

Introduction

(Mrs.) Hudson's Soap: Reading Purity in Detective Fiction

London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained.

—Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*¹

Theorising Purity

On 1 December 1888, the London newspaper the *Graphic* published a full-page advertisement for Hudson's Soap (Figure 1). Of the various commodities advertised in the back pages of the newspaper, soap was one of the most frequently featured, and manufacturers placed weekly adverts which drew upon a stock of familiar images to render their brands recognisable (one of the more prominent campaigns being that for Brooke's Monkey Brand soap, the adverts for which always featured a grinning monkey and the slogan 'Won't wash clothes'). Such adverts usually located the commodity in the realm of the domestic, as a cleanser of clothes, people and household items. They drew upon a certain stock of images and constructions, or as Anne McClintock argues, four 'fetishes': 'soap itself, white clothing (especially aprons), mirrors and monkeys.'² In contrast, the Hudson's Soap advert of 1888 drew on visual and ideological cues that belonged to a different discursive field. The figure in the advert was a policeman rather than a monkey, and the setting was not domestic, but a dark London alleyway. The scene portrays a policeman shining a lamp onto a poster bearing the exhortation to 'ARREST all Dirt and cleanse Everything BY USING HUDSON'S SOAP. REWARD!! PURITY, HEALTH & SATISFACTION BY ITS REGULAR DAILY USE' (Figure 1). Somewhat strangely, and perhaps historically inaccurately, the poster stands alone on the wall; this is not the visual overload of modernity, or a Benjaminian rendering of a single image into a mechanical set of repetitions (as in the posting of multiple copies of posters), which then dialectically alter the image and the environment in which it stands. Rather, this is a declaration, made as much so by its uncharacteristic isolation as by its capitals and double exclamation marks.

The ideological work of this advertisement demonstrates the connections between discourses about the criminal and a state of (im)purity, the concern of this

book. The slogan ‘Arrest all dirt and cleanse everything’ establishes a relationship between crime and dirt, and between detection and cleansing, in six words. Nor is this a formulation limited to either the public business of the police, or the private realm of washing; the specification of ‘all’ dirt, and the project to ‘cleanse everything’ ambitiously implies the benefits of cleanliness across the whole of society and culture. In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White briefly discuss a later version of this advert published in 1891, one in which the poster which the policeman reads has a different, more detailed (and conversely less emphatic) text, and which lacks the key term ‘purity.’³ Similarly, Stallybrass and White only situate the image in a very broad historical context of late nineteenth-century imperialism, missing the fact that the advert first appeared at a very specific moment in criminal history, just weeks after the Whitechapel murders of Jack the Ripper.⁴ In September to November of 1888, five prostitutes (Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Catherine Eddowes, Elizabeth Stride and Mary Kelly) were murdered and mutilated. While the *Graphic* largely stayed away from the sensationalist reportage of the murders featured in publications such as the *Illustrated Police News* and the *Star*, offering a sanitised version of the events in Whitechapel, the advert would certainly have resonated with recent events.

The reward for arresting the dirt, the criminal, is ‘Purity, Health & Satisfaction,’ rendered visually in the policeman’s cleansing beam of light.⁵ This was already a familiar visual trope frequently used in crime reportage of the time, such as that of the Ripper murders, as well as parodies of such reportage featured in *Punch*. The iconography of such reports was unambiguous, as it is here: the white brightness of the police lamp (order, purity, cleanliness) in opposition to the dark, uneven fencing of the alley. Similarly, the edges of the beam emphasise at the top ‘Arrest’ and, at the bottom, ‘Purity,’ suggesting that one leads to the other. The London setting is clearly shown by the appearance of the Palace of Westminster over the fence (and, in terms of advertising composition, occupying the crucial position of

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bisecting the brand name) which while meaning that the policeman is not exactly in the East End, nonetheless places the advert in a city recently connected with murderous atrocity; furthermore, an atrocity which in its negotiations between crime and vice carried certain echoes of the social purity debate.

