly 500 million copies in 1979 (Klein 7-8). Not only is detective fiction a popular culture favorite, it has also inspired a variety of literary theories, ranging from Tzvetan Todorov’s structuralist “Topology of Detective Fiction” to Geraldine Pederson’s Freudian “Detective Stories and the Primal Scene.” Unfortunately, few of these theorists have analyzed the specific function of the female detective within the genre, and even fewer have focused on late Victorian female detectives. Rather than providing a comprehensive survey of theories of the

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1 The anthology The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory, edited by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe, provides a comprehensive sampling of some of the more popular academic theories of detective fiction.
classical detective, I’ve chosen to consider three such theories in detail: John Cawelti’s analysis of the formula of the genre provides a useful outline of the plot structure and character of the classical detective, while also elaborating the domestic context in which these stories were produced, a milieu that will be replicated in stories of the female detective; Slavoj Zizek’s essay places the analysis of detection within the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, a frame I will be returning to in later parts of this dissertation; Joan Copjec introduces a Foucauldian analysis of the “detective function,” positing a connection between bureaucracy and detection that I will reformulate in theorizing the law as hysterical.

In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, John Cawelti argues that the classical detective story is more interested in the “form” of a crime and in the “process” of its solution than in the sociological bases of crime in society. Crime is entertainment; orchestrating the festivities with a combination of artistic intuition and empirical rationalism is Sherlock Holmes. While the classical detective is characteristically a detached, gentlemanly amateur, the popularity of Holmes, as opposed to the less favored Dupin, rests in the scene of his investigations—the family. In nineteenth-century England, according to Cawelti, the centerpiece of moral and social authority was the domestic circle, leading the public to become especially fascinated with the murders of relatives: “the public’s ambiguous fascination with such crimes was a way of vicariously working out feelings of hatred
and frustration imposed by the intensity of the family situation” (77). To heighten the suspense of the plot, detective writers usually include a bumbling Watson whose role is to misdirect the reader by limiting our access to the great detective’s deductive processes. In addition, Watson provides an example of simple common sense with which the reader can easily identify.

Psychologically, the most important element of the classical story is the detective’s final explanation, which involves a denial of mystery and a revelation of human motivation and action, allowing “relief in the detective’s precise definition and externalization of guilt” (90). By pinning the blame on a single individual, the detective clears the rest of society from guilt: crime becomes the fault of a sinister individual, rather than a corrupt culture. In his search for clues, the detective’s process is analogous to the psychoanalyst’s interpretation of a dream. They achieve different results, though: the detective’s solution projects guilt onto an external character, while the analyst’s reveals an internal conflict. Some of the cultural forces that led to the detective’s popularity with a Victorian audience include the political emergence of the lower classes, psychology’s theory of humanity as driven by aggressive and sexual

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3 In “Literature High and Low: The Case of the Mystery Story,” Geoffrey Hartman also creates a link between detective and Freud, arguing that Freudianism is “simply another form of mystery religion, one which insists on its myth of depth and hidden scene of passion” (Most and Stowe 214). Albert Hutter, in “Dreams, Transformations, and Literature: The Implications of Detective Fiction,” argues that psychoanalysis and detective fiction share significant structural relation and a close historical role (Most and Stowe 231).
urges that conflict with the goals of the ideal family circle, and the temporary release of guilt and doubt allowed by the detective’s solution to the crime. Cawelti sums up the work of the classical detective with the general statement, “something potentially dangerous and disturbing was transformed into something completely under control” (105).^4

Cawelti’s description of the classical detective provides a starting point for an analysis of the Victorian woman detective. Like her male counterparts, many of the female detectives also have their “Watsons”—Dorcas Dene has Mr. Saxon; Hilda Wade has Dr. Cumberledge; Mina Harker has Jonathan Harker. In Holmes stories, Dr. Watson figures as a likable character with whom the reader can easily identify, while also, as Cawelti suggests, heightening our suspense by not allowing us access to the detective’s cognitive processes. While the male narrators of female detective stories play similar roles, his position is more complicated. Sexual tension, for example,

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^4 The idea of the classical detective story ending in safety and security has both supporters and detractors: D.A. Miller, for example, writes, “The detective story gives obscurity a name and a local habitation...[it] realizes the possibility of an easily comprehensible version of order...” (69). Richard Alewyn believes that emigres and exiles are the ones who know how to read clues, “so far from confirming everyday reality, the rational order, and bourgeois security, it serves instead to jeopardize them” (Most and Stowe 77). Geoffrey Hartman writes that “the horror of the visible is clearly preferred to what is unknown or invisible” (Most and Stowe 223), while Albert Hutter suggests, “Detective fiction involves the transformation of a fragmented and incomplete set of events into a more ordered and complete understanding” (Most and Stowe 231). In “Agatha Christie: Containment of the Unknown,” David Grossvogel focuses on the individualism of the genre, arguing that “threats to law, order and ethnic impurity, with which the amorphous aggregate of the police cannot cope, are within the power of a single individual to master” (Most and Stowe 264).
enters the relationship of Dene and Saxon; Saxon writes, “Not even in the days of my youthful romance had I waited so eagerly for the hour and the lady, as I waited that evening for eight o’clock and Dorcas Dene” (11). Kathleen Gregory Klein believes that the male narrator completely destroys the credibility of the woman detective: “It is obvious that the male first-person narrator cannot truthfully tell a woman’s story, but neither can an implicitly phallocentric third-person narrative voice which cleaves to the generic formula” (228). It is not obvious to me that the male narrator would necessarily tell the woman’s story deceitfully. In the case of Dorcas Dene, for example, Saxon accompanies Dene on very few of her investigations, so that much of the narration is presented as direct quotation of Dene’s descriptions of her work. Still, the power differential between male narrator and female detective is an issue that is not as relevant in the Holmes-Watson relationship.

Simply by placing a middle-class woman in the public role of detective, an author creates a dissonance between that character and traditional Victorian female roles. As I suggested in my introduction, professional women detectives did not exist in “real-life” until the twentieth century, so that female detectives were purely fantasy. The repetition of stories dealing with corrupt husbands and unhappy marriages—even Dene’s dog, we learn, has rescued a woman from her drunken husband’s murder attempt—suggests that George Sims had a political purpose in mind when creating the fantastical Dorcas Dene. Unlike Cawelti’s classical detective story, Sims’ novel
neither individualizes nor localizes guilt; instead, it suggests that law and culture are dangerous systems from which women need protection.

In *Looking Away*, Slavoj Zizek continues Cawelti’s investigation of the relationship between the analyst and the detective. The power of both investigators has traditionally been explained in two opposing directions—“bourgeois” scientific rationalism and romantic clairvoyance—neither of which is adequate alone to explain the detective’s insights, nor is the attempt to fuse the values of reasoning and intuition (49). More important, in Zizek’s view, is the correspondence between their formal procedures. Through secondary revision, the dreamwork creates an appearance of unity that blinds the dreamer to the underlying dream-content. Fortunately for the analyst, secondary revision is never complete and an element always “sticks out,” rendering “visible the montage of heterogeneous ingredients effaced by its own final result” (53). Similarly, the crime scene is also the site of a false coherence which the detective unravels through his discovery of a “clue.” To identify the clue, the detective must place totality in parenthesis, focusing solely on details. Indeed, the crime scene teems with excessive, senseless details that have meaning only in that “others” (such as Watson) will think they have meaning, and will be diverted from the crime’s “true” solution.

How does the detective distinguish between senseless and meaningful details? According to Zizek, the detective’s very presence as omniscient “subject supposed to
know” guarantees the reestablishment of “normality.” The detective’s omniscience is an effect of transference that depends on the reader’s not having access to his thoughts and that, therefore, necessitates the presence of a Watson, the believer in common sense who mistakenly searches for “facts” rather than meaning. Like Cawelti, Zizek discovers that the function of the detective is to “dissolve the impasse of universalized, free-floating guilt by localizing it in a single subject” (59); so the detective annihilates “the libidinal possibility, the ‘inner’ truth that each one in the group might have been the murderer...on the level of ‘reality’” (59). The product of the detective’s work, dissolving our guilt, marks the point at which his work diverges from that of the analyst. Unlike the detective, the analyst forces us to pay, through symbolic castration, for our access to desire.

The connections Zizek creates between the analyst and the detective are provocative, but I wonder if his definition of the detective as “subject supposed to know” implicitly disallows the entrance of a female detective onto the scene of classical detection; how does transference work with woman as analyst? Does she assume the position of phallic mother? Not imagining that the classical detective genre could include women, Zizek never analyzes the difference woman as detective or analyst would create. Indeed, the only position for woman in this first portion of Zizek’s essay is as the fascinating teller of the story.
Perhaps the greatest charm of the classical detective narrative lies in the fascinating, uncanny, dreamlike quality of the story the client tells the detective at the very beginning. A young maid tells Sherlock Holmes how, every morning on her way from the train station to work, a shy man with a masked face follows her at a distance on a bicycle and draws back as soon as she tries to approach him. Another woman tells Holmes of strange things her employer demands of her: she is handsomely paid to sit by the window for a couple of hours every evening, dressed in an old-fashioned gown, and braid. These scenes exert such a powerful libidinal force that one is almost tempted to hypothesize that the main function of the detective’s “rational explanation” is to break the spell they have upon us. (60)

Thus, the woman functions as lure within the classical tale, as the generator of “fascinating, uncanny, dreamlike” stories, as the victim of masked men and wealthy employers. How does the woman detective avoid identification with these women? While Zizek does not quite accept the temptation of the powerful libidinal force exerted by these fascinating women and their potent sexuality, his text implicitly reveals feminine sexuality as the basis of the need for the detective’s services. Is the seepage of the feminine into the symbolic what Cawelti means when he refers to the “irrational urges” that disrupt the “ideal family circle”? Is the woman as detective, thus, participating in a corolling of feminine sexuality that seems to underwrite the social guilt the classical detective defers?

The charming victims in classical detective stories are transformed into femmes fatales in hard-boiled novels, women whose fascinations divert Zizek from his discussion of the hard-boiled dick in “The Philip Marlowe Way.” Delightful female
victim becomes bewitching and dangerous seductress—is there a difference? After theorizing that the classical detective, unlike his progeny, the hard-boiled detective, remains exterior to the libidinal circuit of the crime both by acceptance of payment for his services and through the intervention of the narrator, Zizek is lured away from the detective and into an explanation of the hard-boiled dick’s “double,” the femme fatale. Zizek finds that the femme fatale manifests a “radical ethical attitude” by her “unreserved acceptance of the death drive” (63). Thus, for example, Zizek applauds Peter Brooks’ revision of Bizet’s Carmen in which Carmen, after discovering that her true love Escamillo is dead, asks José, the man she has rejected in favor of the more macho Escamillo, to stab her. “Is there a denouement more desperate than this?,” Zizek asks. Of course there is, Carmen could have lived: “Carmen might have left with José, this weakling, and continued to live her miserable everyday life. The ‘happy ending,’ in other words, would be the most desperate of all” (64). Is it possible for Carmen to live, with neither José nor Escamillo? In dying, Carmen proves that “woman does not exist,” that she is nothing but “the symptom of man,” and, therefore, by assuming her nonexistence, that she is a truly Lacanian “subject” (65).

In order to assume subjectivity, the woman must fully embody the death drive, yet the detective is not forced to such extremes. Is woman’s desire always linked to the

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5 In Bizet’s version, José stabs Carmen to death as she watches Escamillo’s triumphant fight.
death drive? Can woman assume the position of the “subject supposed to know” rather than the magisterially “ethical” role of the femme fatale?

For Zizek, woman exists as seductress, as symptom, but never as subject. What does his classical detective do? He clears away generalized guilt, which Zizek would “almost be tempted” to link with the charms of feminine sexuality, but, instead, erases by hypothesizing woman’s desire, in its purest form, as an embodiment of the death drive. The detective separates himself from the circuits of libidinal desire—except, I wonder, in the case of “Scandal in Bohemia” in which Holmes desires the incomparable Irene Adler—by, like the analyst, accepting money for his services. Does money necessarily close down the circuits of desire? Can Freud avoid the libidinal circuit of “the uncanny dreamlike” stories of his patients; does his acceptance of Dora’s father’s money keep Freud from implicitly identifying himself with Herr K., Dora’s rejected paramour? Does Holmes avoid the fascinations of Irene Adler? Is it only the woman as analyst, like the therapist in the film House of Games, who is unable to separate herself from her client’s libidinal economy? In the case of Dorcas Dene, the connection between detective and client should be cut due to the monetary exchange, yet Dene is unable to maintain the inhumanely detached attitude of her male peers—for example, at the end of the novel, after receiving a “touching and beautiful” letter from the mother of one of her clients, she says, “These are the rewards of my profession.... They compensate for everything” (119). In addition, she views
her work as “the greatest service one woman can do for another”; perhaps the common bond of gender oppression links Dorcas with her clients in a way impossible for Holmes to imagine.

In her analysis of the classical detective, Joan Copjec adds a Foucauldian angle to Zizek’s Lacanian model. Her essay, “The Phenomenal Nonphenomenal: Private Space in Film Noir,” formulates the classical detective as “armchair rationalist,” solving crime through reason, not experience. Copjec argues, though, that despite their designation as “logic and deduction” novels or stories, tales of detection are only apparently deductive:

When anything can mean its opposite, we are no longer able to proceed from assured principles. Thus the detective cannot and does not solve the crime by drawing from his observations a continuous sequence of arguments, each supported by the one before and supporting the one that follows. Instead, the investigation moves forward in fits and starts, through reversals and false solutions in which the detective must show or appear to show his hand in order to get the criminal to show his. At each step the detective’s knowledge is placed at risk, and at each step some aspect of the situation, not previously known, actualizes itself. The world of classical detective fiction always materializes in bits and pieces, it never appears as a fully constituted world, visible in the simultaneity of its parts, except at the end—and retroactively. (viii)

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6 Joan Copjec has published a revision of this essay in Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).

7 This recurring image of Holmes’ passivity is interesting; I picture Holmes in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” for example, as using a variety of disguises in order to catch the criminal. While he is not emotionally involved in the crime, he certainly seems physically engaged (Doyle 209-229).
Like the analysis of a dream sequence, the solution appears only retroactively, through the apparently whole narrative created by the case history. As recent theorists such as Steven Marcus have argued, though, case histories are more similar to literary texts than to scientific reports: “like the living works of literature that they are, the material they contain is always richer than the original analysis and interpretation that accompany it” (90). Though the writer of a case history or the narrator of a detective story may attempt to create a complete, delimited text, the details of the story can never be fully accounted for, the story always contains a surplus of meaning that exceeds the narrative boundary. The detective represents the possibility of always one signifier more: “Out of every locked room he is always able to extract a letter, a corpse, a clue that was literally undetectable before he arrived on the scene” (177).

The list of potential signifiers is limitless.

Instead of comparing detectives to analysts, Copjec, noting that “statistics formed the basis of classical detective fiction’s narrative contract with its reader” (170), likens them to insurance adjusters. Statistics, she argues, individualize, creating more types of people, since a list of numbers cannot exist on its own without a category attached to it. Similarly, the detective function “scrutinizes, it invades, but above all, it constitutes the very people into which it comes into contact. It ‘makes up people’” (171). In “making up people,” transforming them into specific “types,” the detective
deports a panoptic power. Like statistics and the bureaucracies that contain them, detective fiction is a mechanism of surveillance, of discipline.

But the "characters" created by detectives, by statisticians, and by analysts, are purely performative, the result of a suturing process that makes up categories differentially, not empirically. So statistics, for example, accounts for people, normalizes them by "assigning to each citizen a value that was merely the translation of its relation to the other. The modern social bond is, then, differential rather than affective; it is based not on some oceanic feeling of charity or resemblance, but on a system of formal differences" (175). Copjec writes that "the nineteenth century’s fictional belief in the solvability of crime was specifically a mathematical expectation" (170), but, I would argue, the categories set up by statistics do not have the power of mathematics. Statistics can always be manipulated to suit their interpreters; the numbers do not group themselves into categories, but are shaped to suit the desires of their creators. Thus, the evidence itself is not definitive; a gap exists between the facts and what they prove. This gap, caused by the absence of a final signifier that would nail down meaning, necessitates interpretation, which is, according to Copjec quoting Lacan, just another name for desire.

At this point, the detective enters. Unlike the police who ignore desire and search for evidence or "facts," the desiring detective investigates the way the criminal's desire manifests itself in the evidence. According to Copjec, the primary imperative of
detective fiction is that “desire must be taken literally” (179). Although Zizek suggests that the classical detective does not desire, that he remains outside of the libidinal circuit, the gap that Copjec posits between evidence and interpretation, the gap that allows the detective to interpret the criminal’s desire, also creates a space for the desire of the detective to surface. Within this gap, the detective works. Copjec argues that the detective’s desire does not result in personal bias:

Desire is not an impurity that threatens the ‘objectivity’ of the detective, but the quasi-transcendental principle that guarantees it. In other words, desire does not impose a bias but supposes a gap: the detective reads the evidence by positing an empty beyond, a residue that is irreducible to the evidence while being, at the same time, completely demonstrated in it. Interpretation means that evidence tells us everything but how to read it. Beyond the evidence, in other words, there is no other reality, nothing—except the principle that guides our reading of it. (179)

When desire, the sign of her Lacanian background, enters Copjec’s equation, her formulation becomes problematic for theories of female detection. In particular, Copjec argues that the gap that necessitates interpretation is caused by the absence of a final signifier that would establish an end to the chain. While this missing final signifier makes both detective fiction and statistics possible, its absence also makes the sexual relation “impossible” because, this signifier “if it existed, would be the signifier for woman” (179). Like Cavelti and Zizek, Copjec, thus, posits an absence where the woman might have been.
“The detective,” Copjec insists, “is structurally forbidden any involvement with a woman” (179). Therefore, the elision of the signifier for woman defines the fictional space of classical detective fiction. Why, I wonder, must woman necessarily be “the final absent signifier”? Is the classical detective actually forbidden all involvement with women? As Zizek suggested, many of the Holmes stories insist upon the presence of women; don’t these women count and why not? How would “A Scandal in Bohemia” fit Copjec’s scheme? Does Holmes relate with Irene Adler? How would Copjec theorize Adler’s master detecting? While her analysis of the relation of statistics, bureaucracy and detection is provocative, the Lacanian interlude seems less compelling. Besides denying women, her analysis also appears to theorize interpretation as an ideologically neutral activity. Spurs, Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche in which he attempts to create a space for the feminine within philosophy, includes a passage that considers the relationship of woman, style and interpretation: “At this point, where it pierces the veil of truth and the simulacrum of castration in order to impale the woman’s body, the questions of style must be measured against the larger question of the interpretation of Nietzsche’s text, of the interpretation of interpretation—in short against the question of interpretation itself” (71-73). Reading this passage, Kelly Oliver questions whether violence necessarily belongs to interpretation or if interpretation necessarily impales woman’s body? What place can
woman occupy in interpretation? (29). These questions are especially important in our reading of female detectives: do their interpretations impale the female body? 

Does woman's method of detection work differently? Can we accept desire, i.e. interpretation, as "the quasi-transcendental principle" that guarantees objectivity?

Before discussing this paradigm further, I would first like to consider the distinction Copjec creates between classical detectives and the heroes of film noir. Traditionally, the difference between the two is related to the question of identification; in noir the detective comes to identify so closely with his criminal adversary, that he becomes himself the criminal. Instead, Copjec views the classical detective as aligning himself with desire/"having"/sense, while the noir detective is driven by satisfaction/"being"/jouissance. Safeguarded by the empty, "private," space produced by counting, the classical detective is ruled by desire and aligned with the oedipal father who offers protection. Refuge no longer exists for the hero of noir who is overwhelmed by the drive. In classical detective fiction, the private beyond remains hidden, secret, the space of jouissance and the feminine in Copjec's theory. As "being," the woman does not have any sense: "In shifting its topological position, being does not lose its essential nature as resistance to sense: what is made audible—or visible—is the void as such, contentless and nonsensical" (188). "Being"/jouissance, is

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8 The significance of this problem will become particularly important in my reading of Dracula, in which interpretation leads literally to Lucy's impalement.
defined as "resistant" to sense, contentless and nonsensical like the voice of hysteria. As jouissance, the private room, nonsensical, the woman would seem to have no position from which to speak.

Although Copjec creates a distinct line of demarcation between a desire-driven, as opposed to a drive-driven society, I would question the clarity of that line. Suture seems to be more subject to disruptions from imaginary excess; for example, in "Paranoia and the Film System," Jacqueline Rose writes, "the emphasis on the imaginary in the discussion of film as a specific ideological form must address itself to the relation of woman to that register, since that relation is itself a comment on the impossibility of stabilizing positions in the symbolic" (235). Zizek's temptation to take the imaginary excess created by woman, a return of the "feminine" repressed perhaps, in the Holmes stories seriously, implies that the system of detection is more precarious than these theories indicate. That the return of the repressed "feminine" has the potential to rupture the symbolic system is a foundational concept of my theory of female detection.

While theories of classical detection create space for women only as spectacle, as symptom, as final absent signifier, as empty room, as senseless "being," they provide a starting point for an analysis of woman detectives. Using Copjec's terms, I will argue that nineteenth-century women detectives "make" different characters than does the classical detective, and, reciprocally, that by positioning these women as
detectives—rather than as angels in the house or as household managers, etc.—my argument makes them "count" differently. I am not necessarily investigating characters that are traditionally viewed as detectives; while Valeria Woodville and Hilda Wade can easily be viewed as detectives, Rosa Dartle has never been theorized as a detective, and Mina Harker has been labeled a detective, but, as far as I know, has never been analyzed exclusively as a detective. By positing characters such as Rosa Dartle or Mina Harker as detectives, I find that women were investigating crime before we gave them credit for it and, furthermore, that viewing these women as detectives adds an extra shade of complexity to our perceptions of their characters. In line with Foucault's genealogical approach, I try to fragment what was thought to be unified, and show the "heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (82). Thus, I mimic the female detective. While Cawelti argues that the classical detective transforms the dangerous and disturbing into "something completely under control," I will argue that the Victorian woman detective disrupts institutionally-sanctioned constructions of reason, of law, and of gender. Just as she unsettles, perhaps unconsciously, the rigidity of the institutional truths, I try to disturb traditional representations of Victorian women characters. Thus, I am less interested in genre—the novels I investigate, with the exception of Wilkie Collins' The Law and
the Lady, exceed the limits of Cawelti's "formula of the classical detective story"—and, instead, am intrigued by the ways women detectives complicate theories of classical detection, and by the ways the investigations these women conduct unsettle theoretical perceptions of their characters and of Victorian society, allowing us to account for women in new ways.

ii. The Nineteenth-Century Female Detective: Representing the Phallic Mother?

The detective, as Zizek notes, assumes the position of "the subject supposed to know"; is that position problematized by the entrance of women into the scene of investigation? If woman is, as Copejac theorizes, nonexistent, the blank space, how can she possibly assume the role of subject? While theories of classical detection provide insight on the historical and methodological bases of detection fiction and on the intersection of detection and psychoanalysis, they do not elucidate the problems a nineteenth-century female detective might face. To uncover the specific difficulties faced by Victorian female detectives, I turn now to feminist analyses of detection.

*Cawelti lists three minimal conditions of detective fiction: 1. There must be a mystery—certain facts must be concealed from the reader; 2. The story must be structured around an inquiry into these concealed facts; 3. The concealed facts must be made known at the end of the story (132). While all of the female detectives I consider are searching for concealed facts, the texts are not necessarily structured around the investigation. The Law and the Lady is the only novel I consider that conforms fully to Cawelti's detective formula.*
Walking the Victorian Streets, Deborah Nord’s analysis of Victorian women as “public” figures, does not include the female detective, but her description of the difficulties women faced as they moved from home to career suggests potential differences between classical and female detectives. Unlike men, whose roles were traditionally public, women became transgressive simply by moving outside of the boundaries of home: “the particular urban vision of the female observer, novelist, or investigator derives from her consciousness of transgression and trespassing, from the vexed sexuality her position implies, and from her struggle to escape the status of spectacle and become a spectator” (12).¹⁰ As public figure, the female detective is automatically sexualized. This is one of the reasons Dorcas Dene needs the help of her assistant, Mr. Saxon: a man in evening dress can negotiate the streets at midnight without attracting the attention of the police, while a woman cannot. To overcome their feelings of transgression, women resorted to disguise, a “tangible and rhetorical defense against vulnerability, exposure and accusations of trespass” (206). In the Dorcas Dene series, Dene transforms herself from gypsy woman, to American tourist, to Italian street musician in order to protect her identity. In addition, Dene must negotiate the contradictions of her role as spectator and spectacle; her looks both

¹⁰ Nord posits a connection between the prostitute, the actress, the female investigator—they are all “public” women (7).
evoke Saxon's desire and catch the criminal. Nord historicizes women's ventures into the public realm by arguing that this new generation of independent women were united by their revolt against the bourgeois family and by their attraction to the city of London. Since "domestic life headed the national agenda" (214) of late nineteenth-century England, women's entry into the public sphere, despite its anti-family values message, was justified as an extension of domestic duties, a fulfillment of private responsibility in the public realm (209). Like Nord's social investigators, female detectives were also obligated to assume, in the words of Dene's narrator, the persona of a "womanly woman": "it is as if their legitimization as social investigators depended on their creating a conventionally female persona even though the actual unconventionality of being a female investigator...was at odds with their obligatory support of traditional gender roles" (Nord 208). Nord's analysis evokes many questions concerning the specific function of the female detective: Did she support or reject bourgeois family values? How did she negotiate her roles as spectator and spectacle, between "womanly woman" and social critic? What function did disguise play in her role as detective? What is the relationship of women to law? of women to knowledge? of women to theories of vision? How does the female assume a position within the structure of knowledge?

In an analysis focused specifically on nineteenth-century female detectives, "Lady Sleuths and Women Detectives," Fay Blake provides a useful catalogue of
nineteenth-century British and American female detectives, but also develops a basic
theory for analyzing these detectives. Blake posits a distinction between lady sleuths,
upper-class women who become detectives in order to preserve their families, and
women detectives, working women who sleuth for money: the “women detectives,”
Blake finds, are “truly subversive females,” while the “lady sleuths” aren’t, as they
detect “to be able to function solely and happily as wives and mothers” (31). As
professional detective, Dorcas Dene would fall in the “subversive” category, while
Valeria Woodville/Macallan in Wilkie Collins’ *The Law and the Lady*, detecting in
order to clear her husband of six days from blame for his first wife’s death, lands with
the “not”s. I find the text more complex, and the final domestic situation less than
secure. Although Valeria discovers the story of Sara Macallan’s suicide, and the novel
ends with Valeria and Eustace happily together with their new son, problems still
plague the text—the suicide note of the first Mrs. Macallan is left for the son to read;
Eustace is legally vindicated, but remains morally reprehensible; the suicide note
remains outside of the law. Guilt is never, using Cawelti’s term, “externalized.”
Indeed, the parallels the novel draws between the first and second Mrs. Macallans
make it difficult to blame one woman, while admiring another; despite Valeria’s
attempts to vindicate her husband morally, he remains the guilty party; finally, the
novel suggests that the legal system, which neglects to investigate a husband’s
psychological mistreatment of his wife, is also guilty for her suicide. But while Blake's reduction of the work of all nineteenth-century women detectives into a simple binary seems problematic to me, her methodology is followed by most feminist theorists of women detectives in this period.

A recent collection (1995) edited by Glenwood Irons considers, as its title suggests, *Feminism in Women's Detective Fiction*. While the majority of the collection's twelve essays discuss twentieth-century female detectives, Joan Warthling Roberts' piece, "Amelia Butterworth: The Spinster Detective," begins to chart the history of female detection. As the following quotation suggests, Roberts' primary goal, like Blake's, is creating a dichotomy between "subversive" and "conservative" detectives:

The simple presence of a female detective in fiction does not necessarily disturb the narrative order, paradoxical as that may seem. From the earliest days of the genre—the 1860s, until about 1900—women appeared as detectives in fiction, but without disturbing the underlying ideology. They were classifiable and thus easily dismissible as fantasies or freaks, as competent human beings (that is, as honorary males), as domestic but desperate, or as lower-class contemptibles. To take an example from another genre, the fantasy/adventure mode encouraged breathtaking exploits for a female, just as it would for a male adventurer, with only an occasional nod to reality. By using a female as a pawn, the writer raised the temperature and the possibility for terror. Sensational fiction has played on that strategy for many years. These females were fantasies or freaks or pawns and thus did not disturb the essentially heroic male ideology (4).
Roberts' highly generalized classification is problematic. All of the detectives I will consider in this dissertation fall into the "desperate but domestic" category, but, I would argue, that does not necessarily make them "dismissible": is she suggesting that all domestic women are dismissible or that any woman who detects for love is necessarily a pawn in "the underlying ideology"?

Roberts' nomination for "subversive" nineteenth-century female detective, Amelia Butterworth, also seems problematic. From a distinguished American colonial lineage, unmarried, financially secure, Amelia Butterworth is, to Roberts, an "effective, well-rounded, and admirable" version of the female investigator. Although recognizing that Butterworth works within the confines of the law, depending on the support of NYC police investigator Ebenezer Gryce for her authority, Roberts supports Butterworth because she is "an insider, in class and in wealth, an unmarried female of impeccable upbringing" who detects "for no good reason" (9). Thus, while Roberts dismisses women who investigate family-related crimes, she supports an upper-class "elderly busybody," "a finicky, prying, inquisitive" woman who spies on people for "no good reason." The untheorized racism and classism of Roberts' essay

11 Although Roberts is suggesting that the oddities of the woman detective made her dismissible to the Victorian reading public, she seems implicitly to accept these categories, which she has created. Roberts never analyzes the political implications of her categories, but, instead, erects a version of the female detective that is/ was "acceptable."

12 Amelia Butterworth was a detective created by American writer, Anna Katherine Green.
go uncontested, as does the question of the source of Amelia Butterworth’s “strength” and “independence.” While Roberts claims that Butterworth somehow escapes traditional ideologies, her theory that only unmarried, upper-class women who work for “no reason” can pave the “way for the new female detectives...of today and tomorrow” (10) creates a theoretically problematic lineage for the female detective.

Kathleen Gregory Klein’s encyclopedic examination of female investigators, *The Woman Detective: Gender & Genre* (1988), creates a more complex view of the nineteenth-century woman detective, yet her analyses, too, seem overly invested in the “conservative versus progressive” dichotomy. In accounting for the large number of women detectives in turn-of-the-century fiction, Klein proposes two phenomena as significant: the rise of the detective novel and the emergence of the “new woman” (56). Klein posits a clash between the “detective” and the “woman” scripts of these novels, a contradiction which ends up “reestablishing in her traditional place the woman whom they have created for that new role” (58). Like Roberts, then, Klein generally finds the nineteenth-century female detective lacking. In her criticism of Dorcas Dene, for example, Klein discovers:

...Saxon’s [Dene’s assistant] continual references to the womanly woman at home and with her husband awkwardly contradict the description of the ‘famous lady detective.’ However, it is in terms of her family relationships, particularly her marital relationships, that Dorcas Dene is reduced as a detective. (63)
In addition, Klein argues that the novel “mocks and diminishes” Dorcas’ abilities because Dorcas solves her crimes in council with her family: “[Dene] is doubly secondary and submissive as she bolsters [her husband’s] self-confidence by deliberately minimizing her own independence.... Dorcas Dene, woman and detective, is submerged within the confines of patriarchal marriage” (64). Is a woman detective necessarily “reduced” by her family involvements? Klein’s criticism of Dene’s communal³ approach to crime-solving seems ironic given her own rejection of the model of the “loner” detective. Introducing Sara Paretsky in Great Women Mystery Writers, Klein applauds V.I. Warshawski’s disdain for heroic individualism, adopting Carol Gilligan’s feminist theory of moral development in her theorization of Paretsky’s achievements: “Carol Gilligan calls for an ‘ethic of responsibility’... common among women...where [the detective’s] role is not simply to discover the murderer and restore order, but also to work with and develop a sense of community with and among many of the characters” (266).

In its search for a general theory of the female detective, Klein’s analysis whirls through 120 years of female detectives in 250 pages. Rather than analyzing any of these women in detail, she creates a general theory that categorically dismisses the

³ Though their participation in her detective work is actually minimal—Dorcas does all of the work and sends them to Eastbourne while she working on a case. Also, many of her cases are conducted away from home, so the family is unable to assist her.
potentially subversive work of all nineteenth-century female detectives. For example, she concludes her chapter, “Britain’s Turn-of-the-Century ‘Lady Detective’: 1891-1910,” by arguing that although the five female detectives she has analyzed in the chapter are different in “externals,” “essentially they are the same” (72):

Dishonestly, the authors entice readers with prospects of women’s active participation in adventure, intellectual activity, and public roles only to validate the oppressive tradition (real or desired) when it is too late for readers to withdraw safely. The unsuspecting woman reader, unaware that she must adopt Judith Fetterly’s strategy to become a resisting reader, finds herself in the protagonist’s position—undercut at the end. (73)

In this conclusion, Klein manages to dismiss the energy and exuberance of all the female detectives she considers, rather than analyzing their multiple trajectories, both resistant and conservative. Klein creates a hierarchy among female detectives, suggesting, for example, that a woman is “reduced” as a detective if she cannot juggle marriage and career, if she cannot solve every crime independently, or if she cannot “define her own identity” (72). Concluding her history of female detection with the unsurprising—given her reductive arguments throughout the book—discovery that female detectives support “the existing system which oppresses women” (201), Klein seems to be reinstating the status quo by allowing female detectives to exist only within a narrowly defined either/or: either they’re conservative or progressive, for women or against them. No ambiguous ground exists for Klein.
Feminist theories that search for “strong,” “admirable” images of women or that distinguish “subversive” and “conservative” writers seem covertly to authorize censorship and to hierarchize female experience as more or less good enough.\textsuperscript{14} Theories of the nineteenth-century woman detective are particularly trapped within this phallic rigidity. The sense of betrayal or loss in these theories is intriguing; feminists seem eagerly to have embraced the female detective in hopes of uncovering a lost origin, a missing mother, a “whole,” independent woman whose presence could erase decades of representations of feminine weakness—in other words, a phallic mother. Ironically, feminists seem surprised to have found exactly that, particularly in the case of Dorcas Dene: a woman who functioned as fetish for her male narrator, and, most likely, her male creator and male readers.\textsuperscript{15} For a male audience confronted with the late-nineteenth century’s changing gender roles,\textsuperscript{16} particularly in the form of

\textsuperscript{14}Indeed, Michelle Slung was the only feminist I found who defended nineteenth-century women detectives. In her introduction to the Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective, Slung writes, “The very essence of criminal investigation is antithetical to what was considered proper feminine breeding, involving as it does eavesdropping, snooping and spying, dissimulation, immodest and aggressive pursuit and physical danger. The ability to perform these acts, even as portrayed in a fictional character, required a hardening that stemmed not from the example of the so-called New Woman (whether the Girton girl, i.e., the hearty, athletic university graduate, or the suffragist) but rather from the intuitive perception that to be an odd woman could have emancipating advantages, enabling one to act deliberately outside of the system” (xi).

\textsuperscript{15}I haven’t been able to discover any information on the readership for novels such as the Dorcas Dene series.

\textsuperscript{16}See, for example, Ann Ardis’ New Women: New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism. Ardis argues that New Woman novels were threatening because they figure “desires that have never been realized
the bold New Woman, the representation of Dorcas Dene as a “womanly woman” was most likely comforting. While I would argue that female detectives served as fetish for male consumers in the nineteenth-century, I wonder if feminist theorists of women detectives in this period are also searching for a fetish, a woman who has it all like Klein’s ideal detective: lover-fighter-intellectual, all-in-one. Kaja Silverman posits that woman as fetish endangers male subjectivity: “Not only does that construction facilitate the detachment of the female image from narrative control, but it can challenge the very assumption, that is, that woman is castrated or lacking. In short, the fetish can become indistinguishable from the phallus” (229-30). But does the creation of woman as phallus allow feminine difference to emerge? Most feminists argue “no.”

Instead, the search for “strong” images of women embodies a contradiction that becomes apparent in feminist critiques of Freud’s “phallic mother”: “This would be the story of ‘m,’ the mother whose immunity from castration (according to Freud’s own theory) has the function of assuaging masculine castration anxiety” (Jacobus 16). The phallic mother, as an alternative to Freud’s paternal narrative, paradoxically reinscribes “the fiction of the uncastrated woman who defends against anxiety—but does so at the price of denying sexual difference. If the mother is phallic, then there is

before; they imagine worlds quite different from the bourgeois patriarchy in which unmarried women are deemed odd and superfluous” (4).
nothing but masculinity after all; women are really men. To re-member the phallic other is to forget the lesson of originary dismemberment” (Jacobs 17). Mary Jacobs, thus, defines the phallic mother as implicitly negating difference, an idea echoed by Marcia Ian in Remembering the Phallic Mother, who claims the phallic mother is “a symptom of the compulsion to resolve ambivalence by dissolving it into a specious equivalence” (6). Significantly, the phallic mother does not refer to women or to mothers; in fact, it does not refer at all, except to a collapse of the sign and referent replaced by fetishization (Ian 6). Having a penis, the phallic mother defies the psychoanalytic “fact” of women’s castration, while attesting to the castration of every woman but her: “she is the girl who has everything and the one ‘we’ for that reason desire and wish ‘we’ could be” (9).

Fetishism, in Freud’s topiary of perversions, is a penis-substitute in the shape of the mother’s phallus. Unable to abandon his mother as love object, the fetishist disavows maternal castration by substituting the fetish for the fantastic maternal phallus. Just as the reader of the classical detective story does not have to pay for desire, neither does the fetishistic reader of female detectives: the fetishist, we know, never pays for his pleasures as he neither relinquishes his desire for his mother nor suffers castration. In “Fetishism,” Freud theorizes that the fetishist both retains his

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17 Would the phallic mother be an example of a “subject supposed to know,” thereby creating an exact replica of the classical detective?
belief in the maternal phallus, but also gives it up (216). The fetishist’s ambivalent position, both creating and denying the maternal phallus, reminds me of feminist theorists\(^\text{17}\) of woman detectives, who would like to both accept and reject male ideologies. Remaining at this point of ambivalence would seem to be an enviable skill, an ability to see beyond dichotomies and accept paradox. But theorists suggest that this is not the case; instead, the fetishist deliberately refuses to know. Laura Mulvey, for example, identifies fetishism as a psychological structure that “disavows knowledge in favour of belief” (xi), as opposed to “curiosity,” a desire to know that illuminates fetishism’s blindspots. Arguing that the fetishist exhibits an “epistemophobic overinvestment in the memory of the phallic mother” (56), Ian’s analysis, too, delineates the phallic mother as an object of both epistemophilia and epistemophobia. By erecting the female detective, or any “strong” woman for that matter, as fetish, the feminist necessarily rejects the position of seeker of knowledge.

