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## Material Witness: Occult Affects in the Mystery Fiction of the Fin de Siècle

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

### Material Witness: Occult Affects in the Mystery Fiction of the Fin de Siècle

As the nineteenth century progressed, Spiritualism blossomed from a religious movement to a cultural moment. While it remained an object of faith or ancillary faith, Spiritualism became as well a voice for radical reform, parlour entertainment, means of negotiating an increasingly mediated world, and so forth. Combined with enthusiasm for occult knowledge, Spiritualism offered intricately interrelated modes of narrating our relation to a consistently present past, in light of a rapidly approaching future. My project reads this *fin-de-siècle* fascination as a sensibility. Occult figures and Spiritualist impulses, I argue, provide a vocabulary of feelings evoked in encounters with the mysterious. My dissertation turns to mystery fiction, examining the influence this occult sensibility has in narrating a criminal investigation's material *mise-en-scène*. In my first chapter, I read the corpse in Richard Marsh's thriller *The Goddess* (1900) as the centre of spreading similarities and sympathies, each marked by occult figures. I explore an anxiety toward dissolved boundaries expressed in the violent rupture of a murdered body and the further disruptions of definition and identity it initiates. My second chapter turns to the signature objects of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes canon. I tease out three items from "A Case of Identity" (1891) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) to argue that the affects, history, and individuality of the clue parallel psychometric belief, particularly that our items inhere their vicinity, ownership, and interactions within their soul. Reading Anna Katharine Green's novel *The Filigree Ball* (1903) in Chapter Three, I suggest the locked-room convention anxiously articulates the porous nature of domestic space. I suggest Green's depiction of a room that repeats its violence stages the uncanny domesticity of a family that accepts its haunting. In my final chapter, Algernon Blackwood's ghost story "The Empty House" (1906) prompts a reading of spaces in *The Goddess*, the Holmes canon, and *The Filigree Ball*. Each depicts rooms haunted by disembodied emotion, only available to the detective who adopts a mediumistic, negative affect. Throughout the project, the tales I examine consistently borrow occult affects to imagine a material world unexpectedly charged with lingering history and affective intensity.

## Keywords

Affect theory; Blackwood, Algernon; Doyle, Arthur Conan; Detective fiction; Gothic literature; Green, Anna Katharine; Marsh, Richard; Nineteenth-century literature; Occult fiction; Spiritualism, history of.

## Summary for Lay Audience

This dissertation examines the influence that occult and Spiritualist conventions had in late-nineteenth-century British and American mystery fiction. The *fin-de-siècle* fascination with occult knowledge and Spiritualist mediumship—one means of accessing that knowledge— informs the situations and language that mystery fiction employed to describe the mysterious and the unknown. In particular, mystery fiction shared Spiritualism’s interest in haunted objects and in the lingering presence of the past, and this shared focus emerges in the presentation and investigation of crime scenes. My project analyses the extent to which and the means by which some of the most noteworthy fictional detectives of the time—such as Sherlock Holmes—engage with corpses, crime scenes, and clues. They do so not just with their signature logic and astute observation, but also with a Spiritualist sensibility and a set of emotional responses that were best described in Spiritualist writings of the era. I further explore how detectives’ Spiritualist receptivity enables them to read the physical aspects of a crime for historical traces and emotional traces that are often, and surprisingly, critical to solving the mystery of the crime.

## Acknowledgments

Nineteenth-century psychometry reminds us that no new thing comes into our world without bearing the quiet impressions of its origins. Both the primary materials and all the various hands that shaped them linger in the final work. Its existence intimates the social context and the care and the experience of those involved at every stage. These influences, intentions, and experiences work their way into the grain, and they become, eventually, the soul of this new object. The Spiritualists had no dearth of “proofs” to demonstrate this idea but if they needed yet another example, they need not have looked further than academic work. At every stage of writing this dissertation, its form and development have been influenced by a community of thoughtful, caring supporters for whom I am constantly grateful.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Steven Bruhm, first. Dr. Bruhm’s was the first class I took, coming into my master’s programme, and the care, attention, and enthusiasm of his teaching practice and scholarship inspired my own decision to pursue a Ph.D. I am grateful for his thoughtful, evocative explorations of the Gothic and its intersections with *noir* and nineteenth-century crime fiction. His kind encouragement and incisive responses met my work wherever it had meandered. The interests that sparked this project arose in conversation with him and continued to develop in the same way. Mostly, however, I am grateful for his generosity with time: the long hours over cups of tea as we talked through a confusing question or complex point; the years that he devoted to this project.

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A whole cohort of fellow graduate students made their mark on this project. Their friendship and care, as well as their suggestions and questions brought the following pages into being. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Riley McDonald. His willingness to talk out any idea, no matter how strange or obscure, led me through many of the early briars of research into which I consistently fell. Dr. McDonald’s vast knowledge of horror literature and critical

theory and his enthusiasm for new thought made these discussions a delight. I will always be grateful to the generosity and consistent, encouraging support of Dr. Fred King. Dr. Jeremy Colangelo made enlightening suggestions throughout and his desire to see me through this project and to assist me along the way were invaluable. Many, many others deserve to be mentioned, here, for their thoughtful responses and creative suggestions. My thanks to Meghan O'Hara, Marta Croll-Baehre, Emma Croll-Baehre, Emily Kring, Diana Samu-Visser, and Andy Verboom for all of your help over the years.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary support of my family: my brother Douglas Stuart, my father Roy Stuart, my mother Barb Stuart, and my fiancée Nahmi Lee. Unfortunately, I cannot. As with any mediumistic experience, psychometric or otherwise, there are influences and feelings that will exceed any articulation. Words cannot describe my gratitude. Their backing during this period and their unwavering confidence in the work have brought me through the process. They saw from the beginning what this project could be, and they devoted themselves tirelessly, daily to leading me to the same vista. All my thanks.

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## List of Abbreviations

“BC”	Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet”
“CI”	Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Case of Identity”
“EH”	Algernon Blackwood, “The Empty House”
<i>FB</i>	Anna Katharine Green, <i>The Filigree Ball</i>
<i>GD</i>	Richard Marsh, <i>The Goddess: A Demon</i>
<i>HB</i>	Arthur Conan Doyle, <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>
<i>ML</i>	Ann Leah Underhill, <i>The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism</i>
“MR”	Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual”
“RM”	Edgar Allan Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”
“SB”	Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band”
“SIB”	Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia”
<i>SS</i>	Arthur Conan Doyle, <i>A Study in Scarlet</i>



# Introduction with Interludes: The Hydesville Mystery Theatre

## I. The Occult Detective

Perhaps the most influential mystery story<sup>1</sup> told in the nineteenth century was not, after all, Edgar Allan Poe's genre-defining tale "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841). Perhaps, instead, it was the tale of a pedlar's murder, which was narrated, sporadically, through stranger media than print: jostled furniture, cracked knuckles, and apples discreetly rolled across the room by the mischievous daughters of a blacksmith in Hydesville, New York. Perhaps. If not the *most* influential—admittedly, that point is moot—perhaps the Fox sisters' murder mystery could be said to be, of the two, the more *improbably* influential. Certainly, the pranks of ten-year-old Kate and fourteen-year-old Maggie Fox during their sleepover with a visiting cousin on the night of March 31, 1848, had an inordinate, bewildering influence on the cultural imagination, religious sentiments, political possibilities, and even scientific prospects of the next eight decades, spreading from North America to Great Britain and out across the globe. The form of trance mediumship the Fox sisters developed from these "Rochester Rappings" eventually annunciated Spiritualism's New Dispensation, a burgeoning era of miraculous showings and spectral communications that promised a new theological order. Their performances would join other closet fascinations of the nineteenth-century middle class: the visionary, Swedenborgian writings of Andrew Jackson Davis; the ceremonial Hermeticism and secret codes of Francis Barrett and, later, Eliphas Lévi; the superstitions and beliefs compiled by Catharine Crowe, Andrew Lang, and other collectors of obscure folklore; the mesmeric manipulations, the phrenological theories, and all the various notions that lingered in the margins of natural science. Together these latter had already provided the century with a reservoir of significant tropes, behaviours, images, and identities. Each expressed a powerful and often ambiguous affective charge that we might now

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<sup>1</sup> There are any number of technical terms for the fiction I discuss in this dissertation: mystery fiction, detective fiction, crime fiction, investigation fiction, suspense fiction, thriller fiction (in some cases), sensation fiction (in some cases), whodunit, and so on. I will occasionally turn to detective, crime, or investigation fiction where it seems appropriate and where that quality is the primary focus of my argument. In general, however, I use mystery fiction. This is not due to any preference for that term specifically but because the mystery—insofar as the word combines supernatural/sacred implications with an urgent sense of ignorance—is my primary focus in this dissertation.

recognize as countercultural, that we can call occult. The Fox sisters' story of rural murder would soon join this murky confluence, bursting its banks and flowing out into popular culture at large. Though Spiritualist enthusiasm inundated nineteenth-century society, it bubbled from a relatively humble pair of fountain-heads: a hole in the Foxes' dirt cellar floor, rapidly filling with water, and a bedroom above, rapidly filling with neighbours. The Foxes and their early followers narrated these origins through tropes now legible as investigative. That is to say, Spiritualism only needed a murder mystery to begin its course from midnight tale to the counterculture.

In the chapters to come, I read *fin-de-siècle* mystery fiction by the light of the New Dispensation (which is probably just swamp gas or ball lightning). This dissertation examines an imaginative process of *feeling* our way forward when we are in the dark, bumping up against whatever solid objects we find. My interest lies in how mystery fiction narrates its mysteries and in a vocabulary of feeling that nineteenth-century Spiritualist and occult conventions lend the genre to that end. Due to the central place that Sherlock Holmes occupies within the genre, for many readers mystery fiction instantly evokes the *mise-en-scene* of this period—foggy London streets, gas lamps, steam trains, telegraph wires, house coats, pipes, walking sticks, typewriters—and vice versa. But the genre conjured in this material milieu is not exactly the genre we now find conventional. It is familiar but altered. It is uncanny—particularly insofar as it rehearses and even stages the supernaturally uncanny, despite all its professed devotion to the rational, the physical, and the logical. Mystery fiction was still inchoate at the turn of the century, yet to undergo its Golden Age of the 1920s and 1930s. By 1928, S.S. Van Dine would set down a doctrine of twenty rules, to be followed by any genre-respecting mystery writer. Number eight reads:

The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means. Such methods for learning the truth as slate-writing, Ouija-boards, mind-reading, Spiritualist séances, crystal-gazing, and the like, are taboo. A reader has a chance when matching his wits with a rationalistic detective, but if he must compete with the world of spirits and go chasing about the fourth dimension of metaphysics, he is defeated *ab initio*. (190)

Automatic writing and crystal balls are, perhaps disappointingly, absent from the four chapters of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the readings I offer suggest that the canonical foundation that Van Dine and other generically conservative writers cherished was secretly

alive with a range of Spiritualist and occult images, practices, and logics. Moreover, the conventions that proved resilient in the early experimentation of the *fin de siècle* would come to be canonized and even concretized into generic forms over the next twenty to forty years. Strange subjects found their way into mystery fiction in the *fin de siècle*. Prophetic dreams and god-haunted clockwork, reincarnated patriarchs and murderous houses all can be found—quite literal and apparent—within the purportedly rational stories I discuss in this document. Some of the strangest of these subjects and situations remained, lasting long enough to be fixed into the form as Dame Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, Dorothy L. Sayers, and others would have it. In modern British and American television, there is still a quality of psychometry and wondrously contagious history to the frequently exaggerated feats of crime scene investigators. Rarely is a fictional serial killer hunted nowadays without someone, at some point *getting in his (or her) head*—that is, without some mediumistic investigator acting out their crime in its original location as though residual motive or emotionality remain in place. These scenes trace their ancestry back to the occult bizarreries of the turn of the century when Holmes was as likely to astral project in a tobacco stupor as to track footprints through a snowy garden.

Of course, to refer to the Foxes' first mediumistic performance as mystery fiction is necessarily to read with a certain productive generic tension. In turning back to the events in Hydesville that initiated American Spiritualism, in pointing to the mystery fiction couched within their religious revelations, my intent in this introduction is not to be glib or provocative. That is simply a fringe benefit of my interest in a Spiritualist origin story, however convenient or disputable, that initiates alongside the new faith a reciprocal relationship between investigative and mediumistic narratives. Undeniably the "Rochester Rappings" tell a ghost story, first and foremost. Indeed, they begin life, as it were, as just the sort of typical ghost fiction one would expect from a child at a sleepover: *it happened not so long ago to a nameless traveller on a dark midnight right in this very house!* To read this tale as mystery fiction—or even as a ghost story, for that matter—runs counter to the nonfictional claims that mark most descriptions of the Hydesville haunting. Clearly, it also contravenes those accounts that later sought to instantiate an origin point for Spiritualism in sober, democratic, and decidedly-not-sensational prose. In her autobiography *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (1885), for example, Ann Leah Underhill (née Fox) presents the first

rappings of a new Spiritualist era in a sparse, documentarian style, quite a departure from the canny and conversational prose that characterizes the rest of her book. Without remark or context, Underhill's first chapter drops the reader into a fractured assemblage of sworn testimonials given by ten witnesses to the Hydesville hauntings. We begin with the family matriarch, Margaret Fox, who recalls repeated nights filled with noise and describes the family's furniture, alive with "tremulous motion, more than a jar" (*ML* 6). Margaret recounts hearing Kate as she plays in the dark with the spirit: "Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do" (*ML* 7). It seems this strange communication—a girl and her bed, mimicking each other—inspires Margaret to catechize her troublesome haunting:

I then asked: 'Is this a human being that answers my questions so correctly?' There was no rap. I asked: 'Is it a spirit? If it is, make two raps?' Two sounds were given as soon as the request was made. I then said: 'If it was an injured spirit, make two raps,' which were instantly made, causing the house to tremble. I asked, 'Were you injured in this house?' The answer was given as before. 'Is the person living that injured you?' Answered by raps in the same manner. I ascertained by the same method that it was a man, aged thirty one-years [sic]; that he had been murdered in this house, and his remains were buried in the cellar . . . (*ML* 7)

A new faith emerges in this moment as Margaret Fox demands testimony from rattling furniture and a haunting (or her daughter) answers her back with its history of crime and violence. The ghost of a generic bed-time tale transforms into an impossible communion with the bed itself. Afterward, this exchange will become legible to Spiritualists as an early instance of mediumship. Later séances will centre on just such conversations, often conveying past details through possessed or energetic objects. As in the Foxes' bedroom, the invoked dead will rehearse their individuality and history; they will offer insights into objective truths and narrate one's place within a broader historical process. Significantly, however, Spiritualist practice does not begin here with a revelatory question on the nature of the soul nor with an exploration of the experience of death. Underhill's account offers nothing so transcendental. The movement begins with a criminal interrogation regarding a violent crime.

*Material Witness* reads for a vocabulary of feeling that nineteenth-century occult and spiritualist writings share with mystery fiction. Fringe curiosities like mesmerism, theosophy, Spiritualism, as well as more institutionalized expressions such as the Society for Psychological

Research (SPR) provided the *fin de siècle* with an occult imaginary. Their images and their logics recur throughout the mysteries of this period, often in patchwork variety. In particular, they surface when mystery fiction turns to the physical world and narrates its involvement with the unexplained. Hermeticism and theosophy tended to place emphasis on the transcendental, but many instances of the nineteenth-century occult were attempts to address and conceptualize immanence. The occult often presented the material world as a means or medium of transgression. Mesmerism, for example, suggested that the body, stripped to its most basic material operations, could at once become the vector for various sympathies—with other physical spaces, with other physical bodies. Spiritualism, which centres many of the discussions in this document, conceived of a separated sphere for the dead, often termed Summerland, but its practices and its discourse tended to focus on spiritual interactions with the material world. As a popular belief, Spiritualism foregrounded a series of transgressions into the quotidian objects and spaces of daily life. The dead might return but their presence often took form through another human being or through suddenly lively, noisy furniture. Through ectoplasm, table turning, palpable apparitions, and spirit photography, mediums worked to make the spirit world manifest, to gesture to its immanence in our daily surroundings. Even the famous rappings suggested the forceful interaction of two solid bodies, table and knuckle. But occult discourses also conceived of our physical world as an informational environment, thrumming with events, interactions, and feelings that remained in place as an archive of attachments. Psychometry suggested, for instance, that our objects contained a history of sentiment and use. Accounts of hauntings suggested that our behaviours, moods, and patterns of inhabitation might remain in our daily spaces. The supernatural situated the believer within an archive of feeling, thought, and circumstance that rested eternally in a material immanence. The Spiritualist vision enmeshed the physical object within affective histories and individual relations.