I shall return to this advertisement towards the end of this introduction. In the meantime, it serves as a convenient illustration of the wider argument of this book, that late Victorian detective fiction dramatises an anxiety about material contamination and impurity, including a metaphorical category of crime as dirt, and aligns detection with the act of cleaning in exactly the way that the Hudson’s advertisement does. I consider the political aspects of such ideas, particularly in terms of social investigations among the ‘great unwashed’ (a term first used in crime fiction, in Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830)) and social purity campaigns.⁶ Yet such an analysis accepts the categories of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ without subjecting these to interrogation. What is actually meant by purity, and why is it so valued? Central to such discussions is Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger* (1966). Douglas’s anthropological exploration of the pollution rituals of various cultures is built around the key insight that ‘dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder.’⁷ What is dirty or impure is that which is out of place, that which does not fit into a certain order.

We can recognise in our own notions of dirt that we are using a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems. ... Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing.⁸

It follows, therefore, that systems, orders and laws create their own dirt and impurities. Douglas attributes the insight that dirt is simply 'matter out of place' to the eighteenth-century man of letters Lord Chesterfield, but in so doing passes over various Victorian manifestations of the concept, especially towards the end of the century. Alfred Russel Wallace, in his discussion of the importance of dust in *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures* (1898) similarly defined dirt as 'matter in the wrong place,' although he saw in such dirt a threat to health rather than the symbolic disorder Douglas identifies; Wallace's ideas of dirt are more medical materialist than structuralist.⁹ Likewise, in the same year, the physician and social purist Elizabeth Blackwell noted in her *Scientific Method in Biology*

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that 'Dirt in its largest sense [is] matter in the wrong place.'¹⁰ Douglas develops this point to argue that pollution behaviours are a positive effort to organise an environment, rather than solely being a reaction of fear:

In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying, we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience.¹¹

The passage here hints at Douglas's scepticism of medical materialism as an explanation for our reactions to dirt (at least, where medical materialism is invoked as a totalising alternative to any other, symbolic, explanation);¹² indeed, she argues that 'Often our justification of our own avoidances through hygiene is sheer fantasy.'¹³ Kelly Hurley, however, sees another potential meaning in Douglas's analysis: that the formulation 'matter out of place' emphasises the functionality of classificatory schema according to which 'anomalous phenomena are abominable because they throw into relief the *provisionality* of the categories they confound.'¹⁴ This is only implicit in Douglas's work; its more immediate concern (and one which Hurley finds less convincing) is the comparison it draws between the primitive cultures it explores and our own, arguing that our pollution behaviours are the same as those of apparently 'superstitious' tribes: 'The difference between us is not that our behaviour is grounded on science and theirs on symbolism. Our behaviour also carries symbolic meaning.'¹⁵ Our fear of dirt as creating disease is based in the same kind of symbolism as the tribal superstition, since we overestimate both the efficacy of cleansing rituals (passing food through water, for example, is hardly enough to eradicate bacteria), and the potential of dirt to infect (as Douglas comments, 'Dirt does not look nice, but it is not necessarily dangerous').¹⁶ The hyperbole of threatening dirt is at the heart of the Hudson's advertisement described above, and therefore at the heart of much of the detective fiction of the 1890s; the exaggerated power of cleansing rituals must be strong enough to counter the equally inflated threat of the dirty, the infected, the criminal. Of course, Douglas's analysis would not have been possible in the mid-nineteenth century, when the miasmatic theory of illness directly equated dirt with disease, as is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The passing of the theory in favour of the theory of contagion, however, allowed new rhetorical moves to be made.

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Purity was an overdetermined term for the late Victorians. Discourses of degeneration and eugenics applied it to racial debates; concern over the adulteration of food and sanitation of urban spaces made it a matter of public health. The expression was an advertising buzzword, used to promote soap, cocoa, alcohol, and a wide range of self-medications. Impurity as crime also had more concrete manifestations, for instance in concerns over adulteration of foodstuffs, and the fear that consumers were slowly being poisoned. The term 'pure' became a fetish of advertising, unsurprising given some of the statistics gathered by the

Local Government Board: in 1877, a quarter of all milk examined was found to be seriously adulterated, and it was not until 1894 that this figure fell below 10 per cent.²⁸

²⁸ Anthony S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London: Methuen, 1983), 21.