What is the alternative?

iii. Detection, Law, Hysterics

In limiting the focus of this dissertation, I’ve chosen to consider amateur

\(^{17}\) Elizabeth Grosz discusses the gendering of fetishism; traditionally, it is a male perversion, though she theorizes a possible lesbian fetishist.
investigators created by male authors, women who, unlike Dorcas Dene, pursue
detection in order to clear a family member of wrong-doing: Rosa Dartle to brand
Little Emily for her affair with Steerforth; Valeria Woodville to restore her marriage
and the reputation of her new husband; Mina Harker to save her husband and herself
from Dracula’s infestation; Hilda Wade to clear her father of a murder charge. These
detectives are interesting, in my opinion, because their work takes place on the
margins of the professional/public divide, blurring the boundary. While the
consensus among feminist theorists seems to be that these women are neither strong
nor subversive, I disagree. Kathleen Gregory Klein, for instance, believes that amateur
detectives “can be ignored and their behavior seen as a momentary intrusion into
public life” (225): “The amateur is allowed extraordinary scope for error, foolishness,
and luck as she solves a mystery; she has no client, no responsibility, and no
commitment to investigation as a profession. Her accepted lack of credentials means
that readers have no standard against which to compare her” (6). While these women
are “amateur” detectives, the public nature of their work positions them as precursors
of the woman “professional.” Thus, I find the amateur/professional divide to be
blurred at best. Although my goal is neither to discover strong or “admirable,” or
even “reduced” images of woman, nor, more problematically, to make prescriptions

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about what types of women would or should be acceptable for feminists, I find that all of these women are subversive in that they uncover the blindspots within the system of the law, in that their analyses are not definitive, in that they recognize their own corruptions—particularly in the case of Hilda Wade—by systems of “masculine” power. These women are not subversive because they present themselves as external to the system, but because their investigations uncover the perversities of the “male” system, a system in which they, necessarily, participate. Like the detecting women I analyze, I will read for the eccentric moments in a narrative, and I will insist upon the complexity of Victorian representations of women.

Given the specificity of my focus, I am not surprised to discover that the detectives I investigate appear to function differently than the professionals analyzed by other theorists. Unlike Dorcas Dene, these amateur detectives work beyond the sanctions of the legal system and, as members of the family circles they interrogate, they are necessarily caught within the libidinal circuits of their investigations. While Ann Cvetkovich argues that the male detective exists in “an odd no man’s land between the legal, professional world and the family,” the position of the female detective involves an even greater contradiction because she does not have the sanction of the law, even as final resort. Like Lady Anna Barraclough, or Judkins Barraclough’s first wife, the amateur female detective exists literally in “no man’s land.”
Perhaps professional women detectives, because they work within the institution of the law, more fully embody the attributes of the phallic mother—i.e., depictions of them may be more conventional. Perhaps the male creators of these amateur detectives, because they felt less personal responsibility for creating "strong" images of women to serve as role models, tried to minimize their characters' explicit subversiveness by emphasizing their domesticity. What interests me about the detectives I investigate is how complex and contradictory their identities often are, how little they conform with the "Superwoman" pattern of phallic motherhood, and how seldom the cases they investigate are resolved or resolvable. Not only are the identities of the female detectives I investigate contradictory, but the societies in which they work are equally inconsistent. While the classical detective supposedly creates a reassuring sense of social stability, the female detective's investigations reveal a social system that cannot be repaired by novel's end, one that, instead, reflects a hysterical process of endless deferral. While Zizek's analogy between sleuthing and dream interpretation is apt, Freud's recognition in the Interpretation of Dreams of the fundamental insolubility of the dream, the illegible navel at its center, seems a more appropriate description of the work of female detection: "there is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unraveled and which moreover adds
nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown" (235). At this point where knowledge touches the unknown, this umbilical cord, the female detective works. Not another phallic mother, a "subject supposed to know" in the phallic sense, the amateur woman detective works as a hysterics refusing to assume a singular position, subverting, even rejecting law. Her investigations reveal the points at which the social system falls apart, call into question its origins, its relationship to sexuality, its repression of the feminine, perhaps even its hysteria. When the symbolic system, or even the law itself becomes hysterical, it can no longer be used to justify or defuse anxiety or guilt.

Disrupting the solidity of the law's self-representation has become the work of literary critics and philosophers. In "Devant La Loi," Derrida explores Kafka's story of the same name, leading him to posit the following basic question: "What if the law, without being transfixed by literature were possible only under the same conditions as literary works?" (133). Based on Kafka's text, Derrida interrogates the origin and authority of the Law: what makes it Law and how does it maintain this power? To sustain its position as "subject supposed to know," the law must appear to be without history, origin and narrativity. While the gate to the law is open, the doorkeeper's discourse "operates at the limit, not forbidding, but interrupting and deferring passages, withholding a pass" (141). Because of the inaccessibility of its discourse, the
law remains forbidden, incessantly deferring "access to itself, abstaining or interdicting itself in order thereby to become something or someone" (143).

To investigate law’s narrative origin, Derrida invokes Freud, who, he claims, wanted to write a history of law: "Repression," based on the myth of Oedipus, is Freud’s response to the question of the origin of moral law. In his letters to Fleiss, Freud charts the history of his newly emergent theory of repression:

...after the frightful pangs of labour these last weeks, I have given birth to a new body of knowledge. Not entirely new, of course; it had repeatedly shown itself and then withdrawn again.... I had written to you in summer that I should discover the source of normal sexual repression (morality, sense of decency, and so on) and for a long time afterwards I have failed. Before the holidays I had told you that my most important patient was myself; and then, suddenly, on returning from my holidays, my self-analysis, which at that time had given me no sign, began again. Some weeks ago I desired that repression be replaced by the essential thing that lies behind it and it is what occupies me now. (Derrida 134-35)

Assuming the position of the mother he exorcises from his new Oedipal theory of psychology, Freud discovers the origins of morality in “[d]elay, difference, and ennobling elevation, removing the olfactory sense from the smell of sex, repression” (Derrida 135). And fundamental to Freud’s theory of repression, as he writes in a letter to Fleiss uncited by Derrida, is the feminine: "In every instance repression starts from the feminine" (Jacobs 3). Mary Jacobus translates this statement as meaning, “What gets repressed is femininity” (3). Thus, the erasure of the feminine is at the base of moral law, the “essential thing,” the primary debasement, that lies behind
repression. In her investigations of the Victorian family, the female detective uncovers the ways that law creates the feminine as degraded in order to authorize its own investigations; in *The Law and the Lady*, for example, Valeria Woodville discovers that the law's unwillingness to investigate its own spectacular, narrative origins limits the types of female subjectivities it is able, or willing, to authorize. The female detective discovers the law's blindspots, the ways in which it resists itself. As I will argue in Chapter 3, female sexuality is erased from the annals of the trial of Madeleine Smith, thus preventing the legal authorities both from recognizing Smith as a sexual being and, therefore, from prosecuting her for the poisoning death of her lover.

In "Sexual Contagions: Dorothy Strachey's *Olivia,*" Diana Fuss picks up the thread of Derrida's argument, placing it within the weave of her own discussion of the hysteria of the law: "What is to prevent us from reading the law itself as hysterical symptom?... The significance of the structure of hysteria is that it is all structure" (131). While Derrida does not link his analysis with hysteria, Fuss believes that such a connection is appropriate:

Although Derrida does not mention hysteria in his reading of this passage on the law, we might recall that the "self-analysis" Freud refers to here is his self-treatment for hysteria that leads to the very discovery of repression as the basis of the law. It is true, as Derrida notes, that from the outset Freud "wanted to write a history of the law" (135); it is also the case that, from the outset, this history of the law is a history of hysteria. Put within the terms of Derrida's own hysterical reading, we might say that there is no hysteria before, outside, or beyond the law. And yet my question here, though related, takes a rather different tack:
what might it mean to say that there is no law outside of hysteria? Or, more precisely, that the hysteria of the law obeys the logic of the law of hysteria? (131)

Fuss answers these questions by suggesting that “the Symbolic itself is ill” (131), that the law “induces what it purports to cure” and that “psychoanalysis is itself a hysterical theory of sexuality” (133). In hypothesizing a symbolic system that is fundamentally hysterical, suggesting that the hysterics illness is a reflection of a sick society, Fuss introduces a theory that will be confirmed in each of the texts I analyze. Like Fuss’ hysterics, the female detective repeatedly poses the questions: “What does it mean to be a woman? to be a man?” (133). In texts populated by weak male characters, both men’s and women’s identities are at stake, quite literally in Dracula. But so is the identity of the institutions that supposedly constitute English society; by positing breaks within the structuring institutions of Victorian society—middle-class domesticity in David Copperfield; the law and marriage in The Law and the Lady and Dracula; medicine and colonialism in Hilda Wade—these novels rupture, rather than reconstruct, the illusion of social stability. Unlike Copjec’s classical detective who “makes people,” the woman detective “unmakes” people and institutions, suggesting the limitlessness of character “types,” the impossibility of making character plain.

If we accept Fuss’ notion of psychoanalysis as hysterical discourse, how does that alter Zizek’s reading of the classical detective’s method? How might the
detective's focus on the detail, "placing the totality within parenthesis," suggest a link between detection and hysteria or, remembering Copjec, the idea of the detective as representing "the possibility of always one signifier more." In Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine, Naomi Schor connects the detail with the feminine; the detail, she argues, has traditionally been labeled as feminine, trivial, mundane and sexual (3). The logic of the particular, she writes, is the logic of the supplement, enlisted to compensate for lack (20); hysteria, she hypothesizes, is a pathology of the detail (70). How does Schor's theory alter our understanding of theories of classical detection? Cawelti, Zizek and Copjec all emphasize the detective's detail fetish; does the detective's worship of the detail implicitly feminize or sexualize him? As Copjec argues, the proliferation of details is stanched by suture, the addition of an element to a series of signifiers that both allows it to function "as if" closed, while simultaneously signaling the impossibility of closure (176). Zizek argues that the hysteric's fundamental question articulates the "experience of a fissure, of an irreducible gap between the signifier that represents one and the nonsymbolic surplus of my being-there" (131); "There is an abyss separating them; the symbolic mandate can never be founded in, accounted for by my 'effective properties' insofar as its status is by definition that of a 'performative'" (181). Thus, the performative basis of identity that Copjec argues is the basis for statistics and detection is nothing but a gap that the
hysterically recognizes and rejects: she refuses to accept these performative categories.

Realizing her own position within this performative space, does the female detective refuse the mandates of suture, refuse the phallic thrust of interpretation? I will argue "yes." Instead of closing identity in a false, phallic suture, the female detective opens subjectivity up to reveal multiplicity and contradiction, as, I hope, the following brief synopsis of my dissertation will suggest.

Chapter 2 discusses an odd, eccentric, "minor" character—Rosa Dartle in *David Copperfield*. While readers may not immediately recognize Dartle as a detective, I will argue that she detects both actually, discovering Emily’s hiding place in the depths of London, and metaphorically, revealing the gender and class inequities that Copperfield’s narrative obscures. Dartle’s exposé of women's problematic relationship to knowledge, to vision, and to sexuality makes her a vital precursor to the other detectives I will discuss in this dissertation. Rosa’s scar, for example, is the emblem of her link with the hysterica. Connecting her with repressed female desire and with male violence, the scar both demands and defies interpretation; it is also contagious, hystericalizing Rosa’s entire body, and her conversational style, which continually asks what things are, what they mean, but never reveals a singular answer. In her discovery of Emily’s hiding place, Rosa moves from the safety of a middle-class home and into the roiling streets of a working-class London inhabited by pimps and prostitutes. Her movement from domestic to public space again fixes her as a
forerunner to the other female detectives who, though investigating domestic crimes, conduct their investigations in public. In probing Steerforth’s secret, Dartle ultimately becomes identified with the “fallen” women, Emily and Martha, suggesting that the boundaries between “fallen” woman and “proper” lady cannot be clearly delineated. In addition, Rosa becomes a surrogate for the narrator, revealing the inequities of class and gender discrimination that he does not want to acknowledge. Like Rosa’s conversational darts, David’s text covertly reveals class struggles and participates in the characterization of unacceptable elements in Victorian society.

While Rosa, like David, would like to pin things down, to fix people with a singular “character,” the text also reveals the multiplicity of identity. Breaching the boundary between prostitute and lady, Emily, in particular, cannot easily be typecast and, therefore, must be shipped to Australia. In a book inhabited by ditzy Doras and angelic Agneses, Rosa is a reminder of the multiple subjectivities of women and of the complexity of Victorian society.

Like Rosa Dartle, Valeria Woodville/Macallan in Wilkie Collins’ The Law and the Lady detects the multiplicity of Victorian female identities which are represented as dangerous because they cannot be “plainly” read. In Chapter 3 I juxtapose Collins’ novel with the trial of Madeleine Smith, a notorious nineteenth-century Scottish case, in which Smith was tried for the poisoning death of her secret lover. Like the fictional trial of Eustace Macallan for the murder of his first wife, Sara, the trial of
Madeleine Smith ends with a "not proven" verdict, meaning that both Macallan and Smith were morally, though not legally, censured. The similarities between the two cases do not end with the similar verdicts. Both reveal, as did Rosa’s investigations, the specter of female desire hidden by the veneer of middle-class respectability. In both the novel and the trial, women’s writing is presented as the means through which the hysterical enters the Victorian courtroom, although, I will argue, the courtroom it already hysterical. Madeleine’s letter and Sara’s story invoke a narrative pleasure from which the law tries unsuccessfully to separate itself. Narrative, as the basis of law, is the source of an intoxication, a hysteria that necessarily affects the legal system. Neither Madeleine Smith’s love letters (viewed as too racy for the Victorian courtroom) nor Sara’s suicide letter is ever disciplined, ever incorporated into the letter of the law: in fact Sara’s letter becomes an inheritance for Valeria and Eustace’s son, presenting an unsettling image of the uncanny at the heart of the domestic. In both cases, the law’s attempts to spurn its spectacular origins only emphasizes them more fully. Indeed, Valeria’s investigations receive the most help not from the legal authorities, who fail to uncover the truth of the case, but from Misserimus Dexter, a disabled, ambiguously gendered, eccentric. Only by placing herself within a vulnerable position as Sara’s, Dexter’s and her own double, does she discover the hidden evidence.
In *Dracula*, Mina Harker also refuses the posture of the “armchair rationalist” and conducts her work from within vampirism, ultimately confusing the boundaries between rational and hysterical narrative. Analyzing the attempts of Mina and her band of vampire hunters to contain Dracula’s excess through an “accurate,” “exact” and public textual account is my goal in Chapter 4. Hysteria permeates this text, as it had *The Law and the Lady*, becoming a group phenomenon that illicitly reproduces itself and infects Mina, her friends, her husband, and, indeed, the entire bureaucratic system. Dracula, whose identity is purely performative, capable of endless mutation, becomes the mirror in which the solicitor’s own subjectivity is reflected. Mixing professional with sexual, Jonathan’s journal conflates the clear boundaries between legal and hysterical discourses: the professional is threatened by his own multiple identities. Mina’s goals are to reestablish the boundaries of Jonathan’s identity that have been blurred by his adventures in Castle Dracula, and to divest English law of its uncanny relationship with the Count. Like Rosa Dartle and Valeria Woodville, Mina Harker works from a vulnerable position within the illness she is trying to cure. Like Dartle, Mina bears a scar that links her with feminine desire, as well as male violence. As with *The Law and the Lady* and *David Copperfield*, the narrative remedies prove insufficient to enact a cure for vampirism. The endnote suggests that the narrative has become a “mass of typewriting,” a seemingly limitless, unending fragment.
While the first three texts I explore specifically examine the work of the female
detective in terms of hysteria, Hilda Wade seemingly rejects this trope. Indeed, the
novel’s narrator, Cumberledge, explicitly reveals the ideological mechanisms behind
the deployment of hysteria, especially when used as a label to defuse the powers of the
intellectual woman. Still, the novel has a deconstructive purpose. Not only does it
critique the mechanisms of surveillance deployed by medicine and colonialism, it
equally posits character as multivalent. Rather than presenting Hilda Wade, for
example, as emphatically external to the scientific mechanisms she critiques, the novel
argues that she is sometimes dangerously similar to Sebastian, the scientist murderer.
Like law, science has a narrative origin and uncovering the story that underwrites the
scientist’s authority is Wade’s goal. What she discovers is less than flattering. The
novel critiques Sebastian’s brand of scientific objectivity, which views human subjects
as objects—or even as animals—glorifies the autonomous individual thinker as genius,
and results in the inhumanity of imperialism. In Hilda Wade, scientific knowledge is
not neutral, not gender free. Unlike Sebastian who, in his medical practice, carries on
the nineteenth-century scientific project of calculating “identity” quantitatively, Wade
practices a “psychological” approach to medicine; her approach coincides with that of
feminist philosophers such as Lorraine Code who reject the model of the
autonomous, ethically suspect scientist, and suggest, instead, that knowledge “based
on a commitment to knowing people as well as possible is a worthy epistemological paradigm" (1991, 41). In place of the exterior, impartial gaze of pure "diagnosis," or the subjective, mystical realm of "intuition," the novel valorizes "inference," a boundary-breaking combination of reason and speculation, as a more appropriate way of thinking.

While the novel begins in England, Wade's investigation of Dr. Sebastian leads her and the narrator, Dr. Cumberledge, to Rhodesia, then Tibet. The colonialist portion of the novel critiques the scientific imperialism that transforms human beings into experimental subjects, and that proves as inhumane as the capitalist exploitation that steals native lands in the name of profit and progress. Although the novel advocates a humanitarian overhaul of colonialism, it refuses a more fundamental critique of the colonial project; by changing the appearance of imperialism, the novel argues, the system itself will change. The Englishwoman is expected to instigate this humanitarian approach, not, as previous critics have argued, by providing a maternal ideal, but by establishing a daughterly or partnership relationship with the current colonialist establishment. By teaching Cumberledge, and ultimately Sebastian, to revere friendship and community over the Kantian-based ideal of the "autonomous man," Wade breaks the "feminine" gendering of values such as community, compassion and cooperation. The novel suggests the multi-dimensionality of English identity, which is never singular. Unfortunately, the complexity envisioned in the
English character does not translate to the colonies; the colonized remain stick figures, categorized and collated in Wade's travel pictures.
CHAPTER 2

A "FIerce LITTLE PIECE OF INCOMPREHENSIBILITY": ROSA DARTLE AND THE SCARIFICATION OF THE FEMALE DETECTIVE.

In one of the most intriguingly voyeuristic scenes in *David Copperfield*, we see the innocent David and the "fallen" Martha peering out of a cupboard as Rosa Dartle berates Little Em'ly for her affair with James Steerforth:

'I came here, you pure fountain of love,' she said, 'to see—as I began telling you—what such a thing as you was like. I was curious. I am satisfied.... I thought you a broken toy that had lasted its time; a worthless spangle that was tarnished, and thrown away. But, finding you true gold, a very lady, and an ill-used innocent, with a fresh heart full of love and trustfulness—which you look like, and is quite consistent with your story!—I have something more to say.' (789)

Rosa Dartle's verbal assault on Emily highlights the problematics of vision, legibility, sexuality and knowledge that inform Dickens' text: because Emily looks like "true gold, a very lady," and her story is consistent with this appearance, Rosa finds it necessary to "brand" her so that Emily's body unambiguously reveals her "fallen"
state. While David remains safely in the closet, looking but not participating, the female detective ferrets out the dangerously fallen woman, exposing her to the reading audience; the narrator, in turn, will make story truth match the hidden truth of the fallen body. Rosa Dartle’s powers of detection hinge on her ability to investigate and decode the hidden workings of Victorian society. While David, our “innocent” narrator, acknowledges the evidence neither of Emily’s sexual desires, nor of Steerforth’s disdain for the working-classes, nor of his own role in orchestrating Emily and Steerforth’s affair, Rosa brings these issues of gender and class to the “grindstone.” Like Valeria Woodville, Mina Harker and Hilda Wade, Rosa emphasizes the gaps in the seemingly smooth surface of middle-class identity. Like them, she detects from a vulnerable “inside” perspective, ultimately becoming identified with both Emily and David. In her anger the most dangerous of the female detectives I will investigate, Rosa, like Emily, must finally be safely subdued within David’s autobiographical narrative, but without tarnishing his claims of innocence.

Numerous critics have charted David’s attempts to remain “innocent” of both the problematic discourses of feminine sexuality and class difference. Mary Poovey,

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1 John O. Jordan uncovers the foundations of David’s seeming innocence by, for example, considering the class and gender issues which underlie the domestic bliss which the text appears to support. Jordan analyzes the social basis for the contradictions in the book in order to “recuperate a social subtext” (63), but his reading almost completely ignores the gender issues which are inextricably linked with this sub-text. Margaret Myers argues that “gender role-playing vitally informs [David’s] journey to self-discovery,” but her study never confronts his dangerous scopophilic relationship with female sexuality. Audrey Jaffe suggests that David is unwilling and unable to articulate the implications of
for example, claims that both domesticity and the supposed innocence of the literary man “contribute to the rhetoric of individualism and likeness that hides class differences and alienated labor” (122). What I will argue, though, is that Poovey’s analysis neglects David’s identification with the fallen women in the text, and, therefore, the textual positioning of the writer’s work in relationship to women, such as Martha and Emily, who of necessity have moved outside of the home and into the dangerous streets of London. Through the character of Rosa Dartle, in particular, the narrator effectively hides his own involvement with a dangerous, class-crossing sexuality, as well as his fear of a female sexuality that is “secret, something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered” (Doane 1). Not only does Rosa’s presence suggest the deep secrets of the female body, it also exposes the hidden depths, the multiplicity within the author’s own text: David’s text, like Rosa’s conversational style, “hints” at the complexity of the Victorian character and, thus, covertly reveals its enigmas (350). Like Rosa, David qua novelist is involved in “piercing” class structures and in verbally “scarring” unrepresentable elements within those structures.

The uncomfortable truths of sexuality and of the visibility of female difference are graphically imagined in this text as a disfiguration; the “seam” which furrows what he sees and that his identification with his childhood self creates him as a seemingly innocent observer (Vanishing Points 125). Critics have uniformly ignored Rosa Dartle’s importance to the text.

2 In Dracula, too, dangerous sexuality will be figured as a scar: “two little white wounds” that look “horribly white and mangled” (146) mark Lucy Westenra’s neck following Dracula’s feasting; after
Rosa Dartle’s upper lip figures the impossibility of a smooth junction between upper and lower classes, just as her wasted frame unveils the danger that unfulfilled desire poses for the middle-class household. Introducing Rosa, David emphasizes “an old scar—I should rather call it a seam, for it was not discolored, and had healed years ago—which had once cut through her mouth, downward towards the chin, but was now barely visible across the table, except above and on her upper lip, the shape of which it had altered” (350). The most “susceptible” part of Rosa’s face, the scar becomes “a dull, lead-coloured streak” (353) when she turns pale, and “starts forth” to show the “whole extent of the wound inflicted by the hammer” (356) when she is passionate.

Inflicted when a young James Steerforth threw a hammer at her, the seam charts the remnants of male violence on Rosa’s body. As the eccentric member of the Steerforth household, a distant orphan friend who lives with the family, Rosa is unmarriageable, the source of a desire that can never be channeled into “proper,” i.e., reproductive, sexuality. Rosa’s mere presence suggests the illegibility of visual signs; the oscillating meanings of the scar—according to David, the scar signifies Rosa’s connection with both vulnerable female sexuality and masculine knowledge—introduce a slippage into

Mina Harker’s interaction with Dracula, Van Helsing’s communion wafer leaves a red mark on her forehead, branding her as “unclean”; Jonathan Harker’s hair turns white, marking his infection with Dracula’s tainted sexuality.
the representation of Victorian woman. In “starting forth,” throbbing, when Rosa is passionate, the scar etches the female body with both female desire and male violence, reminding the reader that David’s autobiographical self is also founded in sexuality and rage. In this chapter I will first analyze the iconography of Rosa’s scar, limning its oscillating meanings. Supplementing her scar, Rosa’s verbal “darts” suggest that language is not innocent, that nature is not “natural,” but studied. Uncovering the implications of these discoveries will be my goal in the second section of the chapter. Finally, I will argue that David’s narrative project “scars” the unrepresentable elements of society, and, therefore, participates in the nineteenth-century project of creating “character.” In this role, David functions as a precursor to Freud. Like Freud, David forsakes the pleasures of the gaze by diverting the “look” from the female body and onto a reassuringly constricted textual body. As Freud’s self-analysis leads to his creation of “types” of psychological disorders, David’s autobiographical narrative brands the “characters” of female desire. David’s project of creating an individual, autobiographical self involves him in the nineteenth-century creation of “characters,” of types of people. This is a recurring theme of my dissertation. Hilda Wade, in

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3 The scarred body, according to Helena Michie, creates a “large and accommodating space for the sexual at the center of Victorian realism” (212).
particular, interrogates the notion of “types,” ultimately suggesting, like *Dracula*, that dividing people into categories is “life-eating.”

*i. The Sexual Iconography of the Scar*

An oscillating “coming and going,” Rosa’s wound sometimes throbs with pleasure and sometimes with pain, creating an “alluring vacancy” in the supposedly whole and legible female face. David’s connection of the scar with writing—“like the old writing on the wall” (353) or “a mark in invisible ink” (364)—positions it as an hysterical symptom, transforming the body into text. While David tries to avert his eyes from the “cruel mark,” he writes, “I could not help glancing at the scar with a painful interest” (353); the scar continually, and uncomfortably, draws David’s eyes, necessitating a reading. Rosa’s palpitating wound represents a disturbing dialectic between surface and depth which threatens the stability of the Victorian representation of femininity; in its legibility the scar is comforting because it can apparently be easily “read,” but this legibility is also disconcerting because it points to a “something” below the surface which demands interpretation. Dissecting the

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4 A reference to Nina Auerbach’s “Alluring Vacancies in the Victorian Character” (*The Kenyon Review* 8.3 (1986): 36-48), in which she argues that although female identities were “squeezed into one-dimensional stock roles” in order to limit women to “what they said they were,” these same narrow roles provided “glimpses of a mystery beyond sincerity” (36). “Women’s sincerity assured observers that a knowable self existed: her devious dimensionality inspired awe at that self’s hidden boundlessness” (36).
simultaneous legibility and illegibility of the hysterical symptom, Diana Fuss writes, “the hysteric’s somatic symptom ostensibly works to block interpretation by leading the analyst through a thicket of confusing and shifting identifications, its very unreadability provokes, even coerces, a reading” (116). As symptom of a painful encounter within the middle-class home, Rosa’s scar insists upon being read, but, simultaneously, defies a singular interpretation. Inviting reading, drawing David’s gaze, but defying interpretation, the scar belies the Victorian belief that women “were what they said they were” (Auerbach “Alluring Vacancies” 36).

Always shifting, shrinking and engorging, coming and going, it elicits a variety of interpretations. The iconography of Rosa’s scar is intimately linked, in David’s mind, with a perverse, excessive sexuality, suggested by his description of the wound “twitching and throbbing” in a manner from which he “could not dissociate the idea of pain” (493), or sometimes “pleasure,” as when Rosa is revealing Emily’s probable death following her desertion by Steerforth (735). Rosa’s scar evokes a threatening sexuality—not merely female sexuality, but a dangerously violent male sexuality, enacted upon the displaced body of the “redundant” woman. Created by James Steerforth’s violence—he threw a hammer at her—Rosa’s scar testifies to masculine

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5 In “Secret Subjects, Open Secrets,” D.A. Miller also claims that, like a Freudian hysteric, Rosa Dartle strikes a compromise between expression and repression so that “the secret subject is always an open secret” (205). While I agree that the novel breaks down the distinction between open and closed, I would not argue that an “open” subject is necessarily a legible subject. Rosa’s scar points to an “open secret” that is still closed.
uncontrollability, and to the thin line between sex and violence. While the very legibility of her “seam” is troubling for David because it graphically presents the emblem of a depth of desire which was rigorously closeted, it is more problematic in its link with chaste domestic space, and with its refusal to yield a consistent reading. Initially, the narrator reassuringly equates the scar with Rosa’s unfulfilled wish to be married: “She was a little dilapidated—like a house—with having been so long to let” (350), a connection with the domestic that Rosa later affirms, labeling herself a “mere disfigured piece of furniture” (872). Not only does she bear the mark of an uncontrollable male sexuality, she is also an emblem of demure Victorian femininity; covering her “cruel mark” is a hand “so thin and delicate, that when I had seen her hold it up before the fire to shade her face, I had compared it in my thoughts to fine porcelain” (493). It is not surprising that she causes David both pleasure and pain.

The location of the scar also indicates desire. Griselda Pollock, discussing the iconography of Victorian paintings of women, argues that the metonymy of the mouth has diverse connotations. Most obviously, the mouth functions as a “ruby wound,” a displaced sign of female sexuality and genitals, but, according to Pollock’s paradigm, the mouth also suggests a regression to an oral stage of development:

The mouth functions as a classic fetish, some sign which both involves and displaces visual knowledge of female genitals but can disavow the threat of that knowledge by harking back to another more comforting visual encounter and sensuous experience—that of looking up to the mother/female caretaker in the course of being suckled. (128)
By maliciously splitting Rosa's lip with his hammer, Steerforth has symbolically removed her from the circuit of the legitimate family structure. Opening the gap of an illegible legibility that constantly draws the narrator's look (350), the scar defuses the connection between Rosa and the maternal, while simultaneously bringing the split connection disturbingly into view. In his analysis of "Fetishism," Freud posits the fetish as, "[t]o put it plainly" (215), a substitute for the mother's phallus that the little boy once believed in and does not wish to lose. Though Freud implicitly suggests that the maternal phallus, a phantasm at best, can be "plainly" unveiled, the work of the fetish is anything but unambiguous; instead, it allows a contradiction to remain in place so that the little boy "retains this belief [in the maternal phallus] but he also gives it up" (216). As a stand in for the mother's phallus, the fetish, according to Freud, saves the fetishist from being a homosexual "by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects" (216). In her analysis of fetishism, Linda Donaldson claims that feminine "to-be-looked-at-ness" transforms women into fetishes, into objects that satisfy, rather than threaten, the dangers of impending castration (26). But Freud's view of the fetish does not suggest that the fetish has such an unambiguous or comforting meaning. As fetish, the scar both is and isn't the phallus. It belies the existence of the maternal phallus, an illusion, and
emphasizes Freud’s definition of the fetish as both belief and disbelief built into a single object; as fetish, Rosa’s scar is not one thing or another.

Laura Mulvey’s analysis of fetishism and curiosity casts the fetish as a spectacular image that shields the fetishist from knowledge: “the fetishist’s eyes fixed on the seduction of belief to guard against the encroachment of knowledge” (6). Functioning as both lure and protection, the fetish is implicitly linked with the hysterical symptom; like the hysteric, the fetishist is protected from the truth about sexuality by a spectacular symptom. At the moment when Rosa reveals Emily’s desertion by Steerforth, she wields an “air of wicked grace; of triumph, in which, strange to say, there was yet something feminine and alluring” (735), invoking both desire and repulsion. Similarly, in explaining his feelings about Rosa to Agnes, David describes her as someone “who is very clever, and whom I like to talk to...But I don’t adore her” (428) and he also writes, “I felt myself falling a little in love with her. I could not help thinking, several times in the course of the evening, and particularly when I walked home at night, what delightful company she would be in Buckingham Street” (416-17). As bearer of the imaginary maternal phallus, Rosa is half and half;

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6 Iain Crawford notes that no other woman in the novel exerts such a strong hold on David as Rosa and that his reaction to her is “unusually intense” (47). Crawford easily dismisses Rosa, though, claiming it is “just as well that he does not see too much of her, since...she evokes responses in him that he would find difficult to reconcile with his feelings for either Dora or Agnes.” It is her difference from doll Dora and angelic Agnes that makes Rosa so intriguing.
her intellectual acrobatics make her “alluring,” but not “adorable.” As phallic-substitute, Rosa’s “throbbed wound” prevents David from having to recognize the truth of Steerforth’s destruction of the Peggotty household, while also placing a seam in his love for Steerforth.

**ii. Verbal Darts and Penetrating Glances**

While Rosa’s scar threatens the narrator because of its ambiguity as fetish-reassuring in its connection with the maternal phallus; discomfiting in its constant throbbing reminder that the maternal phallus is, was and always will be, just an illusion—her eyes, variously described as “piercing,” “hungry” and “lynx-like,” threaten him with their violent penetration into the depths of his psyche; to David, they insistently pronounce, “I want to know” (356). Though the narrator seeks to provide a supplement for the dangerously shifting and unreliable “truths” offered by vision, Rosa Dartle’s presence in the text suggests that verbal “truths” remain as shifty as appearances. Specifically, Rosa recognizes the innocence of neither object nor subject of the gaze. Rosa is presented as the possessor of knowledge, but a knowledge half revealed. Women, of course, are not supposed to know too much—especially of

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7 In *Hilda Wade*, the female detective, Hilda Wade, is described as “lynx-eyed,” as is the murderer, Dr. Sebastian, whose eyes are also depicted as “hawk-like.”
the secrets of the male mind. Sartre’s familiar figuration of the search for knowledge, a conflation of male vision and masculine sexual desire, provides a striking image of the impact of Rosa’s lynx-like stare on the innocent David:

[The idea of discovery, of revelation, includes an idea of appropriate enjoyment. What is seen is possessed; to see is to deflower. If we examine the comparisons ordinarily used to express the relation between the knower and the known, we see that many of them are presented as being a kind of violation by sight. The unknown object is given as immaculate, as virgin, comparable to a whiteness. It has not yet “delivered up” its secret; man has not yet “snatched” its secret away from it. (Modleski 63)

Rosa’s constant search for knowledge, ”I want to know so much” (352), combined with her “lynx-like” stare, “snatch” “Daisy”’s secrets away, making him “shrink” as he is unable to endure her “hungry” (491) gaze. In her discussion of Sartre’s argument, Tania Modleski argues that Sartre’s “grotesque insistence on the extreme of masculine sexuality—rape and violation—as the model and motor force of all enterprises of discovery...stresses the appropriative, phallic nature of every kind of knowledge” (63). When transferred from men to women, the gaze becomes linked to the power of the Medusa and “castration is not far away.” According to the logic of Modleski’s analysis, Rosa’s scar indicates a dangerously violent sexuality at the heart and hearth of the middle-class home which has become reinscribed in the eyes of its insightful victim who is then enabled to expose the secrets of the male narrator; by ruining her “looks,” Steerforth provokes Rosa to look. Masquerading as Steerforth’s young, naive
Daisy, David can maintain a comforting illusion of himself as immaculate, as virginal, sexually untainted. But Rosa’s stare makes Daisy go limp; while David accuses her of “snatching” away his innocence, Rosa suggests that he has always been implicated in Steerforth’s violent penetrations. Thus, the novel breaks down the dichotomy between innocent object and penetrating subject.8

One of the most graphic representations of this breakdown between gaze and object comes in the scene in which Rosa’s portrait glares down at David, significantly penetrating the darkness of his bedroom: “To get rid of her, I undressed, quickly extinguished my light, and went to bed. But as I fell asleep I could not forget that she was still there looking” (356). The portrait of Rosa functions as a covert form of observation, staring down at David even when he can no longer see it and, thus, exerting the “power of domestic surveillance” theorized by Nancy Armstrong. According to Armstrong, the domestic woman’s power rests in her “peculiar combination of invisibility and vigilance”: “The domestic woman executes her role in the household by regulating her own desire. On her ‘feeling and principle’ depends the economic behavior that alone ensures prosperity. So conceived, self-regulation became a form of labor that was superior to labor” (81). Rosa upsets this model, as

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8 Helen Michie makes a similar argument, suggesting that, in never averting her eyes, Rosa breaks the distinction between looker and looked-at (203).
will the other female detectives I examine, because she refuses to “regulate” her desire; indeed, as I will argue later in this chapter, it is Rosa’s similarity to Emily, her vulnerable, “inside” perspective, that allows her to discover and articulate Emily’s transgression.9 Rosa’s disruptiveness is depicted in the fluctuating meanings of her scar. Looking at the “startling likeness of Miss Dartle,” David is most disconcerted by an absence, rather than a presence, in the picture—specifically, the absence of the tremulous scar, which David anxiously, and excessively, repositions on the representation of Rosa: “The painter hadn’t made the scar, but I made it; and there it was, coming and going; now confined to the upper lip as I had seen it at dinner, and now showing the whole extent of the wound inflicted by the hammer, as I had seen it when she was passionate” (356). Again, the terrifying absence/presence of the scar reminds David of the stability and the instability of vision as a technique for controlling female “passion.” Rosa’s picture shows that the visible is not always the knowable, that the supposedly obvious is too often disguised. But this example also suggests the writer’s obsessive need to depict the “truth”; pictures can lie, so David insists on repositioning Rosa’s scar, despite the painter’s erasure of it.

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9 This will be true of all the female detectives I investigate. They surpass the powers of the law by refusing to regulate or control their desires: thus, Valeria Woodville’s overwhelming passion for Eustace leads her to information the law misses; Mina Harker can uncover Dracula’s hiding place only when she is infected with his poison; Hilda Wade coerces Dr. Sebastian’s confession only by allowing herself to become involved in his scientific project.
In her analysis of the iconography of nineteenth-century portraits of women, Griselda Pollock notes the connection between idealized representations of the female face and masculine illusions of control:

In the visual sign, woman, manufactured in a variety of guises in mid-nineteenth-century British culture, this absolute difference is secured by the erasure of indices of real and actual space, by an abstracted (some would call it idealized) representation of faces as dissociated, uninhabited spaces which function as a screen across which masculine fantasies of knowledge, power and possession can be enjoyed in a ceaseless play on the visible obviousness of woman and the puzzling enigmas reassuringly disguised behind that mask of beauty. (123)

As noted earlier, the scar “comes and goes,” negating the semblance of woman’s “visible obviousness” and ejecting David from masculine fantasies of control over women. The scar splits Rosa’s face, adding a sign of instability to the perfect wholeness of the female face. Instead, with Rosa “still there looking,” the narrator must acknowledge his lack of knowledge, the potential inability of the epistemological movement of his text to control this sexually charged mark. “Is it really, though? I want to know,” Rosa’s portrait asks, causing David to uneasily ask “all sorts of people in my dreams whether it really was or not—without knowing what I meant” (356). David’s claim not to know what Rosa “means”—or what he “means”—indicates his own devious attempts to separate himself from his own identification with—as Steerforth’s “Daisy” for example—and knowledge of female sexuality, of “the whole extent of the
wound inflicted by the hammer.” In addition, his rejection of meaning echoes Rosa’s own renunciations of knowledge: “You know how ignorant I am, and that I only ask for information” (350). Despite David’s attempts to disavow an understanding of Rosa’s comments, he does recognize that Rosa’s insinuations contain an implicit “correction of everything that was said to which she was opposed” (351). Thus, her method provides a paradigm for understanding David’s own seeming lack of comprehension of Steerforth’s intentions in relation to Little Em’ly. Just as Rosa’s “I want to know” sometimes carries the unpleasant force of a covert accusation, his selective understanding of the meaning of Steerforth’s interest in the Peggottys in general, and Little Em’ly in particular, hides a covert complicity; David knows more than he says. To defuse his link with forbidden knowledge, David capitalizes on Rosa’s “readings” of the Steerforths when they do not implicate him in the dangerous knowledge of Steerforth’s duplicity. For example, he explains that his knowledge of the impending split between Mrs. Steerforth and her son “did not originate in my own discernment but in the speech of Rosa Dartle” (494).