The forensic manner in which mystery fiction approaches our material surroundings presents a clear cognate to this haunting suggestion of latent significance and historical residues, manifest in the physical world. The evidence and crime scenes of mystery fiction retain traces of their use and of their involvement in human lives. The significances these materials offer up to the adept observer might lie in their wear, as with the typewriter in Doyle's "A Case of Identity" (1891), or in their situation in space, as with the upholstered settle in

Green's *The Filigree Ball* (1903), but often these objects and spaces also seem imbued with a narrative impulse. Through experienced interaction, the investigator can engage with the murderer's mindset or the struggles of the dying. Through various encounters with the outré, mystery stories prompt their characters to confront a meaningful world of hidden signs and diffused knowledge, inherited into the physical. My interest lies in the affective force of these encounters and in the structures and implications of their affects. The mystery stories I read throughout turn to spiritualist and occult imagery and situations in order to better narrate our relations to an information-laden world. At times, mystery stories draw upon occult phenomena to narrate creative leaps of logic that often slip from our own understanding. Intuitions and hunches offer one example; gathering the emotional atmosphere of a space offers another. At other times, mystery stories use the images of hauntings to suggest the presence of significance not yet understood or connections sensed but not yet recognized. Under the investigator's scrutiny, these physical objects and architectural spaces betray a material world suffused with occulted traces and transgressive associations. Of course, not all evidence in these stories is physical, neither is all evidence in some manner occult. As we shall see, however, in the breach of a mystery, investigations often find vibrant objects revealing their own individuality, spaces shaped by recollection, and slippages rather than rational interactions.

Reading for moments when mystery fiction draws upon occult situations, feelings, or conventions, we often find that the metaphor carries its own hauntings, its own transgressions. Other feelings and practices, suggestions and impressions cross over into mystery fiction through these conventions and many—too many to cover here—take on their own occulted identities in the mystery genre. My intent is not for this document to be exhaustive so much as suggestive of a certain eerie, uneasy quality of feeling to be found in mystery fiction's engagements with its evidentiary environs. Taken as a whole, the texts that I discuss in this dissertation draw together a recognizably spiritualist sensibility. This comprises a series of conventional figures and situations, but my focus lies in its affects—chiefly feelings of sympathy, perplexity, and disorientation. I read these through a series of encounters with four material witnesses: the corpse, the clue, the locked room, and the haunted crime scene. Of course, any number of other chapters might find a place in this document. We could turn to the weapons, clothing, print ephemera, stolen objects, or natural

artefacts featured in the investigations of this period just as readily and this too would be a curtailed list. In a late addition to the canon, Holmes famously claims, “[t]his agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply” (“SV” 73). To read the *fin de siècle*’s mystery fiction in the right hand and its esoterica in the left is to realize that the scale of the world, the mysteries of its phenomena, and the legibility of the ground beneath Holmes’s feet are rarely truly distinct from the application of ghosts.

In Underhill’s account of Spiritualism’s first night, one mystery entwines inextricably with the other. The Foxes’ neighbours, who have rushed to the cottage to experience something wondrous, must solve what purports to be a murder in order to prove the authenticity of their own experience. Only in doing so can they demonstrate that the pulses sounding through the floorboards and furniture are information and not simply noise. One neighbour, Mr. William Duesler, serves as the narrative’s restrained psychical investigator. In a dry, factual tone which never quite rises to skepticism, he recalls addressing himself to the spirit to ask:

if it had its throat cut, and it rapped as usual. Then, if it was with a butcher knife, and the rapping was heard. In the same way it was ascertained that it was asleep at the time, but was awakened when the knife entered its throat; that it struggled and made some noise and resistance . . . Then I asked about a number of persons, if they knew it, and there was no rapping until I came to Mrs. ----, and when I came to her name the rapping was heard . . . I then asked if it was buried in different points of the cellar . . . (ML 13).

Duesler moves through the cellar until a rap marks the site of a deep grave, at which point his account ends. As we move through the chapter’s various documents, we consistently find a murder investigation’s conventional trappings. Broadly, the documents reveal a murder, stage an interrogation, and locate a crime scene. Given that the room itself answers to Duesler’s and Margaret Fox’s questions, we might even say that the two investigate the space for evidence. Indeed, as I describe in Chapter 4, Anna Katharine Green’s novel *The Filigree Ball* stages just such a collapse of spatial haunting and crime scene investigation. Beyond basic narrative beats, however, we find specific paraphernalia and conventions. Margaret Fox’s interview with the spirit teases out a murder weapon (a butcher’s knife), the motive behind the pedlar’s death (theft), and the precise amount of money he was carrying when he died (five-hundred dollars) (ML 9). Duesler cross-questions the spirit to narrow down the

cause of death, those involved in the cover-up, and the site of the pedlar's burial. Both inquiries push to know the name of the murderer—which is excised from Underhill's account—and attempt to portray certain narrative qualities of his death. Margaret, for example, learns that he was dragged down the steps in the buttery at the back of the house. Duesler recounts the upsetting detail that the pedlar awoke in pain when it was already too late.

These points become an important means of suturing together Underhill's various compiled documents. Deprived of interstitial commentary, the reader must attend to small details in a manner analogous to reading a mystery novel. It is left to us to catch that Lucretia Pulver recalls seeing a pedlar near the house, wearing "a black coat and light-colored pants" (*ML* 15); another boarder, Jane C. Lape, later glimpses a ghost in the house who "had on light pants, black frock-coat, and cloth cap" (*ML* 17). We must make our own sense of Lucretia's claim that she once heard spectral thuds moving from the buttery down the stairs to the cellar. We must glean from context the revolting horror of her account that one day, as she walked across the cellar, she sank to her knees in loose earth. More than simply referencing a criminal investigation, more than utilizing the investigative mode to structure an encounter with the mysterious, Underhill's documentary style challenges the reader to involve themselves. As a popular and spontaneous form of devotion, Spiritualism often took the form of an ancillary faith to other denominational modes of worship. There was no single spiritualist creed. Instead, Spiritualism stressed experience and incident over a coherent, shared theology, dispensations over dogma, and testimonials over testaments. It invited adherents and skeptics alike to become investigators of the afterlife. Fittingly, then, Underhill begins *Missing Link* by implicitly inviting the reader to intellectually and emotionally engage with the murder investigation that will confirm a spiritualist view of the afterlife. To make sense of Underhill's chapter, readers must make sense of the investigation by reading for associations and correspondences; in making sense of the investigation, we practice the associative, sympathetic grammar of thought that makes spiritualist and other occult claims believable and even satisfying. If you will pardon the pun, we solve the crime through *inductive* reasoning. Piecing together the connection, say, between the location Duesler marks on the cellar floor and the grave-dirt Lucretia sinks into, we rehearse the thoughts of the earliest apostolic spiritualists. We inculcate ourselves through readerly praxis. The



investigation into a pedlar's murder, then, is a path that leads further into the occult. If we are ideal neophytes, to be curious of the revelations of this first mystery is to become curious of the other, deeper mysteries promised by Spiritualism's ecstatic, occult prose.

Underhill's chapter prompts our curious engagement through various objects and narrative beats that we tend now to associate with criminal investigations. The mystery fiction of the *fin de siècle* often returns to this same intersection of materiality and supernatural significance. It employs a variety of occult figures and I suggest that these conventions allow the tales I read in this dissertation to conjure an atmosphere of secret knowledge and obscure procedure. Irrational or superstitious though these conventions may be, their implication of a world saturated in sympathetic associations and revelatory truth resonates with mystery fiction and its aestheticized depiction of research and thought. In Chapter 1, for example, I examine the disrupting influence of Philip Lawrence's misidentified corpse in Richard Marsh's sensational investigation novel *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900). A variety of occult figures orbit Philip's body and each rehearses the categorical rupture of the corpse, as it moves from subject to object. As John Ferguson, a retired soldier of fortune, investigates each of these figures in turn, he falls into a series of discomfiting sympathies, some productive and some wildly uncontrolled. I focus in this chapter on a specific triadic form of sympathetic feeling and on the discomfiting slippages between analogous fellow feelings that this structure makes imaginable. Sympathetic moments in this novel tend to move toward a collapse of identities, one into another. They make knowing an anxious proposition. While this transgressive form of sympathy emerges from the corpse, its effects ripple out, propagating through a series of parallel bodies. The twin appears here in response to the corpse's liminality, as does a clockwork idol, possessed by an eastern deity, as does a young automatist, mesmerized and psychically linked to the investigator in the moment of Philip's death. In their uneasy similarities and connections, these occult figures reiterate various forms the affective unease and the confused identity of the corpse. They speak as well to an anxiety regarding violated or untenable boundaries that I begin to discuss through sympathy in this chapter and continue to observe in the chapters following. Though each of these figures is notably associated with the occult, they do not collectively derive from any one specific tradition. Rather, *The Goddess* draws on theosophical concepts, mesmeric

conventions, and folk belief in order to depict a profoundly transformative and unpredictable form of occult sympathy.

In Chapter 2, I turn to a similarly heterogeneous expression of occult imagery: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's canon of Sherlock Holmes stories. If my first chapter is generally interested in occult sympathy—and, particularly, in the slippages of identity that may occur through this affective parallel with another—this chapter concerns itself with a feeling that I term “perplexity.” The term itself is ironic since my use is obscurantist, deviceful, and—charitably—perplexing. Here, I employ the term to refer to a confusing or shocking feeling of being deeply enmeshed and involved in the physical world through a series of unconsidered associations. Of course, this is Holmes's classic manoeuvre, to stun his clients and Watson with a personal revelation drawn from some meaningful material quality in their garments, for example, or from the manner with which they interact with their physical surroundings. Examining two Holmes cases, “A Case of Identity” and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-1902), I read this depiction of a physical world laden with information and history in regard to psychometry, a spiritualist belief that the objects of our lives might inherently recall their manufacture, their movements, their handling, and their attachments. These objects bear mute witness to their own history and only the refined sensitivities of an adept, a psychometer, can commune with their occulted remembrances. Late in the *fin de siècle*, Sir James Frazer would refer to an occult logic of recalled, associative history as “contagious magic,” writing of “the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such a sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other” (*The Magic Art* 174). Psychometry and Holmes pseudo-mediumistic gaze demonstrate a related form of contagious connection. By examining those things we interact with daily, the seer is allowed an insight into ourselves as though all three—investigating subject, object of interest, and physical object of study—were intimately connected. In *The Hound*, this occult imagination of material vectors is further entangled with another occult tradition, the folkloric beliefs of English rural life, and with an aesthetic tradition oriented to the occult, early Victorian Gothic literature.

Clearly, mystery fiction has a syncretic or even mosaic approach to the occult. The fiction I read in this document often draws emblems, conventions, and situations from out of their

original contexts to formulate productive admixtures. In their inscrutable way, nineteenth-century hermetic alchemists and ritual magicians might have been proud. In his book *Modern Occult Rhetoric*, Gunn coins the term “occultic” to refer to the late-twentieth-century dissolution of Spiritualism, theosophy, and the occult from coherent traditions into a slew of affective simulacra:

Though there is an occult tradition—a historical content obsessed with books, spells, and secrets—this has been eclipsed by the form of its rhetoric, which concerns a logic of secrecy, interpretation, and discrimination. Unlike the occult discourse of the early twentieth century, contemporary occult discourse is dominated by image and form. Traditional horror films, for example, are not occult, but they always seem to involve a secret . . . the ability of the protagonist to uncover the secret or vanquish it, and an array of highly evocative images. (xxiii)

I suggest that this process toward an aesthetic imaginary and an evocative vocabulary of feeling actually dates at least as far back as the mystery fiction of the turn of the century. Certainly, the figures and beliefs of multiple traditions have been sublimated and transmuted in these stories and, certainly, they drift from their religious or arcane significance. They become sign-posts that a secret possibility has come into play, that esoteric knowledge has a presence and place in this fictional world. (Usually this place is just at the investigator’s fingertips, though for Richard Marsh’s and Anna Katharine Green’s investigators, it is just under their noses.) In *The Goddess*, the occult figures I have referenced above are not as significant for the traditions they reference—though, we shall see, these have their implications—as they are for a deeper, unsettling sense of occulted slippage between the identities of witness, corpse, murderer, and investigator. In *The Hound*, the references to English beliefs in barghests and old shucks and the Gothic reference to a haunted portrait seem to stray from their normal resonance—that the supernatural might impinge in threatening form into the physical realm. Rather, they signal the unsettling possibility that the material world is capable of manifesting its own returns, recursions, and associations, which defy our grounded expectations. Indeed, the tales discussed in *Material Witness* differ to this end from the modern horror films that Gunn invokes: mystery fiction is itself a narrative of occult discovery. Gunn’s horror films use occult emblems to suggest an atmosphere. Whether or not they employ occult imagery, *fin-de-siècle* mystery stories ultimately suggest that the world is other than it seems. Moreover, they gesture to the means—cognitive, observational,

rhetorical, affective—that we might use to glimpse the world in its hidden informational variety. They provide exemplars for apprehending the obscure correspondences and sympathies that seem to structure our material world. Their forensic narratives call us to witness the manifest immanence of history, death, and knowledge, as well as the possibilities of justice and meaning that they locate in physical surroundings. As we shall see in the chapters to come, mystery fiction suggests that the investigator—through the power of his or her unique vision, thought, and emotional control—might usher us into a better understanding of the true nature of the world and its evident associations.

## II. The Haunted Detective

In July, 1848, the cottage called on the Foxes to return. The family had deserted the home by this point and, as Underhill evocatively records, “[t]he old house at Hydesville was not occupied by any one [sic], save the ‘murdered man’” (*ML* 20). By this point, many in the family had moved into Rochester, where John and Margaret Fox’s eldest daughter, Ann Leah Fish (née Fox and later to take the name Ann Leah Underhill) worked as a piano teacher. Early investigations into the cellar in the spring had failed due to the high groundwater table. Despite the uses of pumps and the best efforts of the Foxes’ son, David, the thaw had meant nobody could dig deeper than three feet in the location marked by the rappings without becoming a dowser as well as a spiritualist. As Underhill writes it, that summer, when the spirits finally call for a renewed investigation, David initially refuses to comply out of embarrassment. He cannot so easily escape the divine work of spectral justice, however. Underhill recalls that:

still the Spirits commanded him to obey instructions, and nightly they would go through the performance of representing the murder scene. (This occurrence was in my brother’s house.) Gurgling, strangling, sawing, planing, and boring; representing the enactment of the horrid crime said to have been committed in the Hydesville house... The sounds as of broken crockery were heard, and as if heavy weights were dragged across the floor. Sawing, planing, digging, boring, groaning, and whispering close to our ears. (*ML* 21-22)

The haunting has followed the Foxes, spreading contagiously, and moved from one haunted house to another. Later in Rochester, before Underhill takes up the mantle of spiritualist

proselytizer, her piano becomes the spirits' plaything: "[t]he lower bass key tolled the death-knell, solemnly and distinctly, while we sat at the table, unable for a time to stir. At length I went into the parlor, closed the piano, locked it, and took the key with me; but the sounds kept on" (*ML* 45). This death knell sounding from within the piano's locked cabinet suggests the haunting's general spread from one porous structure to another. The Foxes' contact, however removed in time, with the domestic failure of the cottage consistently returns in uncanny iterations. Death's incursion into one household spreads out to others, infecting even Underhill's professional means. These returns implicate the Foxes' failure to investigate within a narrative of violence as yet unsolved and unfinished. Slow to address the cottage's original unhomeliness, to lay the ghost by discovering its corpse and demonstrating its violent end, the family is barred from the comfort of its own domesticity.

I discuss a similar nexus of porous structure, spectrality, disrupted domesticity, and cyclical history in Chapter 3. Here, I turn to Anna Katharine Green's mystery *The Filigree Ball*, a novel that begins by denying that its crime scene is haunted though it consistently expresses its mysteries through spiritualist images and concerns. My interest in this chapter lies in the locked-room mystery, a conventional form of murder mystery in which the physical circumstances of the crime seem impossible. The locked-room mystery had an early vogue at the turn of the century and would ascend again as the central expression of the puzzle mysteries beloved by detective fiction's Golden Age authors. I read the locked room perversely, arguing that it expresses an anxiety that we can never secure ourselves against the outside world, that we can never lock a room. In the *fin de siècle*, there were many means of narrating this fear; one strategy that I address briefly in the chapter was to depict a nationally foreign intruder, often a colonial figure drawn back to menace the heart of the empire in true imperial Gothic fashion. *The Filigree Ball* tends to avoid this idiom and, instead, playfully turns to imagery drawn from or analogous to spiritualist conventions. The novel opens with an assurance that Moore House is not haunted and yet throughout its investigation the spectral becomes a central means of depicting the disruptions that repeated violence has ingrained into its domestic spaces. Invoking through analogy and implication a spectre that it has previously denied, the novel haunts its own early chapters with spiritualist discourse and convention. As we shall see in the final chapter of my dissertation, even that denial is a misdirection. In Chapter 3, however, I confine my discussion to the spectral quality of the

architecture of Moore House, the novel's repeatedly violated crime-scene. As with the rattling bed in Hydesville and the avant-garde atonal innovations of Underhill's piano, the failures of domesticity in this locked room surface in energetic furniture. Seats beckon with murderous intent in Moore House and you are as likely to have the ceiling fall down upon you as you are to uncover the building's secrets. Chapters 3 and 4 function as two parts of a discussion regarding the spectral methods that mystery fiction of this era employs to depict spaces altered by violent acts. In both chapters, I discuss disorientation as a falling out of place, particularly when it emerges as a falling out of sync with the affective meaning of a space. The spaces featured in crime scenes and ghost fiction often have a strongly recognizable affective currency that has become somehow overwritten with new meanings and associations, held in tension. Disorientation presents as a period of confusion—intellectual, emotional, as well as physical—in which a resident or an investigator must grapple with one's surroundings and their various orientations. To take the example of the Foxes, these orientations might be to domesticity or to public professionalism (as with Underhill's parlour piano lessons), but they might also be to violence and death, to hostile treachery, to desperation, or even to the history of a different domestic site down the road in Hydesville.