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The term 'social purity,' however, had a more specific meaning as the guiding principle of a number of associations, societies, and vigilance committees founded in the nineteenth century, with the aim of policing sexual purity and morality. As Margaret Hunt notes, for the social purists (or more specifically, the social purists of the 1890s) 'sex and sexuality are deeply problematic drives, which unless tightly controlled will spill out into society and cause untold harm.'³³ Just as the 1880s and 1890s saw the development of the modern genre of detective fiction as a recognisable mode of literature (R. F. Stewart traces the origin of the term to the *Saturday Review* of 4 December 1886, and its article 'Detective Fiction'),³⁴ spurred by changes in publishing culture and the periodical press, the same period was one of the peaks of anti-vice agitation in British history.³⁵ The later nineteenth century saw the foundation of a number of purity movements, including Josephine Butler's Social Purity Alliance in 1873, Ellice Hopkins's White Cross Movement in 1875, and the National Vigilance Association, run by William Coote and launched by W. T. Stead at a demonstration in Hyde Park on 22 August 1885 (Stead's involvement with social purity is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1). Many of these associations, characterised by what Edward J. Bristow describes as a background of holy militancy, were based in a movement against the sexual double standard which excused the use of (often young) prostitutes in order to preserve the purity of the domestic family.³⁶ Thus, the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869, were seen as legal endorsement of this double standard, being laws in which prostitutes (or any woman suspected of prostitution) in garrison towns were legally obliged to submit to medical examination. The law was controversial in that it excused male sexual incontinence by making the female body the site of disease and by using the apparatus of the prison to control 'unfit' women. More widely, the debate over the Contagious Diseases Acts raised the question of who exactly could be termed 'pure,' and who had the political power to make such definitions. Josephine Butler, the leader of the repeal movement,

argued in 1870 that the impurity of sexual disease was ‘almost universal at one time or another’³⁷ among men and condemned the Contagious Diseases Acts as ‘This legislation of vice, which is the endorsement of the “necessity” of impurity for men, and the institution of the slavery of women.’³⁸ The most extreme development of this argument took the form of accusing the Admiralty of using prostitutes as scapegoats to obscure homosexuality in the navy.³⁹

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The purity societies themselves often played on the trope of moral impurity as actual dirt. In 1908 the National Social Purity Crusade published *The Cleansing of a City*, an anthology of articles addressing a number of ‘impurities,’ primarily the popular reading of youth (‘this pernicious stuff’) and the influx of foreign ‘bullies’ or pimps.⁴³ Two articles by Arnold White and

George R. Sims addressed this racial impurity. White, a notorious anti-Semite, thundered that ‘the exploitation of vice is mainly in the hands of Jews.’⁴⁴ Sims, a journalist and author of detective fiction, was more descriptive and less strident, distancing himself from White’s outburst. Sims was already famous as the author of several articles of social exploration, published as *How the Poor Live* (1883) and *Horrible London* (1889). Both utilised the language of dirt to make their observations of the poor, characterising the slum dwellings of the residuum (itself a materially suggestive term) in terms of their dirt. Middle-class attitudes were defined by reference to a rejection of mess: Sims noted that one slum girl had been improved by education to the extent that ‘She has learnt to be ashamed of dirt.’⁴⁵ Similarly, he argued that gradual cultural change was necessary to solve the problem of poverty, rather than a quick philanthropic solution: ‘Take them from their dirt to-morrow, and put them in clean rooms amid wholesome surroundings, and what would be the result? – the dirty people would not be improved, but the clean rooms dirtied.’⁴⁶ Sims drew upon the argument made by Octavia Hill in a paper on ‘The Importance of Aiding the Poor without Almsgiving’ (1869); Hill argued that the poor needed training before their environment could be changed: ‘transplant them tomorrow to healthy and commodious homes and they would pollute and destroy them.’⁴⁷ Such tropes are typical of the social investigations of the end of the century, betraying a social concern tempered by a very material fear of contamination.