But Rosa insists on David’s blame. On his second visit to Steerforth’s home, David is once more subjected to Rosa’s overwhelming, though often covert, surveillance. This time she keeps a “close and attentive watch” upon him, lurkingly comparing him with Steerforth. So expansive has her gaze become that, in David’s
estimation, it “seemed to pervade the whole house” (491). Even though David feels that he is “blameless” in respect to the unknown crime of which she convicts him, the “hungry lustre of her eyes” still causes him to shrink. Rosa’s insightful gaze deflowers David’s innocent description of himself. Though David the narrator presents his young self moving “blamelessly” through a class-free world, happily sailing from Peggotty’s fishing boat to Steerforth’s Highgate home, Rosa uncovers the class differences which irretrievably separate him from his waterbound friends. Most telling is her ability to comprehend both Steerforth and David in one glance. Rather than escaping the class-crossed desire enacted by Steerforth, David is comprehended as Steerforth’s double through the skewering power of Rosa’s stare: “So surely as I looked towards her, did I see that eager visage, with its gaunt black eyes and searching brow, intent on mine; or passing suddenly from mine to Steerforth’s; or comprehending both of us at once” (491). “Comprehending” the two men in a single glance, Rosa is “always dangerous” because the “wandering light” of her eyes, along with the throbbing legibility of her scar, suggest a violent and uncomfortable culpability in the male narrator.

Rosa Dartle is not the only female character who links David and Steerforth: Miss Mowcher, another disfigured woman, also comprehends Steerforth’s corruption of lower-class women. Indeed, she initially believes that David, not Steerforth,
desires Emily. Recognizing her mistake, she vows to help David in discovering Emily. Unlike Rosa, she leaves David innocent, never finding him a threat to Emily. The text metonymically connects Miss Mowcher and Rosa by suggesting that Miss Mowcher made “little darts into the provinces” (395) and that she is, like Rosa, “a sharp little thing—I need to be, to get through the world at all” (525). The difference is that Miss Mowcher is sympathetic to David, believing in his innocence, while Rosa is more penetrating. While Rosa arouses sexual desire in David, Miss Mowcher is safely out of the sexual game. As I suggested in my brief discussion of Nancy Armstrong’s model of domestic surveillance, Rosa’s participation in the circuit of desire, her refusal to “regulate” her passion for Steerforth, makes her an incisive detective. Lacking the vulnerable insider’s perspective, Miss Mowcher does not participate in the investigation of Emily’s secret hiding place and drops out of the text after her midnight interview with David.

Steerforth describes Rosa as a “a fierce little piece of incomprehensibility”; this incomprehensibility hinges partially on the conflicting visual signs that she embodies, but equally on her ambiguous verbal missiles. While Rosa Dartle’s conversation style is, at best, mystifying—“she never said anything she wanted to say, outright” (350)—her name suggests the truth-revealing aim of her verbal darts. Her scar reveals a dangerous, though undefinable, sexuality lurking behind the mask of the supposedly
respectable middle-class; her verbal barbs disclose David’s exploitation of the
Peggottys. Though David verbally removes the Peggottys from the problems of the
“real” world by placing them in a fantastic realm—their “small, or inconvenient, or
lonely” renovated boat that had never “been meant to be lived in” (79) is refurbished as
“the most delicious retreat that the imagination of man could conceive” (82)—Rosa
emphasizes the difficulty of the fishermen’s lives. Despite the “rough” Little Em’ly’s
delineation of the differences between the two orphans—David’s father was a
gentleman and his mother a lady, while Emily’s father was a fisherman (85)—and her
chronicle of dead relatives, all “drowndead,” David refuses to recognize the “cruelty”
of the sea. Steerforth later dredges up the truth of class-difference by referring to the
Peggottys as “that sort of people.” While his comment makes David’s heart leap
“with a new hope of pleasure” (352), it leads Rosa to grind out Steerforth’s beliefs
about David’s Yarmouth friends. In response to Rosa’s ironic question—“That sort of
people. Are they really animals and clods, and beings of another order”—Steerforth
declares that “there’s a pretty wide separation between them and us...they have not
very fine natures, and they may be thankful that, like their coarse rough skins, they
are not easily wounded” (352). While David ignores the implications of Steerforth’s
description of the Peggottys, Rosa ironically thanks Steerforth for steering her in the
correct direction for understanding the relationships between the upper and working
classes: “It’s such a delight to know that, when they suffer, they don’t feel. Sometimes I have been quite uneasy for that sort of people, but now I shall just dismiss the idea of them altogether” (352). As Chris Vanden Bossche points out, David neither rejects the Steerforths fully, nor does he submit them to the comic satire that mars his presentation of the Peggottys—Ham, the chucklehead, for example. Comprehending David and Steerforth as sharing a belief in working class insensitivity and roughness, Vanden Bossche, like Rosa Dartle, critiques David’s representation of the Peggottys as unreflective country people (92). By bringing the issue of class “to a grindstone” (352) in her critique of Steerforth, Rosa allows David to maintain the representation of himself as a “romantic,” “innocent,” “youthful,” “Daisy.”

Rosa’s will to knowledge is figured as violent, as a penetration or a castration, but her appearance is all surface, reduced often to a palpitating scar. While philosophers such as Nietzsche have argued that women are pure surface, no depth, Rosa is both and neither. The vicious penetration of her skin by Steerforth’s hammer leaves Rosa as an always throbbing critique of male violence. But this penetration also makes her a constant reminder of something lost that cannot be recovered. Though Steerforth has scarred Rosa with the violent throw of his hammer, a cruel mark of male violence that cannot be covered, this savage act does not preclude David’s love of Steerforth. Indeed, the vacillations in Rosa’s personality obscure the evidence of
Steerforth’s infraction. His violent assault appears to have reproduced itself, giving Rosa’s personality a similarly violent edge; particularly in her abusive verbal assault on Emily, Rosa becomes both vindicator and violator. Therefore, while the pulsating scar makes Steerforth’s assault legible, Rosa’s own repetition of his violence functions to cover that legibility. Appearances deceive.

Rosa’s scar signals a surface legibility, but one which cannot be consistently interpreted; conversely, her language appears deceptive and hidden but reveals truth through its winding course—thus, nothing is what it appears. In this text, Rosa’s lynx-like eyes and throbbing scar, her look and her looks, are often figuratively entwined: David claims that Rosa’s thinness was the effect of some “wasting fire within her, which found vent in her gaunt eyes” (350). While her penetrating stare is disconcerting, David also finds it appealing: she was “not agreeable to look at, but with some appearance of good looks too...perhaps because of something really remarkable in her” (350). In her reading of the gaze, Linda Williams argues that “women can look with the eyes of many types of desire” (133), suggesting that the gaze is not necessarily coded male. Freud’s “A Child is Being Beaten,” for example, challenges the gendering of the gaze as “male,” by positing a multiplicitous subject who simultaneously occupies the position of sadistic viewer and masochistic object, of gazing and taking a beating. Similarly, David Copperfield suggests the
interchangeability of subject and gender positions; David and Rosa perform a duet, constantly switching positions, viewing and viewed. While Rosa’s gaze comprehends David, her “looks,” especially her palpitating scar, continually entice his vision. Similarly, David claims to fall “a little in love with her” after realizing that “she got everything out of me she wanted to know” (416); sometimes her penetrations are agreeably seductive.¹⁰

Ultimately, Rosa’s comprehension of both David and Steerforth in the dangerous act of class-crossed desire leads Dickens, as implied author, to kill Steerforth and banish Emily to Australia. David’s refusal to understand Emily’s warning, as well as his continual efforts at covering the real class differences of the Peggottys under a veneer of fairy tale, involve him in Steerforth’s act. Thus, when in Rosa’s presence, David must violently reaffirm his innocence, his difference from men like Steerforth: “It is certainly not the fact that I am accountable for Steerforth’s having been away from home” (492). In denying his accountability for his excessive attachment to

¹⁰ This scene suggests a further connection with Nancy Armstrong’s argument that by deflecting eroticism away from the material body and into the secret depths of the self, the domestic woman represented a new object of male desire: reading the secrets of the female body “provided a new object of pleasure that was supposed to redirect male desire away from the surface of the female body and into its depths” (120). Depth is valorized over surface. The multiple meanings of Rosa’s scar suggest a complexity that resists simple, or surface interpretation. Armstrong agrees with Dorothy Van Ghent’s characterization of the Dickensian world as one that is “all surface where individuals convey the absence of depth” (88). Yet I would argue that Rosa adds depth and complexity to David’s flat narrative.
Steerforth, David argues that his love for Steerforth is “natural” and, therefore, uncontrollable. But Rosa’s conversational darts, again, signal the indefensibility of this position and cause David to rewrite his interpretation of Steerforth’s relationship with the Peggottys as “delightful art—delightful nature I thought it then” (495). David claims that his understanding of Steerforth originates not in his “own discernment, but in a speech of Rosa Dartle” (494). Following Mrs. Steerforth’s injunction that Rosa “not be mysterious” and that she speak “plainly” in her own “natural manner,” Rosa responds, “Oh! then this is not my natural manner?...’Now you must really bear with me, because I ask for information. We never know ourselves’” (494). In this exchange, Rosa reveals the difficulty of identifying anything as “natural,” even the self. The conversation continues as follows:

‘It has become a second nature,’ said Mrs Steerforth, without any displeasure; ‘but I remember,—and so must you, I think,—when your manner was different, Rosa; when it was not so guarded, and was more trustful.’

‘I am sure you are right,’ she returned; ‘and so it is that bad habits grow upon one! Really? Less guarded and more trustful? How can I, imperceptibly, have changed, I wonder! Well, that’s very odd! I must study to regain my former self.’

‘I wish you would,’ said Mrs Steerforth, with a smile. (494)

Mrs. Steerforth’s suggestion that Rosa’s current personality is “a second nature,” uncovers a problematic question about identity: is “second nature” natural? In responding that she must “study” to regain her “former self”—her “natural” self—Rosa
suggests that identity is not so much “natural” as learned, a choice we make in a particular context. We must study to regain the natural. As “nature” becomes less natural, David’s assertions that Steerforth casts a spell on everyone “to which it was a natural weakness to yield” (157) or that in everything Steerforth did there was an “indescribable lightness, a seeming impossibility of doing anything else, or doing anything better, which was so graceful, so natural” (368), become less defensible. Believing in Steerforth’s “grace” and “lightness” has become “second nature” to David; even though Rosa Dartle’s scar legibly reveals the violence of Steerforth’s passions, David refuses to read the message.

Rosa’s insistence on restoring the literal dimension to language, of creating an exact representation, once again connects her with Freud’s hysteric. In explaining the hysterical symptom, Freud uncovers a link between figurative and literal language: “In taking a verbal expression literally and in feeling the ‘stab in the heart’ or the ‘slap in the face’ after some slighting remark as a real event, the hysteric is not taking liberties with words, but is simply reviving once more the sensations to which the

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11 And with the other female detectives discussed in this dissertation. The Law and the Lady and the trial of Madeleine Smith explore the problematic connection of female bodies and writing, an interaction that is presented as hysterical in both cases. In Dracula, the entire social system has become hystericalized, but the female detective bears, like Rosa Dartle, the scar of her illicit sexuality. Only Hilda Wade examines the political implications of hysteria, arguing that intellectual women are branded as hysterics. Wade’s narrator distances Wade from the link with hysteria, suggesting that by the end of the century, the ideology of hysteria had become questionable because articulable.
verbal expression owes its justification” (206). In her explication of Breuer’s analysis of Anna O., Mary Jacobus argues, “Anna O. seems to have known that neither talk nor language (nor talk about language) are ever innocent” (206). Her analysis is also true of Rosa who brings conversation to the grindstone, questioning the silences, the problems of the “natural,” and the gaps in the text. First of all, the references to Rosa’s “second nature” are similar to Breuer’s descriptions of Anna O.’s “absences” or her “condition seconde.” For Breuer, the “condition seconde” refers to the unstable, unassimilable or contradictory places in Anna O.’s narrative, the times when she “hallucinates and sometimes misbehaves; the place where she is when she is foreign to herself” (214). David Copperfield suggests the difficulty of distinguishing between the domestic and the foreign. In David’s narrative, Rosa’s “second nature” reveals a truth about the unmentionable aspects of Victorian society that David would like to hide—Emily’s affair with Steerforth, the unfairness of class difference, the difficult lives of the lower classes, the insensitivity of the upper classes; thus, Rosa’s utterances function as the second nature of David’s text, the “absences” that he would like to distance from himself. Mrs. Steerforth’s comments also suggest that she views Rosa’s “second nature” as making Rosa foreign to herself. But Rosa does not accept this view. Indeed, she views her second nature as the reasonable response of a lady whom James Steerforth has violently scarred and then spurned in favor of a lower-class
woman. While David views his text as innocent—"delightful nature" rather than "delightful art"—Rosa attempts to bring a more literal function back into language, as is traditionally the case with the hysterics, while also suggesting that "delightful nature" is always "delightful art," since we can never know ourselves. Rosa's scar functions metaphorically, but so does her entire body—she brings herself "to the grindstone," just as her scar belies David's seemingly seamless innocence. Steerforth, for example, says of Rosa: "She brings everything to a grindstone, and sharpens it, as she has sharpened her own face and figure these years past. She has worn herself away by constant sharpening. She is all edge" (352). Figuring purely metaphorically, Rosa's body expresses both the sharpness of her penetrating knowledge and the weariness of her role as single, "odd," woman: David notes that she is "dilapidated" with "having been so long to let" (350). While David attempts to create a coherent autobiography of "David Copperfield the Younger," Rosa's presence brings an absence, a second nature, into David's "natural" text. Mary Jacobus argues that "[h]ysteria, women, and the uncanny are the points of instability which threaten to expose theory, sexual difference, and 'reality' as themselves the products of representation; as constructs" (201).

Rosa dangerously disrupts the representation of middle-class domesticity as a haven by her revelation of the "domestic mismanagement" (Poovey) which has led to
Steerforth’s infidelities. Vanden Bossche argues that Rosa’s presence in the text suggests that only a real family, one that lays claims to that title through legitimacy, can have a home (92). But, more dangerously, she reveals the desires which underlie the “legitimate” middle-class family—the movement of desire from the mother to the son. Specifically, Rosa unveils Mrs. Steerforth’s responsibility for Rosa’s unenviable position; Rosa will never be in the secure position of David’s doll-wife Dora, or his angel-wife, Agnes. The reason for her expulsion from this idyllic family scenario lies in the “similarity” between the Steerforths, the danger of a mother who desires her own image reflected in her son. Mrs. Steerforth claims that she has had “no separate existence” from James since his birth (531). This perfect reflection of mother and son creates a bond that no other woman can break. With no “judicious father” (380) to separate him from the attachment to his mother, Steerforth never fully negotiates the Oedipal complex. Rosa Dartle, with her piercing intelligence, is the only person in the text who tries to break James Steerforth’s mother-sanctioned authority; David writes that Rosa insinuates the truth “sometimes, I could not conceal from myself, with great power, though in contradiction even of Steerforth” (351). But even Rosa’s power is unable to break the “unyielding, wilful spirit” (531) that connects mother and son, and that leaves her “marked until I die with his high displeasure...for what [Mrs. Steerforth] made him” (871). According to the imperatives of the text, Mrs.
Steerforth is ultimately culpable for the scar which is Rosa Dartle’s reward for her fidelity to James. Thus, the rotten desire at the core of the Victorian family contaminates the entire structure by breaking the circuit of desire, upon which the circuit of exchange is founded.

In her analysis of Our Mutual Friend, Eve Sedgwick suggests that “sentient middle-class women of this time perceive the triangular path of circulation that enforces patriarchal power as being routed through them, but never ending in them—while capitalist man, with his prehensile, pre-capitalistic image of the body, is always deluded about what it is that he pursues, and in whose service” (172). Applying Sedgwick’s argument to David Copperfield, I claim that Rosa Dartle has been marked by patriarchal power, but, as an orphan, she will never become the object that consolidates male power. John Jordan suggests that Emily becomes an object of exchange within the male economy; as David’s pseudo “sister” she is presented to Steerforth as a gift to confirm the social bond. Conversely, according to Jordan’s argument, David’s interest in Rosa stems from his belief that Steerforth has made a gift of Rosa: “David deceives himself into imagining a reciprocity of sexual exchange with Steerforth” (69). The physical exchange of women in this text functions to strengthen the bond between the two male characters, effectively cementing David’s class position, while simultaneously reaffirming the gender-differentiated structure of
the bourgeois family. But David’s contribution is viewed as inadequate. The desire between Steerforth and Emily is, according to Mrs. Steerforth, one that “would irretrievably blight my son’s career, and ruin his prospects” (530). By steering Steerforth’s desire away from Rosa and onto Little Em’ly, David has implicitly blighted the flow of desire within this middle-class family, causing Rosa to curse David: “It was in an evil hour that you ever came here” (873). While she resents David for introducing Steerforth and Emily, Rosa recognizes that he is not solely responsible for deflecting Steerforth’s desire away from her and onto a lower-class woman. Mrs. Steerforth, she claims, has short-circuited the flow of heterosexual desire by her almost incestuous attachment to her son. This maternal excess makes Steerforth incapable of lasting love for any other women, so that both Emily and Rosa become the discarded “spangles” of his wasteful consumption, a sexual possession that can never be directed into a productive—i.e., reproductive—heterosexual romance.

The son’s inheritance of the mother’s lack of control has demoted this upper middle-class woman into “a doll, a trifle for the occupation of an idle hour...having no eyes, no ears, nor feelings, no remembrance” (872). In this speech, Rosa creates a parallel between herself and Emily, whom she had earlier called, “a broken toy that had lasted its time: a worthless spangle that was tarnished, and thrown away” (789).
Santlybras and White discuss the potential problems that ensue when one tries to distinguish the “high” from the “low” members of society:

A recurrent pattern emerges: The “top” attempts to reject and eliminate the “bottom” for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other (in the classic way that Hegel describes in the master-slave section of the Phenomenology), but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. (5)

Rosa’s desire to eliminate Emily violently from the Steerforth family—“I would have her branded on the face, dressed in rags, and cast out in the streets to starve” (533)—suggests that the interconnections of lower and upper classes can only be cut by the bodily marking of the other. As Rosa reminds us, unlike her, Emily bears no external mark of Steerforth’s “displeasure”; in fact, Rosa, and in effect, David, find Emily dangerous because she looks like a lady, “true gold, a very lady, and an ill-used innocent” (789). Rosa’s emphasis on the performativity of Emily’s identity12 echoes her earlier conversation with Mrs. Steerforth in which she revealed that identity is not

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12 *The Law and the Lady* also presents identity as performance, especially in the representations of Dexter and Ariel. While Ariel breaks gender boundaries, Dexter breeches the dichotomy of gender and of human/machine. Dracula is clearly a character whose identity is problematically performative; he switches from bat, to wolf, to Jonathan Harker, etc.
“natural,” not fixed, but a “second nature” that must be “studied” or, in this case, “branded” on us.

Earlier, Mr. Omer had remarked that Emily had “as elegant a taste in the dress-making business—I assure you I don’t believe there’s a Duchess in England can touch her” (362). Throughout the novel, David is carefully shielded from the sight of this unmarked, yet fallen, woman. Lynda Nead discusses the ideological necessity of maintaining clear, legible differences between the fallen and the virtuous: faded looks, painted faces, and seedy clothes are supposedly clear indications of notoriety (178). Nead’s study delineates the reason that David is unproblematically able to collude with Martha, while his eyes must be continually averted from Emily. In the traumatic encounter between Emily and Martha at the Peggottys’ boat, Martha’s hair is described as “loose and scattered, as if she had been disordering it with her own hands” (398). Helena Michie suggests that long, loose hair was “traditionally a Victorian synecdoche for female desire” that could function as “both sexuality and its veil, both articulation and its disguise” (211). In this instance, Martha’s hair signals her participation in a world of illicit sexuality, while at the same time veiling it from David’s “innocent” gaze. Like Martha who was initially described as “young, and of a fair complexion” (398), Emily must, on closer inspection, prove to be “worn and haggard” (754). Though Rosa states that Emily is a “devil whom you make an angel
of” (740), David’s text creates Emily as devil as well. In order to reestablish a visible distinction between classes, Rosa advises Emily to “drop [her] pretty mask” (791), or be revealed to the entire city of London. Her speech indicates that while vices are generally “written on the body,” their marks are not always visible, or readable, because they often reveal contradictory meanings; thus, the body of the novel must be the site at which these disfigurations are disclosed.\footnote{Similarly, \textit{Dracula} creates a narrative coffin for the Count.}

Since Emily’s face is unblemished, it must be carefully hidden from David’s view in the traumatic scene between Rosa and Emily, while the faces of Rosa and Martha are fully visible. Conveniently, Mr. Peggotty places a handkerchief over Emily’s face when he removes her from Martha’s apartment so that David is subject to the sight only of her “veiled face lying on his bosom” (791). Interestingly, Mr. Peggotty’s attempts to mark Emily as clearly working-class coincide with Rosa’s; Mr. Peggotty has brought a “country dress to put upon her” (651), so that she can “cast off what she wore,” the false image of lady, and return to her true position as fisherman’s daughter. The image of Emily exchanging one dress for another suggests the difficulties of distinguishing upper from lower classes. Although David’s association with Emily must remain carefully hidden because of her fluctuating class position, he more overtly associates with Martha, since her sexual and class status is “written all
over her.” As writer, David’s task becomes distinguishing the false lady from “true
gold,” keeping class differences clearly in sight, establishing a consistent relationship
between text and body: thus, both David and Rosa are involved in the project of
creating “character,” identifying female sexuality, labeling and classifying it. Because
Martha’s body unambiguously reveals her fallen state, David never divulges the full
details of her story. While the absence of the history of Martha’s fall may suggest that
certain stories simply cannot be spoken, it also indicates the importance of creating a
narrative supplement to scar the unmarked, yet fallen, body. Thus, David’s text
unveils Martha’s fallen face, but not the details of her story, while it carefully records
Emily’s story, but leaves her adult face veiled with Peggotty’s handkerchief.

In contrast to David who never looks Emily in the face, Rosa Dartle’s “lynx-
like scrutiny” (491) and her “curiosity” allow her to view the “fallen” woman.
Ironically, her penetrating gaze, together with her penetration of the dark streets of
London, associate her with the male quest for knowledge, but also link her with the
dangerous female sexuality of the fallen woman. Judith Walkowitz, for example,
suggests that “audacious, unflinching looks, like these, or so the cultural critics tell us,
are a sure sign of the unchaste public woman” (1). Rosa’s “fierce” looks are dangerous
because they unveil David’s culpability, but her ability to gaze unflinchingly at the
world of lower-class London provides her with knowledge that middle-class women
were not supposed to possess. Thus, mimicking Rosa who had comprehended David and Steerforth in a single glance, David metaphorically links Rosa's face with the unwieldy landscape of London:

[Rosa] was sitting on a seat at one end of a kind of terrace, overlooking the great city. It was a sombre evening, with a lurid light in the sky; and as I saw the prospect scowling in the distance, with here and there some larger object starting up into the sullen glare, I fancied it was no inapt companion to the memory of this fierce woman. (734)

But the connection between Rosa and London moves from metaphor to reality as Rosa penetrates the dangerous streets of working-class London in order to uncover Emily. The scene in which David gazes upon Rosa and Emily is important for its revelation of a link between Emily and Rosa, but equally for its omissions: for example, it omits information about how Rosa discovered Emily's secret, and how this modest woman penetrated the city's dangerous spaces. According to Walkowitz, being in public was, for women, to enter an immoral domain "where one risked loosing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into a 'disorderly and heady swirl'," as the city "threatened to erase the protective identity conferred...by family, residence, and social distinction" (46). Rosa has no choice. The disintegration of the domestic scene, the inability to separate working-women from ladies, forces Rosa into the streets to discover the truth of Emily's identity. In completing her detective work, Rosa rushes into a house that David describes as "swarmed with inmates" and watched
over by “lower-class observers” (784). Its “dwindling frame” is metonymically related to the “dilapidated” state of Rosa’s own external appearance. The connection between Rosa, Martha and, ultimately, the river front, is further elucidated when David describes the scene near the river as centering around “a dilapidated little wooden building” (747). Near this house lay “strange objects, accumulated by some speculator, and groveling into the dust, underneath which—having sunk into the soil of their own weight in wet weather—they had the appearance of vainly trying to hide themselves” (748). Rosa is, thus, positioned within a nexus which ends with the discarded aspects of capitalistic industrial culture and the body of the suicidal prostitute.

The relation between the erotic body of the fallen woman and dangerous, uncontrolled consumption does not leave the middle-class woman unscathed, as becomes apparent in the narrative’s representation of Rosa Dartle. As a speculator who accumulates and discards “strange objects,” Steerforth is presented as a perpetrator of an excessive consumption that spoils both working- and middle-class woman: according to David, Steerforth follows “a mere wasteful course of winning what was worthless to him, and next minute thrown away” (368). Of course, both Rosa and Emily, and perhaps even David, become scraps thrown away by Steerforth in his consumptive consumption. Stepping into the world of consumption renders women suspect, as the locales of exchange and degraded erotic activity appear to be
inextricably linked. For example, the text suggests that the cash which Emily accepts from Steerforth is the mark of her degradation; Mr. Peggotty, of course, refuses to accept these wages of sin. The middle-class woman is, once again, implicated in this cash nexus when Peggotty reveals Mrs. Steerforth as the source of the money that has blighted Emily: “If the likeness of that face don’t turn to burning fire, at the thought of offering money to me for my child’s blight and ruin, it’s as bad. I don’t know, being a lady, but what it’s worse” (530). Here Peggotty verbally scars Mrs. Steerforth, the “likeness” of her son James, for her participation in the market, in the process of buying and selling bodies. Significantly, Martha marks her movement out of the role of prostitute and back into culture by her refusal to accept the money David and Mr. Peggotty offer for her services in helping to locate Emily; through this symbolic refusal to participate in cash transactions, Martha removes herself from the system of consumerism. Similarly, Rosa’s condemnation of Emily centers around her role in the world of exchange: “You are a part of the trade of your home, and were bought and sold like any vendible things your people dealt in” (788). By participating in the process of trade, the body of the worker, along with that of the prostitute, becomes a vendible body. But this emphasis on the vendible body of the fallen woman is another point at which Emily is conflated with Rosa; Rosa’s claim that Emily was “made much of for an hour” (788) echoes Rosa’s later complaint that she, too, has
become the "occupation of an idle hour" (872). Furthermore, in labeling Emily as a "piece of pollution," Rosa recalls both the scene in which Martha is identified as "a part of the refuse" cast out by the polluted river, as well as her designation of herself as a "mere disfigured piece of furniture" (872).

iii. Consuming Characters: Copperfield and Freud

While these examples clearly link Rosa with the vendible body of the fallen woman, the narrator is equally connected with the penetration of women’s secrets, of labeling and identifying the "character" of female sexuality. Just as he writes Rosa’s scar onto her portrait, though the painter has omitted it, David also verbally scars the bodies of both Emily and Martha. Of course, it is ultimately David, not Rosa, who valiantly proclaims Emily’s infidelities and dangerous class-crossed desire to the reading public. Though David feigns a lack of contact with his old love Emily by remaining carefully concealed in the background during the confrontation between the two women, the discerning reader nonetheless recognizes that it is the autobiographical narrator who “brands” Emily’s face with notoriety.

The importance of the figure of the sexualized woman as model for the penetration of “dark” secrets is most fully evident in the scene in which David follows Martha into the inner recesses of London. In his discussion of the interplay between
city and self in Dickens, David Craig argues that the search for “Miss Emily” is an “interior event, experience whose location is inside the self” (25); but he neglects to note that this “interior” search involves an attempted recovery of a “fallen” sister. The scenes with Martha display both David’s participation in the spectacle of the city and the metaphoric penetration of the female body which the scene enacts. In *City of Dreadful Delight*, Judith Walkowitz suggests that urban exploration was an essential feature of nineteenth-century bourgeois male subjectivity, and that a “powerful streak of voyeurism marked all these activities” through the figure of the flaneur, who “transformed the city into a landscape of strangers and secrets” (16). In *David Copperfield*, these “strangers and secrets” are often women. David penetrates the city’s secret interiors when following the “solitary female figure” of Martha—another surrogate detective who takes on the task of discovering Emily after her return from France—and David covertly admits to an “indistinct desire...to know where she went” (746). Ironically, David’s statement echoes Steerforth’s earlier wish to “see the natives in their aboriginal condition” (360) when contemplating the best manner for viewing the Peggottys. Although David suggests to Mr. Peggotty that Martha might be “more disposed to feel a woman’s interest in the lost girl, if we spoke to her in a quieter place, aloof from the crowd and where we should be less observed” (746), the text indicates that it is not Martha’s feelings he is interested in, but, rather, his own desire
to increase the sensational power of their trek through the dark, labyrinthine streets of London. David admits "the strange fascination in the secrecy and mystery of so following anyone" (746), but especially of following the figure of the fallen woman.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, Joan Copjec has argued that nineteenth-century novels were involved in the creation of "character" and that the codification of "types" of people was the outcome of the detective function. Attempting to textualize the fallen women, David's narrative participates in this project. More intriguing, his attempts to defuse through narrative his own identification with this unacceptable female sexuality make him a precursor to Freud. In "Dora's Secrets, Freud's Techniques," Neil Hertz speculates that an unacknowledged identification existed between Freud and Dora: in some sense, Freud "was" Dora (229). Similarly in David Copperfield, David "is" Emily.¹⁴ Both Freud and David destroy these identifications with female sexuality by creating narratives of female difference: Freud transforms Dora into hysteric; David creates Emily as "fallen." Thus, both men consolidate their own individualities by participating in the creation of female sexuality as deviant.

For example, David Copperfield's depiction of David following devious paths through the city of London in his search for Martha uncannily presages Freud's discovery of

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¹⁴ This is especially true when Steerforth transforms David into "Daisy"—as "Daisy," David becomes his own double, the sister/self that Betsey Trotwood had hoped for. He also becomes the precursor to Emily who, as I argued earlier, is his "sister," the woman he exchanges with Steerforth in order to consolidate his own class position.
the uncanny. In his almost compulsive need to follow Martha, David echoes Freud who is compelled to follow the lure of fallen women in his search for the uncanny:

Once, as I was walking through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was strange to me, on a hot summer afternoon, I found myself in a quarter the character of which could not long remain in doubt.
Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. (143-44)

At the bottom of Freud’s discussion of the involuntary repetition that often structures the uncanny is the figure of the painted woman. Similarly, the fetish is, fundamentally, an image of the maternal phallus, while the hysterical symptom marks the repression of forbidden sexuality. In each of these three cases, Freud’s goal becomes the representation of the female body as somehow deviant, a textual tracing of neurosis that leads, deviously and inevitably, back to the body of women. David’s autobiography appears to chart the same course.

The connection between the narratives of Freud and Dickens has not gone unnoticed. In his discussion of “Young Man Copperfield,” Alexander Welsh argues that the interest of psychoanalysis in the penetration of secrets was one “shared with the institution of the novel” (169); he finds it “tempting to compare the process of self-examination by Dickens that culminated in David Copperfield with the origins of
psychoanalysis, because Freud attributed his discoveries to his own self-analysis in early middle life” (169). While Welsh notes that both novelist and analyst penetrate secrets, he doesn’t recognize that this penetration of the secret recesses of the self is firmly bound to the figure of the sexual woman. Although David claims that the angelic Agnes is his guide and model, Rosa Dartle, the misplaced female detective, locates the secrets which the novelist both seeks to uncover and obscure. Like Rosa, who means more than she says, David’s narrative contains implications that continually exceed his meaning. The scarification of “deviant” or excessive sexuality figures as a primary component of each man’s “self-discovery.” Just as David scars Rosa and Emily in his narrative, Freud figuratively brands the faces of the women represented in his case histories. Recognizing the limits of David’s knowledge, the incompleteness of his story, Rosa brings a component of illegibility into the text, just as Dora, for example, remains fundamentally enigmatic to Freud. Explicating Freud’s Anna O., Mary Jacobus argues, “What the analyst learns from the hysteric’s misreading is how to be a good (that is, a metaphoric) reader; how to disembody the text and discover what the picture covers” (217). Through the example of Rosa Dartle, David learns that language is never innocent—in dredging up the implicit meanings of the speech around her, Rosa infects David’s narrative with her own multiplicity. Rosa disembodies the picture of Emily as “lady” to reveal what it covers
and, through this intermediary, the body of David's text presents the "fallen" woman to us. But female sexuality can only be presented through an intermediary. David carefully cuts the body of the fallen woman from his own self-representation—indeed, he removes her from his sight—so that his text becomes the site of a vigilant misrepresentation. Though the narrative claims to reveal the truth of David's self-discovery, of the creation of the individual, the body of the text presents events—his identifications with feminine sexuality, his acceptance of Steerforth's violence—that disrupt his power of control. Like Rosa's scar, the difficulties of desire and of class come and go, now you see them, now you don't.

But David's narrative appropriations of the bodies of Martha, Emily and Rosa, bodies that he uses to create a coherent self-identity, once again link him with Steerforth's wasteful consumption. The description of the scene along the waterfront, together with Martha's spectacular attempt at suicide reinforce Stallybras and White's argument that the figure of the fallen woman provided a focal point around which the "gaze and touch, the desire and the contaminations, of the bourgeois male were articulated" (137). But within the context of this novel, the narrator's participation in the rescue of both Martha and Emily suggests a narrative consumption that consolidates the author's middle-class identity while also distancing himself from female sexuality. In her analysis of fallen women in the fiction of
Dickens, Laura Hapke writes that defusing the femme fatale “was a way for men to sublimate their own sexuality, the sexual feelings she aroused in them. Vanquishing and purging the sexual impulse meant triumphing over the temptation the sexual woman, penitent or not, provided” (19). Hapke’s argument suggests that the narrator essentially consumes the bodies of these dangerously arousing women in order to churn them out as sexually innocuous. Though the novel has been careful to critique excessive consumptions—for example, Steerforth’s ability to wastefully use people and then toss them out—this process of narrative sublimation, like that of Freud, is also based in a process of consumption. In his analysis of Henry James, Jean-Christophe Agnew argues that James’ narrators seem to have an almost “relentless commitment to acquisition—furnishing of his ‘inward life’ with objects whose properties—personal, material, theatrical—formed the capital of his imagination” (82). Like James, David is also accumulating “densities” within himself in order to turn them out again and his ability to survive as a writer seems to stand “upon the power of his possessive outlook” (82). 15 Throughout the novel, the female character becomes “internalized as a possession,” something which can be “either displayed or interpreted.” But she also becomes the foundation of the novelist’s success. Interestingly, the raw materials of

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15 In “David Copperfield and Bleak House: On Dividing the Responsibility of Knowing,” Audrey Jaffe argues just the opposite—that David constructs himself through displacement to free himself “from the consequences of action and of knowledge” (114). According to her argument, David creates “a position for himself outside the self” (115). I would argue that David maintains narrative control by consuming the representations of other characters.
the novel—the bodies of fallen women, for example—become commodified and reified through a process of narrative consumption. While David often relinquishes the power of the gaze, so that characters such as Rosa Dartle become endowed with its powers, his narrative consumes individual stories and provides them with a place in the seemingly coherent, linear and progressive structure of his autobiographical narrative. Thus, once again, David is comprehended as a double of Steerforth: both men appear to follow “a mere wasteful course of winning what was worthless to him, and next minute thrown away” (368). As the vendible, raw material for the narrator’s own growing identity, the bodies of women become objects of narrative consumption. Safely ensconced in the body of the male text, the “fantastic sight” (788) of Rosa’s scarring glance can be tamed and confined on the body of “a sharp, dark, withered woman, with a white scar on her lip” (947). The legibility of the scar is blanched to a leprous white; the “wasting fire” is snuffed. The novelist has also forsaken the pleasures of the gaze by diverting the “look” from the female body and onto a reassuringly sutured textual body.