The Fox sisters return to Hydesville in the second chapter of Underhill's memoir. They bring with them, in an informal expedition, a number of Rochester luminaries, each elected by the spirit rappings. On the first day of their renewed investigation, the group digs deeply in the cellar earth and by evening they have discovered trace evidence, "some hair of a reddish or sandy hue, and some teeth" that seem to confirm their interpretation of the spirit's noisy testimony (22-23). That night, the group of investigators rest at David Fox's Hydesville farmstead, which is still active with spectral noise and animated furniture. Returning to the little cottage the next day, these early Spiritualists find a crowd of hostile locals waiting for them, "and among them were sympathizers with the man who was accused by the general public opinion" (24). The farmers berate and mock the Foxes' group of apparition advocates and poltergeist proponents. Even as the Spiritualists reveal their most certain evidence to date, Underhill recalls, the locals threw stones down upon their heads and lobbed rocks into the cellar's dig site. Nevertheless, the Rochester excursion has its answers. The group uncovers what appear to be human bones as well as a bowl that, the spectre mentions in

Gothic graphic detail, had been used by the cottage's previous owners to catch the pedlar's blood. Not to be so easily deterred by these discoveries, the ring of reactionary rural rationalists rises to a riot, descending that evening on the representatives of Rochester's new religion. Only the caring intervention of the spirit world, Underhill tells us, turns the crowd aside and saves the sisters from an unuttered fate. With this final turn, both mysteries have been answered, if not solved. The Fox sisters demonstrate that there is some material basis for their claims to mediumship. They reveal believable—because practicable—evidence to a criminal act. More significantly, they reveal evidence of the continuance of the soul after death. They have solved the outrage of a long-buried murder (though their legal case looks less than promising) and, in this forensic work, have demonstrated the explanatory power of the Spiritualist dead.

Throughout this dissertation my attention returns to the means that the spectral and the occult provide mystery fiction for narrating various possible engagements with the physical world, particularly in the moment that one's surroundings provoke our closer scrutiny. On one level these means are often simple and directly allegorical. They tend, foremost, to describe our reactions to the appearance of the truly unthinkable or unexplained—for example, an individual's passage into death. The bodily sympathies and similarities that I track in the first chapter tend to rehearse the social confusion and collective shock of a tragic event through a fairly metaphorical expression of occulted connections, nightmarish, disorganizing, and indefinable. Most memorably, the revelatory experience of seemingly star-crossed love appears here as a telepathic bond or affective insight, discovered during a moment of crisis. At other times, the supernatural offers a means of narrating intellectual work, describing genius and staging those fascinating, spooky qualities of thought that seem to stray into the supernormal—intuitions and insights, hunches and “feelings.” The mediumistic affective state of disorientation—at least, as I describe it in Chapter 4—rehearses, in magical form, the axiom that a successful investigator must see the world as it is, avoiding the entanglements of any social association or spatial expectation. William E. Connolly, in different contexts than these, suggests that “culture involves practices in which the porosity of argument is inhabited by more noise, unstated habit, and differential intensities of affect than adamant rationalists acknowledge” (*Neuropolitics* 44). Ripped from Connolly's larger argument, there is a quality of spectral mystery to this line. Superficially, the raps, repetitive actions, and disembodied

emotions of a haunting align well with his “noise, unstated habit, and differential intensities.” More meaningfully, however, by pointing to affect’s tendency to seep into and shore up the cracks of our apparently rational systems of thought, Connolly has also provided an ideal explanation for the support that hauntings provide to mystery fiction’s narratives of intellection. Hauntings and occult associations often make acceptable, accessible, or even barely noticeable all the little cracks in the detective’s work, the insights and intuitions that refuse easy categorization.

The nineteenth-century supernatural world serves in these texts as an imaginative site in which one might productively express complex, indefinable, or barely-parsed attitudes toward the mysterious or the unknown, made manifest. The occult’s conventional association with immanence and transgressive movement allows its referents to suggest a multivalent set of impressions. They conjure, in the texts I read, feelings of ignorance, unknowability, irrationality, and mystification. They also suggest a latent access to unexpected sensual and intellectual experiences, often those of others. That observation may seem elementary (to borrow Holmes’s diction). However, one of my first, pleasant surprises in beginning this project lay in the sheer range of felt experiences—beyond fear, terror, and melancholy—that we can find in mystery fiction’s depictions of hauntings. Perhaps it is not surprising that a religious philosophy constructed on popular assumptions of history’s persistent presence might have provided nineteenth-century authors with modes of thinking through our relation to a consistently present past, in light of a rapidly approaching future. Less expected—or at least more curious to my mind—are those scenes in which a haunting may speak to a quiet concern that our objects might recall our sentimental attachment or might betray our confidences. Moreover, the spectral and the occult always seem to slip from simple, structured meaning into wilder forms of associational significance. In Marsh’s novel, telepathy initially seems to be simply an occult expression of the love-at-first-sight trope or, more specifically, the conventional passion of two characters thrown together by horrifying circumstance. As the relationship wears on, however, this initial attraction is ironized and problematized, confused and strained. By the case’s end, the reader may be left wondering whether the character’s love and their continued relationship are not merely the most convenient and least concerning category in which to place an ineffable and unexplained connection.



My second surprise lay in the ethereal, spirited nature of those feelings and images which tales of investigation recall from the supernatural world. In describing the affects, emotions, impulses, sensibilities, disciplines, contents, postures, manners, attitudes, positions, and general heebie-jeebies that populate this dissertation, I have worked to sketch—in necessarily partial forms—the drift of narrative moments that begin as metaphors for informational traces but take on their own strange implications. The significance of occult conventions, the feelings they invoke, and the information they index tends to drift and morph, developing through unanticipated trajectories. Like any haunting, they are difficult to locate; like any occult secret, they are difficult to know for long. Thus, while I am interested in how these novels portray the material world as a register of affects and an affecting storehouse of information, I am drawn primarily to reading for general attitudes or manners of approaching that archive. In his now classic examination of affects, *Parables for the Virtual*, Brian Massumi considers affects freed from signification, at once pre-, post-, and a-subjective:

In the absence of an asignifying philosophy of affect, it is all too easy for received psychological categories to slip back in... Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But... emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders.

An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity. (27-28)

The readings that I provide throughout this dissertation attend to affects, such as they are, but they concentrate primarily on the feelings and impulses that accrete within affective exchanges and, primarily, to a range of situated feelings toward the physical world. My focus on the unexpected, supernatural quality of latent information in fictional investigations largely necessitates this. In Massumi's work, emotion constructs narrative and identity from the wild briar of affective interrelations and entanglement. I am interested, here, in how mystery fiction depicts that briar but I am more interested in how the investigators measure and map its wilderness. That is, I am concerned throughout with the ways in which detectives seem to construct history and order out of a mysterious world and with the ways in which this world can reorder their feeling and thought.

While I discuss individual emotions—anxieties, fears, intuitions, compulsions, and all the greatest hits of the Gothic repertoire—my general interest lies in the situating nature of certain affective complexes. The readings that I offer here have been informed by the critical practices and interests of Sara Ahmed and Sianne Ngai. Both thinkers deploy a series of attitudes, impressions, and recognitions that are not unnameable nor purely pre-subjective but neither are they directly productive of a specific emotional reaction. Both of these writers tend to read for situations of feeling—a textual node or social complex—and then attend to their branching influences. To trot out an old joke, if their writing is about a certain feeling, it is ultimately “about” that feeling; it encompasses that feeling’s shifting identity as it moves out from an origin point into the social sphere. These thinkers make legible the myriad, felt relations which contextualize an affective moment, tracing them to their furthest, marginal implications. Early in the affective turn, Ahmed turned, herself, back to the great turn-of-the-century philosopher of feeling, William James. Taking up his understanding of emotion as a profoundly embodied act of oriented response, she writes “[e]motions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of ‘towardness’ or ‘awayness’ in relation to such objects... Emotions involve such affective forms of reorientation” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 8). This project is interested in a series of similar, directional feelings or attitudes toward physical immanence. Each of the readings that I present describe certain material emblems of a mystery—the corpse, the clue, the scene of the crime—as vectors of feeling through which we might imagine, predict, or even recall the feelings of others. Reading for these, I begin to theorize specific manners of approaching material immanence that I borrow from Spiritualist and Occult writings. I turn to these manners and felt situations—sympathy, perplexity, disorientation—because these are productive means of interrogating precisely what is compelling in mystery fiction’s narratives of research and why these feelings, which stage the confusions of learning and knowledge synthesis, should so seamlessly slip into the supernatural.

Occult sympathy, the first affective mode that I address, presents a fantastic form of transgression into the experiences of another. The sympathy I describe in Chapter 1 forms triadic social structures of feeling. It arises, seemingly spontaneously, between characters as they feel in parallel toward an intensely affective third figure—a mutilated body, let us say, hypothetically. Through tropes of telepathy and supernatural mimesis, sympathy emerges in

Marsh's novel as a manipulatable but turbulent and deeply discomforting form of feeling. It prescribes an emotional field that is defined, almost entirely, by slippages and breaches of identity. It may allow a form of knowing but its knowledge is neither coherent nor concrete. I then move to perplexity, a term I use to describe the shock of awareness that we are surrounded by and constantly creating meaningful objects, intentionally or not. The revelations promised by psychometry present an early conceptual form of what we now consider as New Materialism by recognizing the experiences of objects and surroundings. In both mystery fiction and psychometric belief, the self-identity that we construct from our objects, the sentimental attachments that we ascribe to them, the uses to which we put them conspire through unconsidered, incremental acts to form an object's own identity, legible and individual. Our objects tell our stories, whether we want them to or not, and they speak to our involvement in a tangle of object-relations. Building from this sense, I turn in the last two chapters to consider one form of disorientation. As with perplexity, I use the typical definition of disorientation with some loose creativity. Here, I adopt the word to describe a haunting, often mediumistic form of displacement. To be disoriented in Moore House, the Gothic mansion of Green's novel, is not to be lost within a space but to be overcome by the tensions or confusions of affective association that make a space legible on a variety of emotional registers. A crime scene was once defined by some other trait and the atmospheric tensions between that original space and this violent rupture situate the investigator in a complex of feeling. A haunted house is still a house though it may be abandoned, and many of the haunted houses of the *fin de siècle* are haunted by domestic behaviours and logics that have curdled over long durations. To be receptive to these situational affects—contradictory orientations and tense lines of feeling—requires certain situational affects of investigator as well.

Of all the investigations that I discuss in this dissertation, the story that I read in Chapter 4 most closely resembles the Fox sisters' early forensic work in Hydesville. In this chapter, I shift to directly exploring a *fin-de-siècle* ghost story, "The Empty House" by Algernon Blackwood (1906). Blackwood's tale depicts an investigation into the trace evidence, however spectral, left behind by a historic crime. As in many ghost stories and many mystery stories, it is the means of researching this crime and of locating this evidence, rather than the crime itself, that provides the tale with its central interest. I use this story to reflect back on

some of the cases I have discussed so far—*The Goddess*, *The Hound*, and, at some length, *The Filigree Ball*—to read for a specific set of postures that each stages when imagining the significance of a place. More specifically, this chapter considers the crime scene and the haunted house as essentially similar spaces, each haunted by a lingering history of violence or rupture. Though these hauntings may be expressed with differing emphasis, both genres imagine a lingering, informational quality inherent within spaces that have staged intense emotions or prolonged behaviours. They utilize this affective topography to tell a tragic story—often of criminal acts—through a series of highly localized narrative impressions. Dry as this explanation may sound, my focus lies primarily in the emotional atmospheres, positive or negative, that we often lend to spaces in fantasies of personal connection. This chapter describes the informational excess of a space in three parts: first, loosely considering some of the scientific and cultural concerns at play in the nineteenth-century understanding of spatial significance; second, examining the emotional work of settling into a space and the depictions of the process common within late nineteenth-century ghost fiction; last, comparing mediumistic affective states with those that the detective must often embrace in order to access the history of a space in all of its spectral excess. This last movement sees the return of Ann Leah Underhill and her memoir *Missing Link*. Indeed, there is any number of interlocked recurrences and concerns that mean these chapters might have appeared in any sequence. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 all share an interest in a triadic structure of sympathy. Chapters 1 and 3 both examine our unsettling anxieties toward unseen connections and unreliable barriers. Chapters 2 and 4 explore similar concepts—our attachments to the material world, our fantasy that these might exist within that world rather than within our mind—but their methods and attention differ. The former reads objects according to the underlying assumptions of psychometry and Thing Theory. The latter reads crime scenes with an eye to our more phenomenological orientations to environment. Chapters 3 and 4 concern themselves with the potential that a violent history has to significantly alter our feelings toward architectural structures. These final chapters examine our struggles to relate to such historically ruptured spaces and to build an identity and a position within them.

For much of this dissertation, then, I read the forensic plots and investigation scenes that are conventional within mystery fiction for their spectral sensibility and occult impressions. In turning more directly at times to texts that openly consider haunting—as I have with

Underhill's Spiritual memoir in this introduction and Blackwood's ghost story in my final chapter—my intent is not for this dissertation to break from one methodology into its contrafact. Rather, each of these stories resonate on multiple registers of generic form. The readings I offer throughout seek to listen for their harmonic conventions, the tones that emerge from modulating genres. As Michael Cook observes of two of mystery fiction's nineteenth-century innovators, "Poe and [Wilkie] Collins's work stand at the intersection of Gothic, sensation and detective fiction crucially carrying forward elements of the fantastical and supernatural into the new form" (*Detective Fiction* 6). In Underhill's memoir, the pedlar's murder follows a set of tropic beats, legible as a standard local ghost story: the outrage of hospitality, betrayed; the immediacy of the location and the not-so-distant past; the haziness, at least at first, of any dates, details, and identities, and so on. The appearance of an unruly mob of violent opponents, bent on a prejudiced form of justice, also has a quality of Gothic excess in its thoughtless, threatening presence.<sup>2</sup> Much of the work of this dissertation takes place within the borderland of occult fiction, ghost fiction, Gothic fiction, and mystery fiction. Often, I attend to figures and situations that can be read multivalently, according to various contexts and traditions. The twin, for example, recurs throughout nineteenth-century mystery fiction. We can think of the Sholto brothers and the Stoner sisters in the Holmes canon, the doomed siblings of Charles Felix's *Notting Hill Mystery* (1865), or the Lawrence brothers in *The Goddess*, a less literal example. In Marsh's novel, I read the image of the

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<sup>2</sup> Drawn from its own context and compared synthetically with texts from the end of the century, as I have been doing, the story also shows strange parallels to Holmes's relation to the countryside. The horrors of a pedlar's murder, late at night in rural upstate New York, recalls Holmes's unsettling pronouncement on provincial privacy:

the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside . . . filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser. (*CB* 280)

Odd parallels tend to arise with these trans-historical, trans-generic, and entirely convenient comparisons. Underhill's narrative of thoughtful, urban agents of justice, not necessarily aligned with the law, who take up brief residence in the country in order to investigate a Gothic haunting has an unexpected parallel in Doyle's *HB*. Here, the organizing method of investigation is flipped. Each must deal with a credulous rural populace. Dartmoor, while Holmes walks it, supports any number of local believers in its proto-folk horror. Hydesville is home, it seems, to a staunchly rational and Christian crowd, not welcoming to this new sect of superstition. While Holmes is staunchly rational and suggests a fantastic form of cognition, the Foxes are staunchly mediumistic, suggesting devotional revelation. These comparisons are ethereal, liable to dissipate at the slightest gesture but they suggest a shared ancestry of investigative tropes that, it is imagined, might build sense through structured knowing out of spaces and figures that were culturally less valued and less considered.

twin alongside cultural beliefs as they were taken up and compiled by Catherine Crowe in her popular work *The Night-Side of Nature* (1848). I turn as well to research by Sir Francis Galton that eerily returns later in the century to similar anxieties around the doubled body through a more scientific lens. A similar mixture of science and folk-belief also informs the telepathic trance-states and automatism rehearsed throughout the text, which draws on the occult-curious writings of the SPR. Twins, of course, have their Gothic implications as doppelgangers, their high occult implications as hermetic emblems of material dualisms, their folkloric implications of ominous fetches, wraiths, and soul-bound doubles. We could go on, I am sure, but my point is not simply the elementary observation that figures and emblems may have multiple significances. Rather, to parse these significances, as I occasionally do throughout, is a synthetic act when reading a genre that turns to the occult generally as much as to an aesthetic sensibility as a form of knowing. The twin—or the haunted crime scene or the mesmerized somnambulist—arises in mystery fiction with specific associations and with peripheral, latent impressions that branch out to various traditions and genres of an occult imaginary.