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Smaller organisations such as the Pure Literature Society attempted to police textual impurity.⁵⁰ One of the most public campaigns, however, was that conducted by Mrs. Ormiston Chant against the West End music halls, in particular the Empire in Leicester Square. Chant was a tireless purity campaigner, who from July 1885 to June 1886 addressed 400 social purity meetings, although her real fame came

from the campaign's attack on the Empire in 1894, the promenades of which were used for soliciting.⁵¹ Chant's campaign to close the venue attracted more notoriety when she attended it in evening dress. Chant argued that she 'only did what was dictated by common sense when I found that when I went in ordinary walking dress I was a marked woman,'⁵² although her protest did not stop *Punch* satirising the incident, characterising Chant as 'Prowlina Pry.'⁵³ The terms of *Punch*'s satire are particularly interesting in the context of social purity and detective fiction; rather than emphasising the easy parodic targets of Puritanism or hypocrisy, 'Prowlina Pry' emphasises surveillance and detection, and presents a *fin de siècle* ghost of earlier nineteenth-century objections to the establishment of the police force.⁵⁴ Before the founding of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 and the detective department in 1842, detection was seen doubly as both the intrusive power of the state and as a foreign, un-English espionage; an 1818 Select Committee ruled against the establishment of a police force, using the language of disgust to argue that an efficient police force 'would of necessity be odious and repulsive.'⁵⁵

The characterisation of Chant and other social purists as detectives was appropriate: social purity movements leant heavily on the moral effects of legislation and worked closely with police to attempt to control sexual spaces.

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Reading Purity in Detective Fiction

Why detective fiction? Is there not a sense in which all fiction is concerned with anxieties regarding bodily boundaries, the clean and the unclean, with matter out of place? Such analyses are evident with reference to genres such as the Gothic (with its emphasis on bodily contamination and corruption), and even the most innocent of romances may be demonstrated to shore up a eugenic ideology of suitable marriage and breeding, preserving racial integrity. What makes detective fiction a special case? In the following sections, I argue that such a privileging of the genre in terms of mess is twofold. Firstly, a thematic concern with mess (as in my reading below of Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Man with the Twisted Lip') which plays out Douglas's implication of dirt as a matter of law (that is, a transgression of order); but also a structural affinity between purity discourse and detective fiction, a genre in which nothing is wasted in terms of narrative (since anything may be significant), but whose practitioners carried an unshakeable suspicion that the genre was itself a waste product, a commodity for consumption and disposal.

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j. The most popular Victorian detective fiction (the short stories in the *Strand*, the *Idler*, and other similar magazines) tended to shy away from murder, and built its mysteries around thefts and conspiracies. When the corpse did appear, it immediately became subject to the discourses of science outlined in Chapter 4 – medical materialism at the service of detection (or, perhaps, vice versa) – a move that sought to rob the corpse of its abject status (for Kristeva, the most abject corpse is the one 'seen without God and outside of science').⁶¹

Nonetheless, the shying away from the material body is another manifestation of purity, this time the maintenance of the purity of the reading public inasmuch as these narratives were a defence against a sensationalism that acted upon the body. George Newnes, the proprietor of the *Strand*, made it clear in the first issue that his magazine would develop his programme of publishing ‘cheap, healthful

literature.’⁶² Thus, the idea of maintaining a purity of genre in detective fiction began to appear in the 1890s, at the end of a century in which crime narratives had caused controversy. These narratives include the sensation novels of the 1860s, which caused a moral outcry by portraying criminals as sympathetic, rather than social filth; similarly, the penny dreadfuls of the 1860s onwards were seen as (in the words of contemporary critics) ‘impure literature’ that led young readers to commit crimes. The detective fiction which developed in the 1880s and 1890s, then, was a ‘cleaned up’ version of the genre.

Crime itself is the abject, the disordered. As Kristeva herself argues, the abject includes ‘Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility.’⁶⁴ That fragility is inscribed not only in the disorder of crime, the rupture of order and the appearance of social matter out of place, but also in the material repetitions of the genre, of detective heroes who reappeared week after week in monthlies such as the *Strand Magazine*. The acts of intellectual cleaning performed by Sherlock Holmes and others are never final; they need to be performed again in another four weeks or so, such is the fragility of the law as identified by Kristeva.