The shifting iconography of Rosa’s phallicly fantastic scar, the acute insights of her lynx-like stare, and the deconstructive effect of her “incomprehensible” conversational style together create a fissure within the narrative. Although David meticulously kills Steerforth, ships Emily to Australia, and ensconces Rosa within the
Steerforth home, he cannot mend the holes Rosa’s verbal darts have created in his apparently coherent identity. Just as the vampire hunters in *Dracula* will fail to construct an impenetrable narrative coffin for the Count, David Copperfield fails to create a singular identity for himself. By suggesting that language is not innocent, that nature is not “natural,” Rosa’s verbal missiles break down the “delightful nature” of David’s autobiographical text, exposing it as an artifice, as a construct. Rosa’s scar also figures a contradiction within David’s seemingly cohesive subjectivity. Simultaneously seductive and sickening, the scar figures both Rosa’s sexual vulnerability to Steerforth and her phallic, knowledge-seeking maternal power. Articulating the feminine sexuality signified by the scar and uncovered by Rosa’s investigation of Emily’s adultery will also be an objective of the narratives created by Valeria Woodville, Madeleine Smith and Mina Harker. In revealing the inconsistent multiplicity of Victorian representations of identity, truth, class and gender, Rosa Dartle is an apt precursor to later female detectives. Rosa’s implicit identification with both Emily and David, “fallen” woman and novelist, also presfigures the continuing vulnerability of the female detective: never an “armchair rationalist,” she is always physically and emotionally involved in her investigation. While *David Copperfield* suggests that the female detective’s emotional involvement in her investigation taints her vision, it also posits that only a vulnerable, “inside”
perspective reveals narrative’s hidden secrets. Like Valeria Woodville, Mina Harker and Hilda Wade, Rosa asks “trifling questions”: her verbal and visual darts uncover the unnatural origins of “nature” and the hidden connection between David Copperfield and Steerforth, and underscore David’s disavowed responsibility for “piercing” the class structures of Victorian society, and for “scarring” the unrepresentable elements of that society.
CHAPTER 3

PLAIN FACES, WEIRD CASES: DOMESTICATING THE LAW IN WILKIE COLLINS’ *THE LAW AND THE LADY* AND THE TRIAL OF MADELEINE SMITH

In 1857, Madeleine Smith, aged twenty-one, was accused of poisoning, with arsenic, Pierre Emile L’Angelier, a shipping clerk who turned out to have been not only her secret fiancé, but also her lover. One of the most infamous trials of the Victorian period, Madeleine Smith’s story, as Robert Altick claims, “has everything: sex, a setting in well-to-do Scottish society, abundant echoes of contemporary conventions and prejudices, and, not least, more reverberations among the high literary folk of the Victorian era than were called forth by any other immediately contemporary murder” (175). One of the “high literary folk” who capitalized on Smith’s notoriety was Wilkie Collins in his novel, *The Law and the Lady* (1875). Based
loosely on the trial,¹ Collins’ story charts the history of Eustace Macallan, accused of the arsenic poisoning of his first wife, Sara Macallan, and vindicated by the sleuthing of his second wife, Valeria Woodville/Macallan; in fact, the story can only be recovered by recourse to “the lady,” who uncovers the evidence missed by the legal authorities. In both the Smith case and Collins’ text, the defense counsel argues that the arsenic was purchased in order to improve a bad complexion. Both trials end with the uniquely Scottish verdict of “not proven,” leaving the defendants, Madeleine Smith and Eustace Macallan, legally free, but morally condemned. Dougald MacEachen, elucidating the similarities between the Smith trial and the Collins text, writes that the “not proven” verdict was suggested by the trial, but then concludes that there are “no close parallels between this historical case and Collins’ fictional one except that in both cases the victim dies of arsenic that has been bought ostensibly for cosmetic purposes” (136). But the “not proven” verdict carries more significance than MacEachen suggests.

Henry James, whose family had avidly followed the Smith trial, writes: “I can still see the queer look of the ‘not proven,’ seen for the first time, on the printed page of the newspaper” (Altick 189). The “queerness” noted by James indicates not only

¹ The connection between the two cases has been noted by many previous critics, including Jenny Bourne Taylor in her excellent “Introduction” to the novel. Dougald MacEachen and Julian Symons have also commented on the link between the novel and the trial.
the unfamiliarity of this Scottish verdict to an American or English audience, but, further, announces the improbability or the "weirdness" of Smith's and Collins' cases, a factor which links them more firmly than MacEachen suggests. Specifically, the "not proven" verdict introduces an element of "queerness" into the supposedly unambiguous realm of the law, a "queerness" associated with women. Justice does not prevail; the defendant is left in a morally ambiguous position—not hanged, but equally not vindicated. In her discussion of canonicity in law and literature, Susan Sage Heinzelman explains the differences among hard, easy and weird cases. While in easy cases, the language of the law "speaks for itself," in hard cases the judge must "actively interpret the language of the relevant rule, statute or legal opinion in order to resolve the conflict" (60). Through the system of precedent, hard cases act as fathers to future legal conflicts, providing an established and recognized guide by which "hard" legal language becomes "easy," i.e., unambiguous, clear. Existing beyond the recognized language of the law, weird cases are so wildly counterfactual that "even the clearest language breaks down," leaving them with no predictive or normative value and nothing to say. In order to become "hard," the weirdness must be extricated from these cases, they must be "domesticated" so that they can set a precedent and father future laws—ironically, to be good fathers, "weird" cases require a good mother.
Valeria Woodville/Macallan is this good mother in the *Law and the Lady*, ferreting out information denied to the legitimate legal authorities. By becoming a good mother, Valeria attempts—I will argue, though, that she does not succeed—to mediate the excess and control the passion that constitutes the “weirdness” of both trials: Madeleine’s letters to L’Angelier provide evidence of an excessive desire, and both Sara Macallan and her successor, Valeria, contract extravagant attachments to Eustace Macallan. Like Rosa Dartle who scars David Copperfield by linking him with Steerforth’s sexual excesses, Valeria also uncovers the sexual secrets hidden by the veneer of middle-class respectability. Like Rosa, Valeria discovers that the domestic itself is inextricable from the “weird.” Susan Sage Heinzelman wonders if “domestication” negates “that which cannot be canonized” (70), rather than creating a space for the weird within the canon of “hard” cases. While the novel’s happy ending apparently supports Heinzelman’s theory, I will argue that Sara’s suicide letter is never disciplined, never incorporated into the letter of the law. Remaining as a keepsake for the Macallans’ first-born son, Sara’s letter memorializes the law’s failure to fathom women’s stories and functions as a reminder of the excessive passions that render the domestic itself uncanny. In the second section of this chapter, I will consider the relationship of ladies and law: how were women legally represented? How does Valeria interact with the legal authorities to uncover Sara’s secret? Finally,
I will analyze the relationship of masquerade and the uncanny. While Rosa Dartle’s investigation of Little Emily led her into the forbidden spaces of working-class London, Valeria’s inquest into Eustace’s past takes her on similarly “devious paths.”

Not only must she venture into London’s odd suburbs to interrogate Misserimus Dexter, but she must also assume multiple identities to elicit evidence from suspicious witnesses. In the course of her investigations, Valeria becomes identified with the murdered woman, with the masquerading Misserimus Dexter, and with her own pseudonym, Mrs. Woodville, identifications that differentiate her from the model of the detached classical detective posited by Cawelti. Like Rosa Dartle who, as we saw in the last chapter, was ultimately identified with Little Emily and with David Copperfield, Valeria is identified not only with the dead woman, but also with the man who participated in her suicide. Both the Smith trial and The Law and the Lady suggest that woman’s sexuality is not easily translated into recognizable legal discourse and, in particular, that the law’s attempts to exclude weirdness only emphasize its own participation in the spectacular. In the course of both investigations, the law

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2 In his discussion of “The Uncanny,” Freud associates the uncanny with a devious walk through the streets of Vienna. Masquerade, feminine sexuality and repetition are all important components of Freud’s devious walk.

3 This problem of identification will also appear in the next two chapters—in Dracula, Mina Harker must form a dangerous alliance with Dracula in order to uncover his hiding place; in Hilda Wade, Wade is presented as uncomfortably identified with her nemesis, Dr. Sebastian.
becomes entwined with the sensational narratives it seeks to make “plain,” breaking the boundaries between legal and emotional discourse, between law and ladies, between the plain and the ornamental, and, finally, between the domestic and the uncanny.

**i. Law, Letters, Hysteria**

The trial of Madeleine Smith provides a useful companion text to the novel, elucidating Valeria’s position in relation to the law, showing the use of women’s textual productions and self-presentations within the courtroom, and also foregrounding the “uneven” ideological position of female sexuality within Victorian representations of women. In both the Smith case and Collins’ text, the relationship of law and women hinges on the difficulty of letters—hidden or missing in some cases, in others, too apparent. The most damning evidence against Madeleine Smith was self-produced: letters she wrote to L’Angelier.\(^4\) Indeed, the entire course of their affair

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\(^4\) In *Uneven Developments*, Mary Poovey suggests the “unevenness” within the construction and deployment of mid-Victorian representations of gender, and representations of women in particular (4).

can be traced through hundreds of letters, generally signed, “thy ever-loving and ever-devoted Mimi, thine own wife” (Altick 176). Recognizing that she had “put on paper what I should not” (Hunt 107), Madeleine Smith requested that L’Angelier return her letters. He refused. Instead, he threatened to blackmail her by revealing the illicit words to Madeleine’s father. When L’Angelier died suddenly, hundreds of her letters were found in his bedchamber and office, making her what she most dreaded, “the public scandal” (Hunt 107). According to Richard Altick, the reading of Madeleine’s letters in court was the only moment in which she lost her composure: “when her terrible letters were being read she covered her face with her hands” (178). Madeleine’s response suggests the reciprocity between women’s bodies and women’s writing: the words evoke a visceral response—Madeleine’s body becomes legible when her letters are read. Although they do not leave a scar, like Rosa Dartle’s, to mark Madeleine’s difference, the words still have a physical impact, leaving an emotional trace on her body, revealing a truth about women’s desire which should have remained hidden. Jane Carlyle, writing of the case, applauds Miss Smith for “giving the death-stroke to testimonials” (Altick 188). Her comment suggests that the emotions documented by Madeleine were more common than we might have thought, while also hinting at the problematic bodily uncontrollability invoked by “testimonial” writings.
The following passage, taken from one of Madeleine's letters, indicates that women's writing introduced an unwelcome, even incongruous, element into the Victorian courtroom: an image of woman's desire:

It was a punishment to myself to be deprived of your loving me for it is a pleasure, no one can deny that. It is but human nature. Is not everyone that loves of the same mind: Yes, I did feel so ashamed of having allowed you to see (any name you please to insert). You are a naughty boy to go and dream of me—and get excited.

While Madeleine writes woman's desire as "human nature," the legal system refuses to recognize her emotions as natural. One judge, commenting on Madeleine's "licentious" letters declares that this passage, in particular, was written "in terms which I will not read, for perhaps they were never previously committed to paper as having passed between a man and a woman." Later, this same judge writes, "Certainly such a sentence was probably never before penned by a female to a man" (Jesse 295).

Not only is Madeleine on trial for the murder of her lover, she also stands accused of bringing "weirdness" into the courtroom, delivering into written language what has never before passed between men and women, a new mode of discourse which calls un chat un chat.6 While Freud obscures his sexual discussions with French, simultaneously revealing and concealing feminine desire, Madeleine's sexual/bodily

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language is partially hidden under a mask of euphemism—for "menstruation," she writes that she was "ill"; for "intercourse," she substitutes the word "love" underlined (Jesse 295). Still her language is considered too insinuative for the Victorian courtroom in that it allows women's bodies figuratively to enter the reasonable realm of legal decision-making. Madeleine's love letters break down the barriers between proper and painted lady, as well as the boundary between male and female sexuality: enjoying sex, Madeleine argues, is "but human nature," and "everyone" that loves is "of the same mind."

The judge does not object to sexual relations between men and women; he is incensed that Madeleine has "committed" such intercourse to paper. His fear suggests that Madeleine's discourse linguistically covers the underlying organ, yet leaves it exposed, that her euphemisms are too apparent for the female audience to the trial, that women will know what Madeleine is talking about. Ironically, by disallowing Madeleine's most sexually suggestive letters as evidence, the judge unintentionally allows sexual intercourse and the specter of women's genital organs to enter the courtroom under the veil of silence—the judge's concealment creates a cleft; in the gaps produced by Madeleine's missing correspondence, the imaginative audience member could substitute her own fantasies. Much of the perceived danger of the Smith case hinged on the belief that a female audience was too capable of making such
a substitution. Commenting on the trial, *The Glasgow Sentinel*, for example, argues that Madeleine was “as much the seducer as the seduced. And when once the veil of modesty was thrown aside, from the first a very frail and flimsy one, the woman of strong passion and libidinous tendencies at once reveals herself” (84). Madeleine’s explicit expression of her illicit passion will unveil the sexuality barely concealed under the makeshift garment of Victorian modesty. The press accuses the crowd of thousands, mostly women, of having “dishonoured their sex” by “eagerly drinking in that filthy correspondence” (*Daily Express* July 11, 1857). Producing an intoxication—“eager drinking”—into the supposedly rational boundaries of the courtroom, Madeleine’s letters endanger the female spectators of the trial. Words and body entwine; language elicits a physical reaction that rends legal discourse. Making apparent the spectacular origins of law, a narrative pleasure from which the law cannot separate itself, Madeleine’s letters produce an “overwhelming excitement” in

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7 This comment is reminiscent of Freud’s defense of his use of sexually explicit language in his analyses of adolescent women: “No one can undertake the treatment of a case of hysteria until he is convinced of the impossibility of avoiding the mention of sexual subjects, or unless he is prepared to allow himself to be convinced by experience. The right attitude is: ‘Pour faire une omelette il faut casser des oeufs.’ The patients themselves are easy to convince; and there are only too many opportunities of doing so in the course of treatment. There is no necessity for feeling any compunction at discussing the facts of normal or abnormal sexual life with them. With the exercise of a little caution all that is done is to translate into conscious ideas what was already known in the unconscious” (*Dora* 60).

8 Law’s connection with entertainment and narrative is not new in the nineteenth century. As Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* vividly shows, public hangings and other punishments were a popular source of entertainment until well into the eighteenth century. Also, the narrative potential of the law’s stories became apparent in the eighteenth-century publications of criminals’ lives, which are seen by many theorists of the novel as ancestors of the eighteenth-century novel.
the courtroom, parallel to that which her body produces in L’Angelier. Her letters introduce an intoxication, a jouissance, which the court dismisses as evidence. Freud, too, tries to clothe female sexuality in scientific metaphors, but instead unveils it with his jarring use of French, divulging the irrational language of desire that underwrites both psychoanalytic and legal discourse.9 The Madeleine Smith trial makes evident the “weirdness” that underlies even the hardest cases. In attempting to erase the specter of sexuality from the courtroom, arguing that it cannot become part of legal discourse, the question of sex, ironically, becomes the most potent question in the case.

Uncovering the truth of a woman’s story, writing a desire that has never been written, Madeleine Smith’s trial begins to embody the gap that has traditionally constituted women’s sexuality. Sara Macallan’s missing letter to Eustace, the mystery around which The Law and the Lady turns, creates a parallel link between women’s writing and sexuality. While Madeleine’s love letters are simultaneously too visible and too hidden, Sara Macallan’s suicide note is simply invisible until the end of the

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9 Making a similar point, Diana Fuss writes, “The letter of hysterical speech and the letter of symbolic prohibition follow an identical path of transmission, reminding us that in our present cultural symbolic the language of desire is the language of prohibition” (133-34). Fuss argues that the law itself orchestrates the production of hysterical discourse in order to “sustain itself through the introduction and management of its own breaches and resistances” (134). Based on this novel, though, I wonder how well the law actually manages these resistances; can the law control the breach introduced by Madeleine’s sexuality or by Sara’s suicide? I will argue “no” in the rest of this chapter.
novel. Recognizing that the note reveals his double guilt in betraying both Eustace and Sara— in showing Eustace’s diary to Sara and in, thus, leading Sara to suicide—Dexter shreds the letter and tosses the fragments into a gluey wastepaper basket from which they are thrown into a dust-heap. Neither Sara nor Madeleine controls her audience. Although Sara had intended her letter to be read publicly in order to vindicate Eustace of her death, the letter remains dangerously private until it is unburied by Valeria. Even after it has been recovered, the letter is never fully reconstructed.

Valeria’s discovery of the existence of this letter, evinced through Dexter’s madness and his cousin Ariel’s insistence on a story, provides important insight into the problematic relationship between women and narrative. A woman’s writing is buried deep within a rousing tale which viscerally affects both author and audience. When Valeria arrives at Dexter’s house to assess the extent of his knowledge about Sara Macallan’s death, she hopes to learn “just the facts,” declaring “we don’t want the story” (335). Dexter’s companion and cousin, Ariel, on the other hand, advocates a more roundabout and, ultimately, more effective route to the truth: a story, “Puzzle my thick head. Make my flesh creep. Come on. A good long story. All blood and crimes” (332). Dexter is intrigued with Ariel’s demand for narrative— “you don’t understand a word of my stories, do you?”—“And yet I can make the flesh creep on
your great clumsy body” (332). Ariel’s requirements are not for intellectual truth, but for a physical response to the tale, not for rational interpretation, but for feeling. Unlike the stories told in the courtroom which are, ideally, passionlessly related, then subjected to endless, rational, repetitive interpretations in order to uncover “hard” meanings, Ariel demands the “weird and fanciful” bodily pleasures provided when “the clearest language breaks down” (Heinzelman 60), leaving a residual *jouissance* created by the pure sound of the words, “nothing but the repetition, the endless mechanical repetition” (336). But Ariel’s demands also show the entanglement of fact and flesh—“facts” have an emotional component. Necessarily, the audience at Madeleine’s trial, like Ariel, is intoxicated by the tale. Drunk on words, and on Dexter’s “kingly Burgundy,” Royal Clos Vougeot, Ariel embodies the sound of the words: “Look at Ariel! Her flesh creeps; she shudders audibly” (338). Although her repetitive demand reveals the dangerously visceral effect of narrative on the female audience, it equally makes visible the location of Sara’s secret letter—hidden in a wayward narrative, “stolen” by a man whose storytelling ability allows him to compete with the legal authorities.  

So the legalistic attempt to separate the visceral

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10 Because of his vivid storytelling techniques, Dexter competes with the powers of the legal authorities. “The cross-examination resolved itself, in substance, into a mental trial of strength between the witness and the Lord Advocate; the struggle terminating (according to the general opinion) in favour of the witness” (178). This quote makes apparent the danger of “storytelling” in the courtroom; as the law is based primarily in stories, the master tale-teller will win the case. Dexter also speaks the language of the law, asking the judges, “Am I here to declare theories, or to state facts?”
and rational realms can not be satisfied because it creates a false dichotomy. The novel emphasizes the narrative, spectacular origins of law; because the law refuses its origins, ignores, or never attempts to uncover, this viscerally affecting story, the legal authorities are unable to discover Sara's missing letter. Similarly, the judges' refusal to admit many of Madeleine's letters as evidence restricts their ability to discover the truth in her case. Again, the law's attempts to distance itself from its own sensational, narrative origins signals the limits of its access to truth. Both trial and novel show the institutionally imposed boundaries on legal "truth," which is formed in a particular socially constructed space and is, therefore, shaped and restricted by the contours of that space. As the Madeleine Smith trial indicates, nineteenth-century judges erased the evidence of female sexuality from their courtrooms, therefore, eliminating the possibility of constructing Smith as a sexually motivated subject, and, consequently, of convicting her in L'Angelier's murder.

Rejecting the limitations of legal truth, the female detective digs below the meaning constructed by the courts, ferrets out the evidence missed by the legal authorities, and determines—viscerally and rationally—the adequacy of the evidence she uncovers. She must be passionate enough to recognize Dexter as the source of truth, and reasonable enough to correctly interpret his enigmatic message, labeled incorrectly

(178). Dexter's ironic question poses the problem of distinguishing "theory" and "fact"; where does fact end and theory begin?
by Benjamin, Valeria’s elderly male Watson, as “jibberish.” Like Benjamin, Valeria initially questions the value of narrative as a mode to legal truth, but eventually becomes “as eager as Ariel to hear the story,” because “Dexter’s memory of the true events might show itself reflected in the circumstances of the fiction” (337). Ariel listens for pure sensual satisfaction, Valeria for the “snares,” for meaning. Thus, Valeria’s relation to narrative combines pleasure with profit; like Ariel, she is “excited” by the tale; like a good lawyer, she notices the gaps in the narrative. Valeria must read fiction for “truth,” both emotional and factual truth, in order to uncover Sara’s letter and vindicate Eustace. Invoking Ann Cvetkovich’s language, I claim that the female detective must utilize affect in order to forge familial bonds, while diffusing any excessive displays of affect which might rend those same bonds. Cvetkovich theorizes affect’s contradictory role—a source of social stability and instability—in Victorian society:

A discourse about affect represented marriage and the family as the product of natural affective bonds and individual self-expression. The construction of affect as natural, however, also meant that it might be uncontrollable... This contradiction is embodied in the figure of the middle-class woman, whose capacity for emotional expression at once exemplifies the domestic ideal and represents the threat of transgression. (6)

Extending Cvetkovich’s argument, I would suggest that the discourse of affect also influenced representations of the law. In The Law and the Lady, truth cannot be found
without recourse to Dexter’s “morbid sensibilities”; while the law distances itself from the sensational crimes it investigates, tries and convicts, the novel emphasizes that this separation limits the law’s effectiveness. Only by placing herself in a vulnerable position—as the occasional double of Sara and Dexter—does Valeria uncover the story secreted under the official narrative. In order to uncover the “truth” in the Smith trial and the Macallan case, the law must investigate the sexual excesses of both Smith and Sara Macallan—by refusing to acknowledge Smith’s sexually explicit letters and by neglecting to recognize Sara’s abusive marriage, the law will never be a source of truth.

Both trials imply that passions born in the drawing room threatened to escape into the courtroom. Confirming that Sara was found hidden in Eustace’s bedchamber “by some bachelor friends who came to visit him,” Lady Brydehaven’s testimony “produced a strong sensation among the audience and had a marked effect on the minds of the Jury” (155). Following Lady Brydehaven’s testimony, Sara Macallan’s letters were read aloud in court, causing Eustace to lose “all control over his feelings. In piercing tones which rang through the Court, he protested against the contemplated violation of his own most sacred secrets and his wife’s most sacred secrets” (156). While the unveiling of Madeleine’s secret correspondence produced an excessive emotional response only in the female members of the audience, the revelation of Sara’s secrets results in a more widespread infection—the reading of her
letters produces an overwhelming physical excitement in Eustace, an excitement which her body could never produce. Eustace’s “want of composure” is counted as evidence in his favor: “Self-possession, in his dreadful position, signified to their minds, the stark insensibility of a heartless and shameless criminal, and afforded in itself a presumption—not of innocence—but of guilt” (127). The specter of Sara’s writing allows Eustace to atone for his earlier, “unnatural” lack of passion for her and prevents his “dreadful position”—as a man unaroused by his wife’s body—from being revealed in the courtroom. His present excitement veils his prior apathy.

While Eustace’s lack of self-control counts in his favor, Madeleine Smith’s complete self-composure, her “perfect self-possession,” her “fashionable” clothes and her “most attractive appearance” (Spectator 30, 1857, 27), along with her upbeat attitude—she “stepped up the stair into the dock with all the buoyancy with which she might have entered the box of a theatre”—save her. Men are rewarded for private chastity and public display, women for public chastity and private display. Thus, the sight of a man making a spectacle of himself is “indescribable. Some of the women present were in hysterics” (156). Hysteria spreads. As the foundation of a group hysteria that circulates from the courtroom and into the streets, Eustace’s emotional outburst produces an overblown and misinformed mob mentality that threatens to preempt the verdict of the legal authorities:
As usual in such cases, the excitement in the Court communicated itself to the crowd outside in the street. The general opinion here—led, as it was supposed, by one of the clerks or other inferior persons connected with the legal proceedings—was decidedly adverse to the prisoner's chance of escaping a sentence of death. 'If the letters and the Diary are read,' said the brutal spokesmen of the mob, 'the letters and the Diary will hang him.' (157)

A member of the legal elite has spread the rumor, supporting Diana Fuss' argument that the "law's production of the hysterical symptom works in the manner of a letter opener that permits the law to sustain itself through the introduction and management of its own breaches and resistances" (134). While the trials of both Smith and Macallan literally open disturbing letters that produce and function as hysterical symptoms, I question the law's management of the resistance in these cases. Because of the hysterical situation during the Macallan trial, the judges read "extracts" from the letters of Sara's friends and from Eustace's diary. Since the entire letter would cause too much emotion in an already overly affective courtroom, the letters of Sara's friends are read as fragments. To limit the breach of legal control, the authorities create a false context for the reading of these letters. Though originally written as part of a dialogue between Sara and her friends, the letters are presented out of context; in the courtroom, we hear her friends' responses to her words, but never Sara's voice. To maintain its control, the court erases Sara's voice; the victim becomes a shadow. While Madeleine Smith is more problematically represented as victim, the judges in
her trial also limit the hysterical outbreak by erasing her most sexually explicit letters, the letters that would most clearly indicate the “unevenness” of female identity in nineteenth-century England. In addition, they rewrite her language as “impossible,” as never having passed from male to female, thus making it too “weird” for the courtroom.

But the best attempts of the legal authorities to exclude certain types of evidence do not prevent the outbreak of hysteria in court. While Fuss argues that institutions chisel their own chinks, she also indicates that group hysteria may result in a more disturbing, because uncontrollable, political resistance: “Nevertheless, the spectacle of group hysteria can be read, at the same time, as a clear act of resistance. At least to Freud, group hysteria is far more disturbing than seemingly isolated cases such as Dora’s, simply because it holds out the unsettling possibility of collective or even organized resistance” (118). Similarly, in the courtroom scenes investigated here, we see cases of hysterical identification—“eager” intoxication on the drama presented in the courtroom—that extend beyond the boundaries of the courtroom. But, as Fuss also asks, “To what extent can prohibited identifications and the desires they produce be considered a form of social resistance?” Answering her own question from a Foucauldian perspective, Fuss argues that the institutional scene of hysterical resistance is important:
Both the hospital and the school are sites of social classification, disciplinary spaces organized for the observation, regulation, and supervision of their subjects. The function of these two institutions is to produce subjects whose progress can be isolated, individualized, examined, charted, measured, and systematically classified. But these institutions also produce the identities they are socially instituted to manage, installing at the center of the disciplinary project their own resistances. Read from a Foucauldian perspective, social institutions organize groups through a distinctly spatial ordering of subjects. We can thus redefine the question of both resistance and group identification as fundamentally a problem of how bodies circulate, of how subjects act upon, influence, or repel one another in a given social space. (119)

Like the hospital or the schoolroom theorized by Fuss, the courtroom is obviously another institutional space whose goal is the production of certain types of subjects. In the cases of both Smith and Macallan, though, the law refuses to accept certain types of evidence, refuses to sanction certain subjects; it refuses, as I argued earlier, to create Madeleine as a sexual subject, despite the overwhelming evidence of her sexual pleasures, or to present Sara as an abused wife, contrary to the fragmented evidence presented at the trial. Both trial and novel show the legal limits to allowable “types” of female subjects, or to acceptable female discourse. Of course, the law’s attempts to keep sexual narratives from circulation only creates further contagion. Group hysteria in both instances is an important source of resistance, because it shows the spread of a dangerous desire despite the best attempts of the legal authorities to stanch its circulation. In both cases, “weirdness” exceeds the control of legal authority.
ii. Law and Ladies

While the law's attempts to delimit female subjectivity only emphasize its socially constructed boundaries and its foundation in sensational narrative, both cases also reveal that domesticity has itself become tainted with a weirdness that disallows "domestication" as a civilizing force. Both Madeleine Smith and Sara Macallan, apparently proper English ladies, have moved beyond the space of acceptable affect and into an uncanny realm of violent and uncontrolled emotion: a phrenologist's analysis of Madeleine's personality suggests "more than usual force of character, owing to large combativeness, self-esteem, love of approbation, and firmness, powerful affections...a warm sanguine temperament" (Jesse 409); Sara Macallan has a "poetic" temperament which is linked with her "headstrong and violent" (128) tendencies. Before sneaking into Macallan's bedchamber, Sara Macallan "pined away visibly; neither medical help nor change of air and scene did anything for her" (154). Even the female detective allows herself to be infected with Dexter's—i.e., Sara's—viscerally powerful narrative;¹¹ in fact, as I suggested earlier, Valeria uncovers Sara's secrets

¹¹ In Dracula, the female detective's infection with Dracula's poison allows her to uncover his secret hiding place. By putting herself in this vulnerable position of identification with the criminal and with the victim, the female detective discovers truth. Rosa Darle's passion for Steerforth was the source of her identification with Little Emily. In Hilda Wade, Wade's identification with her nemesis, Dr. Sebastian, will allow her to force him to confess his crimes.
partially because of her identification with the dead woman. Like Sara, Valeria is overwhelmed by physical desire for Eustace: “we forgot our breeding as lady and gentleman; we looked at each other in barbarous silence” (14) and, after a secret assignation with Eustace, “I could not breathe; I could not think; my heart fluttered as if it would fly out of my bosom—and all this for a stranger” (15). As Cvetkovich suggests, emotion occupies an ambiguous position in the Victorian family as signifier both of proper ladyhood and of transgressive desire. Sara’s sexual passion for Eustace, for example, is born in the bosom of the family, the consequence of “perfectly innocent intercourse” (154), nights in the drawing room playing the piano and reading books. Not only the “fast young ladies”¹² of the period displayed this excessive emotion—any woman could.

In order to be considered a serious candidate for patroller of the dangerously passionate Victorian household, the woman detective must display both emotion and control. While the Smith trial and Collins’ novel both clearly indicate the difficulty women had in regulating the audience of their texts and the dangerous connection between women’s writing and their bodies, they equally question the adequacy of the

¹² According to Mary Hartman, “fastness” generally designated women who were “brash, self-assertive and flirtatious” and reflected the reality of a growing wealthy upper middle class which could “create a distinguishable group of leisureed young women in search of diversion” (61). See also C. Willett Cunnington, Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century (London: Heinemann, 1935).
interpretations of women’s words provided by a traditional economy of criticism. Dexter’s tale, for example, produces such overwhelming affect in Ariel that she cannot properly interpret the subtext, while Valeria, who is both emotionally and intellectually invested in Dexter’s story, creates a “correct” interpretation, one that allows her to discover Sara’s missing letter. Though the novel suggests that origins can never be fully recovered—the fragments of Sara’s letter are found but never completely reconstructed—Valeria’s investigation of Eustace’s secret provides her with insight into her own identity. Thus, the novel stages what Smith’s trial never does: woman’s role in the transformation of transgressive, weird tales into precedent-setting law able to father future cases. Equally, the novel expands the repertoire of representations of women in a way the trial cannot. While the novel suggests that affect impairs analysis, it also offers a forum in which an emotional story can be properly interpreted, supporting Susan Sage Heinzelman’s theory that novels, unlike male-dominated courtrooms, often function both as an outlet for the representation of transgressive, “illegal” female stories and as an authorization of those stories, presenting them as credible and realistic (251).

Though many of Madeleine’s letters were erased from the official court case, they have gained meaning through repeated narrative rehearsals of the trial. Many of her words could not be read in court, but were later published in the official “British
Trials” series, though even this edition did not include a complete set of Madeleine’s letters. Subsequent readers of the trial have published ever more complete versions of it. In Victorian Murderesses, Mary Hartman writes that additional material, “including several previously unpublished letters by Madeleine Smith, is contained in Peter Hunt...and in Nigel Moreland....Hunt’s is the best full account of the case” (276).

A similar puzzle presents itself in the reconstruction of Sara Macallan’s suicide note. From the clues hidden in Dexter’s meandering and cyclical story of “a Mistress and a Maid,” “snares” whose meaning escapes both Ariel and Benjamin, Valeria discovers the letter buried “deep” in a mound of trash. The lawyer, Mr. Playmore, and Benjamin painstakingly excavate, unglue and finally refabricate Sara’s words in a manner analogous to Benjamin’s weekly “Enigma” puzzles (284). As the dismissal of Madeleine’s writing from the courtroom suggests, women’s stories must be pieced together on the border between public/legal and private/domestic discourse, because the law provides no plausible context for interpretation—no precedent exists to “father” women’s words, to make them “hard” precedent; they are viewed as too weird, “never having passed from a woman to a man.” Since many of the original pieces of the letter have been lost, Benjamin and Playmore have “reconstructed certain sentences, declaring, in the plainest words, that the arsenic which Eustace procured was purchased at the request of his wife” (385). Despite Benjamin’s
assurances that Sara’s words have been “plainly” recovered, the nervous footnotes placed by Mr. Playmore in the text of the letter suggest otherwise; he states that the first pages of the letter were “a scattered wreck” (395), but, like Benjamin, believes that “the utmost pains” have been taken “to supply the deficiency in exact accordance with what appeared to be the meaning of the writer” (390). Woman’s writing/women’s lives represent a lack which must be filled by the male authorities.

While the methods used by the representatives of the law to uncover Sara’s “deplorable and shocking” (385) letter are instructive, Valeria’s explication of the contents of the letter reveals her own conflicting motivations. Valeria prefaces her introduction of Sara’s “confession” by reminding her forgetful readers of the scandalous beginning—verified, she emphasizes, in “the sworn testimony of respectable witnesses” (386)—of her husband’s first marriage. In distinguishing herself from Sara, the first Mrs. Macallan, Valeria assumes a contradictory position in relation to the law, accepting the courtroom-produced interpretation of Sara’s conduct, but rejecting the judicial analysis of Eustace’s involvement in Sara’s death. Just as the legal authorities in the Smith case dismiss some of the evidence in order to limit the outbreak of group hysteria, Valeria underplays Eustace’s role in Sara’s suicide in order to redeem her

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13 Helene Cixous on footnotes: “note [footnote], a typographical metaphor of repression which is always too near but nevertheless negligible” (537).
husband's reputation. According to Diana Fuss, violence exists at the center of identification: “All active identifications, including positive ones, are monstrous assassinations: the other is murdered and orally incorporated before being entombed inside the other” (34). To become Mrs. Macallan, Valeria must resurrect Sara Macallan, then violently erase her. But, as Fuss also recognizes, identification “travels a double current, allowing for the possibility of multiple and contradictory identifications coexisting in the subject at the same time” (34). Sara’s letter affects Valeria as viscerally as does Dexter’s tale: “As soon as I could dry my eyes and compose my spirits, after reading the wife’s pitiable and dreadful farewell, my first thought was of Eustace—my first anxiety was to prevent him from ever reading what I had read” (395). First, Valeria incorporates the letter into herself, allowing Sara’s “pitiable and dreadful farewell” (395) to affect her emotionally; as a personal revelation between the two women, the letter, Valeria vows, must be kept secret from Eustace and from the public. Despite her recognition of the letter’s powerful testimony against Eustace, Valeria, the first-person narrator of the novel, still includes its full restoration in her text. Thus, I will argue that the letter and Valeria’s preface to it are evidence of her ambivalent identification with Sara: not only does she wish to include this remembrance of the first “dear wife,” but Valeria also needs to vilify Sara so that she can become Mrs. Macallan.
Sara’s letter, fragmented and deeply buried beneath a pile of trash, is an apt image of the “covered” state of women under common law. The female detective forages through the debris of Dexter’s “wayward” tale in order to uncover Sara’s story, and, equally, her own. The novel begins with the Marriage Service of the Church of England which argues: “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (8). Confirming this biblical tradition, Sir William Blackstone in the 18th century treatise, Commentaries on the Laws of England wrote: “The very being or legal existence of the wife is suspended during the marriage or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything” (Lewis 119). Perhaps it is not surprising that Valeria signs her married name, rather than her maiden name, on her marriage certificate, signifying a married woman’s immediate erasure by English law. Even more ironically, the name she uses, “Woodville,” is Eustace’s assumed name, a cover up—Valeria is blotted out with a pseudonym. Thus, Valeria’s detective work both discloses her identity, separate from Eustace, and uncovers the existence of the first wife and her secret letter—the letter which the law could never discover, “we should never have discovered what the dust-heap was hiding from us—we should never have seen so much as a glimmering of the truth” (381). The
common-law practice of coverture, whereby a woman was "covered" by her husband because the interests of husband and wife were assumed to be the same, left the wife "nonexistent" in the eyes of the law. Mary Poovey writes:

[t]he most basic opposition established by civil and property law in nineteenth-century Britain, and therefore the opposition both protected by and crucial to the developing state, was the opposition between subjects—those people considered able to determine and act on their own interests, hence capable of binding themselves by contract—and nonsubjects, who were not considered responsible and therefore not so bound. To the latter—children, orphans under guardianship, lunatics and married women—the law (and increasingly the state) extended its protection in lieu of awarding rights." (75)

Sara's position as "nonsubject" becomes clear as Valeria slowly pieces together fragments of Sara's identity.

Just as Benjamin and Playmore glue together the fragmented bits of Sara's letter in order to attain a "plain" copy, Valeria pieces together a "plain" version of Sara in order to understand the "truth" of her identity; this identity is never singular, but continually contradicting, as fragmented as the trashed suicide note. Sara's voice is never heard in court; her letter is never read by the authorities or by her husband, its intended audience. One of Sara's correspondents writes of the deplorable state of her friend's marriage, one which destroys her self-confidence but from which she cannot easily escape: "I declare I think I would rather be beaten like the women among the
lower orders, than be treated with the polite neglect and contempt which you
describe” (159). While the class biases revealed in this letter are problematic, the
novel suggests that the emotional abuse Sara suffers from Eustace is a potent form of
beating. Mary Shanley argues that Victorian feminists were committed to the ideal of
spousal friendship (20) and the wish to transform marriage from a relationship of
hierarchy and domination to one of reciprocity and friendship; this “vision of a
transformation of the marriage relationship from one of ‘tyrant and victim’ to one
where husband and wife would walk ‘hand in hand, eye to eye, heart in heart’
underlay the Victorian feminists’ repeated campaigns to rid British law of the myriad
injustices of the common law doctrine of coverture” (189). Far from viewing his first
marriage as a blissful, mutually helpful friendship, Eustace characterizes it, instead, as a
painfully durable union, a marriage only to the legal authorities: in short, “the law has
made her my wife” (163).

The law’s failure to recognize Sara Macallan as an individual, in particular, as a
multiply constructed individual, leaves it unable to uncover her secret suicide or to
excise the “specter of the poisoned woman” (112). But this abused and unloved first
wife must be vindicated before Valeria can properly become “Mrs. Macallan.” Enter
the female detective. “What the Law has failed to do for you, your Wife must do for
you” (109), says Valeria to Eustace; equally, what the law has failed to do for Valeria,
recognize her as a legal entity, she must do for herself; what the law has failed to do for Sara, allow her a voice, Valeria must do with the publication of Sara’s letter in her rendition of “The Trial of Eustace Macallan.” Indeed, Lawyer Playmore freely acknowledges his debt to Valeria, arguing “you have opened an entirely new view to my mind.... Here is the client leading the lawyer” (274). Ann Cvetkovich suggests that the growing need for detectives in Victorian society resulted from the law’s failure to understand the family and from the perceived inappropriateness of outside assistance in the resolution of domestic disputes: in “an age before psychoanalysis, the detective, the new professional required by the law’s intrusion into the family, sought out the family’s tensions, its sexual undercurrents, its madwoman (the hysteric’s precursor)....[T]he conversion of lawyers into detectives disguises a new form of social control, allowing for a deinstitutionalized, private, and resolvable inquiry into the family” (52).

*The Law and the Lady* creates a family-based detective, mom as analyst, whose job is specifically to root out sexual and emotional excesses in order to establish a stable domestic space. Because the family has become the scene of tension and conflict—Valeria’s uncle comments that there is “something under the surface in connexion with Mr. Woodville, or with his family” (20)—as well as the progenitor of supposedly inappropriate sexual impulses. Both Madeleine and Sara prove that the
threat of uncontrolled feminine sexuality has invaded the middle-class home; not only does Madeleine write “licentious” letters, she also sneaks her lover into the house, and makes love in the grass behind the family’s summer home. While both trial and novel make plain the dangerous desires infecting domestic space, they equally emphasize the law’s inability to decipher the signs of female sexuality. Although Valeria makes Sara’s letter “plain,” giving Sara back her voice, even Valeria cannot control readers’ interpretations of the letter, as it resists a clear, singular translation.