Ultimately, to draw clear boundaries between a Gothic complex and a ghost narrative, a mystery investigation and a spiritualist inquiry is, itself, a deeply Gothic task—that is, problematic and revelatory of anxieties toward transgressions. Gothic fiction and ghost stories have their own complex and entwined generic past beginning well before the nineteenth century. Both genres, and especially the latter, became aesthetic expressions of Spiritualism’s cultural influence after 1848. They determined, clearly, popular Spiritualist understandings of the spectral; they broadcasted Spiritualist beliefs and practices—such as the séance—out to a general public; and they staged, for critics of the faith, the very fictionality and ridiculous melodrama that occasionally marked that devotional engagement. As David Punter observes, the Gothic, in particular, has a complex relationship between its extravagant mimesis and the outside world: “[t]he Gothic condition is one in which no excess, no transgression—for Gothic is above all a literature of transgression—that can occur to the dark imagination can fail to find its equivalent in the ‘real world’” (3). My interest in occult sensations lies in the new qualities to haunting, mesmerism, trance, and folk belief that these feelings bring into sharp relief. For example, a focus on occulted history and Spiritualist emotional discipline in Chapter 4 allows us to more readily consider hauntings of

feeling and emotion, outside the traditional individuality of the ghost, a coherent soul lingering between spheres. As we shall see throughout, Spiritualism and other forms of the occult employed emotional response and emotional discipline as means to recognize an associational grammar that connected submerged meanings beneath our normal perceptions of the world. Not only would an adept have to look more closely into their own ignorance, they would have to feel their way forward, following impressions and impulses, intuitions and predispositions. In centering my readings on a spiritualist sensibility, then, rather than a Gothic or ghostly one, I do not intend to disregard the other generic intensities in these texts. That said, these are shifting sands that can only be mapped provisionally and in situ within each text and even each scenario.

Fortunately, these territories have been charted before and my study, with its specific focus on affective engagements, only attempts to add some local details and marginal notes. Janet Oppenheim's 1985 monograph *The Other World*, which studied the historical impact of Spiritualism as an American import to English society, initiated an ongoing wave of histories examining incrementally more specific aspects of the faith and its period. Marlene Tromp's *Altered States* (2006), which presents Spiritualism as a field for personal and sexual exploration and for temporary cultural flux, has proven particularly successful. Molly McGarry's *Ghosts of Futures Past* (2008) reads the journals, editorials, and philosophical treatises circulated by American Spiritualists during this period, developing the ghost as a figure that can bring to light latent historical political tensions. In particular, McGarry presents Spiritualism's enthusiastic engagement with philosophical experimentation as a secular rather than religious movement, one which might work to modulate a diverse array of activist, political, and religious interests. These publications have not noticeably slowed. In 2017, Simone Natale published *Supernatural Entertainments*, a reminder in the form of an eminently readable cultural study, that Spiritualism's appeal lay as much in its theatrical charisma, its promise of titillating enjoyment and thrills, as it did in its more philosophical revelations of divinity and history. Courtenay Raia's lengthy 2019 intervention, *The New Prometheus*, delves into the work among chemists, psychologists, physicists, and anthropologists, often working in concert with the SPR, to create a gnostic science, which would have been inclusive of Spiritualist belief and more unified across fields of inquiry. But Oppenheim's work also took place at the forefront of a broader shift that would become

recognizable in the 1990s as a spectral turn. The success of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* would have a signal impact on the expanded use of hauntings and the figure of the revenant across various fields of research in the humanities and social sciences. For one example, we could turn to Andrew Smith's *The Ghost Story, 1840–1920*, which is a foundational text for the new historicist style of spectral criticism and which argues that the ghost story served primarily as a Victorian genre of epistemological inquiry. Observing that the Victorian period saw extreme fluctuation in public markets, Smith notes “that images of spectrality take on a peculiarly economic dimension during such periods” (5). In doing so, he reads the ghost story as a locus for debates on the morality of the new laissez-faire political climate.

It would be an extraordinary task to provide even a sense of the most prominent among these and so I will instead speak to a few studies that have been particularly helpful or influential to the formation of this dissertation. Roger Luckhurst's book *The Invention of Telepathy* develops a far-reaching cultural study of the early struggles to define science and pseudo-science, productive and unproductive belief, faith and superstition in the *fin de siècle* from a highly specific focus: a brief popular interest in thought-transference and unexplained sympathies. His scholarship informed, most obviously, the first chapter of this document but its interest in liminal forms of knowing, those that often fall between established ideologies or cultural modes, further informed the remaining chapters included here. Michael Cook's book *Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction and Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story* similarly have their momentary, obvious impact—in Chapter 3, when I turn to the locked room—but parallel many of my interests across the dissertation. I am particularly fascinated by Cook's work to provide a diagrammatic, structural understanding of the locked-room mystery. His study, which equates mystery fiction's rigorous structures with the strictures of a sealed space, is the first book-length study on that subgenre in English. Chapter 3 attempts to complicate and parse his elegant diagram in light of the spectral rhetoric of Green's *The Filigree Ball*. In doing so, I am drawn to the hybridic readings of his second book, where he argues that “if the detective story has haunted itself throughout its life, it too, has been the subject of a haunting by the supernatural tale” (*Narratives* 5). One of the more common touchstones among current scholarship in English on the nineteenth-century ghost story is Srdjan Smajić's *Ghost-Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists*, a study that focuses particularly



on the central place that our sense of sight, as a bodily phenomenon and a scientific marvel, maintained for decades in discussions of the verity of ghosts. Smajić's focus here runs rather tangentially from my own but his discussions of Sherlock Holmes as a seer and a medium directly shape my reading of *The Hound*. Though I do not focus on ghost-seeing, his work informs my own thought on a parallel occult practice during the nineteenth century, psychometry. Finally, Jen Cadwallader's *Spirits and Spirituality in Victorian Fiction* has a quiet, haunting presence within most of this document. Cadwallader's argument charts the shifting signification and popularity of the ghost in nineteenth-century English culture, directly linking that popularity to a public ambivalence toward the institutionalized authority of science and religion. For Cadwallader, the ghost story elicited "the thrill, not of fear or of nostalgia, but of triumph . . . over prescriptive authority, in this case, the scientific and theological authorities that were increasingly classifying and codifying human experience" (6). This specific suggestion, which echoes many of the arguments made by Luckhurst, that the ghost might offer a cite of subtle, productive control for the late-century individual over specific forms of knowledge and classification, might even fill in gaps between modes of knowing and feeling, provided the impetus for much of this project.

Really, though, my earliest intimation as to how this project might function and what it might involve itself in articulating emerged from an early reading of Underhill's first chapters, as I have laid them out in this introduction. Specifically, the initial glimmerings lay in a strange narrative parallel that I noticed while reading Underhill's account of the night of Spiritualism's nativity. At that time, I was re-reading the early cases in the Sherlock Holmes canon, specifically *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Amidst the rappings, comings, and goings, while Margaret Fox interrogates a bedstead and Mr. Duesler wanders a dirt-floor cellar, candle in hand and playing a cosmic game of warmer-colder, Underhill reveals a great deal of highly specific information that would seem to utterly unseat any attempt to argue that this was a serious attempt to involve the reader through the narrative apparatus of an investigative plot. As readers, we learn early on that the pedlar

was murdered in the east bedroom about five years ago, and that the murder was committed by a Mr. -----, on a Tuesday night, at twelve o'clock; that he was murdered by having his throat cut with a butcher knife; that the body was taken down cellar; that it was not buried until the next night; that it was taken through the buttery, down the stairway, and that it was buried ten feet below the surface

of the ground. It was also ascertained that he was murdered for his money, by raps affirmative. (8-9)

From the ninth page on, then, little mystery is left as to what precisely happened to the pedlar, how he was killed and why and by whom. We could compare this moment, however, to the wealth of details thrown casually about by Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* when the reader is finally allowed a glimpse of his fluency with a crime scene:

the murderer was a man. He was more than six feet high, was in the prime of life, had small feet for his height, wore coarse square-toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar. He came here with his victim in a four-wheeled cab, which was drawn by a horse with three old shoes and one new one on his off fore-leg. In all probability the murderer had a florid face, and the fingernails of his right hand were remarkably long. These are only a few indications, but they may assist you. (33)

There are differences, clearly, between the two passages and the role they fill within their respective texts. Underhill's description provides not only a narrative sense of the events but far more salient information for the reader to understand an act of violence in context. The reader recognizes the reasons for the killing and learns enough of the killing's features to recognize the meaningful moments as they are rehearsed through a haunting. In Doyle's passage, we receive an overwhelming number of apparent trivialities, information that does not seem to add to an actionable description of the murderous antagonist. We are, nevertheless, similarly primed by these details to recognize their meaningful recurrence later in the text. But my small epiphany was simple enough. Both of these texts deploy a great deal of information at the beginning of the mystery to gesture toward a second mysterious component within their narrative. Frequently, it is not only the crime that we want to understand but the investigator's strange means of explication. The central crime is of interest in both of these texts but so too is the means by which Margaret Fox and Mr. Duesler and Sherlock Holmes arrive at their information. The mystery stories I treat in this dissertation will repeatedly stage similar situations. Time and again, we are made to feel the eeriness of research, thought, and understanding. We are prompted to feel the perplexity, the disorientation, and the struggle to sympathize that become a numbed process of thought. We are led to feel the eerie mystery of obscure history, yes, but also of all the associations, intuitions, and revelations that are necessary to bring occulted knowing into the light.

## Chapter 1

### 1 Sympathy for the Demon: Fellow Feeling and Occulted Connections

In Ferguson's dream, there are two individuals in the room. In reality, there are four or, quite possibly, five but, for the purposes of his investigation and for ours in this chapter, we begin with these various characters collapsed into only two figures in Edwin's suite as one of the Lawrence brothers is murdered. A jerking, screeching creature dressed in ethereal robes whirls around Lawrence, attacking him from every side. As he falls, the creature bends down and continues to butcher and mutilate his corpse. Richard Marsh's *The Goddess* returns to this scene four times. First, it appears to Ferguson in this form, a vision, a revelatory act of witnessing before the case has even begun. Second, it is reconstructed haphazardly as Ferguson's and Hume's examination of the body. Third, the novel's primary suspect, the innocent amnesiac Bessie, physically reenacts the scene as an illegible wash of sympathetic connections. Fourth, Edwin Lawrence, believed to be dead, returns to explain what has occurred. Each new iteration has its generic conventions—a prophetic dream, a crime scene investigation, an anxious rehearsal, and a Gothic confession—that draw new characters into the proximity of the corpse and trace its mysterious effects. This chapter reads Philip Lawrence's corpse as the centre of a range of uneasy similarities and sympathies repeatedly marked by occult figures. It maps an intricate system of liminalities that are produced through mystery fiction's renovation of Gothic convention. These liminalities find their expression through historical discourses of Spiritualism and mesmerism. By way of this mapping, I begin to explore an anxiety toward dissolved boundaries that is expressed in the violent rupture of a murdered body and in the further disruptions it may initiate. Throughout the first section of this chapter, I explore the conventions and context that inform the strange influence of Philip's corpse on those caught in its proximity. In the second section, I attempt to trace this influence to its margins by examining an uncomfortable, communal reaction toward the ruined body. My broader interest lies in the manner by which a detective novel might produce sympathies in the anxiety of their connections and similarities, of their origins and implications. Detectives, as we shall see, often utilize and manipulate sympathies in

questionable ways. The investigator's emphasis on discernment and organization through research, however, and sympathy's often oneiric slippages make for an oddly ambiguous portrayal of a generally positive form of feeling. In the pages of *The Goddess*, sympathies become occulted as telepathic connections, identical twins, and automata, both corporeal and mechanical. These limit-cases that straddle the boundaries of nineteenth-century psychology and the occult prove to enact their own sympathies in a spiraling set of encounters between characters as the mystery slowly spreads out into London.

## 1.1

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1928, the *Daily Mail* published a set of three brief remarks made by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the cultural impact Spiritualism was to have on England in the coming years. The comments display all the easy expansiveness of an enthusiast. In fewer than 250 words they range from mental health and demon possession to the prosecution of “respectable women and householders” as mediumistic frauds to the renewed contact Spiritualism could offer to the divine (“Sherlock Holmes as Clairvoyant” 5). The news-piece focuses particularly on the legal benefits made possible by society's eventual and assured acceptance of the spiritual sciences. Doyle predicts:

We shall have a clairvoyant in attendance at every police station and every offence will be hunted down so that crime will become very difficult. if [*sic*] not impossible... Clairvoyants will often be able to tell who actually committed a crime. If you give them a portion of the dress of a murdered person they are frequently able to throw themselves back to the time of a murder and get a kind of intimation of the circumstances of the murder and how it was done.

Even now the police use clairvoyants surreptitiously in many places—in the intervals of persecuting them. (“Sherlock Holmes as a Clairvoyant” 5)

For modern readers, as for the *Daily Mail*'s contemporary audience, the curiosity of these statements—at least, such as might catch attention for a filler piece of Saturday newsprint—lies outside the statements themselves. It emerges, instead, from an implicit *chiaroscuro*: the long shadow of Sherlock Holmes contrasted against Doyle's writing in

*Light* as a spiritualist luminary or, possibly, the enlightened scientism of deduction contrasted against the dim credulity of night-side superstition. Doyle had once been considered, as John Dickson Carr observed, “the apostle of common sense” (274); by 1928, he had wryly assumed the title “St. Paul of the New Dispensation” (Lellenberg, Stashower, and Foley 656). No matter their shared investigative focus, his quotes in *The Daily Mail* are touched with apostolic fire even as they coolly avoid discussion of his literary legacy. Nevertheless, the article begins by paralleling yesterday’s consulting detective and tomorrow’s consulting clairvoyant: “SHERLOCK HOLMES AS A CLAIRVOYANT. / Sir Conan Doyle Visualizes a Crimeless World. / Police Station Spiritualists” (*Daily Mail* 5). The three-tiered headline expresses a continuing sense of cultural disbelief. It evokes the central, ironic fissure in the public life of a noted medical authority, sportsman, journalist, and author of deductive investigation narratives: namely, that a man of such practical interests and material successes—a celebrity of grounded thought—should become entranced by so ethereal and often groundless a faith as Spiritualism. As Carr would write in his biography of Doyle: “Conan Doyle, of all people?” (274).

That being said, to distinguish between “the apostle of common sense” and the apostle of spiritualist research—to stage between the two a tension for attention, as this news-piece does—might mean accepting a dichotomy born of institutionalizing suspicions rather than of discrete historical divisions. Spiritualism, after all, cannot be easily dissociated from its more practical engagements. In music halls, mediums offered miracles on demand; spirits appeared as large as life and in full view of a crowd of corroborating witnesses. As Simone Natale has observed, “[t]he intermingling of performance and claims of authenticity, of spectacle and religious experience, is not a contradiction in séances; on the contrary, it represented the very core of the spiritualist experience” (240). Similarly, the appeal of the parlour séance, for Doyle as for tens of thousands of other devotees, lay not only in a democratized mode of religious encounter but in its observable, even tactile phenomena. Writing in 1916 in *Light*, Doyle predicts that Spiritualism’s apparently demonstrable and reproducible effects would displace an earlier religious devotion constructed from blind belief: “Such, in brief, is the spiritual philosophy whose faith—a most two-edged virtue—is replaced by actual demonstration”

(“A New Revelation” 357).<sup>3</sup> Doyle’s comments, and their dismissal of doctrine, may not have convinced those many spiritualists who maintained ties with traditional or evangelical Christianity. William Stainton Moses and Archdeacon Thomas Colley, for example, were both prominent Anglican clergy and active spiritualists. Nor would Doyle’s religious fervour have convinced those scientists—such as William James and Sir William Crookes—fascinated by the spiritual sciences as a human talent rather than a holy showing.

In a different register, then, to divide the rational from the superstitious, as this common sense/Spiritualism dichotomy implicitly does, elides the complications of layered ideologies that meshed with Spiritualism and were still in motion as one century wound down and a new one whirred to life. An increasingly professional category of scientific research; colonialist concerns and curiosities; public debates regarding the suffrage of women and visible minorities; a growing impulse to secularism; Fundamentalist Christianity; even minor fads, such as an English interest in folklore and pagan belief: each found something in Spiritualism to claim or disavow. As Spiritualism enmeshed with various cultural trends, its machinery produced strange frictions. Reading this dichotomy on a grander scale, we might include among its sympathies the communities organized in the United States by black spiritualist churches.<sup>4</sup> We might also include the close intimacy of the radio and the telegraph with Spiritualism. Guglielmo Marconi,

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<sup>3</sup> Doyle extends this theme in the next few sentences, which cement the sense that Spiritualism offered a more evidentiary, more common sense approach to divinity: “Such, in brief, is the spiritual philosophy where faith—a most two-edged virtue—is replaced by actual demonstration. The evidence upon which this system rests is so enormous that it would take a very considerable library to contain it, and the witnesses are not shadowy people living in the dim past and inaccessible to our cross-examination but are our own contemporaries, men of character and intellect whom all must respect” (357). Elsewhere in the article he observes that “[i]n spite of occasional fraud and wild imaginings, there remains a solid core in this whole spiritual movement which is infinitely nearer to positive proof than any other religious development with which I am acquainted” (357). This is echoed in the quotes published by *The Daily Mail*, in which Doyle suggests: “Spiritualism is going to revolutionise the world in every possible way. It will revolutionise religion by getting back to actual contact, which I have no doubt once existed, but has been completely lost” (5). His emphasis on a return to a nostalgic “contact” recalls the evangelical origins of Spiritualism in figures such as the Fox Sisters and Andrew Jackson Davis but it also suggests the desire for experience over credulity, evidence over doctrine.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this topic, please see John J. Kucich’s chapter in *Ghostly Communion*, titled “Around Rochester: Spiritualism, Reform, and Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,” as well as Mark A. Lause’s book, *Free Spirits*.