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It is tempting to note that, in a Foucauldian manner, Lombroso’s taxonomies did more than categorise offenders; they brought criminal man into existence. Hence, deviance is simply a function of a normative society which creates ‘crime’ in order to define itself as lawful by comparison. Similarly, Michel Foucault famously argued in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), that legal history displays a shift in the later eighteenth century from the model of torture as a means of establishing legal truth, and from public execution (the ‘spectacle of the scaffold’), to a ‘gentler’ form of punishment, the price of which is a constant surveillance and discipline which becomes interiorised and creates the subject as a body of knowledge. Foucault’s argument has informed so much recent criticism of detective fiction (particularly with regard to the detective’s power of sight) that to give a more detailed outline would be to repeat much of these analyses. The key text in this respect is D. A. Miller’s *The Novel and the Police* (1988), which focuses on crime texts to explore the disciplinary apparatus of the novel form itself. Miller’s discussion, although widely influential, is not without its critics; Simon Joyce points out, for example, that Miller’s treatment of *Bleak House* as detective novel is a dangerously reductive analysis which ignores the many disparate elements in

that novel which move against the apparently reassuring closure of the detective story.⁷¹ Subtler Foucauldian analyses have been made by Rosemary Jann (arguing that Holmes's readings are based on certain codes, which are reinforced and inscribed by the very act of reading them), and Ronald R. Thomas and Marie-Christine Leps, who both comment on the interactions between detective fiction and the disciplinary technologies of forensic science.⁷² Yet I would sound a note of caution in enthusiastically embracing Foucault's model, and it is stories like 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' and historical contexts such as the social purity movement that provide us with telling challenges to the influential Foucauldian paradigm. Writing of the developments in crime and detective fiction from the work of Emile Gaboriau onwards, Foucault argues that

by his cunning, his tricks, his sharp-wittedness, the criminal represented in this literature has made himself impervious to suspicion; and the struggle between two pure minds – the murderer and the detective – will constitute the essential form of the confrontation. ... We have moved from the exposition of the facts or the confession to the intellectual struggle between criminal and investigator.⁷³

Unlike the popular criminal heroes of the *Newgate Calendar*, in whom readers could perhaps recognise features of themselves, the criminals and detectives of late Victorian detective fiction were rarefied, almost to the point of becoming reduced to narrative functions, 'two pure minds.' As Foucault puts it, 'The man of the people was now too subtle to be the protagonist of subtle truths.'⁷⁴ Yet as Simon Joyce has convincingly argued, Foucault's move from a model of torture and confession to one of cerebral investigation is ultimately reductive, since the confession was still present in late Victorian detective fiction (and, as I point out in Chapter 2, was necessary to confirm the often seemingly arbitrary findings of the detective's investigation).⁷⁵

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It is tempting for critics of detective fiction to follow Foucault and cast the genre as a game played between two 'pure minds,' involving investigation as opposed to bodily torture; yet to pursue this kind of analysis is to ignore detective fiction's fascination with the (bodily) material, and especially the dirty – traces, marks, clues. In similar vein, Frank Mort has pointed out that whereas Foucault's account 'stress[es] the subordination of legal controls to the growth of more dispersed techniques of discursive power,' the social purity campaign showed the opposite happening in legislative terms, since legal controls became central to their moral aims. As Mort says, 'The law was itself productive: seeking out and redefining forms of dangerous or deviant sexuality, organising the cultural experience of dominated groups and stimulating their political demands. There was no neat distinction between juridical and discursive forms of power.'⁷⁷ This makes the social purity campaign a useful historical context for those who wish to develop the recent critique of the dominance of the Foucauldian model in the reading of detective fiction.⁷⁸ My aim here is not to dismiss Foucault's model entirely – indeed, its emphasis on the politics of order and strategies of categorisation make it indispensable when considering the structural definitions of dirt espoused in the nineteenth century and theorised by Mary Douglas – but to question the model whereby detective fiction emerged as a rejection of the physical body.