Implicitly, the text grants Valeria access to a new form of writing that refuses the sexual and emotional excesses of Madeleine and Sara. In his interactions with Valeria, Playmore briefs her on traditional legalistic mechanisms and also allows her to watch him write: “You will see what is passing in my mind, if you see what I write.... There shall be no professional mysteries between you and me” (275). While Misserimus Dexter taught Valeria the importance of narrative, of reading below the surface, of looking for the gaps in the story, Lawyer Playmore and Ogilvie’s Imperial Dictionary teach her legal discourse: “The law and the lady have begun by understanding one another. In plain English, I have looked into Ogilvie’s Imperial Dictionary” (116). She understands both Dexter’s “wayward” text and the “plain English” of legal discourse, both weird, uncanny narratives and “hard” fathering texts. The goal of Valeria’s sleuthing is a discovery of a hidden woman, a voice lost in the
mechanized courtroom. But will Valeria ultimately reduce Sara to the “plain English” which Benjamin and Playmore use to describe Sara’s reconstituted letter and which is now used by Valeria to describe her reading of legalese?

As my discussion of Dexter’s story suggests, this novel argues that fact and emotion, plain and wayward texts, cannot be separated—there are no pure, emotion-free “facts,” and “plain” English is just a fiction. Valeria’s methodology continually breaks down these dichotomies in the manner of contemporary feminists, such as Jane Gallop, who advocate “impertinent questions” as a proper mode of feminist discourse: “I shall ask all sorts of questions which grave lawyers might think it beneath their dignity to put” (121); “Don’t laugh at her when she speaks of trifles. She is half ashamed to speak of trifles.... Thinks men are above such matters” (375). Implicitly valorizing Valeria’s approach to the law, D.A. Miller argues that “characters who rely on utterly unlegal standards of evidence, like intuition, coincidence, literary connotation, get closer to what will eventually be revealed as truth” (194). However, lawyer Playmore reminds Valeria of the need for intuition combined with fact, “plain evidence which can alone justify anything like a public assertion of his guilt” (278). Valeria’s attempt to maintain a balance between her view of the case and the legal one again invokes Gallop, whose belief in the necessity of paying attention to small details and to localizing theory provides an antidote to the “masculine” inclination of
universalizing—“attention to context, to materiality, which refuses the imperialistic, idealizing reductions that have been solidary with a denigration of the feminine-material, localized, at home, in situ—in favor of the masculine-active, ideal, in movement, away from home” (93). Equally, this feminist approach provides insight into contemporary critics’ derogatory reading of Collins’ penchant for knot-tying:

“He can tie knots that are almost as ingenious as the knot of Gordium, and can form a puzzle that would be no discredit to a Chinaman. Untying knots and unraveling puzzles is at best but very dull work, though to people of a sluggish mind it would seem to be as pleasant as any other occupation” (The Saturday Review March 13 1875, 356). Not surprisingly, the playfulness, the multiplicity of identity necessary for solving mysteries and asking “impertinent” questions become the domain of women and foreigners. The critics’ depiction of Valeria’s investigations as unnecessary work, used to solve an uninteresting case, suggests women’s problematic alienation from the law: they are taken seriously neither as agents of the law nor as subjects of legal discourse.

Valeria’s appropriation of legal methodologies was not well-received. Early reviewers of the text implicitly question Collins’ juxtaposition of women and law by,

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14 This emphasis on the detail will become an obsession in Dracula, where the vampire hunters believe that by amassing enough detail they will be able to create a narrative net around the Count. Similarly, Hilda Wade rejects grand theorizing in favor of situated, localized analyses.
for example, belittling a plot centered on a woman’s writing. *The Saturday Review* claims that the secret of *The Law and the Lady* is not one which “altogether repays the trouble of getting at it” (357). Additionally, this reviewer questions the woman’s role in investigating crime, particularly a crime based on a woman’s sexual secrets: “Here was a pretty mystery in which to involve a young bride” (357). But the state of marriage depicted, both Sara’s burial and Valeria’s displacement, suggest that questioning their husbands’ secrets is exactly what "young brides" must do. What is the "hidden secret" of *The Law and the Lady*? Not that of a woman sneaking into a man’s chambers—Sara Macallan’s passionate excesses were revealed in the courtroom—but of a woman’s suicide because of a husband’s lack of love, of a plain woman’s attempts to be attractive for her husband. What, ultimately, is the result of Valeria’s investigation of Eustace’s past? Not the salvation of a passive and uninteresting husband, but the recovery of a woman’s secret letter and a resuscitation of a woman’s emotionally deadening marriage. These are the “deplorable and shocking” truths which this text insists must not remain hidden from the law nor buried in a woman’s fragmented suicide note.

Lynne De Cicco, writing of *The Woman in White*, argues that the relationship between women and law involved a rigid establishment of boundaries, but that in late-Victorian culture those boundaries began to break: “What the law refuses to
acknowledge must be substituted by new professions...transformation of both Marian and Walter...into the kind of people deserving of the law's endorsement and thereby allowed to go home" (235). While Marian and Walter eventually earn a protected position within the legal sphere, Sara Macallan remains forever excluded, her suicide note never becomes "hard" legal document or enters the court. Nor does Valeria. Although she works in conjunction with Playmore, and, in fact, arrogates his authority by discovering a solution to the case, she is never allowed to enter the courtroom. Instead, most of her work is conducted in the drawing rooms of Major Fitz-David and Misserimus Dexter. The threat Valeria poses to the established systems of justice is apparent in her criticism of Eustace's lawyer, Mr. Playmore. In her assessment of Playmore, Valeria describes him as "[k]ind, genial, clever—but oh, how easily prejudiced, how shockingly obstinate in holding to his own opinion" (291). More damningly, her entire sleuthing enterprise is premised on the law's failure to defend Eustace adequately, primarily because of its failure to recover the secret of Sara's letter: as Playmore tellingly praises Valeria, "The light which the whole machinery of the law was unable to throw on the poisoning case at Glenninch, has been accidentally let in on it by a lady who refuses to listen to reason" (277). The lawyer's reference to Valeria's unreasonable techniques—often echoed in Valeria's self-assessments, as, for example, when she states, "as wife, I alone refuse to listen to
reason" (241)—tacitly refers to a growing critique of the legal profession’s overly convoluted rhetoric. De Cicco argues that solicitors, in particular, were criticized for their technical and mechanical play with language, which left them “tangled in the web of legal rhetoric, forms, and precedents” (v). Beyond this growing bureaucratic bungling, women had every right to be suspicious of legal assistance, given the law’s continued non-recognition of married women as legal subjects.

iii. Plain Women, Plain Texts

Both texts intimate that women need to assume a mask, to masquerade, when confronting the law. Despite overwhelming evidence against her, the jury presented a verdict of “not proven” against Madeleine because of their inability to reconcile her ladylike appearance with the cunning and cruelty necessary for murder (Taylor xix). Henry James writes: “And what a pity she was almost of the pre-photographic age—I would give so much for a veracious portrait of her then face” (Altick 189). James was desperate for the image of Madeleine, a woman who did not fit within the boundaries of proper womanhood. The male critic’s fascination with the sight of the female criminal, and with her supposed sexual voraciousness, continues one hundred years later in the work of Robert Altick:
It was also rumored—though supposedly not in print—that Madeleine, double blessed in that the judge was reputed to be not wholly unsusceptible to feminine charms and that the crinoline of the day facilitated the shy revealment thereof, took care that he should now and then be granted a glimpse of her neat foot and ankle. But so banal an embellishment, though probably inescapable under the circumstances, is unworthy of a place in a classic chronicle; even truth must be rejected if its vulgarity blemished the artistic effect. More disturbing is the fact that such likenesses of Madeleine as survive do not reassure us of her comeliness. (178)

Altick’s gossipy invocation of crinoline’s “shy revealment” and of a less than unbiased judge, suggest that excessive passion was a problem not merely for innocent bystanders; indeed, women’s presence in the courtroom infects the basic premise of impartial justice. Madeleine, in particular, is accused of using her sexuality in all the right ways: demure and domestic for the jury, a shy sex kitten for the judge. But Altick’s attempts to banish the “vulgar” from the tableau vivante of Madeleine’s trial suggest that he, like the jurors, is more interested in maintaining the artistic effect produced by an unsullied vision of Victorian ladyhood, than in discovering the truth about the murder. More problematic, in his opinion, than the image of Madeleine’s vulgarity is the question of her comeliness. A vulgar woman is one thing; an unattractive one, something else. The tale of a woman using her sexuality as a tool is acceptable, but that of an unattractive woman inciting male desire is implausible. Like the judge who had earlier rejected pieces of Madeleine’s story which did not confirm
the proper intercourse between man and women, Altick rejects parts of the story which do not create a sufficiently artistic impression. "More disturbing," Madeleine was "not necessarily a ravishing beauty" (Altick 178). Both Madeleine and Sara are shockingly plain. Again, Altick's comments suggest the impossible place women must occupy within the courtroom, satisfying the demands of "beauty" and "aesthetic wholeness" rather than "truth" or "justice."

Obviously, Madeleine's management of her image was effective—as a perfect image/reflection of the lady, Madeleine was safe from the law's vengeance, but still subject to the beauty rating scales of critics such as Altick. Both cases are premised on women's looks—both gazes and beauty. This is the weirdness which cannot be erased, which cannot be accounted for. Madeleine becomes the image, providing a safe distance from herself, as that "self" was reflected in the letters she wrote to L'Angelier.

Mary Anne Doane analyzes masquerade, arguing that it constitutes a dangerous acknowledgment that femininity is a mask: "The masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic" (25). Madeleine's looks reveal the gap between the "truth" of feminine sexuality and the appearance of proper Victorian womanhood, a gap which is not so clearly revealed in her writings. Or in her plain face. How does woman's plainness—both Madeleine and Sara are
accused of being plain—disrupt clear reading? Why is a plain face more difficult to decipher than a beautiful one? Madeleine’s less than “ravishing” appearance disrupts Altick’s trial tableau; Sara’s murky complexion leads to suicide, following a fatal dose of her (and Madeleine’s) beauty elixir, arsenic. The hidden passion of the plain woman creates a problem for supposedly plain legal writing—while legal discourse supposedly reveals the truth, just as plainness signals asexuality, the hidden depths behind the plain face refuse interpretation. Similarly, weirdness cannot be eradicated from legal discourse. The sensational narrative that founds the legal case can be encased in proper English, just as feminine desire is sheathed in proper dress, but, to paraphrase The Glasgow Sentinel, once the veil of legalese is thrown aside, from the first a very frail and flimsy one, the narrative of strong passion and libidinous tendencies upon which the law is founded at once reveals itself.15 By making Sara’s story “plain,” Valeria actually adds complexity to the case as recorded in the British Trials series; more important, this “plainness” does not vindicate Eustace; his treatment of Sara is still abusive.

Both texts center on the use of arsenic as a cure for the plain face, the poor complexion. That arsenic was viewed as a proper “technology” of female beauty can

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15 *The Glasgow Sentinel* writes that Madeleine was “as much the seducer as the seduced. And when once the veil of modesty was thrown aside, from the first a very frail and flimsy one, the woman of strong passion and libidinous tendencies at once reveals herself” (84).
be seen in the spate of articles on “arsenic-eating” which appeared in Victorian journals. *Chambers Journal*, for example, published an essay called “The Poison-Eaters,” which argues that Austrians eat arsenic to “obtain a fresh healthy appearance and acquire a certain degree of embonpoint” (391). “The Narcotics We Indulge In,” published by *Blackwood*, states that arsenic could be used for “freshness of complexion and plumpness of figure” (395). *Chambers* also called arsenic “the woman’s secret,” arguing that only “the confessional or the deathbed...raises the veil from the terrible secret” (392).¹⁶ Sandra Lee Bartky suggests that a “panoptical male connoisseur” resides within the consciousness of most women: “they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment” (72). Within this system of disciplinary power, the female body enters “a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (80), according to Bartky, and, as Collins’ text adds, sometimes even kills it.

While Sara Macallan’s attempts to hide the flaws of her complexion under an arsenic veil reveal the sinister side of cosmetics, Collins’ text conversely argues that masquerade may be usefully deployed by women. The novel is filled with images of women using masquerade for their own benefit: Eustace, in adulating his mother’s acting abilities, writes, “The women on the stage are not the only women who can

¹⁶ All of these articles are published in Jesse’s *Trial of Madeleine Smith*.  

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act” (33); Helena Beauly switches places with her maid in order to attend a masked ball for “ladies of doubtful virtue...and gentlemen on the outlying limits of society” (169). In attempting to glean important evidence from Major Fitz-David, one of her husband's oldest friends, Valeria also resorts to masquerade. She allows the chambermaid to fetch a "box of paints and powders" in order to make-up Valeria's face:

I saw, in the glass, my skin take a false fairness, my cheeks a false colour, my eyes a false brightness—and I never shrank from it. No! I let the odious deceit go on; I even admired the extraordinary delicacy and dexterity with which it was all done. ‘Anything’ (I thought to myself, in the madness of that miserable time), ‘so long as it helps me to win the major's confidence! Anything so long as I discover what those last words of my husband’s really mean!’ (57)

While this quote is reminiscent of Sara’s “anything” in order to win her husband’s love, including arsenic poisoning, it equally recommends masquerade as a technique for uncovering masculine meaning. Following the transformation of her face, Valeria “seemed in some strange way to have lost [her] ordinary identity—to have stepped out of [her] own character” (58). The change in her appearance elicits a parallel change in her personality: while her temperament was usually “nervous and anxious” she now felt “an unreasoning confidence in myself” (58). In fact, Valeria’s new look also creates confidence in others: “What would Oliver's report of me have been, if I had presented myself to him with my colourless cheeks and my ill-dressed hair?” (59).
Valeria thus recognizes that “[a]ppearances are not always to be trusted” (60). Valeria assumes a feminine role deliberately, and in the process becomes that role, though she is never subject to it; Valeria is always in control of her self-representations.

The novel is not concerned solely with masquerade, but also with the problem of multiple subjectivities. Valeria assumes several other identities, switching into her role as Mrs. Woodville when soliciting information from Lady Clarinda, or becoming Mrs. Valeria when interviewing Misserimus Dexter. In fact, Valeria confesses that she has “often fancied [herself] transformed into some other person” and has “felt a certain pleasure in seeing [herself] in [her] new character” (221). Helena Beauly playfully masquerades in order to create a position for herself outside of the judgmental male gaze—Eustace, who she is visiting at the time, does not approve of the ball: “Mr. Macallan was one of the strait-laced people who disapproved of the ball. No lady, he said, could show herself at such an entertainment without compromising her reputation” (267). Valeria also uses masquerade to attain a sense of freedom.

The difficulty posed by masquerade, though, is apparent: identity becomes multiple, capable of infinite transformation so that, finally, there is no difference between self and other. By naming Dexter as the most multiplicitous, the most often masked character, the novel implicitly labels masquerade a dangerous pastime.

Assuming masquerade as a technique of detection, Valeria becomes implicitly linked
with Dexter. In her introduction to the novel, Jenny Bourne Taylor writes that Dexter “overturns all rational and coherent ways of making sense of him, and thus acts out the investigation of the boundaries of consciousness at work in the novel in his continual transformations.... At the same time he provides a self-conscious commentary on the processes of representation and story-telling that are at work throughout, starting with his analysis of his own name, and undermining the notion of objective evidence by retelling all versions of events as yet another kind of story” (xxii). Because “nature” has committed a “careless” and “cruel” mistake in creating him, Dexter feels no compassion for nature’s supposed laws. Instead, he believes that everything is story, that all representations are subject to revision. Thus, he ironically names his clumsy, clodding, Calibanlike cousin, Ariel. Dexter and Ariel break gender dichotomies, suggesting that sexuality resides in the imagination and that “nature” is a “careless” and “cruel” artifice. Thus, Dexter presents himself to Valeria in “bright,” “beautiful,” “feminine” clothing: “Except in this ignoble and material nineteenth century, men have always worn precious stuffs and beautiful colours as well as women. A hundred years ago, a gentleman in pink silk was a gentleman properly dressed.... I despise the brutish contempt for beauty and the mean dread of expense which degrade a gentleman’s costume to black cloth” (232). Dressed in green and pink as he sits embroidering, Dexter reminds us that gender dichotomies are sheer
masquerade, and so are distinctions between human and machine: “The fantastic and frightful apparition, man and machinery blended in one—the new Centaur, half man, half chair” (206). Dexter is not a purely fantastical being. He provides Valeria with an alternative view of the law, reminding her that in most situations there are at least two interpretations: “One on the surface, and another under the surface” (297). Dexter’s emphasis on narrative reminds us again of the sensational origins of the law and argues that “truth” belongs to the best storyteller.

Recent feminist theories of masquerade show the difficulty in deciding whether it works for or against women. In her well-known essay “Womanliness as Masquerade,” Riviere theorizes that intellectual women may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men. The woman’s public intellectual proficiency signifies an exhibition of herself in possession of the father’s penis: therefore, she compulsively “ogles and coquettes” with father-figures in “an unconscious attempt to ward off the anxiety which would ensue on account of the reprisals she anticipated from the father figures after her intellectual performances” (212). Although Riviere’s theory provides insight into Valeria’s anxieties as she usurps male authority, it does not capture the feeling of freedom or confidence that masquerade allows her. As a budding professional, Valeria continually challenges her husband’s authority and that of her lawyer, Mr. Playmore; masquerade changes her
personality, allowing her to enact a self-confidence that she does not feel. Recent feminist theorists see more to critique than to praise in masquerade. Emily Apter, for example, asks “why one would want to retain such a theory. With its language of veils, masks, and sexual travesty, the discourse of the masquerade seems always to participate in the very obsfuscation of femininity that it seeks to dispel. Though invented by a woman psychoanalyst to explain the ‘flaunting of femininity’ on the part of intellectual women, the theory of the masquerade—associated with the art of camouflaging masculine as feminine—may ultimately qualify as just another mask of phallocentric psychoanalysis” (90). While I agree with Apter’s critiques of Riviere’s theory, I still believe that masquerade provided nineteenth-century women with a useful antidote to nineteenth-century theories of female passivity. Switching identities gives Valeria pleasure. In masquerading as her maid, Mrs. Beauly, similarly, can defeat Eustace’s moralizing.

Luce Irigaray writes of masquerade, not as the anxiety-producing activity described by Riviere, or as the phallocentrically circumscribed theory critiqued by Apter, but as a playfully subversive act:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it.... To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the “perceptible,” of “matter”—to
“ideas,” in particular ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make “visible,” by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible... It also means “to unveil” the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. (76)

Irigaray’s insistence on “playful repetition” as a route to the revelation of truth echoes throughout Collins' text: Ariel’s repetitive demand for a story guides Valeria to Sara’s hidden letter; as Sara’s double, Valeria can play with her own identity in order to uncover another woman’s secret.

Irigaray’s invocation of a “playful repetition” which reveals “what was supposed to remain invisible,” mirrors Freud’s language in his description of the uncanny. The “unheimlich,” or “unhomey,” is the name for everything which ought to have remained hidden and secret, but which has become visible, everything which is both too close for comfort, but also too weird. Both masquerade and the uncanny reveal, through repetition, “what should remain hidden”; masquerade reveals the artificiality of the construction of femininity, while the uncanny, as the reappearance of something that has been “disavowed,” reveals the woman who is veiled and hidden behind the “homey” appearance of the middle-class “lady.” “Painted women” stare out of the center of Freud’s work on the uncanny, an image of female sexuality which Freud never acknowledged in his essay. In her rereading of Freud’s essay, Jane Todd argues that two motifs are regularly pushed aside by Freud: “The central figure of
woman in many of his examples and the related theme of seeing and being seen. The last example, the view of female genitals that some men find \textit{unheimlich}, is by no means incidental. However, Freud failed to see the implications of his own evidence—the underlying motif that would unify the randomness of his examples” (521). In analyzing the uncanny, Freud wanted to uncover the difference between the ideas of “heimlich” and “unheimlich.” Instead, he continually discovers the congruence of the two terms, such that the uncanny has become indistinguishable from the domestic, the homely housewife continually shades into the eye-catching painted lady:

Once, as I was walking through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was strange to me, on a hot summer afternoon, I found myself in a quarter the character of which could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to abandon my exploratory walk and get straight back to the piazza I had left a short while before. (144)

Unable to return home, the analyst has been caught by the look of the painted women. Todd argues that the uncanny is, at bottom, a fear of castration linked to the gaze of the “painted,” the sexually desiring, woman. In masquerading, uncanny women become “double- visioned”: they are the source and the site of the gaze.
Combining the analyses of Irigaray and Todd, I will argue that masquerade creates a necessary space for women, providing protection from masculine mastery and allowing women to gaze. As Todd shows, the audacious gaze at the root of the uncanny is not gendered as masculine, as Riviere’s theory might suggest, but is presented as the look of the sexually desiring woman. By using masquerade as a technique in her investigations, Valeria discovers what the law missed, namely, Dexter’s secret desire for Sara, as well as Sara’s rejected passion for Eustace. In illuminating their desires, Valeria creates a space for the representation of a sexually desiring woman, and the desire for a “plain” woman, and, implicitly, sanctions the representation of herself as sexually passionate for Eustace. Cvetkovich argues that solutions to sensational mysteries rationalize intense affect and make it safe (7); but this happens with neither Madeleine Smith’s trial nor with *The Law and the Lady*. Both texts suggest that women’s writing is dangerous because of its close proximity to the body—not only did this writing implicitly invoke women’s bodies and sexuality, but it produced an overwhelming affect in its readers. Women’s writing, by gazing directly at sexuality, could not be admitted directly into the Victorian courtroom. When it did, its effect was hysteria. Unlike the letters in these texts, which created an implausible, at least for Victorian readers, image of female sexuality, masquerade imagines a uniform identity and a clear meaning. While plain women are impossible
to read, just as their "plain English" cannot be interpreted within legal discourse, women in drag represent explicit, unambiguous meaning. Masquerade paints a woman who can be bluntly read by a male audience: for example, the jury and press at Madeleine's trial. In addition, masquerade opens woman's eyes, allowing her to use her looks in order to look.

The locus of her gaze is the uncanny underside of Victorian respectability. The world of ambiguously gendered beings, such as Ariel and Dexter, provides Valeria with more help than the legal authorities. Thus, while Susan Sage Heinzelman argues that the transformation of weird cases into hard law eradicates the noncanonical, these texts suggest not only that the weird cannot be erased, but that the "natural" is premised on the uncanny, that the "hard" depends on the "weird." Madeleine Smith's trial, for example, with its "not proven" verdict, is always suspect. "High literary folk" continued to speculate about her future life, suggesting that the literary community, unlike the legal counsel, was not as easily duped by her conservative appearance. George Eliot, for example, writes that "since she is acquitted it is a pity Palmer is not alive to marry her and be the victim of her second experiment in cosmetics—which is too likely to come one day or other" (Altick 187). Jane Carlyle states, "One man, a Mr. D--, has given a thousand himself—he had better marry her, and get poisoned" (Altick 187). To overcome the blinkered vision of the law, Valeria
reads “wayward” narratives along with legal documents. She recovers Sara’s tragic agency and subjectivity, but Sara’s subversiveness is never erased. Instead, Valeria’s search reveals the multiplicity of Sara’s identity and equally proves the indeterminacy of Valeria’s subjectivity, as the double of every other woman in the novel. By playfully repeating their identities, Valeria recovers Sara’s letter and proves Eustace’s legal innocence, though he remains morally culpable. Eustace’s passivity is never reversed in this story, so no strong male rends woman’s authority. The relationship of wife and mother, along with the absence of strong male characters, counters the traditional heterosexual romance that seemingly domesticates the ending of the novel.

These texts present an unfamiliar/uncanny view of women as sexual creatures—not women who roam the streets, but Victorian “ladies.” Finally, they uncover the multiplicity of Victorian female identities, dangerous because they cannot be plainly read, nor can their stories be translated into “plain English,” which has been revealed as just a fiction anyway. The “plain” face masks the most violent passions, the plain text the most complex narratives.
CHAPTER 4

ACCOUNTING FOR COUNT DRACULA: TURNING SEALED BOOKS INTO OPEN SECRETS

Following his midnight attack on Mina Harker, Count Dracula rushes to destroy her narrative: “All the manuscript had been burned, and the blue flames were flickering among the white ashes; the cylinders of your phonograph too were thrown into the fire, and the wax had helped the flames” (258). The flickering blue flame reproduces the blue flame Jonathan sees glittering along the road when first he enters Transylvania, a flickering which “seemed to be repeated endlessly” (12). Not only does the blue flame repeat, one of Dracula’s infinite self-reproductions, but the text itself is simply a duplicate: “Thank God there is the other copy in the safe” (285). As consummate shapeshifter, Dracula assumes whatever identity is offered to him, even a textual identity. His continual changes provide a fitting prototype for Elaine Showalter’s definition of hysteria: a “[v]ast unstable repertoire of emotional and physical symptoms and rapid passage from one to another” (129). Like hysteria,
which is elusive and enigmatic, resistant to the powers of masculine rationality,

Dracula’s identity is characterized by a surplus that allows him to exist as wolf or bat
or “thin streak of white mist” in Transylvania or London, on land or at sea.

To contain Dracula’s excess, the vampire hunters create an “accurate,” “exact”
textual account of his invasion of England in the belief that a coherent narrative, a case
history, will create a singular identity for Dracula, and therefore, limit his excess.
Publication of his story will seemingly curb Dracula’s proliferations, his endless
reproductions. But, as I will argue in this chapter, Dracula’s hysteria, instead,
pervades the mass cultural realm that publicizes his story. Both the representative of
the law, Jonathan Harker, and his wife are tainted with Dracula’s blood—“the traces of
such an illness as his do not lightly die away” (105)—indicating that the law itself has
become hysterical. As in *The Law and the Lady*, hysteria permeates this text,
becoming a group phenomenon that threatens the symbolic system, illicitly
reproducing itself and infecting Mina, her friends, her husband, and the bureaucratic
system in which she seeks Dracula. While my analysis of *The Law and the Lady*
showed the link of law and sexuality, the ineffability of justice, *Dracula* insists that the
separation of criminal and solicitor is tenuous and that the origins of law reside not
merely in the Law List, but equally in Dracula’s ancient castle. Indeed, Dracula’s
invasion symbolizes the general eruption of the irrational within the seemingly solid
social system of England, a disruption that the female detective, Mina Harker, both stanches and exacerbates. The goal of the female detective is to unpack the phallic solidity of identity, to represent the fissures that exist within the seemingly stable realm of the symbolic.

Given Dracula’s inherent amorphousness, it seems unreasonable to argue, as Rosemary Jann has, that Dracula can be captured with the tools of materialist science and its rationalist authority. A new type of detective is required. A sympathetic critic suggests that Mina “seems to take control in the novel” and that she “resembles a detective” (Boone 84, emphasis added). Not only does Mina approximate a detective, she is a detective. While previous critics argue variously that Mrs. Harker is “completely within the control of a male text” (Appleby 32) and that she is little more than “a virtuous footstool” (Dijkstra 346), I will argue that Mina acts, neither passively nor necessarily “virtuously,” as analyst, patching together a cure for the hysterical disruption Dracula has induced.

In performing her investigative role, Mina, like Dracula, vamps, scrapping together a narrative from the textual fragments the group of vampire hunters compile—the OED defines that verb “vamp” as “[t]o make or produce by or as by patching; to adapt, compile, compose, put together (a book, composition, etc.) out of old materials; to serve up (something old) as new by addition or alteration.” As a
narrative vamp, Mina pieces together a new cure for her husband’s hysteria out of the fragments of old texts, she contains Dracula within a textual coffin and she improvises a remedy for her own case of vampire-induced hysteria. A contemporary reviewer of Dracula writes “[t]he up-to-dateness of the book—the phonograph diaries, typewriters, and so on—hardly fits in with the medieval methods which ultimately secure the victory for Count Dracula’s foes” (Senf 60). While this reviewer’s comments indicate the confusing entanglement of technology and superstition in the text, they also suggest the position of the female detective; specifically, Mina bridges the gap between monster and analyst, superstition and psychoanalysis, sexual deviance and innocence. Like Valeria Woodville and Rosa Dartle, Mina translates seemingly insignificant details into legible discourse; like them, she refuses the eccentric, “armchair rationalist” role of the male detective, and conducts her work from within vampirism, ultimately confusing the seemingly clear boundary between rational and hysterical narratives. Tainted with Dracula’s poison, Mina has an insider’s vulnerable view of the malady she seeks to cure. Like Hilda Wade, she conducts her investigations on the boundary of rational science, while implicitly critiquing its methods; like Hilda Wade, Dracula argues that rationality cannot account for the totality of modern life.

In the first section of this chapter, I will analyze male hysteria and target the ways in which the vampire hunters try to contain Dracula’s uncontrollable
reproductions within a case history, a genre that the novel redefines as specifically mass cultural, the equivalent of a journalistic "story." By emphasizing the "public" nature of all documents within the mass cultural realm, the novel appears to provide a secure sense that criminals will be accountable because they are "count"able. Thus, the trope of vamping seems to provide security. In the next section of the chapter, I will argue that the seemingly countable always contains an element of excess that narrative cannot control; in co-opting bureaucracy to contain male hysteria, the text itself becomes hysterical and also provides an example of the uncontrollability of the bureaucratic mechanism. The novel simultaneously creates a "professional" woman to contain the threat of this hysterical bureaucracy and deconstructs that woman by suggesting that she is tainted by the disease she seeks to cure. The woman detective's own participation in the hysterical system undercuts the finality of the narrative cure and, as in *The Law and the Lady*, suggests that domesticity itself harbors the uncanny.

*i. Husbands, Hysteria, Hotch-pot*

Similar to Valeria Woodville who enters the detecting business to prove her husband's innocence of his first wife's murder, Mina Harker vamps to improvise a cure for Jonathan's Transylvania-induced "brain fever," reducing it with a new narrative. Both novels suggest that male identity must be stabilized in order to
strengthen the bourgeois family. Unlike Eustace Macallan who refuses to confide in his wife, Jonathan’s most significant act in the novel is disclosing the secrets of his experiences at Castle Dracula to his wife, despite his fear that “I would shock and frighten her to death were I to expose my heart to her” (44). Neither husband wants to read the hysterically sealed book of his own secret, though these private matters are open to their wives/analysts, and the reader. Thus, the wife’s investigation makes an open secret of her husband’s repressed narrative, fabricating him into a “strong manly man” in the process.

In her discussion of Sherlock Holmes’ “A Case of Identity,” Audrey Jaffe argues that the Holmes stories often describe the wife’s role in policing her husband’s identity. This is, likewise, Mina’s goal. Jaffe suggests that the problem of productivity and the threat of multiple identities which it poses was fundamental to Victorian sensibilities: disguise, professionalism, writing and reading are analogous movements in and out of identity (112). Dracula presents an anxiety similar to the Holmesian world defined by Jaffe in which identity has become theatrical and, therefore, susceptible to manipulation. A prototype of the protean “professional,” Dracula coolly rejects class identity as a criteria in his search for ever-fresher sources of
blood. Indeed, he outclasses Jaffe’s professional in his ability to change ethnicity, gender and even species.¹

But his shiftiness infects Jonathan, leaving him without a clear sense of identity. Jonathan’s secret is contained within a text, a journal he was writing during his stay at Castle Dracula. Like Valeria Woodville who is entrusted with her husband’s secret, a textual memory written by his first wife that he refuses to read, Mina Harker must guard Jonathan’s scandalous travel narrative, a record of his sexual indiscretions. Jonathan writes, “The secret is here, and I do not want to know it” (111). In creating a symbol of marital fidelity out of this hodgepodge of Jonathan’s professional duties at Castle Dracula and of his sexual adventure with Dracula’s three voracious nymphs, Mina transforms the journal into “a wedding present.” In a letter to her friend, Lucy Westenra, Mina writes the following:

I must tell you of my wedding present. When the chaplain and the sisters had left me alone with my husband—oh, Lucy, it is the first time I have written the words ‘my husband’—left me alone with my husband, I took the book from under his pillow, and wrapped it up in white paper, and tied it with a little bit of pale blue ribbon which was round my neck, and sealed it over the knot with sealing-wax, and for my seal I used my wedding ring. Then I kissed it and showed it to my husband, and told him that I would keep it so, and then it would be an outward and visible sign for us all our lives that we trusted each other; that I

¹ Judith Halberstam characterizes vampiric monstrosity as an aggregate of race, class and gender anxieties, “a technology of monstrosity” (334). In his multiplicity, Dracula is similar to Collins’ “Master,” Dexter: not only is Dexter capable of gender shifts, but he is also characterized as half man/half machine, half human/half centaur.
would never open it unless it were for his own dear sake or for the sake of some stern duty. (105)

Sexual and textual become conflated: Mina kisses the journal first, Jonathan second. Writing Jonathan as “husband” at the same moment in which she ties up his secret writing with her “pale blue ribbon,” Mina significantly leaves her own neck vulnerable in protecting her husband’s.² By sealing the secret with her wedding ring, Mina also, ironically, gives it her seal of approval, guaranteeing the authenticity of his words. To secure her position as wife, a woman must bear her husband’s secrets in both this text and in The Law and the Lady. Mina’s “gift” is not her body, but her willingness to seal the secret contained in a text that reveals the hidden origins of her husband’s hysteria: his participation in illicit, because nonreproductive, sexuality.³

When he leaves the comforts of home and takes his business to Transylvania, Jonathan Harker becomes infected with Dracula’s protean nature. Not only is he subject, as a solicitor, to the newly recognized perils of the professional—“the individual who professes rather than produces—whose speech, writing, or knowledge is his commodity—blurs the easily readable relationship between producer and product,

² As wife, a woman was vulnerable, as I suggested in my chapter on The Law and the Lady—Mina is relinquishing her legal subjectivity to a man suffering from “brain fever.”

³ Christopher Craft, for example, notes that Dracula’s sexuality, both penetrating and receptive, is dismissive of gender boundaries. In a lecture given at The Ohio State University, Judith Roof also argued that Dracula’s sexuality is dangerous because it disrupts traditional technologies of reproduction.
laborer and commodity” (Jaffe 110)—but his working environment is explicitly coded as foreign and, therefore, doubly dangerous. The first pages of the novel are narrated from Jonathan’s point of view as he travels from Vienna to Transylvania, “one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe” (1). In the first page of his journal, Jonathan reveals that he “was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps” (1). This opening section provides a “hotchpot”4 of exotic, oriental references: “paprika hendl,” “mamaliga,” “impletata.” By moving from his accessible home in Exeter to Dracula’s uncharted Castle, Jonathan loses his identity; as Dracula says, “a stranger in a strange land, he is no one” (21). Dracula dresses in Jonathan’s clothing in order to “leave evidence” that Jonathan has been in the local towns and post-dates Jonathan’s letters, “the first of that fatal series which is to blot out the very traces of my existence from earth” (46). In cloning Jonathan, Dracula suggests the very performativity of identity, “seeming” or “resembling” become as good as “being.” Jonathan fears, as he says, that there might be “no proof” and only “small evidences” that his experiences at Castle Dracula were “real” (40). Jonathan’s identity is in question.

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4 A “quaint legal phrase” (330) used by Mina when she adds her story to the others. In legal terms, “hotch-pot” means “the bringing together of shares or properties in order to divide them equally” (The Random House College Dictionary). Its root, hoche(r), means “to shake.”
Jonathan's fears of ineffability are warranted in that his illness is coded as hysteria, a mute, generally feminine, form of madness. As Slavoj Zizek has suggested, the malady of hysteria rests on the question of identity; specifically, the hysteric recognizes the fissure created by his or her movement into the symbolic, "an irreducible gap between the signifier that represents one and the nonsymbolic surplus of my being-there" (131). Dracula, whose identity, as I suggested earlier, is purely performative, capable of endless mutation, becomes the representation for the solicitor's own subjectivity. Jonathan's movement into hysteria is also signaled by his loss of firm gender bounds. Anne Williams claims that during his brain fever, Jonathan's "masculine reason is temporarily disordered" (448) and Regenia Gagnier argues that the Count effeminizes Jonathan (143); Marjorie Howes claims that the fear of the vampire is a "fear of being emasculated" (107). Both in his resistance to firm gender codes and in his loss of a singular self-representation, Jonathan appropriately believes that his ordeal at the Count's castle will not be understood in England, that his illness will defy diagnosis: "these things are no proof, for they may have been evidences that my mind was not as usual" (42). Initially, these fears leave Jonathan secretly writing his diary in order to maintain his sanity like "some fair lady perhaps penned her ill-spelt love letter" and, finally, they make him mad, "off his head" (110), raving about wolves and poison and blood (105).
By positioning the law’s representative as hysteric, the novel forces us to question the law’s own position of mastery, its own seeming solidity. A fissure has appeared in the symbolic’s smooth surface. The books Jonathan discovers on Dracula’s shelves are significant: “The books were of the most varied kind—history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law—all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the ‘Red’ and ‘Blue’ books, Whitaker’s Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and—it somehow gladdened my heart to see it—the Law List” (19). Not only has English law invaded Dracula’s castle, but Dracula has trespassed the law. Or was he always already there? As Jonathan suggests, Dracula has the makings of a solicitor: “he would have made a wonderful solicitor, for there was nothing that he did not think of or foresee” (31). Dracula’s danger exists not in his expertise in transforming himself into bat or mist or wolf, but in his faculty in masquerading as English gentleman, as representative of English law. By staging this confrontation between Dracula and a solicitor, the novel forces us to pose a question that, according to Derrida in “Devant la Loi,” is forbidden: what is the origin of the law? Representative of a “noble,” “master” race, Dracula’s sovereignty institutes law in Transylvania; is English law equally infested with its own aristocratic origins, despite its democratic pretensions? In her essay, “Sexual Contagions: Dorothy
Strachey's *Olivia,* Diana Fuss argues that *Olivia* inverts the traditional dynamic of hysteria by placing "the master's answer into the hysteric's mouth, displacing hysteria onto the law and disorientating and confusing the difference between them" (130). This disjunction allows Fuss to read the law itself as a hysterical symptom, and leads her to ask if there is "something within the law that resists the law" and to wonder what "comes before the law whose repression might be said to institute that law" (130). Fuss' questions productively apply to *Dracula.* The Count comes before the law as the force that institutes law in Transylvania—Dracula is "noble," a "master" whose speech "seemed to have in it a whole history of the country" (28)—and as seeker of the authority of British law. As embodiment of a sexuality that must be repressed, Dracula also "comes before the law," as the precursor of Freud's proposed moral law of repression. *The Law and the Lady* forced us to question the relationship of law and sexuality and exposed the law's attempts to limit the subjectivities available to women; similarly, *Dracula* suggests that a repressed sexuality comes before the law, a sexuality that cannot be erased by legal discourse, but that infects the text of the legal authorities. As I suggested earlier, Jonathan's journal mixes professional with sexual, conflating the clear boundaries between legal and hysterical discourse.
The primary goal of Mina’s “vampiric typewriting” is to reestablish the bounds of identity which have become blurred by Jonathan’s uncanny resemblance to Samuel Richardson’s heroine Pamela (Case 228) and, in the process, to divest English law of its uncanny relationship with Count Dracula. Mina must make a private text public so that its terrors can be acknowledged and erased: the unauthored headnote to Dracula states that all “needless matters have been eliminated so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact.” While Van Helsing works “spells,” strews Lucy’s room with garlic, and chops off the heads of “booser” ladies, Mina insists upon rendering visible minute psychic details (and private secrets) so that they can be accounted for, can be made into a case history. She does this through a secret code, the language of business which is also the language of bureaucracy: “there is also something about the shorthand symbols that makes it different from writing” (52). Shorthand, a symbol of the professional woman’s

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5 A reference to Jennifer Wicke’s fascinating essay, “Vampiric Typewriting: Dracula and Its Media.” Wicke argues that Dracula is a figuration of mass culture, and that the text privileges consumption. She, too, views Mina as detective: Mina “is productive in her consumptive possession: Mina essentially becomes the detective of the final segment of the story” (486). Unlike Wicke, I posit the mass culture as a hysterical force that infects social institutions, particularly the law. As I will argue later, my argument also figures Mina’s detecting in a different way than does Wicke’s: specifically, I see her as desiring, as infected with Dracula’s hysteria, while Wicke argues that Mina consumes Dracula “without longing or desire and with all cognitive faculties intact” (485).