Alexander Graham Bell, and Cromwell Varley, a significant engineer behind the Atlantic cable, all attempted during their careers to turn their particular telecommunications developments to spiritualist uses. We would need to include phenomena initially asterisked by their association with fringe research only to eventually develop a wider scientific curiosity and acceptance. Automatism—which has a particular significance in Marsh’s novel—and hypnotism both began the century in the demesne of Mesmerism, already slightly suspect by the 1790s, only to end the century as landmarks in psychological and biological debates on free will and consciousness. Perhaps most famously, the Society for Psychical Research emerged from scientific forays into spiritualist phenomena only to then be dismissed by both as those two systems (realms of knowing) gradually became more cohesive and mutually exclusive. Roger Luckhurst charts the elliptical movements of this growing apart in *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870–1901*, where he observes that “[p]sychical researchers did not produce a counter-knowledge to a scientific naturalist monolith: there was no simple structure to oppose. Rather, their knowledge emerged along the fault-lines within a fragile edifice” (21).

Of course, in complicating received notions of Spiritualism, in referencing its more nuanced engagements with contemporary British and American culture, I am not providing a new history.<sup>5</sup> My point here is simpler: a suspicion of Spiritualism, to the extent that it divides that cultural movement from common sense, generates at once too complex and too simple a model for Doyle’s imagined conversion on the road from deduction.<sup>6</sup> This model artificially divides a scientific practicality, valuing material

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<sup>5</sup> Luckhurst and Natale are joined by Elsa Richardson, Jen Cadwallader, Marlene Tromp, Robert S. Cox, and Cathy Gutierrez, to name only some of the better-known scholars who have shaped this current understanding of Spiritualism’s influences and consequences at the turn of the century.

<sup>6</sup> As a further clarification, I would like to stress that I am not arguing that Spiritualist practice was the site of productive critical thinking at the time. The phenomena was marked by a significant credulity in which a will to believe infiltrated methods that appeared on their surface to align at times with scientific rationality. Affect was smuggled into the scientific method not only in the fervent desire for confirmation of an afterlife but in the subtler feelings, sensibilities, and impulses on which mediumship’s imaginary relied. In arguing that common sense cannot easily be sequestered from Spiritualism, I am arguing, first, that the practicality and materiality, the desire for proof that is commonly associated with “common sense” was never far from Spiritualism. I am assuming, second, that like nearly any religious movement, to claim that the mythology associated with a religious experience does not follow “sense” is to miss the point of that experience for believers entirely.

proofs, from a religious moment that stressed consistent displays and studies of the inexplicable; in doing so, it invents an incoherent duality. At once, this gesture also reduces a complex of social developments and pressures into a more consistent and legible binary. In this way, Spiritualism is comfortably cordoned off from the more relevant, less dubious spaces of political enfranchisement, scientific advancement, and cultural reforms. A great deal, then, gets thrown into the ironic fissure of Doyle's public life and covered not with lime but with a bromide. Suspicion, then, proves an X, marking that fissure as the site of a series of underground sympathies perhaps best left buried. Indeed, the letter X, the algebraic signifier of an unknown, itself marks these nineteenth-century sympathies. In 1864, Thomas Henry Huxley famously initiated the X Club, a dinner club of nine scientists who would advocate in the following years for a rigorously institutional understanding of scientific research and education. A more staunchly secular assembly of Victorian thinkers, and one more hostile to Spiritualist claims, there could not be imagined to sup. In 1895, the German engineer and researcher Wilhelm Röntgen would discover the x-ray, during his experiments with Crookes tubes, designed by the infamous psychical researcher Sir William Crookes. The visible effects of this invisible ray, its ability to pass through our own physical form, most of all its broad scientific acceptance, would influence spiritualist writing for the next decade. In the spiritualist community of the *fin de siècle* and among the researchers associated with the SPR, X also denoted the work of Ada Goodrich Freer. Freer edited W. T. Stead's *Borderland* under the moniker Miss X and consistently presented her mediumship in the form of research into telepathy. Freer was consistently liminal, positioning herself on a boundary between Spiritualism, sensational journalism, and scientific research. As Susan Zieger has noted, this liminality extended to her public reputation:

X detached the meaning of women's psychic performance and labor from its sentimental Spiritualist context of contacting the dead on the behalf of the bereaved and from the odor of commerce that always clung to its pretensions to truth. As she advanced into the male-dominated SPR, presenting herself as a scientific researcher, she figured as that malleable construct of the times, the New Woman.  
(351)



But even read on a more personal scale, regarding the development of Doyle's thought, this dichotomy hides symptomatic sympathies.<sup>7</sup> Doyle's engagement with Spiritualism long predates the character Sherlock Holmes. His earliest commercial fiction, a ghost story titled *The Haunted Grange of Goresthorpe* (published posthumously in 2000), predates *A Study in Scarlet* by a full decade though it was not published until recently; throughout the 1880s, Doyle supported himself by writing strange fiction, often with a spiritualist bent, including his most popular ghost story, "The Captain of the Polestar," written in 1883; his earliest spiritualist non-fiction appeared in *Light* in June of 1887, only five months prior to *A Study in Scarlet*. This binary, then, between common sense and the psychical establishes a comforting but inexplicable block that sequesters Spiritualism from the sympathies it fostered with other cultural moments and Doyle's mystery fiction from his other writings. No matter his enlightened façade, the foundations of Holmes were firmly drilled in Spiritualist thought; as we shall see later in this dissertation, there might be a psychometric prop or two in his celebrated "brain-attic" and strains of automatic music echoing through his halls. Sherlock Holmes, however, requires his own investigations and I return to his clairvoyant talents more purposefully in Chapter 2.

For the moment, we should remain with strange sympathies and with the apparently self-negating presence of clairvoyance and telepathy in mystery fiction. As we shall see, these intuitive emotional associations inform Ferguson's dream as well as much of his waking investigation. Any tension between Spiritualism and common sense, between Doyle as author and Doyle as mystic remains largely implicit in the *Daily Mail* article. It is, instead, the inherent conceptual tension of detective and medium that earns a headline: "SHERLOCK HOLMES AS CLAIRVOYANT." That this eye-catching phrase might present an internal strain at all—that even for us, as twenty-first-century readers, a clairvoyant detective should seem to be an anomalous one, almost a contradiction in

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of the *Daily Mail* article, Doyle was still widely believed to have converted to Spiritualism after the death of his eldest son Arthur Kingsley Doyle during World War I; "the inference being that grief had lessened [the author's] critical faculties and made them believe what in more normal times they would not believe," Doyle drily observed in his *History of Spiritualism* (224).

terms—elides the nagging presence of clairvoyance and telepathy, of the “hunch,” the “gut,” the “instinct,” the “nose,” the “sudden impulse,” and all the other various forms of psychical understanding that recur throughout mystery fiction. These feelings are not necessarily conspicuous but they are widespread and they are always significant. Within a narrative form that prizes cognition, they dramatize the emotional, instinctual, and—often—untraceable impulses that lie behind our curiosities. At times, however, more conspicuous moments of psychical revelation in mystery fiction do appear as in the sequence from Marsh that opened this chapter. In Catharine Crowe’s 1841 investigation novel *Susan Hopley*, the eponymous servant dreams a confused, prophetic vision on the same night that her master is murdered and her brother is falsely accused. Hopley’s dream seems to be an early expression of Crowe’s interest in the supernatural and particularly in a form of truth accessed through unconscious states or casual attention; this fascination would be explored in far greater length in her 1848 collection of apparently-true supernatural anecdotes *The Night-Side of Nature*, which provided spiritualists with a trove of pseudo-psychical goings-on. In her dream, Hopley’s brother gestures solemnly to two suspicious figures as they enter into her employer’s room. Her brother then morphs before her eyes into the bleeding corpse of her master. This oneiric ambiguity, particularly the dream’s mingling of identities, parallels Marsh’s much later dream-vision in *The Goddess*. Both scenes share a sense of urgent narrative significance and unreliable interpretive possibility. That is to say, they appear as otherworldly revelation, anathema to a grounded or rational mode of investigation narrative but well suited to the mysterious.

Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) shares Crowe’s and, later, Marsh’s concern with sleep as a revelatory, uncontrollable state.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the novel stages a shadow investigation of that more rational one undertaken by Sergeant Cuff and Mssrs. Ezra Jennings and Franklin Blake; three Brahmin priests, disguised as entertainers, work to repatriate the lost moonstone as a holy relic. They track developments in the case through

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<sup>8</sup> Here, sleep’s knowledge appears through anaesthetized sleep-walking, a form of automatism. More grounded and physical than a prophetic or sympathetic dream, automatism still held a sense of the supernatural and only marginally scientific. As a controversial topic, it remained, in a word, sensational.

a mesmeric ritual, utilizing the powers of a homeless boy that the trio finds in London. One character, Mr. Murthwaite, suggests

The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character... Their boy is unquestionably a sensitive subject to the mesmeric influence—and, under that influence, he has no doubt reflected what was already in the mind of the person mesmerizing him. I have tested the theory of clairvoyance—and I have never found the manifestations get beyond that point. The Indians don't investigate the matter in this way... We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry we are now pursuing. (248)

In Metta Victoria Fuller Victor's influential detective novel *The Dead Letter* (1866), the primary investigation eventually falters, only to be saved by the investigator's daughter whose clairvoyant engagement with a letter ultimately leads to a satisfying solution. In Anna Katharine Green's *The Filigree Ball* (which I discuss in both Chapters 3 and 4), the detective must engage in a mediumistic communication with the house itself. Clairvoyant and telepathic plot developments such as these were typically the preserve in the nineteenth century of Gothic fiction's heightened, impassioned sensibility. We could expand the list above by turning to any number of examples. In a moment of intense telepathic sympathy with Jane Eyre, Rochester's call of desperation from across the moors collapses his own ruined household with St. John's parlour. Staying in Haworth, we could refer as well to the doomed relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, which convinces not because of anything so bourgeois as affection between the two. Rather, the novel consistently displays their underlying sympathy, which wavers between the star-crossed and the telepathic.

*Susan Hopley*, *The Dead Letter*, and *The Moonstone* each are variously considered as influential early examples of investigation narratives and marginalized for their depictions of similar psychical knowing. Such moments of non-ratiocinative plot development seem to test or strain this inchoate genre; they present as Gothic or sensational inclusions that must be cut away for mystery fiction to reach its brilliant

successes of the *fin de siècle*. Indeed, many detective novels of the period, including those discussed in this project, dismiss the supernatural as an inadmissible realm of knowledge. “Supernatural!” Hume crows when Ferguson first tries to explain his vision; “[y]ou had better make that suggestion to the police. The English law does not recognise the supernatural in crime” (*GD* 93). In a parallel moment, the unnamed detective of Green’s *The Filigree Ball* mocks his colleague, whose terror of Moore House’s rumoured haunting distracts from their crime scene investigation. Holmes derides Dr Mortimer for having “quite gone over to the supernaturalists” in *The Hound* (23). Later, in “The Sussex Vampire” (1924), he maintains that his investigation “stands flat-footed upon the ground and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghost need apply” (73). In this way, mystery fiction appears to stage and define itself against those less accountable forms of feeling and revelation that it sequesters to other genres in an intricate procedure of implication and denial. Murthwaite’s dismissal of the Brahmins’ more clairvoyant investigation seems to stage this gesture ironically within the text itself. Despite some indication in the novel that the child’s trance might indeed grant access to objective fact, Murthwaite dismisses this mediumship. Such practices, he suggests, offer nothing supernatural; only mesmeric telepathy between the boy and the hypnotist, a phenomena which itself was neither so mundane nor so established as Murthwaite the worldly traveller implies. But the child’s reverie is twice dismissed; not truly clairvoyant, his telepathy is also not acceptable within the proper English endeavour of fact-finding. In this way, entranced sympathies are doubly enclosed by a narrative form that meticulously produces and regulates the sensational. Murthwaite recognizes but inexplicably confines psychical understanding to the mysterious, to that portion of the detective novel’s incidents meant to be cordoned off by an investigation and an explanatory *dénouement*. In this dismissal from rational investigation, which is at once an acknowledgment of its potential, the child’s trance joins Ferguson’s dream in *The Goddess* and Susan’s dream in *Susan Hopley* as explanations that, themselves, need to be explained, revelations that need to be revealed and contextualized. These moments collapse solution into mystery.

My argument, then, is that clairvoyance and other occurrences of the Gothic, the spiritual, and the sensational in mystery fiction are not vestigial traits that the genre would shed in its evolution toward Agatha Christie’s golden age. Rather, they are narrative sympathies

produced within a genre that subtly regulates and occults its engagement with Gothic convention through the flux of mystery. Indeed, to deny mystery fiction's generic connections with Gothic inexplicability would be to dismiss the mystery from mystery fiction. "Of all the Gothic conventions dealing with the sudden, mysterious, seemingly arbitrary, but massive inaccessibility of those things that should be normally most accessible," Sedgwick writes, "the difficulty the story has in getting itself told is of the most obvious structural significance. This difficulty occurs at every level of the novels" (13). Just so, but if this narrative obstruction is a convention of the Gothic, it is the defining characteristic of the investigation novel. No other generic fiction so purposefully, playfully, and pleasurably complicates the telling of a story than mystery fiction. No other genre works as persistently and perversely to Gothically block readers and characters from a contextual truth.

Marsh's novel affords one example so Gothic and hyper-contextualized that it nears parody. Returning to his room after Hume's examination of Lawrence's body, Ferguson locks his door and retrieves Bessie's blood-stained opera cloak from where he has hidden it in his wardrobe: "I had rolled it up as tightly as I could; the blood with which it was soaked, as it dried, had glued the folds together. I had difficulty in tearing it open... And the stiffness was horrible" (*GD* 37). The cloak, however, in this first ghastly examination, has no significance. Working his way through its coagulated layers offers none of the evidence Ferguson requires of Bessie's identity or innocence, only deferred narrative and further enclosure. It is in rolling the cloak back up that Ferguson discovers an additional interior:

Turning over the cloak with a view of returning it to its hiding-place—for I was aware that, at any moment, I might be interrupted, and I was resolved, at least until I saw my way more clearly, to keep the existence of so, apparently, criminatory a garment a secret locked in my own breast—I came upon a pocket in the green silk lining. There was something in it which I took out. (*GD* 37)

This something proves to be an envelope, addressed to an assumed name. It contains a letter that provides Ferguson with his first real clue to Bessie's identity: the initial B. The narrative work and the layered enclosures that must be got through in order to find this

paltry information are remarkable. The initial is contained in a letter in a falsely addressed envelope in an obscure pocket in a tightly rolled, blood-sealed cloak in a wardrobe in a locked room. Further, the initial identifies a woman who cannot access her own identity but whose incriminating evidence is “locked in” Ferguson’s breast, which is presumably clad in shining armour.

Remarkable, yes, and ridiculous, but these enclosures are also relevant. In mystery fiction, the difficulty of bringing information to light often indexes its truth or value to an investigation. The letter’s adherence to Gothic sensibility, its difficulty “in getting itself told,” marks this evidence as useful in contrast to an analogous piece of paper that, earlier, seems to fall from the cloak when Bessie first stumbles into Ferguson’s room: “I perceived that something was lying beside her on the floor. Where it had come from I could not tell; it was hardly the kind of thing to have fallen from a woman’s pocket. I picked it up. It was a photograph of Edwin Lawrence” (*GD* 13). Compared to the hidden letter, the photograph is easily obtained. It falls inadvertently from Bessie’s hand or pocket while the letter hides behind stiff layers of clotted fabric, only torn apart with difficulty. For all its apparent prominence, however, the photograph proves to have no use to the investigation and seems by the end of the novel to have been forgotten even by the author. More relevant still to the example above is the blood on the cloak, itself. Staring down at the garment, Ferguson muses on Bessie’s innocence despite her guilty circumstance: “Such was my personal conviction; but, at present, it was my conviction only. The material evidence pointed the other way” (*GD* 36). Ferguson here favours affect over materiality, though ultimately both his sympathy and Bessie’s cloak require further context as the narrative evolves. Ferguson is emotionally, if not intellectually, certain of Bessie’s innocence due to a moment of telepathic sensitivity; by contrast, we are convinced as readers because of a generic sensibility. It is not fully correct to say, as I have, that the bloody cloak provides no significance, then; rather, we know, conventionally, to disregard that significance because it is not sufficiently “preterited,” to use Sedgwick’s deeply Gothic vocabulary (*Coherence* 15). The blood is too evident to be, itself, evidence. Its annunciatory quality will initiate, not end, an investigation.