Dirt was not only a powerful thematic feature of detective fiction, but can also be read as a structural concern of the genre. David Trotter makes a distinction between mess and waste: while waste implies system and order (since it is a by-product of that system), mess is contingent, accidental. As Trotter argues, ‘mess is what contingency’s signature would look like, if contingency *had* a signature.’⁷⁹ Mess is accidental, and in the nineteenth century became aligned with chance. Yet in the detective story, *nothing* is accidental or left to chance, since the most insignificant signs and tokens become clues. It has been noted that in detective fiction, *everything* has significance, even absence (the famous example of the dog in the night-time in ‘Silver Blaze,’ another story in which Holmes unravels

a mystery armed only with a sponge); as Dennis Porter notes, ‘From the point of view of the art of narrative, nothing in a detective story is insignificant because at worst it will mislead.’⁸⁰ There is, so to speak, no narrative waste. It is thus fitting that a remarkable number of the signs nineteenth-century detectives read are traces of dirt, mess, and litter. At the beginning of *The Sign of Four* (1890), after Holmes has identified Watson’s route to Baker Street by reading the mud on his trousers, Watson challenges Holmes to ‘read’ a watch to see what information he can extract (interestingly, Watson’s challenge is an attempt to purify Holmes by distracting him from taking another dose of cocaine). Holmes produces an accurate reading of the history of the watch’s owner, but not without difficulty: ‘There are hardly any data The watch has been recently cleaned, which robs me of my most suggestive facts.’⁸¹ Likewise, one of the earliest American detective novels, Anna Katherine Green’s *The Leavenworth Case* (1878), turns on the evidence of a freshly cleaned pistol; the fact that the pistol has been cleaned does not fit with the rest of the evidence in the case, and cleanliness itself ironically becomes matter out of epistemological place.⁸² But it is Sergeant Cuff of Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) who best summarises the argument when he describes one of his previous cases: ‘At one end of the inquiry was a murder, and at the other end there was a spot of ink on a tablecloth that nobody could account for. In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world, I have never met with such a thing as a trifle yet.’⁸³ Making dirt signify (making it more than a trifle) is effectively a way of putting matter back into place – in Victorian terms, an act of cleansing. But Cuff’s comment also suggests the ambivalent status of cleaners/detectives, condemned to walk ‘along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world.’ The detective, on the margins of respectable society, was a liminal figure; as Mary Douglas points out, ‘To have been at the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power.’⁸⁴ If detectives cleansed social dirt, then some of that mess moved onto them;

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The recurrence of these themes in Victorian detective fiction can be attributed to an anxiety that the genre itself was waste, something to be consumed and then thrown away, without lasting value. An article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, ‘The

Function of Detective Stories,' (1888) made the ephemerality of such fictions clear:

Detective stories are not things to be sipped at and lingered over; they must be swallowed at one great gulp. To the true devotee of this intellectual narcotic, the words 'to be continued in our next' are a formula of horror In the five minutes' interval between closing the book and forgetting it, we should say to ourselves 'That's a good story,' or 'A first-rate story,' or 'An A1 story,' according to our mood and our vocabulary; if any more particular or exhaustive criticism suggests itself, the book is not a perfect specimen of its class.⁸⁶

The most successful writers of detective fiction in the 1890s were hardly inclined to disagree.

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A certain self-loathing associated with the 'pot-boiler' aspect of the genre explains why so few fictional detectives of the 1890s accept monetary reward for their services, despite the genre's cultural work of establishing an ideal of professionalism. Sherlock Holmes declares that he has invented his profession, the consulting detective, and although he sometimes does accept monetary payment, his reward is more often symbolic (the photograph of Irene Adler in 'A Scandal in Bohemia').

More often than not, detectives of the *fin de siècle* keep away from the contamination of money (in a Freudian

sense, equating money with dirt),⁹⁵ whereas the creators of such figures were all too aware of their own economic necessity of producing this fiction. Detective fiction, perhaps more so than any other popular genre in the late nineteenth century, was a commodity, hence the genre's close relationship to advertising. Just as detective fiction transformed the world into a realm of signs that could be read by those possessing the required competence (the detective), the rise of advertising turned the city into a realm of (literal) signs, often as complex as the detective's clues in their metonymical operations. For example, Allen's detective Lois Cayley (the titular character of *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (1898–99)) takes a confusing ride through London after spending time abroad: 'the polychromatic decorations of our English streets . . . seemed both strange and familiar. I drove through the first half mile with a vague consciousness that Lipton's tea is the perfection of cocoa and matchless for the complexion, but that it dyes all colours, and won't wash clothes.'⁹⁶ But an even more fascinating relationship between the disposable