6 Case makes this connection based on Jonathan’s attempt to smuggle a letter to Mina; his failed appeal to the Slovak drivers and his would-be rapists, the vampire women; and the Count’s theft of his writing materials, traveling clothes, and paper.
bureaucratic acumen, controls the diffusiveness of the solicitor’s discourse. Mina
confides that she has learned shorthand in order to be “useful” to Jonathan: “I have
been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan’s studies, and
I have been practicing shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be
able to be useful to Jonathan...” (53). Though Jonathan initially worries that his
journal is both too sexy and too scattered—“I began to fear as I wrote in this book that
I was getting too diffuse; but now I am glad that I went into detail from the first”
(25)—it is by being “diffuse” that Jonathan’s disturbing journal can be converted by
Mina into an “outward and visible” sign of their trust and that Dr. Van Helsing can
assure Jonathan that his experiences were “real” because they fit into a definable
category of anguish; as Freud might title it, “An Analysis of a Case of Vampirism.”
Indeed, each character in the novel relies on narrative as therapy; Dr. Seward, for
example, argues “this diary has quieted me” (103) and even the madman Renfield
continually scribbles in his notebook. 7

Though Van Helsing argues that it “is not well that [Lucy’s] very thoughts go
into the hands of strangers” (172), the book testifies that all private indiscretions must
be publicly confessed. Similarly, Mina initially worries that her diaries might be too

7 Bram Stoker’s Dracula, the most recent film version of the novel, makes the connection between
solicitor and hysteric more clear. The film presents Renfield as Harker’s predecessor in Transylvania.
intimate for the Dracula narrative—"I too have seen the need of putting down at present everything, however trivial: but there is little in this except what is personal. Must it go in?" (235)—but because of their secrets, Mina is attacked at midnight by Dracula, thus "no more concealments. Our hope now is in knowing all. Tell freely" (301). Writing a case history is a means of moving confession into fiction, where it can be looked at in another light. But Dracula does not accept the plausibility of private therapy; instead, all diary entries must become part of the public domain. Publication controls social deviance. Thus, by sealing Jonathan's diary off as the symbol of a private covenant, Mina only exacerbates the problem; there can be no "sealed books."

The analogy between Dracula's methodology and Freud's techniques is instructive. Similar to Freud whose general injunction to his patients is "say whatever comes into your head, don't hide anything" and whose specific advice to Dora is "pay attention to the exact words you used" (113), Van Helsing argues that "[n]othing is too small. I counsel you, put down in record even your doubts and surmises" and Jonathan writes that "[a]ll big and little, must go down; perhaps at the end the little things may teach us most" (289). But their words can be useful only if rendered accurately; the novel constantly emphasizes the exactness of the accounts it provides:

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8 As I argued in my "Introduction," this is also the approach used by the classical detective.
Dr. Seward says that all must be put down “exactly” (134); Lucy’s memo is an “exact record” (143); Van Helsing believes that “accurate knowledge of all details” will lead to the truth (267). Mina’s revision of this finely detailed text produces a narrative in which “every point tells” (262) and in which all “authentic” documents have been translated into “a mass of typewriting” (400). Mina, like Renfield, is keeping a record, “focusing” an account (291).

But it is Freud’s emphasis on details that, according to Naomi Schor, reads the scientific veil from his writings, causing them to sound more like fictions:

The problem posed by the written detail now stands out quite clearly: due to its apparent lack of seriousness it threatens the scientificity, not to say the veracity of the text it invades. In other words, the detail belongs to the domain of Dictung and seems out of place in scientific texts. Subsequently, in writing of Dora, Freud will liken his detailed case histories not merely to short stories, but to a far more suspect genre, the “roman à clef”.... We are here confronted with a paradox: a disseminator of fiction on the one hand, the detail is a purveyor of truth on the other. (69)

* Dracula also confronts this paradox.* As Jonathan suggests, by being diffuse his journal becomes “ornamental,” sexy rather than scientific; yet it is only through an accurate and exhaustive listing of the details that the vampire hunters can account for

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* The emphasis on the detail weaves together all of the chapters of this dissertation. Valeria Macallan recognizes that her attention to detail allows her insights missed by the legal authorities, but, conversely, disrupts her authority: the representatives of the law claim that she discovers only “trifles.” Hilda Wade advocates a localized, detail-oriented approach to science instead of grand, generalized theory. And Rosa Dartle, like Freud, is an expert at explicating the seemingly trivial things people say.
the Count. The diffuseness of Jonathan’s narrative also links it with the notorious excesses of legal discourse. Thus, Jonathan’s verbosity connects him with Dracula’s excess and with legal verbiage. A linguistic glut associated with legal discourse has infected the solicitor whose subjectivity, simultaneously, becomes confused—he can control neither his text nor his identity and needs Mina’s help. The female professional is “useful” in processing legal discourse and in disciplining identity.

By including too much detail, Freud realizes that he will violate his patients’ privacy, rendering them publicly visible: “I cannot give a complete history of the treatment, because that would involve my entering in detail the circumstances of my patient’s life.... The importunate interest of a capital city...forbids my giving a faithful picture of the case” (S.E. 10:155-56). Inversely, it is the vampire hunters’ interest in saving the city of London that necessitates their “faithful” representation of Dracula’s case. The publication of Dracula becomes Mina’s “duty” to her husband, since the text supposedly establishes his “strong and manly” nature, while simultaneously renewing the law’s integrity. Freud also recognized a more dangerous problem associated with the detail; not only does the emphasis on the minute threaten a patient’s privacy, but a detailed narrative also promises, ironically, to move his case history into the realm of fiction. Negating the privacy issue by valorizing public good over individual integrity, Freud writes in his “Prefatory Remarks” to Dora that it is
his “duty” to publish and that it would be “a disgraceful piece of cowardice” to deprive the public of his “scientific” knowledge of the mechanisms of hysteria. In his essay “Dora’s Secrets, Freud’s Techniques,” Neil Hertz wonders if Freud can be sure that his narration of Dora’s story is straight and unadulterated, if the story itself is not a further violation of Dora’s integrity? Further, he speculates that an unrecognized or refused identification existed between Freud and Dora; perhaps Freud “was” Dora. Dora’s secret repressions are subdued by Freud through “a consciously elaborated technique” that attempts to keep logos uncontaminated by philia, defusing the erotic content of the acquisition of knowledge (Hertz 229). Similarly, in Dracula, the vampire hunters attempt to defuse the “possibly pleasurable voyeuristic fantasy” (Hertz 229) of their detailed story by transcribing it in shorthand, by rendering it scientific, “accurate” and “exact.”

Dracula seeks to disguise himself in the London masses; yet this is exactly the place where his narrative becomes legible. Like Freud’s case history as “roman à clef,” this novel becomes spectacular, a journalistic “story”; Dr. Seward, for example, writes that several aspects of his rendition of Renfield’s case history “seem to make what the American interviewer calls ‘a story’ if one could only get them in proper order” (272). Seward emphasizes the mass cultural potential of Renfield’s case rather than its scientific value; he does not want it presented only to an insular scientific community,
but diffused to the public at large. In addition, Dr. Seward recognizes the public, journalistic character of case histories when he tells Arthur Holmwood that he will write of the Dracula case “just as if I were doing a descriptive special article for The Daily Telegraph” (120). Seward’s emphasis on the journalistic mission of his work is echoed by Mina. Mina’s goal of working in the guise of a “lady journalist,” “interviewing, writing descriptions and remembering conversations” (54), evidences a desire to make family secrets public knowledge, to emphasize the correspondence between what persons look like and what they are, between outward forms and the meanings they embody, to “be ready for other eyes if required” (179). Rosemary VanArsdel notes that the personal interview was a popular mode for women’s journals because it not only provided the “minutest detail” of people’s lives, but it also allowed the public to be “whisked behind the scenes, so to speak, and given an inside peek at a public figure” (244) and that it was “instrumental in urging women of [the 1880s and 1890s] to look beyond their traditional roles, to dare to venture, to take risks” (246). Journalism, like the case history, combines publication with anonymity: Laurel Brake, for example, writes that “an increase in the personal...was a

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(10) Of course, many writers of the time realized the public nature of journalism. O’Connor, for example, writes, “The newspaper is not read in the secrecy and silence of the closet as is the book. It is picked up at a railway station...” (Brake 91).
characteristic that later came to be associated with the New Journalism in its use of interviews and personal details" (89).

*Dracula* continually breaks the boundaries between anonymous journalism and the secret journal. Mina’s private journal, for example, is written in shorthand which is “different from writing” (71) and is, instead, part of the bureaucratic, public discourse, the language of the solicitor’s office and the courtroom, rather than the private bedroom.11 Thus, her journal, which she carefully distinguishes from the even more personal form of the “diary” (57)—“I don’t mean one of those two-pages-to-the-week-with-Sunday-squeezed-in-a-corner diaries”—reveals Mina’s attempt to mechanize the writing process so that it can become part of the triumvirate of business, utility and practical action valorized by the Victorians (Houghton 112). By controlling the diffuseness of legal discourse, the female detective’s energy and perseverance provide necessary support for her husband, who is limited by his passivity, indeed his hysteria. Unlike Jonathan, Mina is the “useful” citizen described by Kingsley who “is always picking up new facts, and turning them to some particular use” (Houghton 119). Jonathan refuses to remember the experiences of Castle Dracula, while one of Mina’s goals is “with a little practice” to “remember all that goes on or that one hears said

11 Jennifer Wicke writes that shorthand “participated in one of the most thoroughgoing transformations of cultural labor of the twentieth-century—that rationalization of the procedure of bureaucracy and business, the feminization of the clerical work force, and the standardization of mass business writing” (471).
during a day” (57). Reproducing one’s secrets, one’s thoughts, becomes productive—through mass cultural reproduction, she can produce a stable identity for Jonathan.

Besides making a “case” of Jonathan’s psychic terrors in Transylvania, Mina must also make the Count accountable. Because Dracula does not cast a shadow in mirrors—“the whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself” (25)—he appears to be alien to the “age of mechanical reproduction.” Dracula’s danger lies not simply in his nongenital reproductions, but in his mastery of disguise as depicted when he assumes Jonathan’s identity and becomes indistinguishable from middle-class Britons. The Count longs to hide himself in the mass cultural realm of Victorian England—“I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death and all that makes it what it is” (20). But, as I argued earlier, it is precisely within this mass cultural world that Dracula becomes accountable. In his original description of Bohemia, Jonathan argues that “no work” provides the exact locality of the Castle Dracula (4), but once he arrives in England, the Count leaves both a paper and a psychic trail, which then traces him back to Bohemia, a trail that is published in the mass cultural documents produced by the vampire hunters. In this novel, as Joan Copjec has argued about the classical detective genre in general, “to be is not to be perceived, it is to be recorded” (171), to be accounted
for. Though Dracula believes that by “murdering his agent” he will “blot out his traces” (353), as Mina points out, this crime only creates a clearer track. With her “man’s brain/woman’s heart,” Mina and the other vampire hunters vamp together Dracula’s history using a variety of fragmented cultural documents—newspaper articles, journals, letters, case histories. Like Frankenstein who patches a creature together with scraps of bodies stolen from the charnel house, the detectives in Dracula piece a vampire together with scraps of paper culled from the solicitor’s office. Unlike Frankenstein who completes his task using a passionate, Promethean energy, Mina composes the Count “in as businesslike a way, as any other transaction in life” (238), tapping into the informational network of the international bureaucratic systems of “law, business and government: the Incorporated Law Society, Lloyd’s of London, the British Consulate, MacKenzie and Steinkoff of Galatz, Godalming’s ‘people’ (i.e. the aristocracy), the police, and numerous other ‘connections’” (Gagnier 149).

Discovering the Count is a numbers game—how many boxes of holy soil were brought to England and where were they deposited? The bill of goods sent by the Great Northern Railway suggests that 50 boxes of soil were delivered from Bohemia (96), boxes which Dracula has divvied up to diverse London locations, boxes which these novice detectives must discover in order to stop the Count’s unlimited vampiric reproductions. Adding up the numbers leads to the discovery of the Count’s hiding
place. Returning once again to Copjec, we see that statistics is used as a form of surveillance:

The thesis that modern bureaucracies and detective fiction spring from the same source lends itself to a Foucauldian interpretation. It could be argued that statistics and the bureaucracies that are sustained by them are, like detective fiction, techniques of surveillance, mechanisms of a disciplinary form of power. Each of these techniques isolates minute, differentiating and therefore incriminating details which give access to the most intimate secrets of the individuals they investigate. It is, in fact, the very passion for counting, recording and tabulating that deposits many of the clues used by detectives to track their suspects. Laundry lists, insurance records, telephone bills, parking tickets, the criminal and the criminal act always turn up as figures in some bureaucracy's accounting. (170-71)

Anticipating Copjec, and taking a lesson from Jonathan’s “diffuse” journal, Mina’s men trace the Count’s movements through London by considering minutiae:

Jonathan tracks down the location of the boxes by questioning the carrier’s men who “supplement the paucity of written words with a few details” and by soliciting “all the papers connected with the delivery of the boxes at Carfax” (227); Seward’s partner solicits the names and addresses of the men moving the boxes from Carfax (157); Mr. Smollett, one of the moving men, “from a wonderful dog’s-eared notebook” finds information about the boxes removed from Carfax (260). Smollett’s book is reminiscent of the “little note-book” in which Dracula’s only male confederate, Renfield, is always jotting things down: “Whole pages are filled with masses of figures, general single numbers added up in batches, and then the totals added in batches again,
as though he was ‘focusing’ some account, as the auditor puts it” (69). This “habit of figuring” becomes integrally related to the character of the “undeveloped homicidal maniac”: Dr. Seward writes that Renfield is a homicidal maniac “of a peculiar kind. I shall have to invent a new classification for him, and call him a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac” (70). While the penchant for statistics formed “the basis of classical detective fiction’s narrative contract with its reader,” because statistics individualize, creating “more types of people” (Copjec 170), the example of Renfield suggests that this interest in categorizing has a negative side, is “life-eating.”

By placing people within categories, the modern bureaucracy essentially reduces them to representations. Thus, Mina’s detective prowess, which traps both Jonathan’s hysteria and Dracula’s vamping, works much like the capitalist culture described by Mark Seltzer:

> The commercial person, we have seen, admires copies more than originals; he is fascinated by reproductions and reproduction and by representations. The commercial person’s identity or self-identity, depends on representation. That identity is guaranteed by the imperative of resembling oneself, as a copy repeats the original. (Bodies and Machines 75)

Seltzer further argues that this desire to eliminate the difference between what things look like and what they embody appears in the insistence of possessions and hence the aversion to the category of “the secret.” Dracula insists upon the importance of the visible—“no one is the worse for telling their secrets” (225)—of making the red scar of
vampirism visible upon the vampire's body, of creating a world in which public and
private seem completely inextricable, in which the public object stands for private
truth or fact. Mina's "mass of typewriting" in which there is "hardly one authentic
document" (378) signals that the capitalistic bureaucracy has eliminated Dracula by
reducing him to a reproduction, to the type "vampire."

The bureaucratic network which traps Dracula and redeems Jonathan Harker
is reminiscent of D.A. Miller's argument for the "radical entanglement" between
realist and detective fiction. He claims that the detective novel "gives obscurity a
name and a local habitation" and that, in suggesting the possibility of an easily
comprehensible order with a limited number of characters working in a limited space,
it performs a "drastic simplification of power" (69). In contrast, the realist novel
appears to be a space vacated by detectives; it "fills the ideological function by lulling
us into the belief that everyday life is free of surveillance" (Copjec 171). But in
Dracula, surveillance seems safe. Mina's professional vamping makes us grateful that
Big Sister is always watching, that the criminal will always leave a trace in the new
bureaucracy, and that he or she will, therefore, always be caught. Dracula makes us
want to stand up and be accounted for rather than facing alone the unknown. By
placing the Count's self-reproduction, along with Jonathan's hysteria, in the frame of
a sensational "case history," Mina's vampiric improvisations create a world in which
all illusions of privacy are exploded, in which the “inner” self has become thoroughly publicized, in which law can retain its illusionary mastery. By placing Dracula’s story within the mass cultural realm, “[e]very trace” of the wild sublimity of the opening description of Transylvania has been “blotted out” (400), so that Transylvania is now a fit place for British imperialists and their inquisitive wives.12

ii. Women, Hysteria, Narration

But the story does not end here. While the text’s anonymous headnote argues that all “needless matters have been eliminated” from the narrative and Dr. Seward claims that vampire hunters should have “no secrets amongst them” (223), Dracula retains elusive, enigmatic and mysterious elements which seemingly contradict the epigram’s definition of the narrative as “simple fact.” Ironically, by diffusing Dracula’s evil through mass culture, the novel becomes tainted with Dracula’s own ineffability—mass culture limitlessly reproduces Dracula’s tale. As Nina Auerbach has argued, “the documentary rationalism of Freud’s new science is insufficient to conquer Dracula” (292). Just as a recent version of the female detective, Clarice Starling, connects Lector and Gumb because only the monstrous female detective combines the

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11 Tellingly, Stoker titled the last chapter of the book “a tourist’s tale” in two different outlines (Howes 116).
attributes of criminal and investigator (Mizejewski 10-11), Mina Harker necessarily links Van Helsing and Dracula because only she combines bureaucratic acumen with an embodiment of Dracula’s desire. Mina’s forehead scar is more visible than Lucy’s neck wound; is the result of the meeting of desire and rationality?

Mina’s monstrosity is visible in her appearance—her hands and forehead both bear the Count’s “palpitating wound” (324); Dracula proclaims that she is “flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin” (288). The importance of scars, of bearing a visible mark of difference, is fundamental to this novel because it underscores the monstrosity—for nineteenth-century sensibilities—of ambiguous sexuality. The problem with vampires is that they are not aroused by traditionally gendered erogenous zones, but, instead, by the taste of fresh blood, by the touch of voluptuous lips, by the succulence of “protruding teeth” and “ruby red lips.” This is a sexuality contained in the vampiric mouth noted by Christopher Craft, which is both penetrating and receptive, and, therefore, dismissive of gender boundaries; “this mouth, bespeaking the subversion of the stable and lucid distinctions of gender, is the mouth of all vampires, male and female” (218). Not only does Dracula drink from Mina’s neck, but she reciprocally sucks from his breast, breaking the distinction

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13 Robin Appleby similarly argues that Mina is “both a working out of the plot and an object of the plot” (19). But while Appleby believes that as object of the text, Mina cannot tell her own story and is controlled by a male text (20), I argue that Mina plays a more active role throughout.
between lover and mother. While Dracula castigates Mina because she, “like the others, would play your brains against mine. You would help these men to hunt me and frustrate me in my designs!” (287), he insists that she drink the blood from his breast that allows her to read his thoughts. She gains acumen through venom; with Dracula’s blood circulating in her veins, she can provide the others with a “deadly earnest” (286) account of the Count’s movements. While Alison Case argues that this scene posits a model of husband-wife relationships in that the Count can now account for Mina’s thoughts (234), her argument neglects the counterclaim—Mina can now undermine Dracula. This position also renders her vulnerable; Mina reminds her helpers: “I am not as you are. There is a poison in my blood, in my soul, which may destroy me...” (349).

In an argument similar to my own, Jennifer Wicke argues that Mina is in a strange niche—she is consumed by Dracula and also consumes him. But, Wicke attempts to lessen the subversiveness of this text by claiming that Mina remains separate from and unaroused by Dracula’s midnight feeding. The text does not support this reading. Indeed, Mina warns the posse that if she is captured by Dracula she will go willingly; as she says, “this time, if it ever come, may come quickly...and...you must lose no time in using your opportunity. At such a time, I myself might be—nay! if the time ever comes, shall be—leagued with your enemy
against you"; in addition, when he arrives in her bedroom she discovers that,

"strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him" (287). While Wicke and other critics
have recognized that Mina’s closeness to the Count allows her to read and understand
his desire, they also argue that this proximity allows Van Helsing and Co. to rend her
narrative authority, making it a “sealed book,” at the novel’s end, suggesting the
female detective’s inconsistent and limited appropriation of “male” tools. However,
it is Mina’s participation in the Count’s sexual ambiguity which allows her to detect
the Count and helps the posse to trap him. Specifically, following the midnight
feeding session, Mina becomes hysterically, and telepathically, linked with Dracula.
Like other female detectives, Mina translates seemingly insignificant details into
legible discourse; however, unlike them, Mina conducts her work from within
vampirism, ultimately confusing the seemingly clear boundary between rational and
hysterical narratives.

In The Female Malady, Elaine Showalter argues that hysteria was the most
prevalent organization term/concept/discourse of female madness in Victorian
England. The late-Victorian need to understand the processes behind hysteria is
suggested by the fact that Freud and Breuer’s Studies in Hysteria (1895), an

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14 Christopher Craft, for example argues that Mina’s body/character may be feminine, but the
significance it bears is written and interpreted solely by males (227); Geoffrey Wall believes that
Mina’s writing is used only to repeat the words of others, since feminine discourse “doesn’t produce
knowledge until relayed, submitted to the masculine, and deciphered by it” (17).
investigation of femininity and the family, was written at the same ideological moment as Dracula and articulates many of the same anxieties about gender and discourse. Dianne Hunter writes that hysteria is a form of expression “in which the body signifies what social conditions make it impossible to state linguistically” (485), a malady which subverts the reigning cultural order by exploding its facade of orderly conduct. Catherine Clément suggests that the role of the hysteric is ambiguous: she both contests and conserves. She “undoes family ties, introduces perturbation into the orderly unfolding of daily life, stirs up magic in apparent reason” (Cixous and Clément 5). Unfortunately, this magic and otherness can also be easily contained and co-opted. As Jane Gallop writes, the “family assimilates her otherness, and like an amoebae, finds its single cell revitalized, stronger than before” (202). Susan Bordo writes of the reason for the epidemic of hysteria in Victorian England:

Perhaps this is why symptoms crystallized from the language of femininity are so perfectly suited to express the dilemmas of middle-class and upper-middle-class women living in periods poised on the edge of gender change, women who have the social and material resources to carry the traditional constructions of femininity to symbolic excess but who also confront the anxieties of new possibilities. (177)

Bordo finds it instructive that hysteria peaked in historical periods of cultural backlash against attempts at reorganization and redefinition of male and female roles:

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15 Elaine Showalter argues that hysteria was almost interchangeable with the feminine in late-Victorian England (129).
pathology reveals itself here as an extremely interesting social format through which one source of potential for resistance and rebellion is pressed into the service of maintaining the established order” (177).\(^{16}\)

Based on such theories of hysteria and female “otherness,” critics have generally viewed Mina’s vampirism/hysteria as ultimately serving a conservative, family-affirming role. Alison Case, for example, argues that the “threat of vampirism, then, serves to displace Mina from her position of narrative mastery, converting her into (alternately) someone who can provide only the raw material of a plot” (238). Similarly, Geoffrey Wall argues that the enigmatic and uncanny “feminine” discourse Mina produces during hypnosis must be deciphered by men in order to be understandable. Together these critics assume that hysteric is tolerable because they have no power to effect social change; as Clément argues, it is safest to have women express their wrongs through psychosomatic illnesses.

But, Jonathan’s experiences with the three women in Castle Dracula, along with Lucy’s potential danger as the “booler woman” who terrorizes local children, suggest that psychosomatic illnesses are not necessarily safely and easily controlled; indeed, they can be transmitted to healthy, middle-class British men and women. The

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\(^{16}\) Similarly, Sian Macfie suggests that the proliferation of vampiric women “betokens a fin-de-siècle crisis in the definition of ‘femininity’ where the hegemonic response to the emergence of new modes of female subjectivity—to the rise of the 1890s cult of the ‘New Woman’—was to demonize her, to classify her as sick, as evil, as vampiric” (66).
example of Lucy suggests the greatest dangers of hysteria; symptoms\(^7\) become written on her body and function to preclude understanding. Nina Auerbach argues that Lucy is part of Freud’s “garland of female hysterics” and that Dr. Seward’s “anguished clinician’s record makes of Lucy both the early heroine of a case history and an ineffable romantic image of fin de siècle womanhood” (“Magi and Maidens” 290). While she finds the image of the “entranced” Lucy “covertly inspiring” (300), for most women readers, this picture of a woman secretly seduced and publicly staked is probably not so uplifting.

Lucy decides to “imitate Mina and write” (108). Why does writing save Mina and the men, but not Lucy? I will argue that Lucy is aligned with the private space of desire theorized by Joan Copjec: she is the missing signifier for woman that doesn’t exist, the realm of the private, of jouissance, of pleasure from which there is no position to speak. Lucy’s writing is not separated from her body, but is, instead, dangerously private, as revealed by the text she keeps close to her bosom—“Lucy’s first movement was to feel in her breast, and, to my surprise, produced the paper” (160). Mina wants “no witness” to Lucy’s “condition” when she is sleepwalking; Dr. Seward does not want Lucy’s thoughts to enter “the hands of strangers” (163). In keeping

\(^7\) Lucy is not diagnosed with a particular disease, but suffers difficulty breathing, heavy sleep, vivid dreams, anorexia, etc., all characteristic of the symptomology of hysteria which is described by Elaine Showalter in *The Female Malady.*
Lucy’s thoughts and actions private, Mina and Seward function like the judges in Madeleine Smith’s trial, erasing the evidence of private enjoyment from the public record. Lucy’s hysterical inability to separate body and mind also marks her as sister to Rosa Dartle, who also bears a visible, simultaneously painful and pleasurable, scar. Like Dartle, Lucy bears the mark of a dangerous male sexuality; like Rosa’s body which both attracts and repels David, Lucy’s body is concurrently tempting and dangerous. Enjoying, or perhaps enduring, a private pleasure, Lucy is an anomaly in a world where private sins must be publicly confessed, where pleasure must be erased from an exacting narrative.

Before she is “saved,” Lucy is described in the following manner:

The beautiful colour [of her eyes] became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa’s snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. If ever a face meant death—if looks could kill—we saw it at that moment. (223)

Susan Bordo writes that the bodies of hysterical women “offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the interpreter—a text that insists, actually demands, that it be read as a cultural statement, a statement about gender” (169). Thus, Lucy’s face

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18 Lucy’s bodily connection with her writing is also reminiscent of The Law and the Lady’s Ariel, whose response to narration was completely visceral. It would be interesting to explore the connections between the also hyper-feminine Lucy and the masculine Ariel: neither brand of “femininity” is deemed acceptable. Instead, the female detectives in these novels must possess “men’s brains and women’s hearts.”
becomes an image in which every feature “tells”; in fact, the history of civilization is written upon it—Medusa’s snakes, the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese.

Teresa de Lauretis says that the Medusa can cast the spell called “evil eye” largely because of her horrible “staring eyes”: “their threat is to man’s vision, and their power consists in their enigma and ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ (in Mulvey’s word), their luring of man’s gaze into the ‘dark continent,’ as Freud put it, the enigma of femininity” (110). In addition, de Lauretis quotes Eugenie Lemoine-Luccioni who argues that by “offering herself to the look, in giving herself for sight, according to the sequence: see, see oneself, give oneself to be seen, be seen,” the girl often falls into “the complete alienation of the hysteric” (135). The image of Lucy’s ragged, mutilated body certainly suggests a pathology that lurks in the background of “normal” femininity.

The scene of Dracula’s seduction was dangerously private. To make Lucy’s ailment a public event, her salvation is enacted before “an audience of men: inquisitors, magistrates, doctors—the circle of doctors with their fascinated eyes, who surround the hysteric, their bodies tensed to see the tensed body of the possessed woman” (Cixous

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19 In an early letter to Mina, Lucy had confided that Dr. Seward had been “reading” her face. Lucy then notes the difficulty in reading one’s own face: “Do you ever try to read your own face? I do, and I can tell you it is not a bad study, and gives you more trouble than you can well fancy...” (38-9).

20 In his well-known essay entitled “Medusa’s Head,” Freud explains that the “terror of castration...is linked to the sight of something,” the female genitals. Similarly, “the sight of the Medusa’s head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone,” but at the same time offers him “consolation...the stiffening reassures him” (212-13).
and Clément 10). But Dracula suggests that the inquisitors are not immune from the disease they are attempting to cure.

Hysteria circulates. Not just a problem for females, hysteria infects everyone from Van Helsing to Arthur Holmwood. Indeed, hysteria is a threat because it is contagious, because it is, in Diana Fuss' terms, a group event:

In the phenomenon of group hysteria, the hysterical is not merely the object of interested medical study, as in Charcot's theatrical demonstrations, but its subject as well. The hysterical is both a participant in the ensemble performance and a spectator of the performance of the other group members. Spectatorship actually constitutes the point of entry into the illness, blurring the line between medical surveillance and pathological performance, between healthy doctor and sick patient. (116)

By positing hysteria as a spectator sport, Fuss' argument suggests the possibility of an hysterical breakdown of subject/object and master/patient that, in emphasizing the mobility of the gaze, renders its association with the masculine: "The problem with identifying hysteria as either illness or remedy in relation to the social group is that the group is itself involved in the neurotic formation and is, in a very real sense, 'sick.' The difficulty in reading the politics of hysteria can therefore be attributed to one notable problem: strictly speaking, every hysterical formation is a group phenomenon. The psychological gain from the illness is not the hysterical's alone" (117-118). Thus, the hysterical's illness is an articulation of and a resistance to the social situation in which she is forced to live. If hysteria is a repudiation of the law, as Fuss suggests, then the
phenomenon of group hysteria has broad political implications: as “a clear act of resistance,” group hysteria “holds out the unsettling possibility of collective or even organized resistance” (118). Thus the pervasive hysteria in the text counteracts its seemingly conservative veneer, suggesting the subversive possibility of law itself as the site of excess.

It is the female detective, Mina Harker, who most successfully negotiates between hysteria and rationality, ultimately breaking the dichotomy between them. While Lucy is staked for her hysterical excesses, Jonathan suppresses the hysterical memory of his escape from Dracula’s Castle and Van Helsing “laughs and cries together, just as a woman does” (182), Mina rationally pieces together the disparate “clues” in Jonathan’s diary in order to transform both men from “impotence” (188) into “activity” (187); she reconstitutes masculine identities by a transfusion of her own discourse. While this text produces a “cure” for masculine hysteria, it also creates a realm in which the “sick” woman can translate her own illness, curing herself and her men.

A close reading of the text reveals that Mina not only generates, but also interprets her own hysterical discourse. Indeed, Mina writes her own prescription for

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21 Alison Case, for example, finds that Dracula is often read as a reactionary response to the threat of autonomous female sexuality posed by the arrival of the “New Woman” on the Victorian scene (224).
hysteria: “I have an idea,” she says, “I suppose it must have come in the night, and matured without my knowing it. He must hypnotize me before dawn, and then I shall be able to speak” (311). The enigmatic language released by hypnosis is implicitly linked to the reproductive shorthand which Mina uses to write her journal: “The answer came dreamily, but with intention; it was as though she were interpreting something. I have heard her using the same tone when reading her shorthand notes” (312)—hysteria is linked to modern bureaucratic technologies. Like vampirism, which arrives only after dark, the “cure” is also found after midnight; like hysteria, which is “elusive and enigmatic, resistant to the powers of masculine rationality” (Showalter 130), case histories of hysteria refuse traditionally linear, Aristotelian plot development. In “Dora’s Secrets, Freud’s Techniques,” Neil Hertz writes that it “required a vigilant effort, it would seem, to draw the line between the operations in the hysterical, which produce the text of her illness, and those in the analyst, which seek to interpret and dissolve that text, between the production of secrets and the development of techniques” (236). Mina works on the boundary between vampirism and normalcy, between hysterical and analyst, between body and mind. While her body graphically bears the red scar which links her to Dracula, her mind rationally discovers a cure for her “disease.” Mina combs through Van Helsing’s transcription of her hysterical narrative and translates her own words onto maps of
Transylvania. From this merging of psychic and geographic sites, Mina pieces
together her interpretation of the Count’s location:

I examined the map, and find that the river most suitable for the
Slovaks to have ascended is either the Pruth or the Sereth. I read in the
typescript that in my trance I heard cows to and water swirling level
with my ears and the creaking of wood. The Count in his box, then,
was on a river in an open boat—propelled probably either by oars or
poles, for the banks are near and it is working against stream. There
would be no such sound if floating down stream. (353)

While under hypnosis, Mina becomes the Count just as the Count became Jonathan
in the novel’s opening chapters. The slipperiness of subjectivity that led to Jonathan’s
illness—Jonathan became ill when he realized that the Count had solicited his suit—
now becomes the foundation for a cure. Interior and exterior, dream and reality are
indistinguishable. Paralleling Freud’s case histories, which convert “private"
knowledge into public discourse, Mina reveals the analysis of her hysteria in a memo,
an informal, though official communication. Most important, though, is the fact that
Mina produces, interprets and publishes her own analysis; Van Helsing functions as
scribe.

Kathleen Spencer argues that the most crucial event in Dracula occurs when
Mina types all of the documents of the case, since “only with a chronology does
narrative emerge” (220); and, to go a step further, only with a coherent narrative can psychic health be achieved. In Reading for the Plot, Peter Brooks writes:

There is in Freud’s case histories an underlying assumption that psychic health corresponds to a coherent narrative account of one’s life. As Steven Marcus notes in his discussion of the case history of Dora, “Human life is, ideally, a connected and coherent story, with all the details in explanatory place, and with everything (or as close to everything as is practically possible) accounted for, in its proper causal or other sequence, and inversely illness amounts at least in part to suffering from an incoherent story or an inadequate narrative account of oneself.” (282)

Dracula appears to fit this pattern: Mina successfully contains male hysteria and her own within a coherent narrative which frees Britain from the psychic taint introduced by Dracula. While critics such as Appleby argue that Van Helsing’s goal is to contain Dracula and Mina in a “finite text” (31), most readers find that Dracula’s passionate, androgynous desire has not been dispatched and destroyed at the end of the text with the Count’s death, nor has his hysterical, reproductive style been contained. Janet Malcolm’s rereading of Freud, which suggests that the equivalence between narrative closure and therapeutic benefit is not clear, provides a more fitting parallel for Dracula: “In Freud’s metaphor of wearing away, there is tacit recognition of the durability of neurosis and the modesty of the program of psychotherapy. As Freud

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21 Robin Appleby also notes that Dracula’s defeat “depends on his textualization in the compiled narrative” (22); Judith Halberstam argues that Dracula is a “threat to be diffused by discourse” (336).
realized that neurosis was the human condition—that the people who came to him for
treatment were only a little further along a continuum—he came to understand that
every analysis is a failure. It has to be. A ‘successful’ analysis would be monstrous”
(32). Similarly, Toril Moi argues that Freud “stress[es] that no one case history can
provide the answer to all the problems presented by hysteria: all case histories are in
this sense incomplete answers to the problem they set out to solve” (185).

Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen takes this critique of Freud’s hypothesis of narrative as
cure even further. In Remembering Anna O.: A Century of Mystification, he shows that
the idea of repression is itself the site of a myth, the myth at the center of Freud’s
supposed laws—“Ever since (and because of) Anna O.’s miraculous cure, forgetting has
ceased to be a simple lapse of memory and has become under various names—
‘dissociated consciousness,’ ‘the unconscious,’ ‘repression’—the supreme form of
remembering, and the very key to our identity as subjects” (5). The belief that we
need to name our evil, talk about it in order to be rid of it, is the basis of
psychotherapy, but also of our general belief in psychological healing. Borch-
Jacobsen’s book shows that relating memories to Breuer never got rid of Anna O.’s
symptoms: “But that hasn’t prevented this myth and its derivatives from perpetuating
themselves and proliferating in psychotherapeutic discourse.... Paradoxically enough,
the very myth that forms the basis of our modern belief in the redemptive value of recollection and narration has stubbornly resisted historicization” (10).

Dracula ends with a note written by Jonathan in which he laments the transformation of the “authentic” text into a “mass of typewriting” (400). Rather than providing the reader with a definite sense of closure, a “finite text,” Jonathan defines Dracula, as Freud defines Dora, as a fragment, a seemingly limitless, unending narrative. The birthday of Mina’s son memorializes Quincey Morris’ death, but also, significantly, the death of Dracula.23 Although the “whole body crumbled into dust and passed from out sight” (377), the body of the text has just been born and spreads into the world. In an age of mechanical reproduction, Dracula may have lost his aura, but his image still haunts us, reborn in the body of innumerable textual and cinematic reproductions. While the text suggests that character is confinable through narrative, the emphasis on hysteria posits a gap. Like the blue flame which keeps transforming, becoming anything or nothing, hysteria is constantly taking new shapes; the Count will never be fully accountable.