The blood on the cloak serves at once as a legible site, for Hume and Symonds, and as a physical enclosure, for Ferguson and the generically-canny reader, of a further, deferred legibility. Hume's and Symonds's engagement with the blood as information rather than as impediment marks their investigations as less successful than Ferguson's. They are incapable of moving deeper through a series of layered deferrals. When Hume finds the cloak hidden in the wardrobe, he accuses Ferguson of murdering Edwin Lawrence and attempting to frame Bessie. Ferguson's response immediately falters; his vision of the death scene and his certainty of Bessie's virtue can not yet be defined or articulated. The sheer inexplicability of his evidence for Bessie's innocence—not to mention, the confusion gathering around his sympathy with her—makes Ferguson's own defense untenable. Later, when Symonds discovers the cloak still laid out upon the bed, Ferguson finds himself physically—though, perhaps, explicably—blocked from responding. He admits, “[t]here was a choking something in my throat. They had taken me by surprise; and I was conscious that this was not a case in which physical force could be advantageously employed” (*GD* 106). Ferguson attempts two patently clumsy lies—that the cloak, thoroughly drenched in blood, is the remnant of a nosebleed and that he killed Edwin, cloak notwithstanding—but Symonds cannot be dissuaded of Bessie's guilt. In both scenes, the facts of the case, particularly the indications we have as readers of Ferguson's and Bessie's innocence, become largely unspeakable. The evident materiality of the cloak is too blatant and too suggestive to ignore. Ferguson's attempts to protect Bessie's secret, to lock it in his breast, further enclose and confuse the narrative that he is building of her innocence behind a set of half-truths and lies. While Hume and Symonds recognize his unconvincing pretexts as narrative blocks, their miscategorizations bar them from Ferguson's experience and findings. Each recognizes that he is blocking their investigation but reads this block, first, as an indication of Ferguson's own guilt and, second, as an indication of Bessie's. Neither investigator moves toward the truth contained within Ferguson's alibis.

For Sedgwick, the “unspeakable,” both the subject that escapes language and the point of language's failure, is a primary site of the inexplicable blockage that separates space from space and, particularly, that keeps a tale from its telling. It irrupts as “an interpersonal barrier where no barrier ought to be—language is properly just the medium that should

flow between people, mitigating their physical and psychic separateness” (*Coherence* 16). Minna Vuohelainen has recently written on the linguistic failures seen throughout Marsh’s more successful novel *The Beetle* (1897), where they are symptomatic of a phobic response to the foreign. In this way, dialogue fails—spectacularly, Gothically—at the point of suspicion, marking a rejection and blockage of an other that might otherwise challenge identity. In *The Goddess*, the failure of speech *ne plus ultra*, however, is not interpersonal but intrapersonal. Bessie’s amnesia bars her from articulating her identity to her self. Her history prior to her exit from Edwin’s room, a site of multiple violent ruptures, cannot be narrated. She often expresses this disconnect as its own form of spatial separation: “I can’t think. I believe it’s in my head somewhere, if I only knew where to find it; but I don’t know where it is” (*GD* 32). This separation—narrative, spatial, and dissociative—further distances her from those around her. Once Bessie’s inexplicable mental state has been linked to Lawrence’s murder, we read this exchange between Mrs. Peddar, her care-taker, and Ferguson:

“I’d rather she never had come. I—I’m beginning to wish that I’d never taken her in.”

“Don’t say that, Mrs Peddar. You will find that it was not the worst action of your life when you took that young girl, when she had just escaped, by the very skin of her teeth, unless I am mistaken—from things unspeakable, from the very gates of hell, under the shadow of your wing.”

Mrs Peddar shook her head and she sighed.

“Poor thing! Whatever happens, and I tremble when I think of what may be going to happen to her and to us, and to every one—poor young thing!” (*GD* 35)

In response to Bessie’s occulted identity, Mrs. Peddar yearns for her own social barriers. Emblematic of the central mystery, Bessie’s presence is carefully managed by the other characters in the novel in moments like these that betray a wavering impulse to sympathize and suspect. Bessie’s engagement with the “unspeakable,” as Ferguson terms it, prompts Peddar to trail off into a final repetition of “poor young thing.” Elsewhere, earlier in her argument, Sedgwick observes:



“Unspeakable”... is a favorite Gothic word, sometimes meaning no more than “dreadful,” sometimes implying a range of reflections on language. The word appears regularly enough, in enough contexts, that it could be called a theme in itself, but it also works as a name for moments when it is not used: moments when, for instance, a character drops dead trying to utter a particular name. (*Coherence* 4-5)

Repetitive utterances might join Bessie’s discussions of the inarticulacy of repression as communicative acts that express affect through their failure of linguistic expression.

But Mrs. Peddar’s default to repetitive speech, her slow trailing off, does not result from a conventional block, though it may respond to Bessie’s. Peddar seems capable of voicing her suspicion of the young woman and her regret in sheltering her as a guest. Instead, her language falters when she moves into an expression of sympathy and mutual vulnerability, when she tracks a danger that could pass easily from “her . . . to us . . . to every one,” that is, when she attempts to articulate the “dreadful.” This brings us at last to my own intervention, which has itself been preterited, enclosed, implied, and deferred throughout the chapter so far. Sedgwick sets aside the “dreadful” quality of the unspeakable—that is, its affective significance—as it is the less pertinent definition for her project. Reading for affect, however, which emphasizes contiguity, relational interaction, and channels of response—and particularly reading for the untidy, liminal affects such as dread, disgust, and, particularly, sympathy—allows us an alternate mode of spatializing and arranging Gothic conventions. As an example, if we follow moments of dread, moments of intense apprehension in which Marsh’s characters consider their vulnerability and exposure, we can trace a parallel set of thematic conventions to Sedgwick’s at work throughout *The Goddess*. The conventionally Gothic, for Sedgwick, produces an array of anxieties through a sudden, inexplicable, and categorical division that manufactures paralleled spaces, only to be elided in crises of magic or violence. In *The Goddess*, similar divisions and separations tend, however temporarily, to allay rather than to produce anxiety. Indeed, attendant and responsive to Sedgwick’s Gothic convention is a further anxiety expressed in a sudden, inexplicable, and categorical dissolution of division. In scenes of similarity, sympathy, collapse, and vulnerability, the novel rehearses a disquieting inability to create and maintain those divisions that ground

our sense of security and discrete identity. Indeed, the novel suggests that these divisions allow one to maintain a discreet identity; Bessie's lapse can be read, as we shall see, as an uncontained and spreading site of sympathy rather than blockage, one which prompts indiscretion. In Peddar's response, it is her sympathy with the "poor young thing"—that is, both her feelings for Bessie and her fear of being similarly aligned with Bessie—that manufactures an expanding community of shared vulnerability. Against this stand her discretion and divisions, her suspicion and regret that she took Bessie in at all.

Undeniably, enclosure, deferral, and blockage recur throughout *The Goddess* and their presence lends a Gothic air to the novel. However, the Gothic appears as a mode here, and in turn it is modulated by the investigative narrative, a genre of writing in which the disclosure of hidden information tends finally to order and contain rather than further disorder the social. This is not to argue that enclosure and disclosure are reversed in their connotations from one genre to the next. After all, neither carries an intrinsic or polar affective quality in the original Gothic canon that Sedgwick reads. Rather, I suggest that a new generic environment complicates this conventional, spatial concern, which adopts new interactions with containment and breach, suspicion and sympathy, context and fluency, solution and mystery. This rather schematic description is further entangled by a narrative impulse to reorder enclosures, moving from enclosed information that opens characters to danger to disclosed information that contextualizes, categorizes, and, often, secures characters. I have already mentioned how the nested deferral of evidence often speaks to the relevance of its information, a narrative manoeuvre that retains a Gothic convention while altering its implication. In Marsh's text, the divisions and intrications of enclosure often shelter characters against a worrying breach of context. Ferguson cultivates enclosure, for example, around the cloak, itself an enclosure for both Bessie and the letter. This action and its urgency are products of, rather than productive of, anxiety. Before he takes the cloak from his wardrobe and unrolls it for examination, he naturally locks the door, substituting one enclosure for another. When Hume knocks at the door, Ferguson returns the cloak to his wardrobe.

Of course, that a character attempting to suppress evidence might take some steps to hide that evidence is not, on the face of it, overly shocking. My interest lies in two parallel

concerns that inform these precautions and moves to conceal. As he examines Bessie's cloak, Ferguson reassesses his dream of the night before. He theorizes that Bessie has been undone merely by witnessing "some spectacle of supreme horror": "the impression was still strong upon me that some strange creature had been present in the room" (*GD* 36). Ruminating on this intrusion, he first turns to Edgar Allan Poe's foundational mystery "Rue Morgue," "in which the criminal was proved to have been a huge ape; but though I had no notion what the creature I had really seen was, I was persuaded that it had had nothing in common with any member of the ape family" (*GD* 36). Ferguson's thought process exhibits his mounting concern with categorizations, sympathies, and fluencies. The goddess slips from each of his attempts at description, despite his eye-witness experience of the idol. He will not get closer to the mark than "some strange creature" until the novel's final revelation. As the allusion to "Rue Morgue" suggests, a creature's presence in the room would seem an intrusion and yet the idol exceeds the context and, particularly, the special category offered by this reference. Ferguson continues, cataloguing the concerning but never quite definitive similarities between Bessie and the envisioned creature: "I had seen the whirling skirts—as, in this connection, I gazed at the plum-coloured cloak, I was conscious of an inward pang—I had heard the woman's laughter" (*GD* 37). With its draped fabric and obviously feminine laugh, the idol parallels Bessie. These connections cannot convince Ferguson or the reader, but neither can they be easily dismissed. A heavy, alpaca opera cloak is not the ethereal wear of the goddess. It is not "a flowing robe of shining silken stuff, whose voluminous skirts whirled hither and thither" (*GD* 8). Though both garments are admittedly described as "voluminous" draped fabric, Bessie's cloak has none of the imminent divinity of the Goddess. Nor does Bessie laugh openly at any point in the novel, making it initially difficult to deny the laugh was hers. These details, then, slip into the ambiguity of similarity and coincidence, uncomfortably uncategorizable and disordering. Without a convincing answer, Ferguson must simply assert the goddess's and Bessie's separate identities, insisting that Bessie was an additional, invisible presence: "I had seen no one else. Yet all the evidence went to show that, at any rate, two other persons had been present: my visitor of the night before, and the dead man's brother" (*GD* 37).

But if the “Rue Morgue” allusion intimates a categorical fluidity, it also suggests a spatial fluency. Poe’s story inaugurates a generic fascination with locked rooms and with their inability to secure an interior from the violence of the outside world. As I discuss further in Chapter 3, its irruption of colonial, Gothic violence within the Parisian domestic is an early expression of this anxiety of the dissolved or ineffective boundary. Ferguson’s reference to Poe’s intruding figure colours his later decision that there must have been more people in the room than were visible to him. His assertion—denying material evidence and the appearances of his visionary dream—divides Bessie from the creature. It contains the two characters in a binary that suppresses any ambiguous similarities. This rhetorical move also, however, implies an uncomfortable slippage of bodies in space. Philip, Bessie, Edwin, and the creature all must have moved through the room, though in the dream only the latter two were visible. Indeed, Ferguson ends his reverie with this concern over Philip’s movement from space to space, recalling the lift-operator’s testimony “that he had seen him go up to his brother, and seen him come down again” (*GD* 37). His desire to conceal the cloak back in his wardrobe, then, emerges in relation to concerns of slippage and fluidity, of Bessie’s inextricable similarities to the creature and of the uncertainty of architectural space. This final insecurity is particularly apropos. As I have mentioned, both Hume and Symonds will each subsequently enter Ferguson’s bedroom, rifle his wardrobe in his absence, and uncover the cloak. Throughout the novel, characters often display a confusing spatial fluency. Bessie wanders out Edwin’s window and into Ferguson’s; later, she strolls into the crime scene, while a baffled police officer struggles to explain why he let her pass; during Edwin’s climactic explanation, his partners-in-crime Thomas Moore and Isaac Bernstein simply appear in his atelier, avoiding the police guard via a back entrance; though Edwin is mortally afraid of his brother, on the night of his death he leaves his door unlocked, allowing both Bessie and Philip to enter. Not all of these examples evoke anxiety or emphasize an outside threat. They do, however, speak to a general sense in the novel of exposure and a preoccupation with the provisionality of structured space more typically found in locked-room mysteries.

The novel’s expressions of dissolving boundaries, be they spatial, categorical, or emotional, each respond in their way to the violent rupture figured by Philip’s corpse.

*The Goddess* is, after all, a murder mystery; its uncanny trappings of automata, telepathy, and memory lapse express the more grounded, more disquieting anguish of a mutilated body. Throughout the novel, unstructuring and rupture signal the mystery that surrounds Philip's corpse, beginning with two parallel incidents in its early chapters. Waking from a dream of Edwin's brutal murder and mutilation, Ferguson watches Bessie enter his bedroom from the shared balcony. The next morning, he accesses Edwin's apartment by the same route as he investigates his neighbour's locked front door, only to discover Philip's corpse. As he enters Edwin's rooms through the dining-room window, Ferguson calls out to Atkins, one of the building's staff:

He came running to me.

“What is it, sir?”

“I don't know what it is, but—it's something.” (*GD* 23)

The response is characteristically wry. As befits the redoubtable hero of a late-Victorian thriller, Ferguson's sense of humor dries distinctly in moments of action or danger. And since scrutinizing a joke never fails to entertain, I would like to spend some time with Ferguson's use of “it.” Peter Schwenger, writing on debris in response to Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, gives an evocative description of a corpse as “a peculiarly unique object, an object that *is* a border between I who expel and that which I expel to be sure; between the pure and the polluted. But most disturbingly between the subject and object” (157). Ferguson's “it,” then, which is deliberately inappropriate, is also entirely appropriate. In the word's ambiguity, “it” enacts the same distressing, indefinite pull of the corpse, drawing our attention from one category to another more concerning one. “It” feels untoward, even disrespectful, because—while the word's implications might occasionally include an unidentified or ambiguous subject—“it” typically indicates an object.

“It” prepares us for the disfigured alterity of Philip's remains, at least, those that remain after the attack. As he enters the room, Ferguson begins with a clear image—that “Edwin Lawrence lay face foremost on the floor”—that slowly blurs out of focus (*GD* 23). Blood spreads and stains the carpet and the corpse's clothing and Ferguson admits that “[h]ad it

not been for his clothes I should not have known that it was Lawrence, because, when we turned him over, we found that his face and head had been cut and hacked to pieces” (*GD* 23). Considering the scene further, he recalls, “[i]t was as if some savage thing, fastening upon him, had torn him to pieces with tooth and nail. His flesh had been ripped and rent so that not one recognizable feature was left. Indeed, it might not have been a man we were looking upon, but some thing of horror” (*GD* 23). This final sentence traces the body’s movement out from a category that would once have been appropriate. “[I]t’s *something*” has become “*some thing* of horror” as the physicality of the body, no longer quickened by the subject, asserts its material contingency. Through the implicit subjunctive mood of this phrase—“[had we not identified *it* as Edwin Lawrence,] it might not have been a man” or, more accurately, “[were *it* not clad in Edwin’s clothes,] it might not have been a man”—the body approaches objecthood, a transition that it never wholly completes. So mangled is this bundle of residual flesh, we seem to glimpse Philip in a steep descent from coherence as a human being. A growing alarm appears to inform Ferguson’s account of his discovery, particularly as he determines the extent of Philip’s mutilation. In the passage above, his initial certainty becomes less and less credible. By the paragraph’s end this “thing of horror,” without “one recognizable feature,” scarcely discernible as human, seems utterly unequal to the immediate recognition of Ferguson’s initial identification. It is our first clue that the body is not as definite as it may seem.