genres of advertising and detection becomes clearer through a closer reading of the Hudson's Soap advert discussed earlier, by paying particular regard to its structure as an advertisement which itself contains an advertisement. The advertisement displays the structural complexity and features of detective fiction itself, being a text within a text. Tzvetan Todorov argues that the detective novel 'contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation.'⁹⁷ These become aligned with the formalist categories of *fabula* and *szujet*, the distinction between story and plot: 'the story is what happened in life, the plot is the way the author presents it to us.'⁹⁸ The plot of the investigation forms the body of the detective story and it is read by the actual reader; this includes the story of the crime, as read by the detective. Such a structure is replicated perfectly in the advertisement: the *fabula* of the advert on the alley wall is read by the detective; the *szujet* of the whole advertisement is read by the reader of the *Graphic*. Todorov remarks that these stories have no common point (although, of course, it is the work of the detective to bring them together).⁹⁹ There is therefore a space between these two narratives; or, in the context of the Hudson's advert, between the two advertisements – between the image the reader of the *Graphic* sees, and the commodity being sold. This gap is filled in the image by the policeman, standing

between the reader and the poster; more conceptually, the gap between image and commodity is bridged by the idea of criminality as dirt, and of detection as soap. It is not entirely clear what role the policeman plays in this image: has he just put up this poster himself, in the style of the familiar 'Wanted' poster, and is standing back to check his work? Or is he a disinterested viewer, a passer-by, who has been (in Sara Thornton's phrase) 'sought out' by the advertisement?¹⁰⁰ Thornton suggests that one way of reading the Victorian advertisement is as a text that 'inveigles or embraces the reader, drawing him into a certain ideological net'; viewers do not seek out such images, but are rather 'recruited' by them.¹⁰¹ Does the appearance of the policeman here therefore dramatise the effect of the poster on the viewer, turning ordinary consumers into maintainers of cleanliness, policemen of purity? Are we here interpellated (in an Althusserian sense) to become domestic policemen? Certainly, the designers of the image seek to invoke a sense of guilt over dirt, or at least a newly discovered guilt at not using the right soap to deal with it. Whatever the role of the policeman here, this advert is nevertheless itself a complex piece of detective fiction, both thematically and structurally. It has a narrative of a detective or policeman discovering a text, and a visual rendering of one of the commonest metaphors associated with detective fiction, that of throwing light onto darkness, illuminating what had previously remained hidden. Both of these narratives are united by a concern with material and social purity that ranges from the metaphorical (the cleansing beam of the bulls-eye lamp) to the near hysteric (the poster's explicit exhortation to 'cleanse Everything').

¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 10.

² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 214.

³ See Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 134.

⁴ For analysis of the Whitechapel murders, see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (London: Virago, 1992), 191–228; Christopher Frayling, 'The House that Jack Built: Some Stereotypes of the Rapist in the History of Popular Culture,' in Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (eds.), *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 174–215; W. J. Fishman, *East End 1888: A Year in a London Borough Among the Labouring Poor* (London: Hanbury, 2001); Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004), 67–94.

⁵ The centrality of the beam to the advertisement also bears out Sara Thornton's assertion that Victorian advertising 'relied on artificial light' (7), especially regarding the role of the development of gas lighting in extending 'the surfaces available for display, helping to colonize previously unusable darkness' (7). See Sara Thornton, *Advertising, Subjectivity and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: Dickens, Balzac and the Language of the Walls* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁶ Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford* (New York: Collins and Hannay, 1830), xiii.

⁷ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966; London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 44–5.

⁹ Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures* (1898; New York: Cosimo, 2007), 69.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Blackwell, *Scientific Method in Biology* (London: Elliot Stock, 1898), 65.

¹¹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴ Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25. Original emphasis.

¹⁵ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 85.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

³² See the advertising supplements included in the *Strand Magazine*, volumes 1–3 (1890–91).

³³ Margaret Hunt, 'The De-eroticization of Women's Liberation: Social Purity Movements and the Revolutionary Feminism of Sheila Jeffreys,' *Feminist Review* 34 (1990): 23–46. 25.

³⁴ R. F. Stewart, *And Always a Detective: Chapters on the History of Detective Fiction* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1980), 27.

³⁵ Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷ Quoted in Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). 130.

³⁸ Josephine E. Butler, *Social Purity: An Address* (London: Dyer Brothers, 1881), 39.