23 Like The Law and the Lady, Dracula posits a monstrosity, a sexual aberration that will seep into the next generation; in both texts, the son will bear his father’s guilt.
CHAPTER 5

"[T]HE FARDEST SPOT ON EARTH WHERE A WHITE WOMAN...[CAN] SAFELY PENETRATE": MEDICINE, COLONIALISM AND THE SINGLE WOMAN IN GRANT ALLEN'S HILDA WADE: A WOMAN WITH TENACITY OF PURPOSE (1900)

Tall, thin, erect with an ascetic profile not unlike Cardinal Manning's, [Dr. Sebastian] represented that abstract form of asceticism which consists in absolute self-sacrifice to a mental ideal, not that which consists in religious abnegation. Three years of travel in Africa had tanned his skin for life. His long white hair, straight and silvery as it fell, just curled in one wave-like inward sweep where it turned and rested on the stooping shoulders. His pale face was clean-shaven, save for a thin and wiry grizzled mustache, which cast into stronger relief the deep-set, hawk-like eyes and the acute, intense, intellectual features. In some respects, his countenance reminded me often of Dr. Martineau's; in others it recalled the knife-like edge, unturnable, of his great predecessor, Professor Owens.... Sebastian's stern, sharp face was above all things the face of a man absorbed and engrossed by one overpowering pursuit in life—the sacred thirst of knowledge, which had swallowed up his entire nature. (Allen 2)

In Grant Allen's Hilda Wade: A Woman with Tenacity of Purpose (1900), Count Dracula, the aristocratic "master," has been transformed into Dr. Sebastian, the
“master” scientist, the “greatest anatomist” of the century. As priest of the Victorian era, the scientist has “infected” his students, not with Dracula’s tainted blood, but with “the gospel of germs” so that his zeal infects his students like typhoid fever, creating “flaming apostles” (1-2). Descriptions of Sebastian mix excessive religious terminology with the language of disease to suggest that the world’s newest prophets, men of science, may be less than wholesome. His “hawk-like eyes” and “acute, intense, intellectual features” and generally “knife-like” appearance indicate that Sebastian embodies the piercing, predatory skills of rationality and analysis valorized by his scientific method. A surgeon in Sebastian’s training, for example, asks, “How could I preserve my precision and accuracy of hand if I were always bothered by sentimental considerations of the patient’s safety?” (21). Neither sentimental nor materialistic, Sebastian growls, “I have no time to waste on making money” (3), after an American entrepreneur suggests that he sell an invention. Allen’s novel presents the scientist’s obsession as narrow, blind and linear: “he went straight towards the End, looking neither to the right nor the left” (3).

Sebastian’s characteristics are reminiscent of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, who pierces the secrets of nature, bodily absorbed in his task. Yet while Shelley’s mad scientist worked tragically alone, Allen’s “Master” is surrounded by an adoring laboratory fan club who worship him and expect equal adoration from others. Dr.
Cumberledge, the novel’s narrator, is shattered by Hilda Wade’s lukewarm reception of the brilliant doctor: “I wanted her to exclaim, ‘I adore him! I worship him! He is glorious, wonderfull!’” (5). Recognizing the superficiality of Sebastian’s method, Wade rejects Cumberledge’s description of him as an “apostle of philanthropy.” Medicine, in her view, is science, not philanthropy, as doctors are more interested in improving their techniques and their understanding of anatomy than in curing patients. Wade’s perception of medicine’s ultimate inhumanity proves correct when Sebastian becomes incensed because one of his patients lives after he had predicted her death: “it was her duty to die. Her recovery is an insult to medical science” (29).

This long opening description of the text introduces many of the structuring themes of Hilda Wade. In particular, the novel critiques the scientific project that was, according to Allen’s metaphor, gaining a dangerously fundamentalist following. Given the current obscurity of this text, though, I will preface my analysis with a fairly detailed outline of the novel’s plot. Written in 1899, Allen’s novel presents a female detective wielding the powers of medicine and reason in order to vindicate publicly her father, Dr. Yorke-Bannerman, of a wrongful murder conviction. Master Sebastian, of the opening quote, is the true criminal. Sebastian’s ruthless pursuit of scientific advancement led him to administer a secret overdose of an experimental drug to one of Yorke-Bannerman’s patients. To prove her father’s innocence, Wade first
tracks Sebastian to a teaching hospital where she goes undercover as a nurse. When Sebastian discovers her true identity, he attempts to murder her by blood poisoning. She then runs away to Africa, pursued by both Sebastian and the narrator, Dr. Hubert Cumberledge, who has fallen in love with her. In a second attempt to murder Wade, Sebastian, as cult leader, incites a native uprising. He succeeds in slaughtering most of the Klaas family, Wade’s hosts, but Wade, Cumberledge and the Klaas baby escape.

From Africa, Cumberledge and Wade travel to India, where she becomes the traveling companion for a bored young woman, Lady Meadowcroft, whose husband is a railroad magnate. Sebastian secretly hires a guide to lead Wade and her party into Tibet where they are captured by a monastery of supposedly violent Buddhist monks. Wade saves their lives through her knowledge of Buddhist customs and her extensive photographs of Indian Buddhist temples and icons. On their return from Tibet, the party accidentally discovers a plague-weakened Sebastian, whose life Wade and Cumberledge save. Together, though not with Sebastian’s consent, the three then return to England; as they near the British shore, their ship capsizes and, at the moment before his death, Sebastian reveals Yorke-Bannerman’s innocence. Allen died before he had finished the novel and the final chapter was completed by his friend and neighbor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
The novel presents the "farthest" a woman can go on several levels; through the figure of the female detective, it critiques science, but also, through its representations of Rhodesia, India and Tibet, the novel both censures and reinforces contemporary views of late-Victorian imperialism. In *No Man's Land*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that three subtly interrelated themes structure late Victorian fiction: a preoccupation with colonized countries and imperial decline; a fascination with spiritualism; and an obsession not just with the so-called New Woman, but with striking new visions and re-visions of female power (26). Allen's adventure novel addresses all three. Focused on the corruption of the scientist without morals, the novel productively explores the contradictory, often antagonistic relationship of women to both medicine and imperialism at the turn-of-the-century. In exposing the inhumanity of "the pure man of science," *Hilda Wade* creates a distinction between male and female modes of reasoning—defined as "diagnosis and intuition"—and, in the process, implicitly uncovers the hierarchical relationship of surface and depth, a common theme in my analysis of the female detective. *Hilda Wade* critiques the limited, quantitative methodology of the distanced, objective scientist, working within a positivistic framework. In the colonies, the unethical scientist becomes uncontrollable, even depraved, parading as prophet, and corrupting the native, just as he has perverted his students in England.
Sebastian’s danger rests in his implicit participation in the Victorian attempt to create typologies of people. As Joan Copjec’s definition of the classical detective indicates, the “detective function” invents character, suggesting that “categories of being subsume being itself. As the Cartesian ‘I think’ is supposed to subsume the ‘I am,’ so the categories of people invented in the nineteenth century are supposed to subsume the actual people who came to be numbered in them” (171). The political implications of the erasure of individuals in the creation of quantitatively produced “kinds of people” became apparent in the search for racial types. In *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Laura Stoler argues that the heightened British interest in cataloguing the “peoples of India” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was part of the project of documentation that created ethnological knowledge in the service of colonial control (39). According to Stoler, discourses of sexuality, racial thinking, and rhetorics of nationalism have several things in common: “All hinge on visual markers of distinction that profess to—but only poorly index—the internal traits, psychological dispositions, and moral essence on which these theories of difference and social membership are based. The strength and weakness of such social taxonomies is that they are malleable, their criteria opaque and ill-defined” (134). While Sebastian is censured for his participation, as scientist, in the search for social taxonomies, Wade’s relationship to the project of typecasting is more complex. While working in
England, Wade generally, though not always, attempts to break the quantitative
procedure of statistically calculating “identity”; in Rhodesia and Tibet, though, she
participates in the search for racial types. As I suggested earlier, the novel’s
simultaneous critique and support of imperialism creates political confusion, as does
its representation of Wade as a paragon of independent agency on one hand, but a
supporter of imperialism on the other. *Hilda Wade* assesses family dynamics,
interrogating the relations of fathers and daughters by suggesting the daughter’s
possible seduction by her father’s dubious techniques: in the process of critiquing
Sebastian, does she become trapped in his suspect methodologies? In the final section
of this chapter, I will suggest that by creating friendship, rather than family, as the
ideal model for male-female and for scientific relationships, the novel attempts to
bypass this questionable identification between fathers and daughters.

i. “The Episode of the Patient who Disappointed Her Doctor”: Diagnoses, Intuitions and
   Inferences: Interrogating the Medical Man

   In his opening paragraph, Dr. Cumberledge, Wade’s love-struck suitor, argues,
   “Hilda Wade’s gift was so unique, so extraordinary, that I must illustrate it, I think,
   before I attempt to describe it. But first let me say a word of explanation about the
   Master” (1). Like Cumberledge, I have begun with the Master, but only as a model
against which to show Hilda Wade’s difference. This first episode of the novel, presenting Wade’s first days as a nurse in the clinic of the medical master, defines the scientific confrontation between Wade and Sebastian specifically, but, more broadly, grapples with the difference between masculine and feminine modes of knowledge, attempting to crack the dichotomy. The terms of the novel’s argument are immediately set in place as a confrontation is created between Wade and Sebastian as they assess the effects of lethodyne, an anesthetic recently discovered by Sebastian. Wade, Sebastian claims, is gifted with the “deepest feminine gift—intuition,” which contrasts with diagnosis, “the same endowment in its masculine embodiment” (3-4). In order to assess the differences between intuition and diagnosis, I will briefly consider etymologies, not to suggest that “origins” carry truth, but to investigate the divergent and, often contradictory, meanings that underwrite seemingly dichotomous terms.

“Intuition,” according to the Oxford American Dictionary, suggests a direct perception of truth, or fact, independent of any reasoning process. Its Latin root, intuit(us), originates in the idea of “gazing at” or “contemplating.” “Diagnosis,” on the other hand, suggests scientific determination, a description that classifies precisely, an analysis of the cause or nature of a problem, and is rooted in the Greek for “distinguishing.” According to Sebastian’s definition, women are positioned outside of reason; yet the association of “intuition” with the gaze and with contemplation
suggests a depth of knowledge, an inside vision, which the male mode of "diagnosis," a superficial classifying or codifying, lacks. Equally, "intuition" suggests an individual, personal method of understanding, while "diagnosis" connects to broad fields of knowledge, a circuit of thinkers working together to create a uniform view of the world. According to dictionary definitions, both modes lead to "truth" or "nature."

Sebastian’s cognitive categories accord with traditional nineteenth-century theories of the relationship between women and knowledge. In *The Descent of Man*, for example, Charles Darwin identifies intuition and perception as women’s strongest traits, but diagnoses them as “characteristics of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization” (326-27). Darwin’s argument is characteristic of attempts by the nineteenth-century scientific community to link women and “the lower races” through a discourse of science that provides a hierarchy of modes of knowledge. More problematic, as Elaine Showalter argues in *The Female Malady*, Darwin’s ideas were developed into biological explanations of women’s inferiority and passivity:

The theories of sexual difference adumbrated by Darwinian science were incorporated into a highly prescriptive late Victorian psychology of women. From the 1870s onward, this generation of doctors...presented a constellation of rigid views on gender roles. While the fundamental differences between the sexes were, of course, physical, Darwinian psychiatrists insisted that (in Maudsley’s words), ‘there is sex in mind as distinctly as there is sex in body.’ Clearly, they agreed female physiology marked women ‘for very different offices in life from those of men.’ But because the brain responded to the operation of the
reproductive organs (as it did to the other organs of the body), the mentalities of the sexes differed as well. (122-23)

Nineteenth-century American feminists such as Margaret Fuller attempted to reverse the hierarchy between men’s and women’s “mentalities” by praising women’s intuition as a unique source of knowledge complementary to reason. Fuller argues that women’s intuitive prowess enables them to “seize and delineate with unerring discrimination” life’s communal aspects (103). Allen’s text supports Fuller’s argument, suggesting that connection and community need to become recognized values of the scientific establishment; the lone genius, imagined in the character of Sebastian, is no longer an adequate model. Unfortunately, as feminist theorists such as Lorraine Code and Margaret Rossiter have pointed out, Fuller’s arguments fail to challenge the frequent moral arguments made by nineteenth-century scholars in their attempts to exclude women from science: “It [is] unseemly for a woman to expose her talents outside of the home, especially to a male audience, or to acknowledge, let alone enjoy, any compliments or recognition she might receive”; “members of the stereotypically delicate female sex might either be embarrassed at the scientific discussion of biological facts or divert stouthearted men from the serious pursuit of science” (Rossiter 74, 76). Again, Allen’s text challenges this argument by suggesting that women, in particular English women, “should flinch at nothing” (221).
Following the gruesome murders of her host family in Rhodesia, Wade returns to the house to retrieve food, arguing, “Have I not seen already every aspect of death at Nathaniel’s [Sebastian’s teaching hospital]?” And in she went, undaunted, to that chamber of horrors” (221). Later, after a group of hostile Tibetan Buddhists have threatened to cut their throats, Wade and her companion, Lady Meadowcroft, withstand “these trying circumstances” in a manner “thoroughly worthy of two English ladies. They stood erect, looking as though all Tibet might come, and they would smile at it scornfully” (311). As I will argue later in this chapter, the culture of imperialism has altered the gendering of the English lady. No longer can she passively guard the home; she must actively assist the Englishman in defense of empire.

In order to create new space for colonial women, the novel also names a new mode of knowledge, wedged between diagnosis and intuition—“inference.” Indeed, according to Sebastian, Wade’s superior powers of inference make her his epistemological equal, a rivalry so pronounced that Sebastian wants to eliminate her: “That young woman knows too much! We shall have to suppress her, Cumberledge” (11). Standing at the border of intuition and diagnosis, “inference,” too, suggests a conclusion drawn by reasoning, yet inference also contains an unknown element of guess, of speculation or surmise. The Latin root means “to bring,” “carry” or “bear.” Placed on the border, as the term that breaks the dualities created by the male
scientist, "inference" carries reason into the realm of imagination, introducing a hidden element—a guess, a surmise, a trace of the unknown—into all ratiocination. According to Wade, this excessive element is as important to scientific progress as the more linear modes of thought practiced by Sebastian’s entourage. Allen’s text argues that scientists will be unable to grasp the complexities of human behavior unless they exceed the limits of positivism.

While Sebastian creates a broad distinction between intuition and diagnosis, positioning inference in the middle, he attempts further to distinguish male and female cognitive capacities, arguing that women recognize “passing emotions,” reading shadows on male faces, catches in male breaths and movements of male hands, in order to assess “how their words or deeds are affecting us” (4). Women, it appears, comprehend fleeting distinctions, and are aware of the moment, especially if that moment involves the men around them—women’s knowledge relates primarily to men. Furthermore, women cannot see beneath these passing gestures to understand underlying character: women understand “[n]ot what Mrs. Jones is in herself, but what Mrs. Jones is now thinking and feeling” (4). Women’s knowledge, according to Sebastian, is local, context-based, tied to a distinct purpose. Men, on the other hand, are blessed with the ability to read definite facts, to interpret signs, symptoms and observed data. While men, especially medical men, guide life by “definite facts—by
signs, by symptoms, by observed data,” most women detect “passing emotion” but don’t recognize “underlying character.” According to Sebastian, men understand the permanent, the unchanging, the obvious, while women perceive the fleeting, the subtle, the emotional. Sebastian’s rigid view of subjectivity suggests the limits of his modes of thinking—in his opinion, identity is fixed, something that “is,” that can be apprehended, diagnosed and set aside. The problems involved in this fixed way of thinking become apparent when the novel moves into the colonies—in the unknown realms of empire, localized, context-based knowledges become a necessary tool of survival.

The differences between the cognitive methods of Wade and Sebastian are clearly represented in their differing analyses of the effects of lethodyne on the nervous system. While Sebastian hypothesizes that lethodyne’s variable effects depend on diet, with carnivores thriving and herbivores dying when exposed to it, Wade suggests another explanation. Using the analogy of Indian hemp, Wade argues that the drug’s effects depend on differences in temperament: “As usual Wade’s was the truer description. It went deeper” (19). Why does Wade’s description go deeper? While Sebastian creates a simple dichotomy between carnivore and herbivore, Wade theorizes a range of knowledge that accounts for individual differences. Since temperament cannot be accurately assessed, Wade’s method introduces an element of
chance into Sebastian's clear-cut scientific method. For her mode of thinking, there is no sure thing, no definite diagnosis—"temperament" and "character" exist at the limits of reason: as suggested by the definition of "inference," a crack is always present, a guess, a trace. Sebastian's search for unchanging identities, a fixed view of character, distinguishes him as a surface thinker, creating superficial dichotomies, but unable to perceive the complexities and fluidity of identity. Sebastian, Wade claims, is "a man of science," while she is a "psychologist" (70). In linking herself with psychology, Wade arms herself against Sebastian's attempts to discredit her knowledge, especially her insights into his own character, by labeling her "a lynx-eyed detective" (6) and "hysteric" (164). As with Dracula and The Law and the Lady, the female detective, whose knowledge exceeds the limits of rationality and whose analyses do not result in "definitive" or "final" answers, is linked with the hysterical. Unlike its predecessors, though, this novel emphasizes the politics of hysteria when Wade argues that "hysteria is always an easy stone to fling at an injured woman who asks for justice" (164), and Cumberledge affirms that Wade's insights are neither "uncanny" nor "weird," but "mere insights on character."

As "scientist," Sebastian is a prototypical positivist, analyzing behavior from a quantitative stance and arguing that only behaviors amenable to statistical analysis are worthy of attention. Thus, Sebastian doesn't take the consciousness of his subjects
into account. Any method leading to the advancement of science is deemed acceptable by Sebastian’s scientific ethic. Describing Poe’s master detective, Dupin, Jon Thompson emphasizes that the power of analysis too easily slides into an “instrument of alienation,” especially when it is wielded with “Olympian detachment” and complete isolation from the larger human community (50). While Sebastian presides over a community of medical professionals, his detachment from what he calls the “absurd squeamishness” (342) of morality or compassion equals Dupin’s. As attested by his repeated attempts on Wade’s life, or his careless destruction of the Klaases, or his ruthless betrayal of his partner and closest scientific rival, Yorke-Bannerman, Sebastian cares nothing about human life or about friendship; instead, his “true love” is the “advancement” of science, and anything, or anyone, that impedes that progress is expendable. Lawrence Rothfield writes that Conan Doyle links Holmes’ method with a range of disciplinary parasciences that arise in the 1880s and 1890s. In particular, he notes the growing distinction in clinical medicine between symptoms and signs, which allows doctors to “forget the patient in his symptoms” (141). In the bureaucratic tradition of capitalism, Sebastian, too, treats his patients as anonymous numbers, a reification of bodies that, in this novel, dangerously transfers to both
Africa and India. Allen critiques this reification of the body, suggesting the need for a more holistic approach to medicine.

While the doctors in Sebastian's medical establishment claim that "sentimental considerations of the patient's safety" (21) impede their precision or accuracy, Wade argues for the vast moral differences between calling a patient "Isabel" rather than "Number 14." Implicating his class bias, Sebastian is also amazed that Wade allows a patient who is "a tobacco-trimmer by trade," (23) to call her by her first name. The personalized, local, class-defiant, unreproducible nature of Wade's insights defies Sebastian's scientific method so that he refuses to recognize Wade's work as a complement to medical science: her profession is neither nursing—"It is very nice in its way...but...it is not nursing" (24)—nor science—"nobody can be trusted to say when it may be used—except Nurse Wade—which is not science" (30). Like Florence Nightingale, whose conceptualization of nursing "ultimately challenged the basis of medical men's power—the right to define who was a patient" (Poovey 166), Hilda Wade redefines the roles of doctors, nurses and scientists in the alleviation of suffering.

Positing that the doctor's quantitative methods kill as often as they cure, Wade theorizes "healing" as based on a holistic, psychological understanding of human behavior. While Cumberledge admires Sebastian's "coolness and calmness" (14),

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1 Hilda Wade's critique of statistics as a disciplinary procedure continues Dracula's representation of categorization as "life-eating" (for example, Renfield, the zoophageous number-cruncher).
Wade critiques these traits as "cruelty," arguing the difference between philanthropy and science, the alleviation of pain and the truth of the body (15). The potential of relationships, of subtle psychological forces, to cure physical ailments is evident from the text's initial episode. When Isabel lives, largely through Wade's efforts to locate Arthur, her fiancé, Sebastian firmly states, "it was her duty to die.... Her recovery is an insult to medical science" (29-30). Unable to explain rationally either the imprecision of psychology or the murky interconnection of mind and body, medical science refuses to legitimate "sentiment" as curative. But precision and accuracy cannot soothe; Isabel's recovery, as Wade reminds Cumberledge, was equally dependent upon his "skill" and her "care" (22). 3

In his analysis of Sherlock Holmesian logic, Rothfield argues that Watson's point of view is aligned with "a now enfeebled realism"; his discourse is characterized by qualitative, indefinite descriptions, "a type," "a body whose traits somehow convey the metaphysical essence or peculiarity of a person" (134). While Watson reads all indications or marks "together" to create a composite picture, Holmes views the body as "a corpus of isolated, discrete elements, a congeries or consilience of particulars" 2

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2 This idea is also reminiscent of Dracula's critique of science. Van Helsing argues that "it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain" (191).

3 Indeed, the dichotomy Wade creates between skill and care is not completely accurate; in every situation, she is as skillful as Cumberledge.
(135); like Sebastian, Holmes creates a reified body. Wade, unlike Watson or Holmes, reasons from a psychological perspective, which she defines as an anti-materialist stance. Critiquing the police, Wade characterizes them as “bungling materialists” who require a “clue.” As she wonders, “What need of a clue if you can interpret character?” (122). Her approach coincides with the hypotheses of feminist philosophers such as Lorraine Code, who suggests that modes of knowledge “based on a commitment to knowing people as well as possible is a worthy epistemological paradigm” (1991, 41).

Introducing a place for “guess” or for “surmise,” “inference” is linked to the gap “character” creates in psychology’s seemingly scientific project. Indeed, in Allen’s novel, the psychologist is more closely allied with novelist than with scientist, a connection the novel repeatedly affirms. Wade has “something of the novelist’s gift” in that she tries to “throw herself into the person of others and feel how their character will compel them to act in each set of circumstances” (122). By coupling Wade with the novelist, Allen’s text opposes nineteenth-century theories of literature that attempted to refigure the novelist as an aspiring scientist. Arthur Waugh’s 1894 essay, “Reticence in Literature,” for example, demonstrates the wide applicability of

* While Elizabeth Langland argues in Nobody’s Angels that Florence Nightingale patterned the nursing profession on a fulfillment of bourgeois managerial ideals (49), Allen presents this exceptional nurse as more than an efficient manager; her strength lies equally in her bedside manner.
scientific terminology in creating hierarchical, gendered dichotomies that would effectively ban women, not just from science, but from a variety of professions:

There is all the difference in the world between drawing life as we find it, sternly and relentlessly, surveying it all the while from outside with the calm, unflinching gaze of criticism, and, on the other hand, yielding ourselves to the warmth and colour of its excesses, losing our judgement in the ecstasies of the joy of life, becoming, in a word, effeminate.... The man lives by ideas; the woman by sensations; and while the man remains an artist so long as he holds true to his view of life, the woman becomes one as soon as she throws off the habit of her sex, and learns to rely on her judgement, and not on her sense. It is only when we regard life with the untrammelled view of the impartial spectator, when we pierce below the substance for its animating idea, that we approximate the artistic temperament. It is unmanly, it is effeminate, it is inartistic to gloat over pleasure, to revel in immoderation, to become passion's slave; and literature demands as much calmness of judgement, as much reticence, as life itself. (Ardis 48)

Waugh's representation of the artist as "impartial spectator," surveying the world "sternly and relentlessly" from the outside, in order to "pierce below the surface" echoes the language Allen's text uses to represent the master scientist. Waugh is worried that the novel as a literary form will "melt into mere report, mere journalistic detail" if novelists neglect the "tutelage of art and beauty" in favor of controversy. The emphasis upon the damning element of "journalistic detail," in particular, places Allen's novel in jeopardy; its critique of both the domestic woman and the colonialist project places its author on the side of controversy rather than "art and beauty." Echoing the distinction of intuition and diagnosis, Waugh's critique of
“mere journalist detail” emphasizes the connection of the feminine with the micrological, with the detail, which is also the province of the detective. How much is Allen’s rejection of the theory of “genius” an implicit response to his own marginalized—“effeminate” in Waugh’s terms—position?

While in *David Copperfield*, the face of Rosa Dartle could be read as a “deep text,” revealing the secrets of the body’s interior, in *Hilda Wade*, this trope has been replaced by a reading of character. Although Wade reads below the surface, in analyzing Cecil Holsworthy’s deceptive fiancée for example, her ability to detect the femme fatale is not based solely upon reading faces, nor is it based upon “impartial spectatorship.” Indeed, *Hilda Wade* suggests that impartial spectatorship combined with grand theorizing can never provide a “deep” interpretation. Wade, instead, approaches her cases with the method of the participant observer, attending closely to detail. For example, in detecting the fake fiancée, Wade supplements her analysis of Miss Montague’s photograph with a drive to Scarborough so she can “observe” her for a week. Not only does she suggest that mind and body are interconnected, she also implicitly advocates the method of living with the natives, interacting, rather than remaining separate. Because “character” is multi-dimensional, it isn’t easily defined: there is always a gap, an unexpected moment. The increasing sophistication of photography creates a danger, a veil between the “deep” text of the woman and the
misleading photographic image: Miss Montague’s face was "almost babyish in its transparency; but...the innocence has all been put into it by the photographer.... The thing is not real. It has been atrociously edited. Part is nature’s; part, the photographer’s; part, even possibly paint and powder" (50). Because of this technologically induced deception, Wade cannot be certain of the accuracy of the visual realm. Thus, Wade’s understanding of character is not based solely on interpretation of faces; instead, it comes through interaction, through dialogue with the woman. Like psychoanalysis, this novel is suspicious of the realm of the visible, arguing that understanding is not achieved through impartial observation, but through discourse. Labeled “the talking cure,” Freud’s work, as theorists have noted, moved philosophers from the “look” to the “voice” (Doane 44). As Hilda Wade argues, the visible can no longer guarantee epistemological truth as modern photography creates not the real, but merely “what might have been” (50). Capable of manipulating her personality and her appearance, Miss Montague reveals the potential fluidity of identity; “innocent” and “vixen,” she is both and neither.

By creating a distinction between the “man of science” and the “psychologist,” Hilda Wade argues that the knowledge of experience confers authority that purely quantitative data cannot, especially when that data is applied to human beings. Because both Sebastian and Arthur Waugh connect women’s experience with
emotion, with the individual, with the unsystematic, they regard it as inadequate when compared with the “ruthless,” “penetrating,” generalizable and experimentally testable results of scientific experimentation. Wade critiques this view of the cadaverizing male gaze, which objectifies, reifies the human body. In the place of the exterior, impartial gaze of pure diagnosis, or the subjective, mystical realm of intuition, the novel valorizes inference, a boundary-breaking combination of reason and speculation. The divisiveness at the core of traditional epistemological thinking, manifested in dichotomies such as experience/knowledge or emotion/rationality or diagnosis/intuition, must be overcome. The notion of character, as composed of a profusion of differences, blending and interacting, introduces an element of the unknown into the realm of the scientific. In critiquing the gender dichotomies of science, which always label the ruthless, the penetrating, as male, Allen’s novel argues for a scientific methodology that will combine scientific knowledge with humanitarian, moral values. Like feminist philosopher Lorraine Code, the novel argues for “epistemic responsibility” to guard against the reductivism characteristic of much scientific knowledge (“Credibility” 82-83). This responsible approach, though

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5 Hilda does not always practice this more open-ended approach to character, as is evident in her analysis of Mrs. LeGeyt. In presenting this overly efficient woman as an “angel abroad, devil at home” (88), Hilda creates Mrs. LeGeyt as an example of “a type of woman who gets assaulted” (81). According to Hilda Wade, women who get assaulted are almost always “notable housewives” who pride their management skills (91).
often coded as “feminine,” is not essentially related to women. In freeing
Cumberledge from Sebastian’s quantitative mode, Wade effectively breaks gender
boundaries: strong medicine does not simply bombard bacteria, it cares for people.
Compassion, neither a “masculine” nor a “feminine” trait, simply creates deeper
healing.

ii. *Imperialism and Science: Demystifying the Cult of the Male Scientist*

Sebastian’s lack of epistemic responsibility endangers women and the lower
classes in England, but his ruthlessness becomes even more menacing as the novel
moves from the security of domestic space and into the less policed cultures of
Rhodesia and India. After Sebastian attempts to kill her in England, Wade leaves for
Africa and from there, after a second attempt on her life, to India. While Allen’s
novel suggests that the intelligent woman will never be free from the scientist who
fears exposure by her acute inferences, he equally critiques the cruelty of the
supposedly scientific underpinnings of the colonialist project. *Hilda Wade* argues that
the technology of colonial rule and the construction of certain kinds of scientific
knowledge are “cut from the same cultural cloth” (Comaroff 216). The novel critiques
Sebastian’s brand of scientific objectivity, which views his human subjects as objects,
or in the case of the Matabele, as animals, “swarming hordes”; which glorifies the
autonomous individual thinker as genius; which capitalizes on metaphors of vision and the penetrating eye in order to distance the scientist from his object of study; and which results in the inhumanity of the imperialist project.

As replacement for Sebastian, Allen advocates the female detective. An example of a new model humanist-scientist, nurse and amateur anthropologist, Wade rehumanizes the methodology of the medical man at home and abroad. But Allen’s text also theorizes the complex interactions of the Western woman in imperialist culture; although critiquing the brutality of the scientist, Wade plays on the edge of his system of classification and diagnosis. How is Wade’s belief in character, in psychology, enacted in the colonies? Does she recognize the multiple identities of the colonized? What role do women play within the imperialist project?

As Sebastian noted, he and Wade think in similar ways. Often Wade’s methods verge on the ruthlessness which she attributes to Sebastian, a connection she makes clear when she argues, “like Sebastian himself, I am the slave of my Purpose” (167). While she claims that Sebastian pursues science “ruthlessly, cruelly, unscrupulously” (141) and that the advancement of science is his “religion” (142), she also has a plan, redeeming her father’s name, “to which I have resolved to sacrifice everything” (144). Wade refuses to marry, distancing herself, like Sebastian, from the values of home and family, until she has “cleared her father’s memory” (202); the
misdeeds of the medical man have robbed her of her true father, of her potential husband (Wade refuses to let Cumberledge interfere with her “object in life” (190)) and of a home (“I have no abiding city anywhere till my Purpose is fulfilled” (204)). The happiness and future position in middle-class culture of both Cumberledge and Wade depend on Sebastian; the pure man of science is a menace to the happy family. He must be rehabilitated in order for Wade and Cumberledge to assume their proper positions as British citizens. Traveling to Rhodesia, “the farthest spot on earth where a white woman just now could safely penetrate” (204), Wade must, in the terms of this text, depose the ruthless, fake father whose violence threatens to infect the young men of England, and herself become the partner to the newly “benevolent” imperial Englishman. The female detective must purify the tainted image of British imperialism, replacing it with a domestic, humanitarian reflection of herself.

Interestingly, this text does not create that transition by erecting a “maternal imperialist,” but, instead, by presenting the proper female colonizer as friend, mentor and daughter.

*See, for example, Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance, edited by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel.
a. "The Episode of the European with the Kaffir Heart": *Travels in Rhodesia*

Reminding Cumberledge that the world was becoming a "global village," Wade states, "nowadays, really, one is never safe from intrusion anywhere" (204). That by 1899 British imperialism has been recognized as a destructive, violent force is also apparent within the logic of this novel. The white man of science is implicated in colonialism's most blatant cruelty. After arriving in Rhodesia, Wade lodges with the family of Mr. Jan Willem Klaas, a Boer farmer, and provides lessons to children "who would otherwise remain ignorant" (205). Cumberledge soon finds Wade and also resides with the Klaases where he becomes the "constant playmate" (214) of the Klaas' 3-year-old daughter, Sannie. While he dislikes the "unfinished," "crude and ugly" "rawness" of this "new country"—"A country with a future is very well in its way; but I am quite Ibsenish in my preference for a country with a past" (264)—Cumberledge is impressed with the "pretty little evidence of fatherly feeling" (212) of Oom Jan Willem for his daughters and of the general communal spirit of the colonists. When the Matabele slaughter the Klaas family the conservative values of the novel become apparent. In her essay, "Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home," Rosemary George argues that "colonizer novels" use representations of the Englishwoman to buttress imperial values by, overtly, stressing women's domesticating role as managers of "base camp" and, covertly, cautioning that women's safety "necessitates" the violent
repression of the colonized people (103). Women, with authorial approval, see the men's work of quelling enemies of the empire as crucial. *Hilda Wade* partially supports George's theory; in the scene of the Matabele revolt, Wade becomes maternal, Cumberledge violent. When Cumberledge insists that she abandon the Klaas child in order to save herself, Wade asserts that maternal values outweigh personal safety: "you ask a woman to save her life by abandoning a baby?" (224). Exceeding George's theory, Wade not only manages "base camp," but valiantly saves the Klaas baby from slaughter, even though her own life is endangered. Equally, the massacres allow Cumberledge to prove his true masculinity. Though naming himself, unfashionably, "a man of peace," Cumberledge argues that in a "conflict of race we must back our own colour" (235). Though he recognizes that the native anger is justified because "we had stolen their country," Cumberledge affirms that "for the sake of every woman and child in Salisbury, and in all Rhodesia, I was bound to bear my part in restoring order" (235). Wade wouldn't have it any other way. Indeed, she worries that Cumberledge will waste time tending the wounded, rather than joining the posse of white men fending off the Matabele: "I could not love you so much if I did not see you ready to play the man at such a crisis" (240), Wade declares. Wade's desire that Cumberledge "play" the man, suggests her support of violence in the preservation of colonialism, and also reemphasizes her belief that gender is not stable-
at least not for the colonizer—but performative, context-driven. The incident also allows Wade to underscore the heroism of the Englishwoman—“in works of necessity a woman, I think, should flinch at nothing” (221).

Thus, the colonial experience affirms outwardly colliding roles for the imperial woman: Wade is both maternal and militaristic. In this respect, the novel imitates the representations of Florence Nightingale as nurse-warrior delineated by Mary Poovey. According to Poovey, domestic commentaries about Nightingale’s work in the Crimea consolidated two seemingly conflicting views of patriotic service—the mother (self-effacing, nurturing, gentle, kind) and the military hero (resolute, fearless and strong-willed) (169)—implying that the “domestic ideal always contained an aggressive component” (170). While Nightingale was construed as magical, a goddess, in order to construct her “power as magic or even divine, it removed this woman not only from her mortality, but also from competition with medical men” (172), the narrator of Wade’s adventures is careful to distance Wade from association with “the uncanny,” “the supernatural” or “the divine” so that she, unlike Nightingale, can be placed in direct competition with the medical establishment. During the late nineteenth century, when Empire had become the driving force of the British economy, it became necessary to create a more expansive role for women, so they could become partners in the imperial project.
Rosemary George theorizes that in most novels of empire, “only ‘the native’ needs restraint” (105). In *Hilda Wade*, the white scientist needs containment.

Following the Klaas massacres, the white villagers immediately argue that “there’s a white man at the bottom of all this trouble” (231). Indeed, Sebastian has incited a mutiny simply to destroy Wade. Even at this point, Cumberledge maintains “a sort of lingering respect for Sebastian” (232) so that Wade must once again explain his methods: “To Sebastian, the End is all; the Means are unessential. Who wills the End, wills the Means; that is the sum and substance of his philosophy of life. From first to last, he has always acted up to it” (232). More specifically, Sebastian has plotted the destruction of the intelligent white woman by pitting her against the Matabele man, promising in the process to restore land stolen by white settlers to the Matabele.

Colebrook, a Rhodesian colonist, interprets the Matabele:

Said he had a white skin, but his heart was a kaffir’s. Great induna; leader of many impis. Prophet, wise weather doctor! Friends of old Moselekatse’s. Destroy the white men from over the big water; restore the land to the Matabele. Kill all in Salisbury, especially the white women. Witches—all witches. They give charms to the men: cook lions’ hearts for men; make them brave with love-drinks.... White witches, every one. The young ones worst. (251)

Having spent three years in South Africa, Sebastian knows the language, and, as a scientist, will “draw them flattering pictures of a new Matabele empire about to arise under a new chief, too strong for these gold-grubbing, diamond-hunting mobs from
over seas to meddle with” (240). Though Sebastian imposes a distinction between the ruthless capitalist invasion of Africa and the philanthropic function of the new medicine man, the novel undermines this dichotomy, representing the ruthlessness of the scientific invasion; scientists have used native bodies as “raw material” to fuel their experiments as savagely as capitalists have exploited native land. Indeed, the scientist who knows the language and has “lived with the natives” to learn their culture becomes the most dangerous to the Matabele. Sebastian’s influence incites the Matabele revolt, transforming the natives into animals, into “[h]ordes of black human ants” and a “palpitating turmoil of savages” who spring from the ground by “magic” (254-55).

Suggesting that the scientist with the most knowledge of native culture threatens what culture most, the novel implicitly critiques the growing prestige of anthropology. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), Bronislaw Malinowski celebrates the beginning of professional, scientific ethnography: “The time when we could tolerate accounts presenting us the native as a distorted, childish caricature of a human being are gone. This picture is false, and like many other falsehoods, it has been killed by Science” (11). While Malinowski suggests that by living with the natives and speaking their language, the scientist has “evoke[d] the real spirit of the natives, the true picture of tribal life,” Allen’s text underscores the complicity of the
project of scientific objectification in the cruel, savage process of colonization. In *Victorian Anthropology*, George Stocking critiques the supposed humanitarian impulse of nineteenth-century anthropology, arguing that by the end of the century, humanitarian and intellectual approaches to the study of humanity had become disengaged, and the goal of scientific understanding had displaced that of “protecting the defenseless, and promoting the advancement of uncivilized tribes” (Stocking 242). In 1842, for example, the Aborigines Protection Society, by revising its mission statement, announced its belief that to “record the history” of the natives was their best protection. Linked to anthropology, the approach of the earliest nineteenth-century anthropologists involved labeling and categorizing “human subjects,” in order to diagnose their similarities and differences from “civilized” cultures. In the process, according to Stocking, the complexity and integrity of native cultures was “fragmented into discrete material and behavioral ‘elements’” (Stocking 273). Both medicine and anthropology consolidated the nineteenth-century attempt to fragment, dehumanize and objectify the human body. In rejecting Sebastian’s positivism, Wade implicitly critiques the scientist’s use of quantitative methods that result in the reification of the bodies of women, the lower class, and the “native.”