What interests me, in all of this—and what horrifies in a detective novel that plays on Gothic imagery—is, in both senses, the *categorical* liminality of Philip’s corpse, particularly as it influences those caught up in its vicinity. We can refer here to the odd comings and goings through the balcony windows of the Imperial Mansion. These movements, which breach from one apartment to another through an unexpected route, provide the early portion of the novel with a sense of vulnerability and a physical model for other border-crossings: the mental collapse of telepathic dreams, the movement of subject into object. The two sequences—Bessie’s entrance and Ferguson’s investigation—oppose unorthodox movement and transgression (not to mention The Imperial Mansion’s poor security) with the horrific confusion of Philip’s death. This nexus of structure, movement, and violence repeats throughout Sedgwick’s writings as well. She suggests:

The worst violence, the most potent magic, and the most paralyzing instances of the uncanny in these novels do not occur in, for example, the catacombs of the Inquisition or the stultification of nightmares. Instead, they are evoked in the very breach of the imprisoning wall... The barrier between the self and what should belong to it can be caused by anything and nothing; but only violence or magic, and both of a singularly threatening kind, can ever succeed in joining them again. (*Coherence* 13)

A few pages later, she observes that “once this barrier has come into being, it is breached only at the cost of violence and deepened separateness” (*Coherence* 16). For Sedgwick, then, and for the earliest wave of Gothic texts, violence marks a culminating narrative moment or, at its least, a dramatically worsened turn of events. For *The Goddess*, however, just such a profane act of violence initiates narrative. In doing so, it opens up an indefinite fictive space that has its own readerly pleasures, without doubt, but is marked by a general narrative longing for definition, context, closure, and a time prior to this rupture. Indeed, the corpse’s disordering ambiguity is often associated with movement across a boundary in *The Goddess*. In a later reverie, Bessie relives the horror of Philip’s death as though she were watching his descent into an underworld: “I saw his face. His face! What a face! It was as if he were looking into hell. Don’t look at me—not like that. I can’t help you! It’s too late! Turn your face away; don’t let me see it; it isn’t fair” (*GD* 70). Incapable in her mesmerized panic of constructing barriers of identity or categorical differences, Bessie must implore her vision to construct its own, to turn away lest she follow in descent.

Though less spectacular than Bessie’s panic, Ferguson’s aversion still manages to set the corpse in motion. Critical writing on disgust often subtly portrays human remains as drifting objects. They are liminal, certainly, but often also in process, progress, or transition, particularly regarding their decay.<sup>9</sup> Philip’s body moves in parallel. There is a

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<sup>9</sup> Schwenger, for example, points to the corpse as a border rather than a barrier, a delineation of space that implies the possibility of movement rather than blockage: “[n]o longer the clear outline of an autonomous body, this border is a disturbing liminal state between subject and object” (158). Similarly, Aurel Kolnai, in listing his concept of the “prototypical object of disgust” stresses “the transition of the living into the state of death” (53). Gary Laderman points to the corpse as it falls from significance and stability: “the corpse

sense of Gothic recurrence in Ferguson's description, a sense that, as readers, we briefly have a second-order access to Philip's end. In its movement toward total disintegration and ruin, this passage is a more visceral rehearsal than Ferguson's dream-vision of death, and a less aestheticized one. The body begins as a Lawrence (albeit identified as the wrong Lawrence) and as the passage progresses, it figuratively falls to pieces. Philip's body may not progress through decay but it collapses and, figuratively, rehearses its violation before Ferguson's eyes. Schwenger writes that "if the dead body has now become object, it is not wholly so; it bears the imprint of a residual subjectivity, residue within residue" (157). This is bolstered, he suggests, by an eerie material consistency between the living body, as a definite subject, and the corpse, as a novel object. Our material flesh remains; it is the tension between categories, and the difficulty of our marking a clear separation, that generates the affective unrest of a corpse. In *The Goddess*, there is little left to be recognizably consistent with the murdered man. Philip's body is faceless, flayed, and lacks basic human features; its investigators cannot accurately discern whose death they are investigating. Nevertheless, both of these bodies, the murder victim and the corpse in Schwenger's writing, elicit our desire for category and a boundary that might demarcate the subject from the object, the observer from the dead, anything at all to make sense of its gradient liminality. But if one evokes a quiet, uncanny wonder at its transgression, the other demands categorization, and narrative closure for its obscene dissolution. Philip's body is worrisomely stripped of explanation, history, and identity and it centers various expressions of this uneasy longing for separation throughout the novel.

However, we should return again to "it," which—when Ferguson lobs the word back at Atkins—is emptier than its initial implication of an object, and the more evocative for being so. In playing with Atkins's response ("What is it, sir?"), Ferguson's joke ("it's something") carries forward along with "it" all of the word's essentially phatic ambiguity

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had a sacred quality greatly determined by its liminality: the former living being who had inhabited the body continued to be associated with the remains . . . and these remains were seen as unstable, indeterminate, and ambiguous" (27).



(GD 23). Atkins uses “it” as a blank signifier in a valueless question; the word suggests an object, yes, but—used in “what is it?”—maintains its further implications of an event, state, or issue as well. None of these, of course, seem unsuitable to an interaction with an abject corpse. The question slides along a spectrum of possible meanings from “what is wrong?” to “what is the matter?” to “what do you need?” to “what did you say?” But Atkins query, with its casual vapidness, might accommodate any of these interpretations and Ferguson’s sarcastic reply relies on the incongruity of so conventional and indeterminate a word applied to so urgent and disturbing a crisis. After all, before Ferguson lies a body so altered that the investigation will struggle to imagine precisely what might have achieved its thorough destruction. Ferguson will suggest an animal attack while Hume observes that “[i]t looks as if several narrow blades had been used, set in some kind of frame, or a row of spikes” (GD 25). The body’s bizarre condition, its anomalous circumstance in the dining-room of a luxurious London flat, its lack of explanation or context dramatizes our typical concern toward a corpse as an urgent problem. But in “its” emptiness and lack of inherent signification, in “its” reliance on broader context for meaning, finally, in “its” incongruous place in this scene, we find a word that is conveniently relevant. The corpse as it first appears in *The Goddess* or any *fin-de-siècle* mystery fiction signifies nothing but its own violent rupture. It must be recuperated into meaning and narrative context, which as we shall repeatedly see often involves an accurate reading of its physical context. Philip’s body is meaningless, initially, and significantly unsignifying. To make a corpse meaningful—not just obscene, not just disturbing—is a process of gathering up the body and its clues, its interactions and relations, and bundling them all into structured meaning. Murder mysteries are often invested in the production of a body in anxious and urgent particularity to avoid its easy categorization—thus, the often baroque scenes of death with extravagant corpses and lavish contrivance. The fiction discussed in these chapters alone features, of course, a misidentified sacrifice for a divine automaton (*The Goddess*); a baron run down by a dog that has been decorated with a fictional, glowing paint (*The Hound*); three bodies killed by a rigged piece of architecture that leaves no mark, each of whom are merely pretext to the novel’s central suicide/murder mystery (*The Filigree Ball*). Oddly, it is the ghost story of the final chapter that manages a less fantastic account, presenting a victim of

misogynistic abuse, but even here the investigating characters experience an urgent, undeniable pull to understand the emotional particularity of the killing. For myself, much of the satisfaction of these early mystery fictions lies in their power to weave an unease toward the dead and a desire (perhaps delayed) for enclosure, category, and boundary. With these, they produce an insistent curiosity and an engaged reading practice.

As we shall find repeatedly in the second section of this chapter, the mystery of Philip's corpse enacts a strange proximity that blurs contextual meaning and opens uncomfortable sympathies. Philip's collapse as a meaningful, legible figure seems to spread out into the vicinity around his body. We can begin with the corpse's most generically typical proliferation: its excess of any one specific location. While the goddess has "torn him to pieces with tooth and nail" (*GD* 23), not all of these defiled pieces remain in place. Rather, Philip's corpse circulates in iterations and fragments throughout the novel: in Edwin's dining-room, a bloody handprint on the mantle piece and a bloody collar emblazoned with Philip's name; in Ferguson's wardrobe, an opera cloak that is saturated in his blood; in London, at large, an apparently identical, equally violent iteration of Philip, silhouetted in the fog. As it decays from subject into object, the corpse is, in its breach, also moving from significance to implication, a single sign of identity to serial indications of its compromised status. As readers of mystery fiction, we have largely become accustomed to blood sprays and misplaced limbs. Scattered evidence, however, makes spatial the narrative challenge of containing the corpse and its attendant unease. Each of these instances presents a parallel site of complication, which must be considered and made meaningful. Given Symonds' and Hume's incorrect reading of Bessie's cloak, the perils of failing to give these minor mysteries their due attention can be daunting. The disruption and mystery of Philip's corpse seems to spread alongside these iterations. Later, when the corpse is removed to the bedroom, Bessie will interact with the bloodstain it leaves behind. The stain instigates her dissolution into a set of traumatic sympathies she has kept at bay. In his essay "X Marks the Spot: The Exhaustion of Space at the Scene of the Crime," Anthony Vidler observes:

the alleged site of the crime might be gridded with painstaking care in order to provide a coordinate system by which to situate the evidence... the tracks of the criminal,

the traces of blood, the dispersed weapons, and their hastily jettisoned ammunition might all be gathered together and plotted... But all this precision, as fictional and real defenders have demonstrated since Edgar Allan Poe, falls apart at the slightest questioning of a spatial kind. (123)

He follows this up, two pages later, with the aphoristic sentence, “[t]he crime takes place in space, which in turn renders its exact position unstable” (125). Vidler has his own arguments to make after this introductory observation but one of the conclusions we can take from his writing is the extraordinary pressure the body places on its physical context to provide narrative closure. In *The Goddess*, these surroundings are simply not built for such a burden. Unable to contain the mystery, they crumble into it. The corpse’s clothing provides an example. Ferguson predicates his identification of the body on the clothes he recalls Edwin wearing the evening prior: “[h]ad it not been for his clothes I should not have certainly known that it was Lawrence” (*GD* 23). Not a wild deduction that, given the body lies in Edwin’s apartment and Ferguson has already dreamt of Edwin’s mutilation. Hume’s inspection, however, thoroughly compromises his conclusion by revealing that the torso, beneath its sodden clothes, is just as marred as the rest of the body:

If I were to stab you where you stand, the stabbing instrument would have to pass through your clothing, and, in doing so, would leave a mark of its passage. One would expect to find this man’s clothing cut to pieces; but you can see for yourself that, with the exception of bloodstains, there is not a mark upon them; they are intact, without rent or tear. Are we to infer that the attacking weapon did not pass through them? (*GD* 25)

While Hume offers an image of inexplicable, ethereal access—which does not seem wholly improbable given Ferguson’s phantasmal vision—the discovery seems to imply the opposite movement, as though the mystery of the corpse has bled out into its enclosure. What briefly functions to identify and contextualize the body—and to physically enclose it—has instead taken on its disruption. These clothes can no longer signify of themselves nor lend meaning to the body.

The corpse's clothes do, however, provide an early implication of the disordered similarities between the Lawrence brothers. Indeed, to take up Hume's comment, what is not intact and, incidentally, what he cannot accept as evidence is Philip's collar, dropped in Edwin's escape. Turner, the Imperial Mansion's night lift operator, witnesses Edwin in that escape, as he later mentions to Ferguson. Edwin uses the elevator while carrying the idol and what remains of Philip's clothing down to his cross-town atelier. His nonchalance toward an extra witness, indicative of Edwin's fraying mental state, is saved by the novel's most subtly bizarre contrivance. Turner misidentifies Edwin Lawrence, a man he sees regularly and has already borne up once that evening, as his brother, Philip Lawrence: "[i]t was him right enough. My cousin's his coachman—I ought to know him" (*GD* 18). Later, when Edwin returns to the building, he will pass Turner again, pausing only long enough to punch the hapless operator in the nose as Turner offers the man he believes to be Philip his condolences over the death of the man he believes to be Edwin. The absurd moment does not seem to knock Turner's memory loose, however. When Ferguson and Hume, jointly mystified, ask him if he is certain Philip was the assailant Turner snaps: "Am I sure? Do you think I'd say a thing like that of a gentleman if I wasn't sure that it was him? Not likely!" (*GD* 95).

In the nineteenth century, twins emerged as a cultural fascination from a dubious and muddy distillate of freak shows, Spiritualist belief, fringe science, sensation literature, psychology, and—eventually—eugenic enthusiasm. Conjoined twins proved the apogee of this preoccupation, whether the two siblings were still physically connected, as with Chang and Eng Bunker, or separated but telepathically connected as with Alexandre Dumas' fictional *Corsican Brothers* (1844). But anecdotes of eerie similarity between identical twins had their own broad allure, particularly insofar as they staged sympathy at a distance. Sir Francis Galton, in his article "The History of Twins" (1875), quotes a mother of twin boys who relates a disconcerting observation: "[t]here seemed to be a sort of interchangeable likeness in expression, that often gave to each the effect of being more like his brother than himself" (907). Another anecdote on another pair of siblings records: "[t]wo twins were fond of playing tricks, and complaints were frequently made; but the boys would never own which was the guilty one, and the complainants were never certain which of the two he was" (Galton 906). This latter account speaks to a general trend in

Victorian genre fiction that frequently associates twins with crime. At times, these texts rehearse the sudden, violent death of one of the twins and figure the surviving sibling as severed now from some central aspect of their identity, perhaps inexpressible until the tragedy. Ambrose Bierce's "One of Twins" (1888) provides an example of this trend in which the unspoken, shared knowledge that the nineteenth century imagined was natural to twinship tragically causes one of the siblings to commit suicide. Other texts, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's detective novel *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), parallel Galton's account. In these more lurid narratives, one twin exhibits criminal behaviour while his or her counterpart is either innocent or even victimized. These stories often dramatize questions of prosecution and the limits of a justice system reliant on material evidence, suddenly incapable of discerning the boundaries of the subject. It is no surprise, then, that Sir Francis Galton, so enamoured of quantifying physical individuality, so devoted to applying anthropometrics to criminological pursuit, should also have founded gemellology, the study of twins. As Wieland Schwanebeck writes, "an understanding of the criminal also required an understanding of axioms that twin scholarship was crucial in bringing into existence: is it possible to distinguish between vital clues and red herrings with absolute certainty, despite their similarities?" (61).

A part of the appeal found in these stories and anecdotes lies in their combination of Victorian debates as to the relation of self to body and an indulgent, accessible sensationalism. As many scientists and philosophers could be found orbiting this binary system as genre writers, Spiritualists, and thrill seekers. Twins presented useful examples in nature-vs.-nurture debates where, if they could not precisely provide experimental controls, their similarity and difference could at least be made anecdotally significant. In a passage that seems itself eerily similar to the relationship of the Lawrence brothers, Galton lists his general observations of twins' sibling dynamic:

the one was the more vigorous fearless, energetic; the other was gentle, clinging, and timid: or again, the one was more ardent, the other more calm and gentle: or again, the one was the more independent, original, self-contained; the other the more generous, hasty, and vivacious. In short, the difference was always that of intensity or energy in one or

other of its protean forms: it did not extend more deeply into the structure of the characters. (909)

Compare this to Edwin's statement regarding his brother's serial physical abuse. Edwin claims "he was more than a match for me all round. In peace or war he was the stronger man. How could I get even with him? How?" (*GD* 157). What I would like to emphasize, here, is Edwin's question at the end, which suggests that, though Philip may be the more physically dominant brother, both siblings are indeed cognate down to their antisocial, mutually harmful core. Emily A. Bernhard Jackson offers this useful reading of Galton's observations on twins: "such unity surpasses even their physical division—or it negates it. What Galton here describes are twin who, although they happen to have separate carapaces are, in terms of mental attributes and character—one might even say metaphysically—the same" (78). This, of course, is a concept that twin fiction consistently manipulates. An evil twin seems the more wrong because it exaggerates the shock of an unexpected difference. A twinned character that has passed away often seems to take from his or her sibling more than an existential category but an amputated half of their self. My interest, however, lies in the nearness of Galton's respected research to contemporary spiritualist belief regarding twins. Galton's work to compile a series of twin accounts in wide variety—some meaningful to his argument, others simply tantalizing—follows a similar formula to the work of early occult writers like Catherine Crowe, whose *The Night-Side of Nature* devotes an entire chapter to doppelgangers, fetches, and twins. Crowe was deeply fascinated with "[t]his admirable sympathy... generally manifested, more or less, betwixt all persons twin born" (*Night-Side* 169). She depicted twinship as an emotional immediacy shared between two siblings, often activated in times of crisis. Nor would Galton's observations have been entirely out of place in the publications of the SPR, which relied consistently on the general implications of anecdote in the absence of reliable data. Compiled stories of twins served, for turn-of-the-century psychical researchers, as the most promising ground for their interest in telepathy. The writers of *Phantasms of the Living*, Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers, and Frank Podmore, observe that "[o]n the supposition that a close natural bond between two persons is a favourable condition for telepathic influence, there is one group of persons among whom we might expect to find a disproportionate number of instances—namely

*twins*” (279, emphasis in original). Crowe’s interest lay in twinship expressed largely as an empathic sympathy; Gurney’s (*et. al.*) lay in twinship expressed as an informational sympathy; Galton’s lay in twinship expressed as a bodily sympathy. Each, however, tended to treat twins as a single self, divided between two bodies. In doing so, they invoked a logic of sympathetic belief that, sharing a physical appearance, twins must also share a single, essential core.