³⁹ Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 130.

⁴⁴ *Cleansing*, 106. For more on White's anti-Semitism, see H. R. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 159–63. White's contribution was all the more remarkable considering that a number of key religious figures provided forewords to *The Cleansing of a City*, including the Chief Rabbi, who felt obliged to respond to White with a critique based in the Judaic emphasis on moral purity (*Cleansing* xi–xiii).

⁴⁵ George R. Sims, *How the Poor Live and Horrible London* (1883, 1889; New York: Garland, 1984), 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15–16.

⁴⁹ *The Evil Results of Impurity: A Few Plain Words to Boys and Young Men* (London: Church of England Purity Society, 1886), 22.

⁵⁰ Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, 201.

⁵¹ See Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance*, 111.

⁵² Laura Ormiston Chant, *Why We Attacked the Empire* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1895), 19.

⁵³ *Punch*, 27 October 1894, 194. Social purity campaigners were, not surprisingly, not served well by popular culture, being the subject of a number of satirical songs. One example from America, the song 'If You're Fond of Purity' (New York: T. B. Harms and Co., 1893) by Clay M. Greene and T. Pearsall Thorne, sets up the character of the boastful purity campaigner, eventually replacing the titular refrain with 'if you're fond of vanity.'

⁵⁴ Compare, also, 'Prowlina Pry' with 'Miss Van Snoop,' the female detective of Clarence Rook's story 'The Stir at the Cafe Royal,' *Harmsworth Magazine* 1 (1898): 319–22.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Philip Thurmond Smith, *Policing Victorian London: Political Policing, Public Order, and the London Metropolitan Police* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 22–3. On the subject of police efficiency, Smith argues that 'The Victorian bobby may have been portrayed frequently as a figure for ridicule but almost never as a figure of terror. One might even be tempted to hazard the perverse observation that the police enjoyed an extra measure of support because they were not always very good at what they did. A certain inefficiency could be reassuring that the police were not a threat to liberty' (202).

⁶² George Newnes, 'Introduction,' *Strand Magazine* 1 (1891): 3.

⁶³ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷¹ Simon Joyce, *Capital Offenses: Geographies of Class and Crime in Victorian London* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 130–31.

⁷² See Rosemary Jann, 'Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body,' *ELH* 57 (1990): 685–708; Ronald R. Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Marie-Christine Leps, *Apprehending the Criminal: Discourse and the Production of Deviance in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷⁵ Joyce, *Capital Offenses*, 229.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁷⁷ Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral Politics in England since 1830* (2nd edition; London: Routledge, 2000), 116.

⁷⁸ I have already noted Simon Joyce's contribution to this challenge; see also Lawrence Frank's valuable discussion in *Victorian Detective Fiction and the Nature of Evidence: The Scientific Investigations of Poe, Dickens, and Doyle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), in which Frank persuasively suggests that the focus on Foucauldian readings of detective fiction has obscured the Romanticist influences on the emergence of the detective in the nineteenth century.

⁷⁹ Trotter, *Cooking*, 15.

⁸⁰ Porter, *Pursuit of Crime*, 43.

⁸¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (1890; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 13.

⁸² Anna Katherine Green, *The Leavenworth Case* (1878; New York: Dover, 1981), 309.

⁸³ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (1868; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 136.

⁸⁴ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 120.

⁸⁵ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first recorded usage is in the *Times*, 23 November 1967: "'It's the filth,'" cried one of the robbers.'

⁹⁵ For more on money as dirt/taboo in nineteenth-century literature, see Christopher Herbert, 'Filthy Lucre: Victorian Ideas of Money,' *Victorian Studies* 44.2 (2002): 185–213.

⁹⁶ Grant Allen, *Miss Cayley's Adventures: 'The Adventure of the Cross-Eyed QC,' Strand Magazine* 16 (1898): 688–98. 670.

⁹⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction,' *The Poetics of Prose* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 44.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁹ Franco Moretti disagrees with this part of Todorov's analysis, pointing out that the two narratives coincide in the formal device of the clue. See 'The Slaughterhouse of Literature,' *Modern Language Quarterly* 61.1 (2000): 207–27. However, Moretti's reading of Victorian detective fiction is a somewhat reductive one which sees this formal feature as a defining principle of the genre.