To create a pure space for the practice of his science, Sebastian needs to rid the country not only of natives, but of white women, especially women like Wade who
are involved in the project of revising definitions of the medical practitioner; as Cumberledge tells her, Sebastian will kill everyone in Rhodesia simply to “prevent your attempting a revision” (242) or of bringing “dishonour upon a name which has stood for something in science” (381). The sight of Tant Mettie’s dead body, “lying there in its red horror” (234), in particular, reveals Sebastian’s involvement in the Matabele uprising.7 Seeing the woman’s dead body, Wade “felt it must be he” (234); the crimes of the man of science play themselves out primarily on the bodies of women, the lower classes, the Matabele natives.8 Just as he created an antagonism between Wade and the white doctors in England by labeling her “hysterical,” Sebastian incites the Matabele to kill her, and all other white women, by branding them “witches” (263). As the above quote reveals, the white woman has become a witch with the power to charm British men out of subservience to Sebastian’s charisma. Cumberledge argues that Sebastian “has the air of a prophet and prophets always stir the negro” (240). Of course, as we saw earlier, prophets also stir aspiring young scientists; part of Wade’s goal is to break Cumberledge of his hero-worship of Sebastian’s ruthlessness, while placing herself in the gap. When Wade asks if Sebastian

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7 Medical men were perceived as dangerous to women. Judith Walkowitz argues that this fear reached a high point with Jack the Ripper, who was thought to be a “medical maniac” researching the “mysteries” of the “female sex” (209).

8 Male Matabele–Allen does not seem to have imagined any native women, in Africa or in the later India episodes.
could “persuade these angry black men to accept his guidance?,” Cumberledge replies: “He thrilled me through, myself, with his electric personality, so that it took me six years—and your aid—to find him out at last. His very abstractness tells. Why, even in this war, you may be sure, he will be making notes all the time on the healing of wounds in tropical climates, contrasting the African with the European” (239-40). Thus, Wade’s civilizing mission involves curing Cumberledge of his “electric,” homoerotic capture in Sebastian’s net so that he can assume a properly domestic role.9

This scene separates Allen’s novel from Doyle’s Holmes stories. As Jon Thompson has argued, Doyle’s fiction “ratified the principles and ideology of an imperial, patriarchal Britain” (75) by marginalizing subjects capable of calling into question the narrow empirical ideology by which Holmes lives, by refusing to question its method or the causes of crime, and by avoiding any overt considerations of social questions. Indeed, according to Thompson, by giving a human face to the abstract image of science and, conversely, a monstrous face to the native,10 Doyle’s reworking of the ideology of empire in a popular form helped produce a comforting

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9 Similar to Ann Cvetkovich’s argument that the detective novel allows Robert Audley to assume a masculine, heterosexual position in Lady Audley’s Secret. But Audley discovers his identity by investigating female sexuality, while Cumberledge finds courage through the colonial encounter. The difference is probably accounted for by the 30 year difference in time frames; by end of the century, the problems of empire had more fully penetrated the British consciousness.

10 In “The Sign of Four,” Tonga is presented as “a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair...” (Doyle 177).
and reassuring image of society untroubled by sexual, economic or social pressures.

Allen challenges this dichotomy by conflating the faces of the scientist and the criminal; after the massacres. Cumberledge writes: “I happened to raise my head, and saw, to my great surprise...a haggard white face peering in at us through the window. It peered round a corner, stealthily.... The long and wiry grizzled mustache, the deep-set, hawk-like eyes, the acute, intense, intellectual features, all were very familiar” (231). The shadowy medical man has become similar to the criminal figure of Jack the Ripper depicted at Madame Tussaud’s, a disappearing shadow, whose “signature” is the mutilated body of a woman (Walkowitz 2).

While Hilda Wade’s ability to complement diagnosis with dialogue in the detection of European “texts” created a complex notion of character, one that opened a gap for individual difference, her relationship to the Matabele and, in the next section the Tibetan Buddhists, displays a more rigid adherence to surfaces and to the process of diagnosis in the creation of objectifying categories. While Allen’s text is not populated simply and dichotomously by “violent savages” and “innocent white settlers,” it never provides a close-up of the black man. Wade’s interest in broadening the definition of the English character devolves into a simplistic attempt to distinguish “types” of Matabele inhabiting the Rhodesia landscape. Thus, she learns to differentiate “friendlies” from “savages” or to note the “well-educated black man from
Cape Town.” Though the novel recognizes the grievances of the Matabele as a whole, the text never recognizes the complexity of native identities. Thus, the novel’s “psychological turn” does not seem to translate into the colonialist context. By taking Wade to Africa and India, the novel questions the ability of the colonizer to read the face of the colonized—does the native face, analogous to the domestic, reveal a “deep text”? Not in this novel. Through surface observation, Wade distinguishes native “types.” In fact, the novel warns against the interpenetration of cultures: relationship proves fatal. Sebastian, the “European with the Kaffir Heart,” the scientist who claims to “know” the native, who speaks the language, who has “penetrated” most deeply into “the heart of darkness,” creates the largest wound, objectifying the natives as pawns in his plan to kill Wade.

b. The Episode of the Guide Who Knew the Country: Travels in India

While Wade’s inferential skills provided a useful antidote to the rational, quantitative approach of medical science in England, in Africa her inferences serve a much more nefarious purpose: a search for native “types.” Fluid, non-scientific notions of identity become problematic, according to Michael Banton, when they became linked to the nineteenth-century project of cataloguing racial typologies: “the notion of type was a convenient one because it was not tied to any particular classificatory level in zoology, so that it was easy to refer to the physical types of
characteristic or particular nations, to 'types of cranial conformation,' or to say that a skull 'approximates to the Negro type' without having to establish just what that type was" (31). Both linked and separated, the "lynx" eyes of the female detective and the "hawk-like" eyes of Dr. Sebastian both seem to participate in the project of cataloguing people—Englishwoman and Englishman, colonized, colonizer. As the novel moves out of Africa and into India, it focuses, through the metaphor of photography, on the gaze of the female detective, questioning her dissecting and cadaverizing potential. Does Wade's interest in photography simply mimic the scientist's "absolute eye" or does she wield her visual powers differently?

While traveling through India, Wade becomes prey, equally, "to the fashionable vice of amateur photography" and the "craze of Buddhism" (301), both hobbies that continue to play on the difference between the visible/invisible and the relationship of surfaces/depths. As Wade, Cumberledge and Lady Meadowcroft travel through the Himalayas, they spend days taking and developing pictures and nights arranging and collating them. Through her photographic project, Wade plans to "solve all the abstruse problems of the Buddhist religion": "The objects that everywhere particularly attracted her were the old Buddhist temples and tombs and sculptures with which India is studded. Of these she had taken some hundreds of views, all printed by herself with the greatest care and precision. But in India, after all,
Buddhism is a dead creed” (301-2). According to Elizabeth Edwards, the last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed an increase in popular interest in photography, especially following the public exhibition of the photographs of the Cambridge Torres Expedition in 1898 (4). While on the surface, photography had, in the mid nineteenth century, appeared to be an ideologically neutral tourist activity, by the end of the 1890s, it attained its current function as a purveyor of mass communication and manipulation. Or, as some theorists have argued, a predatory weapon. Susan Sontag argues that photography not only “exposes” other cultures, but that it “aims,” “loads” and “shoots.” Foucault implicitly links photography and medicine, arguing that nineteenth-century medicine was dominated by “that absolute eye that cadaverizes life and rediscovers in the corpse the frail, broken nerve of life” (Pinney 80). In connecting photography and violence, even death, these theorists suggest photography’s ability to transform subjects into objects, to define, catalog and collate them. Photography, symbolic of the colonial relationship, represented the technological superiority of European culture, dedicated to the delineation and control of the physical world, as opposed to a less technologically advanced non-European, viewed as the “childhood of mankind.” The photographic image also allows the European scientist to present the racial type, delineated by Banton, as an observable reality.
By assuming the “absolute eye” through the lens of her camera, is Wade engaging Sebastian’s predatory relationship to the colonial Other? Does Wade’s attempt to capture India, to “solve all the abstruse problems of Buddhism” by photographing India’s Buddhist relics, desiccate the country by neatly organizing it into neat piles of photographs—cadaverisation through collation? For the Europeans the photographs are Buddhism. While Wade’s belief that the essence of Buddhism, or India, can be captured through the accumulation of mere surface images, the novel also argues that western technology serves as salvation in the colonial encounter.

After the party is led into dangerous Tibetan territory by another one of Sebastian’s native pawns, Wade's photographs, along with representations of Buddhists produced by previous European travelers to Tibet, become their salvation. Seeing the nine-foot high “praying-wheel” in the Buddhist monastery, Wade exclaims, “I know where I am now.... I think we can work upon these people’s religious feelings” (314). Prostrating herself before Buddha, and walking in the direction of the sun, “slowly round the big drum in the nave, saying aloud at each step, in a sort of monotonous chant, like a priest intoning, the four mystic words, ‘Aum, mani, padme, hum’” (314-15), Wade begins to convince the supposedly violent Buddhists of her commitment to their religion. While the Buddhists are impressed with Wade’s knowledge of their rituals, they still view the Europeans as a band of Christian missionaries seeking converts.
Enter Wade's photographs. Having first shown her true English grit by standing erect and smiling scornfully (311) while the Tibetans interrogate her, Wade uses photographs of Buddhist monasteries to convince the monks of the "depth and reality" of her Buddhist convictions: "the moment they saw we were collectors of Buddhist pictures, they jumped at once to the conclusion that we must also, of course, be devout believers" (319). While photographs of a "dead creed" appear to point only to surfaces, they are here used to provide "depth and reality" (318); surfaces become emblematic of a depth of religious belief.

In this scene, Wade proves the "truth" (318) of her religious convictions by recognizing the forms, the surface, of the Tibetan Buddhist ritual. In the cross-cultural exchange, everything becomes surface; observing the proper form becomes depth. By knowing the appearance of other people's rituals, wherever she goes, the colonist can make herself at home. For the British colonizer, there is no need to penetrate below the surface of native religions—she can navigate without depth of knowledge; in fact, Sebastian's depth is criticized in this case. While in Britain, Wade was able to go below the surface, to read below the photographs; here she needs merely the surface image in order to explicate her world, to know "where" she is. Indeed, Wade's "knowledge" of Tibetan culture has been gleaned from the work of another British traveler to Tibet, William Simpson. Simpson's text provides the terms
for Wade’s description of Buddhist practices and typology. His “personal observation” of the Tibetans, represented in his book, *The Buddhist Praying Wheel*, becomes the basis for both Wade’s and Allen’s authority and for her interaction with the Buddhists. Written as a mythology of comparative religion that weaves together extensive research and data culled from personal experience, Simpson’s text provides authority to Allen’s description of the Tibetan monks. Many of the scenes depicted in Allen’s novel have been purloined from Simpson’s work. Based on Simpson, for example, we learn that capitalism has penetrated and corrupted the spiritual beliefs of the colonized—four shiny coins with “an excellent design of the head of the Queen as Empress of India” (317) sit on the Buddhist altar, along with two brandy bottles and a gin bottle “which they seemed to prize highly from the label, which shone in gold and bright colours, and prominent upon it were the figure of a cat and the words ‘Old Tom’” (10).

But while Simpson presents the monks’ incorporation of Western consumer culture into the Tibetan Lamasery as the unthinking pleasure of children easily seduced by colorful toys—the Tibetans supposedly prize the “bright colors on the labels” of English bottles, for example—Allen is more aware of the colonialist underpinnings of such consumerism. *Hilda Wade* takes Simpson’s representations of imperialist interactions with the monks further by introducing a critique of the
capitalist exploitation of India and Tibet. Photographs become the focal point at which technology, capitalism and imperialism meet; "Photography was a mechanical by-product of the European technological revolution, the period during which scientific facts, invention, mass production, ownership of products and conspicuous consumption began to rule in Western society" (Scherer 33). Cumberledge recognizes the exploitative potential of technology, arguing that smoke-jacks could revolutionize the production of karma in Tibetan households; "don’t tell anyone in England," he writes, "or we shall spend 20 million on conquering Tibet, in the interests of civilization and a smoke-jack syndicate" (326). Later, he critiques the British for worshipping respectability and "the deity of the pure and blameless ratepayer" (357). Just as Sebastian had placed himself, as healer, as the antithesis to "money-grubbing diamond miners," Cumberledge censures capitalist appropriations of technology while himself linking technology and Buddhist spirituality in his creation of "a zoetrope, or wheel of life" (325). This device, a small wheel containing pictures of all the local monks, creates a cinematograph, a "living picture" (325, emphasis added). Whereas

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11 Allen’s predictions of a British-capitalist invasion of Tibet proved, unfortunately, true in 1903 when a British expedition led by Colonel Francis Youngblood entered Tibet and commanded the government to open trade relationship with British India. In the process, a trade pact highly favorable to Britain was produced. The British invasion of Tibet also showed the weakness of Tibetan military powers at that time and cleared the way for the later Chinese invasion of Tibet, which has, obviously, had a long, destructive impact on Tibetans in general and Buddhists in particular. See John Power’s Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism (158-59).
technology and science became weapons of destruction in the hands of Sebastian and “the capitalists,” Cumberledge’s machine generates life, creating karma “for all the village whether anyone happened to be looking at it or not” (325). What is the difference between Cumberledge and the capitalists and scientists who exploit Tibet in the “name of civilization”? Cumberledge’s recognition of proper Tibetan forms. While the example of the smoke-jacks shows the capitalist, technological exploitation of the Tibetans, it also distinguishes Cumberledge’s humanitarian approach to technology—learned from Wade—in the universal generation of karma. Thus, the same means create different ends.12

While the novel appears to critique the imperialist project, a gap always remains. Simpson’s text, for example, is taken as an authority on the “truth” of Buddhism. Yet, as Simpson repeatedly admits, he does not understand the Tibetan language, so that all of his interpretations of Buddhist culture—for example, the Queen as spiritual icon—are inferential, based solely upon personal observation. While inference was viewed as a positive, dichotomy-breaking term in England, its function in Tibet is more suspicious. In Rhodesia, Wade had told Cumberledge that she was

12 Wade’s comparison between Sebastian and Hiram Maxim recognizes that the scientist needs ethics, a “benevolent aim”: “The particular brand of science to which Mr. Hiram Maxim’s mind happens to have been directed was the making of machine-guns—and he slays his thousands. The particular branch to which Sebastian’s mind happens to have been directed was medicine—and he cures as many as Mr. Maxim kills. It is a turn of the hand that makes all the difference” (141).
unable to infer the actions of the Matabele because she had no “knowledge of these savages’ character” (236). Despite her claim, she correctly plots the next move of the “savages” because they are working for Sebastian; her knowledge of the Western scientist allows her to understand the native revolt. Similarly, she “knows where she is” in Tibet because she has read Simpson’s book, the “personal observations” of a British traveler who doesn’t speak the language. In both situations, Wade acquires authority over the natives based on her understanding of their forms/surfaces, as depicted in Western representations of their culture. Within domestic space, surfaces did not provide sufficient information for Wade’s project of detection; yet they provide sufficient grounds for interpretation in the colonies. Thus, the novel does not advocate “penetration” of the native situation, but a knowledge of pure form.

Meaning inheres in action.

*The British Discovery of Buddhism*, Philip Almond’s Foucauldian analysis of late-Victorian interest in Buddhism, provides insight into Allen’s depiction of the Tibetans. Almond argues that the plethora of Victorian textual analyses of Buddhism caused it to become less a living religion, and more a religion of antiquity, bound by its own textuality:

Buddhism as it came to be ideally spoken of through the editing, translating, and studying of its ancient texts could then be compared with its contemporary appearance in the Orient. And Buddhism, as it could be seen in the East, compared unfavourably with its ideal textual exemplifications contained in the libraries, universities, colonial offices, and missionary societies
of the West. It was possible then, as a result of this, to combine a positive evaluation of a Buddhism textually located in the West with a negative evaluation of its Eastern instances. (37)

The praying wheel, in particular, was viewed as the “nadir of Buddhist degeneracy,” leading the London Quarterly Review to comment, “We do not know another religion in the world which has undergone such deep debasement as is witnessed in the Buddhism of Central Asia” (Almond 39). In Buddhism and Christianity: A Parallel and a Contrast (1890), Archibald Scott theorizes that Buddhism began as a philosophy of life, meant to subsume religion, but “now [Buddha’s] name is employed to support the grossest of all superstitions, a religion with more idols in it than that of the most idolatrous of peoples, a worship founded on the efficiency of magical incantations, and of prayers rendered by machines” (336-37). Allen’s text critiques the capitalist who profits by a superficial understanding of native culture, but does not contest views of the Tibetans as idolatrous or violent; Cumberledge, for example, describes the Tibetans as “flat-faced” and “stolidly, sullenly, stupidly passive” (312). Almond speculates that the mid- and late-nineteenth-century obsession with origins and the reciprocal belief that the original is the essential, led the British to view Tibetan Buddhism as corrupt as compared with “pure” Hinayana Buddhism (95). Thus, Wade reveres the “dead” Buddhism of India, but rejects Tibet’s “living” religion. Finally, Almond accounts for the contradictory views of Victorians toward Buddhism by
emphasizing the ongoing British participation in a colonialist mentality predicated on the denial of Eastern sovereignty: “The polarity of assimilation and rejection of Buddhist ethics among Victorian writers is therefore suggestive of the desire of the West ideologically to suppress the autonomy of the East, and thus to control it. Buddhist ethical precepts could be and were assimilated. But the idea that Buddhist societies failed to put them into practice made possible the rejection of the cultural viability of these societies, and validated the cultural hegemony of the West” (117).

*Hilda Wade* continues this rejection of Eastern autonomy. While the novel advocates a humanitarian overhaul of colonialism, it refuses a more basic critique of the imperial project. By changing the appearance of imperialism—humanizing or “feminizing” it—the novel argues, the system itself will change. Ironically, this refusal to differentiate surface and depth in the colonies links the ideology of the novel with that of Buddhism. Arguing that the Buddha’s gaze at the flower is the only vision to escape the fatal phallocentric economy, Luce Irigaray suggests that Buddhism’s relationship to the realm of the visual differs from that of Western epistemologies (Jay *Downcast Eyes* 538). Because the Buddha recognized the interconnection of all things, Buddhists see no separation between self and flower, surface or depth, subject and object: form is everything. Recognizing that much of the world’s suffering is linked to our clinging to ideas of self, Buddhists reject any permanent, fixed conception of
self. Trinh T. Minh-ha echoes this ideal, depicting “clarity” as a means of subjection that Buddhist language, viewed as “nonsensical” by westerners, avoids through its use of paradox. Within the Tibetan monastery, language breaks down and Cumberledge’s inane invocation, “Hokey-pokey-winky-wum” is, he believes, interpreted by the Tibetan priests as “a most powerful spell or prayer in my own language” (318), just as the coins become the image of “a very mighty and potent goddess” or an English bottle of Old Tom and a bottle of Simla soda water become a “most powerful and present deity” (322) for the monks. As mantra, language loses meaning and becomes pure sound, a “mind protection” in Tibetan terms, against the dangers of the ego. Yet this sound, the form, carries more meaning in Buddhism than the words themselves. To Cumberledge’s materialist view of language, “hokey pokey winky wum” are meaningless sounds, mistakenly read as words of power by the naive monks. Within the context of Buddhism, though, these words are powerful because of their association with ritual, just as the zoetrope creates a “living” picture; observing the form is more important than the words themselves, so that the turning of the zoetrope creates karma, not the prayers attached to it (325). Truth cannot be approached through language or through reason.

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13 Interestingly, Sebastian’s name had also been a mantra, a “word of power,” to the young doctors. Though meaningless in itself, the mantra still has great power.
In her criticism of anthropology as a “scientific conversation of man with man,” Trinh T. Minh-ha writes: “Like any common living thing, I fear and reprove classification and the death it entails” (48). Reproaching the anthropologist’s attempts to pierce the psychological and epistemological “depths” of his human subjects, Trinh calls for heterogeneity in the place of “the unity and uniformity of dissection, classification, and synthesis toward a higher truth” (49). Hilda Wade begins to recognize heterogeneity by pinpointing the different deployments of imperialism in Africa and India, and by exploring the various uses of technology, photography in particular, in the perpetuation of imperialism. While Wade’s photographs begin as lifeless displays of a “dead religion,” they gain meaning when attached to Cumberledge’s zoetrope. Buddhist philosophy suggests that evil does not exist in photography itself—photographs are simply photographs for a Buddhist—but in their use. When Wade argues that even though the aim of medicine is benevolent, Sebastian in fact pursues it “ruthlessly, cruelly, unscrupulously” (141), she introduces the problem of distinguishing aims and means. Just as the aim of medicine is “benevolent,” even though Sebastian’s approach to it is not, the novel seems to suggest that the aim of colonialism is equally benevolent, though the scientific and capitalist excesses associated with it are not. The female detective then, does not uncover the complexities or heterogeneities of the Tibetans or the Matabele, but merely the
excesses of the British empire. Her “lynx-like” stare, too similar to Sebastian’s “hawk-like” gaze, cannot perceive the fundamental flaws in the colonialis project, nor can it value cultural difference.

iii. Coming Home: Scientists and Daughters

As the representation of Wade in India suggests, the new goal of the Englishwoman has become creating home wherever she goes, a new ideology of femininity linked with British’s worries about the administration of empire, caused, in part, by the failure of British scientific efforts to police the plague epidemic. Rather than supporting a matenal ideal of the colonial Englishwoman, Allen’s text figures her, instead, as mentor, as friend, as daughter. While Wade teaches Cumberledge to become a better doctor by combining skill with care, Wade’s strength lies not only in her compassion; her ingenuity saves them from the rebellious Matabele and the adoring Tibetans. At no point in the text is Wade dependent upon male protection; at no point is she presented as sexually vulnerable. Indeed, she is a paragon of independent agency and mobility, as is obvious from her travels through Africa, India and Tibet. Wade’s position is undercut only in her resemblance to Sebastian, in her participation in Sebastian’s brand of science, leading her to label some Englishwomen
as the “type” who are beaten by their husbands, or to identify some natives as “friendlies.” In the last section of this chapter, I will explore the problematic identification the novel creates between Wade and Sebastian, while also showing its attempts to reject this model by positing friendship, rather than family, as the basis of the scientific relationship.

After escaping from the Tibetan monks, Wade and her party return to India, accidentally discovering on the way a plague-weakened Sebastian. In Africa, Sebastian was attributed with a “Kaffir heart”; in India he becomes afflicted with a disease relevant “only to the natives.” “Fever,” Lady Meadowcroft learns on the ship from Africa to Bombay, is “endemic” to India; as the ship’s doctor scientifically states, “Forty million microbes to each square inch of the Bombay atmosphere” (292). While the novel disproves “climatic and miasmatic theories of disease causation” (Arnold 397), it reinforces ideas of the body of the Indian as a source of disease; the only

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14 In *Character as Seen in Body and Parentage* (1886), Furneaux Jordan posits that certain women, because of their body types and personality, drive their husbands into beating them. According to Elaine Showalter, Jordan, a surgeon at Queens College, Birmingham, argued that some women had “the unfortunate hereditary combination of delicate skin, thin eyebrows, convex spine, and sharp tongue that made men unable to resist hitting them” (107). For Jordan, biology and personality outweighed considerations of class difference or marital situation in the battered wife syndrome. Showalter offers the following quote from Jordan: “the unimpassioned tradeswoman who entreats a magistrate to protect her from a brutal husband, and the delicately born but erring (impassioned) lady who is summoned to the Divorce Court resemble in organization and proclivity their humbler sisters who were brought into hospitals with bruised bodies or with fatal wounds” (107).
people subjected to the disease are “natives” and those, like Sebastian, who come into
dangerous contact with the natives: “natives” and “nurses” catch the plague.\textsuperscript{15}

The importance of the plague in creating negative representations of the British
medical man in India have been extensively documented by David Arnold. In
“Touching the Body: Perspectives on the Indian Plague,” Arnold argues that in June
1897 the British plague administration was critiqued for interfering “largely and in
such a systematic way with the domestic, social and religious habits of the people”
(392). Arnold asserts that the advances of Pasteur, Koch and others in the new science
of bacteriology had led to confidence among British medical men that epidemic disease
could be “conquered” through the application of Western science and reason. This
confidence led callous British medical administrators to ignore Indian conceptions of
the body and kinship: “The body, as in the West, was treated as a secular object, not as
sacred territory, as an individual entity, not as an element integral to a wider
community” (Arnold 396). Sebastian’s failure to recognize the communal aspect of
the apparently individual body leads, ultimately, to Yorke-Bannerman’s downfall.
While Yorke-Bannerman refuses to “experiment upon his relative” (379)—with the
assumption that any experiments conducted on native bodies would have been
morally acceptable—Sebastian covertly administers large doses of an experimental drug

\textsuperscript{15} Between 1898 and 1908, the Indian plague claimed more than 6 million lives (Arnold 391).
to Admiral Scott Prideaux, Yorke-Bannerman’s uncle, eventually killing him. The
drug the two scientists were researching required bodies infected with a rare, in
England, “tropical disease,” that Prideaux had acquired while stationed off the Malabar
coast where the disease is “endemic” (379). The British medical establishment’s
representation of Indian bodies as “raw material” for the expansion of biomedical
experimentation was reflected in Sebastian’s attempts to record the etiology of tropical
diseases while in Africa and to record accurately every symptom of his own bout with
the plague so he can write “an exhaustive monograph on the whole history of the
disease in the *British Medical Journal*” (343). Sebastian will have the “first opportunity
ever afforded us of questioning an intelligent European case, a case where the patient is
fully capable of describing with accuracy his symptoms and his sensations in medical
phraseology” (344).

The *Englishwoman* is expected to foster a more humanitarian approach to the
body, not by providing a maternal image, but by her daughterly- or partnership-role
in the current medical establishment. As dutiful daughter, the female detective will
create a moral, humanitarian English imperialist and, perhaps, a more effective
scientist: as he lies dying on the life raft after their ship has run aground, Sebastian
claims, “If only I had had a daughter like you, my girl, one whom I could have loved
and trusted, I might have been a better man. I might even have done better work for
science" (372). Despite their antagonism, Wade cures Sebastian, "my best friend now—and my bitterest enemy!" (369). This cure rids Sebastian’s body of the "native’s" disease, and also rehabsilitates him so that he can clear the "cruel stain" (365) from Yorke-Bannerman’s memory. Following the wreck of their ship off the English coast, Sebastian’s face softens and melts "as if some inward change of soul was moulding the fierce old Professor into a nobler and more venerable man" (366). While the methods of Western medicine provide, at best, surface, merely bodily cures, intuition and inference go deeper, healing body and soul. The "care" of Nurse Wade, Sebastian's surrogate daughter, alters him both externally and internally, purifying him for his final confession.

While in The Law and the Lady, Valeria Woodville/Macallan prefers a private confession to a public exoneration of her husband, Hilda Wade, like the vampire hunters in Dracula, requires "a public, an attested, confession" (372); "I want no hole-and-corner confession, which may afterwards be useless, but an open avowal before the most approved witnesses" (373). With Wade, confession moves into the public realm, despite her rejection of the law as arbiter of truth. Mayfield, Yorke-Bannerman’s lawyer, for example, argues to the end that he will not necessarily believe Sebastian’s confession: "The facts have always appeared to me—strictly between ourselves, you know—to admit of only one explanation" (374). Similar to medical
thinking that rejects possibilities beyond the realm of “fact” or “reason,” the lawyer’s
diagnosis is faulty. The woman, as Mayfield argues, “can do a great deal” (374)
because she is not an accepted member of the profession; outside the realm of
authoritative discourse, she introduces a gap into the system. While Wade scorns the
limited views of the lawyer, she does not want “doubt” thrown upon her word, and
therefore insists upon a public confession. For women’s work to be effective, it must
obey the rules instituted by the male establishment; Wade does not work in the “wild
zone” of jouissance or of hysteria. She reveals the crimes of the male establishment by
using that establishment’s own tools. This is the potential problem, though; in
appropriating the father’s tools, does she become subject to his crimes?

Sebastian’s confession creates a name for Wade, who was left homeless
following Sebastian’s destruction of her father. Diagnosing Wade’s “true position” to
Cumberledge, Sebastian argues, “She is passing under a false name, and she comes of a
tainted stock...Nurse Wade, as she chooses to call herself, is a daughter of the
notorious murderer, Yorke-Bannerman” (167). But, as Cumberledge argues, a
reciprocity exists between fathers and daughter, such that “[m]urderers...do not beget
such daughters as [Wade]” (168). Despite the fact that “prima facie evidence” (168) is
strongly against her, Cumberledge believes that the “truth” of Wade’s parentage is
evident in her body. The description of Yorke-Bannerman—“precious clever”;

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“astounding memory,” he “[re]collected every symptom of every patient he ever
attended. And such an eye! Diagnosis? It was clairvoyance! A gift—no less” (175)\textsuperscript{16}—is parallel to representations of Wade, who has the “same power to recall facts, the same
faculty for interpreting character or the signs of feeling” (175). Though linked with
her real father, Wade is also “as abstract” as Sebastian: “she was devoting her life quite
as single-mindedly as Sebastian himself had devoted his the advancement of science”
(6). In the final section of the novel, Sebastian addresses her “by the name she had
borne in her childhood—both were her own” (371, emphasis added). Bearing the names
of both Hilda Wade and Maisie Yorke-Bannerman, the female detective is aligned with
the greatness of Sebastian’s “tenacity of purpose” and the “absurd squeamishness”
(according to Sebastian) of her father’s familial and moral allegiances; Cumberledge
argues that unlike Sebastian, who is merely “great,” Wade is “a great woman; and a
good woman, too” (383). Wade is not merely a humanitarian who rescues her
enemies, but an “intellect” combined with “force of will”; “Such firmness! such
energy! such resolute patience” (342).

While the text seeks an alternative to the father-son, master-acolyte
relationship that modeled the teaching structure at St. Nathaniel’s hospital, this ideal

\textsuperscript{16} The description of Yorke-Bannerman is interestingly similar to the description of Grant Allen found
in the “Publisher’s Note”: “A man of curiously varied and comprehensive knowledge, and with the
most charming personality; a writer who, treating of a wide variety of subjects, touched nothing
which he did not make distinctive, he filled a place which no man living can exactly occupy” (iii).
is not found in the mother-daughter relationship, as it was, for example, in *The Law and the Lady*. Instead, the relationship here is based, as above, on father-daughter relationships, or, in the case of Yorke-Bannerman and Sebastian, or Wade and Cumberledge, on friendship. Again let us consider the Publisher’s Note:

The last chapter of this volume had been roughly sketched by Mr. Allen before his final illness, and his anxiety, when debarred from work, to see it finished, was relieved by the considerate kindness of his friend and neighbour, Dr. Conan Doyle, who, hearing of his trouble, talked it over with him, gathered his ideas, and finally wrote it out for him in the form in which it now appears—a beautiful and pathetic act of friendship which it is a pleasure to record. (iii)

The production of the text, which valorizes the goal of friendship, is itself a tribute to friendship. Yorke-Bannerman’s lawyer, Mayfield, interprets his client’s anger with Sebastian as the anger of a friend who has been rejected in his time of need: Sebastian “preferred the claims of public duty—as he understood them, I mean—to those of private friendship” (180). Mayfield’s descriptions of Sebastian suggest that the neglect of the private has led to his monstrous inhumanity; the best scientist should be not only a “great” thinker, but a “good” friend.

As I suggested in my chapter on *The Law and the Lady*, Victorian feminists were committed to the ideal of spousal friendship and the wish to transform marriage from a relationship of hierarchy and domination to one of reciprocity and friendship. This vision of transformation of the marriage relationship from one of “tyrant and
victim” to one where husband and wife would walk “hand in hand, eye to eye, heart in heart” founded Victorian feminists’ repeated campaigns to rid British law of the myriad injustices of the common law doctrine of coverture (Shanley 189). While The Law and the Lady never realizes this ideal—Valeria tracks down the truth of Sara Macallan’s death with no help from her husband; Valeria’s attraction to her husband is based on physical attraction rather than mutual respect—Hilda Wade presents a woman detective who works with a friend-acyolyte, Cumberledge, in order to track down the truth of her father’s mistaken murder conviction. Indeed, the man’s happiness, as much as the woman’s, depends upon exposing the false medical man: “our chance” is gone without Sebastian (362)—the young doctor must be cured of his worship of Sebastian, as much as Yorke-Bannerman’s memory, or Wade’s name, must be “vindicated and cleared” (383). Following Sebastian’s death, Cumberledge writes: “I could not avoid recalling the time when his very name was to me a word of power and when the thought of him roused on my cheek a red flush of enthusiasm” (382). As a “word of power” Sebastian’s name has become an empty mantra.

In replacing Sebastian’s religion of germs, Wade creates a new epistemological model based on the idea of friendship. Although the sailors who rescue Wade and Sebastian after their ship capsizes mislabel her as Sebastian’s daughter, she quickly corrects them, saying that Sebastian is “my best friend now—and my bitterest enemy!”
Wade rewrites the father-daughter relationship to create a male mentor as friend.\(^\text{17}\) Equally, the relationship between Cumberledge and Wade is more legitimately based in friendship and mutual respect, than in desire. Unlike both Dracula and The Law and the Lady, this novel does not end with the birth of a child. Instead, it finishes with the birth of the heroine-detective work was the preface for her ability to live: “I have vindicated and cleared my father’s memory. And now, I can live. “Actual life comes next.” We have much to do, Hubert” (383). As friendly companions, Hubert and Maisie will carry on the work of both colonialism and science, effectively humanizing each. In What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge, Lorraine Code also theorizes friendship as an alternative to the objective, impersonal epistemology modeled on patriarchal relationship. According to Code, friendship provides a more useful basis for refiguring scientific relationships because friendships are chosen, because they are not inherently gender specific, because they are not fraught with the oppressive aspects of “family” relationships, and because they are based in a careful, reciprocal, nonimperialistic way of knowing (104). Code argues that “[t]his exemplary ‘second person’\(^\text{18}\) way of

\(^\text{17}\) Despite Sebastian’s nefarious treatment of her, Wade still views him as a “great” scientist deserving of respect for his contributions to the field of bacteriology (383).

\(^\text{18}\) Annette Baier’s definition of “second persons”: “A person, perhaps, is best seen as one who was long enough dependent upon other persons to acquire the essential arts of personhood. Persons essentially are second persons” (Code What Can She Know? 82).
knowing another person affords a preliminary model for a restructured subject-object relationship that could displace objectivity and move toward a reconstruction of cognitive activity and epistemic goals" (104).

_Hilda Wade_ represents the detecting woman as scientist, as nurse, as budding imperialist. By teaching Cumberledge, and, ultimately, Sebastian to revere friendship and community over the Kantian-based ideal of the “autonomous man,” Wade breaks the “feminine” gendering of values such as community, compassion or cooperation. By representing the multi-dimensionality of identity, Wade suggests that women’s identity was never singular, that gender is performative. But these new values apply only in Britain. Though _Hilda Wade_ boldly represents women’s independence, quick thinking, and daring, a critical reader might wonder if the novel’s presentation of woman is premised on its imperial context. Much of the novel takes place in Rhodesia and India; is Wade’s independence dependent upon colonialism? Could she have been as active in England? Though Allen’s text critiques the cadaverizing impulse of the contemporary scientist, as well as the capitalist vampirisation of the resources of the colonies, it leaves the structure of imperialism intact. Instead, the novel proposes a simple facelift: humanizing colonialism rather than seriously questioning its hidden goals and assumptions. The new friendship model the novel
posits between English men and women does not translate into the colonies; the colonized remain stick figures, categorized and collated in Wade’s travel pictures.
AFTERWORD

In this dissertation, I have argued that the work of the female detective is unsettling. Her investigations of the middle-class Victorian family disrupt the institutional authority that limits and creates both social and personal identities, and underscore the complexity of Victorian identities, making character “count” in new ways, and reminding us of the “zoophagous” potential of all attempts at theoretical type-casting. Thus, Rosa Dartle’s scrutiny pierces David Copperfield’s middle-class “innocence”; Valeria Woodville/Macallan’s recovery of Sara Macallan’s hidden letter reveals an uncontrollable female desire at the heart of middle-class identity; Mina Harker’s analysis of Jonathan’s disturbing journal unveils the interconnection of hysteria and legal authority; and Hilda Wade’s investigation of Dr. Sebastian equates the excesses of the scientific establishment in *Hilda Wade* with a dangerous imperialism. Just as these women unsettle, perhaps unconsciously, the rigidity of institutional truths, I have tried to disturb traditional representations of Victorian woman characters, to resist the creation of the female detective as fetish.
By investigating these women as detectives and hysteries, my dissertation reveals that women investigators complicate theories of classical detection, but, more importantly, shows that representations of female detectives allow us to account for Victorian women in new ways. For example, unlike Nancy Armstrong who argues that Victorian women “regulate” their desires, I believe that novels of female detection emphasize the necessary connection between desire and interpretation.

Indeed, the female detective surpasses the powers of the law by refusing to regulate or control her desires: Valeria Macallan discovers new information because of her overwhelming passion for Eustace; Mina Harker uncovers Dracula’s hiding place only when infected with his poison; Hilda Wade induces Dr. Sebastian’s confession only by tenaciously dedicating herself to one passion in life, just as Sebastian has.

The female detective uncovers female desire, a location that “Victorian maps efface” (Yelin 41), but her investigations also reveal that hysteria is not just a “female malady,” but a useful trope for understanding the Victorian character more generally. Both the questioning posture assumed by the hysteric and the refusal to assume a singular identity characterize male, female and institutional identities in the novels I have analyzed. Rosa Dartle’s domestic hysteria undermines middle-class identity, but Jonathan Harker’s professional hysteria suggests that the infection is institutionally, as well as domestically, based. Resistance inheres within institutions. Thus, for
example, Hilda Wade wages a critique of scientific quantification from within the confines of rationality.

In their frantic attempts to make character accountable, the narratives of these texts become themselves hysterical. Incorporating a heteroglossia of genres, novels of female detection—especially The Law and the Lady and Dracula—attempt to create truth by a thorough and accurate narrative, stockpiling receipts, case histories, journals, newspaper articles. The limits of detailed reportage, though, are emphasized by the failure of these accumulations of detail: it is impossible, the female detective argues, to account for everything, to present the total truth, to fully account for the Count, to present a clear identity for David Copperfield, to recreate a woman’s missing story in The Law and the Lady. By emphasizing the connection of law and narrative, these texts argue that the legal agglomeration of evidence is also deficient, always “inferential.” In her investigations, the female detective discovers that the law’s unwillingness to investigate its own spectacular narrative origins limits the types of female subjectivities it is able, or willing, to authorize. The woman detective unsettles these boundaries, revealing the law’s own limits, its foundation in the hysterical narratives it rejects.
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