Importantly, though, Edwin and Philip are not twins. Implications and plot contrivance set aside, the novel’s characters would not be so quick to assert that they could easily discern the difference between the two if the Lawrence brothers were twinned. Rather, the Lawrences are deeply entwined by an essentially similar moral character and, more pertinently, by Edwin’s consistent impersonation of Philip. For years, Edwin has stolen Philip’s identity in order to gain access to the inheritance that solely descended to his older brother. It is only once Edwin has killed Philip and undergone the traumatic, sympathetic collapse of that oneiric murder scene that he emerges as a kind of auratic twin to his now deceased brother, not merely physically indiscernible but similarly combative. Edwin’s nervous break is plainly a response to the abjection of his brother’s corpse and the horror of his murderous actions. I would argue, too, that this bodily conflation responds in parallel to the dead body’s categorical slippage, its ability to disorganize signification. Thus, in the occult logic necessary for the narrative, a misidentification of the corpse realizes the essential similarity of character between the two brothers—a similarity associated with doubled bodies—as a weird physical correspondence. Edwin is not a twin until he could not be a twin—that is, until his brother has died. In its moments of mistaken identity, then, *The Goddess* stages a thoroughly disarrayed twin narrative. Rather than depicting the sympathy of a single self, divided into two identical iterations, here an intense and perverse sympathy allows two selves and two bodies to merge. Rather than depicting a single immoral twin, we come to learn of the constant circuit of abuse that bound Edwin and Philip. Rather than losing a sense of self in the moment of his brother’s death, Edwin attains an identity he has long coveted.

Yet, for all of this discussion of the asignificance of the corpse, its influence over the scene of its own collapse, over Edwin's identity, Ferguson does not spend his time investigating Philip's body. That work is largely left to Hume, though Ferguson remains curious and does poke around at Philip's house to interrogate his staff and, incidentally, terrorize a loan shark. Ferguson's task in *The Goddess* is to investigate and contextualize Bessie. The idol's attack leaves Bessie, like the corpse, wholly without identity except for the physical context of the crime scene. Prior to this she can only recall applause, a brief hint at her profession. When Bessie first enters Ferguson's apartment, even her affect is illegible to him, despite the telepathic connection they have shared in his vision: "Was it possible that the lady was a somnambulist, who, held in the thralldom of that curious disease, had woke to find herself in a stranger's bedroom?" (*GD* 10). Ferguson's diction is productively, pointedly ambiguous. Somnambulism, certainly, was an accepted term for sleepwalking, a parasomnia that in the Victorian era was as often discussed as a product of disease as of unease. Somnambulism, however, was also the generally accepted term for an ambulatory, rather than a cataleptic, state of hypnotized behaviour. Bessie's confusion, her childlike affect, the blood soaking her cloak, her implicit connection to the vision of murder from which Ferguson has just awoken, all seem to reference an anxiety pulled from the fringes of Victorian science, where research blurred into the occult. Hypnosis, as Roger Luckhurst has noted, was a significant cultural anxiety in the second half of the nineteenth century—particularly in regard to the research avenues initiated on the continent by the Paris and Nancy schools of hypnosis:

Liégeois, a professor of law at Nancy, ceaselessly warned that suggestibility might produce a wave of criminal activity. Women might be the passive and amnesic victims of hypnotic seducers; others might find themselves acting in trance or post-hypnotic suggestion to rob, murder, or rape; jurisprudence would have to confront the paradox of innocently guilty agents, robbed of any memory or responsibility for their crimes. ("Trans-Gothic" 152)

Readers already familiar with Marsh's most famous novel, *The Beetle*, would have been primed to read Bessie's confused, somnambulist state as an indicator of a case of crime by proxy. Marsh begins *The Beetle* with precisely this conceit. Robert Holt, an unemployed clerk, falls prey to the mesmeric powers of an ancient Egyptian creature who



strips him down and molests him. After, the creature pilots the English innocent through London, forcing him to break in through the window of an upscale townhouse where he must terrorize Paul Lessingham, the object of the beetle's vengeful obsession. The early scenes of *The Goddess* figure Bessie as just such a threat and just such an unfortunate victim. Ferguson's visionary conviction that Bessie is innocent, despite all appearances to the contrary, appears at the beginning of the novel to support this interpretation. If Bessie's body had been coerced into murderous action, she would have been "innocently guilty." Indeed, Ferguson's glimpse, in his own somnambulist state, of the goddess initially seems to rehearse the same fusion of divinity, animality, and humanity that inhabits Holt's mind while he works the beetle's mischief.

This occult misdirection is largely lost to time, a relic of Victorian urban legend and supernatural concerns, but Bessie's behavior and subsumed identity are undeniably infused with mesmeric implications and sympathetic connections. The somnambulist, whether a hypnotized subject or a parasomnic sufferer, emerged in the nineteenth century as a figure of transgressive sympathies. Their altered personalities and disoriented affective states implied that the entranced individual had connected to a second self, transgressing the barriers of normative identity and behavior. Moreover, the popular culture associated the somnambulist with a sensibility that transgressed or at times even transcended bodily specificity and individuality. Accounts told of subjects who could see with their eyes closed, could hear with organs other than their ears, could mimic events in far-flung locations or learn of a disease contained within another person's body.<sup>10</sup> Often, they seemed to breach into a different, imaginative space, overlaying our physical world with an entirely invented one. When Bessie returns to the crime scene later in the novel, she relives the scene in a manner that involves each of these transgressions. Her former identity consistently bubbles to the surface, only to pop under the pressure of her traumatic knowledge. She populates the room with fantastic, amorphous forms of the

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<sup>10</sup> Robert S. Cox's book *Body and Soul* provides a particularly thorough description of American accounts of sleep-walkers in the first half of the nineteenth century, the period when these various behaviours and occurrences accumulate into a general cultural convention. Refer to his first chapter, "Sleepwalking and Sympathy."

characters involved in the murder scene and seems to habit each one in a variety of experiences. As Robert Cox writes, “[t]he somnambular body was animated by mind, porous, fluid, and partible, interconnected within itself and with others, and liberated of spatial and temporal restrictions. As sensate beings mutualistically engaged with the universe, somnambulists were primed to supervene the barriers of human limitation” (*Body and Soul* 42). These transgressions emerged, at times, as sympathies—as when a mesmerized subject seemed to follow the unspoken will of another or guess the pain of a fellow subject—and, at others, as similarities—as when a subject seemed to mimic the actions of those around them. Rarely, however, were their actions solely one or the other.

Bessie’s mesmeric sympathies and transgressions go beyond her entranced, suggestible manner. They work their way into her use of language when she describes the moment of her psychic break. As Bessie rehearses the scene of the crime, she returns to a specific, repetitive descriptive structure: “I can see the knives—the knives! . . . and the hack, hack, hacking!” (*GD* 69); “and then the hack, hack, hacking!” (*GD* 70); “[i]t keeps on strike, strike, striking” (*GD* 71); “I killed him; it hacked, hacked, hacked; his blood is on my cloak and hands; the dead man lying on the floor” (*GD* 72). Bessie’s sing-song repetitions allow us an early sense of the swift, relentless violence of the automated idol. Her unerring return to this movement, however, also implies that it, and particularly its repetition, are central to her current state. James Braid was the first scientist to consider hypnosis a viable object of research and a mental phenomenon that might be separated from mesmeric pseudoscience. From his earliest treatise on “neurypnology,” as he termed it, in 1842, Braid stressed the easy manner by which a monotonous or repeated stimuli might suppress the conscious self and usher a subject into a hypnotic state. William James, in his chapter on hypnosis, references Braid’s use of the repeated flash of a polished button. Indeed, repetitious stimuli remained a primary clinical method of hypnosis into the late century and many of James’ methods stress rhythmic movement: “‘passes’ in a downward direction over the face and body but without contact;” “[s]troking the skin . . . especially that of the region around the brows and eyes;” “making him listen to a watch’s ticking” (593). Bessie’s automatism clearly presents throughout the novel as shock, as a reaction to Philip’s violent destruction in bizarre circumstances. But her emphasis on repetition implies a further response to the relentless, mechanistic

violence of a murderous automaton. It is in the presence of this uncanny mechanistic movement that Bessie, to use James' term, "will 'go off'" (593).

It may seem by now that I have wandered from my discussion of the corpse but in moving out to discuss twins and hypnotic subjects, I am mapping an expanding field of effects initiated by Philip's body. These occult figures arise in direct response to Philip's violent movement from subject to ambiguous object. Within the narrative, Edwin's adoption of Philip's manner speaks to his unraveling personality in reaction to his murder of his older brother. Bessie's hollowed affect and amnesiac state are her attempts to contain and order the shock of witnessing an inexplicable act. So much is clear but it is the novel's expression of emotional response as a physical similarity that marks the disruptive potential of Philip's ruined body. Within the novel's imaginary, these figures, the first to interact with and bear witness to Philip's transgression into death, emerge from the crime scene as images of a similarly liminal embodiment. Edwin and Bessie can be read as further iterations of the corpse, dispersed across the novel. Indeed, Edwin refers to himself as such in his final appearance: "Hume, ask the corpse" (*GD* 148). Twins and automatists were limit-cases of Victorian realms of knowledge, betraying their permeable, perplexing boundaries. Much as they were an occult fascination, they presented for biologists and behavioural psychologists the untidy boundaries of self and physicality. Further, their depictions of twins and somnambulists seem to parallel the corpse's trajectory toward objecthood: in twin siblings, a single subject had been strangely dispersed between two bodies; in somnambulists, one's self had been suppressed. As a final liminality, both twins and the hypnotic subject expressed an anxious vulnerability to sympathy. The possibility that siblings could incidentally influence the emotions of their counterpart, could know the enclosed space of their second self's mind, provides nineteenth-century twin lore and research with its most eerie and fascinating anecdotes. As Luckhurst observes above, the legal concern embodied by the automatist lay in the access hypnosis might provide to drone bodies, in our vulnerability to such an overpowering connection. The detective's work is to contextualize and categorize the corpse, to understand the moment and the means by which the subject becomes the body. In doing so, he feels toward the boundary of the self, attempting to demarcate its liminal passage into death. Ferguson's task as he

investigates Bessie's background is strangely similar and what we find here is his expedition into the corpse's proximity. Subjects of hypnosis represented a concerning, fascinating state in which consciousness may "go off," revealing a less complex, less significant physicality. Ferguson works to extricate Bessie's latent self from this largely physical remainder. In doing so, he stumbles upon Edwin in the train station, individuating him from his brother and clarifying this further bodily transgression. Only once these analogues to the corpse are categorized and separated from their strange sympathy with the dead can the investigation finally address the events of Philip's death.

## 1.2

We now come to what are called the higher phenomena, namely, Sympathy and Clairvoyance.

—William Gregory, p. 113

The tangle is greater than I thought. It seems to be drawing us together.

—Marsh, *GD*, p. 81

In *The Goddess*, the corpse's disruption spreads through contiguity and proximity and much of the novel's uneasy fascination lies in charting its growing area of effect. The corpse proliferates through a series of similarities and sympathies and, as we shall see, these further figures will themselves often signal or even instigate their own sympathies and transgressions. So far, I have referred to sympathy and similarity without distinguishing my discussions of affect from those of converging religious and scientific fascinations or my analyses of feeling from those of social relation. However, over the long line of a drawn connection between nineteenth-century scientific suspicions of Spiritualism and mystery fiction's parallel aversion to telepathy, say, sympathy can seem to blur and dissipate—not least, on the part of the reader. This is to be expected as the concept of sympathy remains nebulous, though it is most cloud-like—as we shall see—in the modern sense of an enmeshed tangle of relations. Despite their familiarity, affects and feelings are often barely articulable; we may struggle to define them—to ourselves, to those dearest—specifically because of that self-evident familiarity, because we know them when we feel them. Affects emerge as a felt clarity and recognition which—if they are to be essayed—must then be translated into language. At times, the clumsiness of this

process can feel analogous to translating computer code to conversational English. Sympathy is not one of these palpable but ineloquent feelings. The difficulty in characterizing sympathy lies, instead, in its multiple definitions, in its proliferating connections to various modes of thought and engagement.

In this second section of the chapter, I use sympathy largely to designate a specific, analogous structure of communal feeling but a sympathy can also be an emotion and a moral act. It is at times an intellectual labour to sympathize accurately with a person while at others it is an uncontrollable and undesirable impulse. More difficult still, sympathy's multiple glosses are rarely distinct from each other. Sympathy, felt as a compassionate emotion toward someone we cherish, for example, retains an implicit connection to its conventional context as a broader social good. That convention stubbornly tinges even the sympathy I feel for a reprehensible character like Edwin Lawrence, lending a disquieting fascination to our engagement with socially complicated characters over and above the charisma of these figures themselves. Sympathy's multivalence is a persistent problem, one that had interested writers a century prior to the texts I consider here; nineteenth-century culture, on both sides of the Atlantic, inherited a philosophical tradition that valued the socially-complicated, processual quality of the experience, heavily influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment. Summarizing the writings on sympathy by David Hume and Adam Smith—perhaps the most consequential authors within this tradition to the nineteenth-century reader—Geoffrey Sayre-McCord observes, “in talking about sympathy, Hume and Smith sometimes have in mind just the process by which we, in the standard cases, come to feel as others do and sometimes have in mind just the product, the fellow-feeling” (212). Sympathy is passage and process and product. Even the apparently contradictory uses of sympathy—an intentional, thoughtful action of connection; an instinctual and unruly reaction; a marker of moral kindness—were not, as we shall see, so easily extricated in the more conservative *fin-de-siècle* imagination.

Nineteenth-century fiction inherited a Romantic interest in staging and manipulating sympathy as one means to an emotional catharsis that is itself an essentially political feeling. We can think here of the abolitionist politics at play throughout the antebellum literature produced by the northern American states or the socioeconomic debates

dramatized in early Victorian social problem novels. One of the quintessential nineteenth-century cultural products, the melodrama, manufactures particularly strong and comfortingly predictable sympathies directed toward popular, politicized figures: the virtuous but wronged woman, the struggling middle-class family, the unemployed worker. Melodrama's consistent popularity throughout the nineteenth century speaks to sympathy's commercially reliable ability to organize large groups or audiences in concert, to capture the emotional imagination, and to reproduce that experience repeatedly with little diminishment in its affective power. With Charles Darwin's publication of *The Descent of Man* in 1871, sympathy surfaced into another iteration of rationalist debates regarding the public good. Darwin's sympathy is instinctual, an embodied practice of moral understanding. His beliefs draw upon Smith's arguments of more than a century previous to suggest a fundamental will to sympathy that is modulated—sometimes strengthened, sometimes weakened—by our other social instincts, our desire for standing and approval. Smith's sympathy was a complicated act of imaginative simulation and mimesis. As Robert S. Cox glosses it, Smith's argument portrays the feeling as “a complex amalgam of individual desire and social need that affirmed the possibility of a stable society, perhaps a true community, even as it affirmed the bedrock of interpersonal isolation” (29). Darwin's fellow feeling is, at base, an evolved socializing trait, shared to a greater or lesser extent with other social animals.<sup>11</sup> Its grace lies in a communal altruism that founds our moral sensibility; that is, its separation from animalistic compassions is a difference of degrees, not divinity. If

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<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Darwin's development of a biologically-informed affect theory, refer to Rachel Ablow's book *Victorian Pain*, specifically to her chapter “Charles Darwin's Affect Theory.” Though Darwin's is a particularly embodied and practical affect theory, Ablow points to the kinds of imaginative doublings and involuntary feeling that we see throughout this chapter. For example, Darwin discusses an instance of joyful tears shared between reunited father and son. He explains that these tears originate in a phantasmal grief felt for an imagined iteration of the pair who never saw each other again. As Ablow observes:

here two men's sympathy with counterfactual versions of themselves in some sense makes those two men four: the men they are, and the men they are not, but might have been. The very nonsensicality of this conclusion begins to indicate the way that male tears come to seem as if they signal the fact that the weeper is *not* in pain, but that someone else is, even if that someone else in some very real sense does not exist, or is somehow also himself. (109)

sympathy seemed stronger in European civilizations to his (largely European) readership, it was because instinct had in Western culture become habituated, its practice had become refined. This was Darwin's clearest expression of his theory to date but other scientists and critics had already attempted to read sympathy by the light of his evolutionary theory. Alfred Wallace argued in 1864 that a cultural acceptance of sympathy had artificially halted the processes of natural selection. His observations initiated a general turn toward selective social strategems (Sir Francis Galton would not name these "eugenics" until 1883) in the debate and discussion of England's liberal intelligentsia. Darwin was notably hesitant to wade into Social Darwinism's deep waters. His advocacy in *The Descent of Man* for sympathy and altruism as, themselves, successful evolutionary traits seems pointed but only mildly so; his point is neither piercing nor blunt.<sup>12</sup> Beyond this question as to the essential good of sympathy in an evolutionary theory, however,

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed, *The Descent of Man* contains Darwin's nearest approach to a public comment on these social theories. The notorious passage suggests the larger utility of eugenics while quailing from its moral repugnance:

With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, feeds to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.

The aid which we feel impelled to give to the helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy, which was originally acquired as part of the social instincts, but subsequently rendered, in the manner previously indicated, more tender and more widely diffused. Nor could we check our sympathy, even at the urging of hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature. The surgeon may harden himself whilst performing an operation, for he knows that he is acting for the good of his patient; but if we were intentionally to neglect the weak and helpless, it could only be for a contingent benefit with an overwhelming present evil. We must therefore bear the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind. (133-134, 1891 Edition)

Darwin's theory also tied sympathy to social progress. His writings offered new argument for scientists working in the unlovely work of vivisection, for example, or any number of other researches or advocacies that challenged public sensibility. Rob Boddice eloquently lays out this new rhetoric of sympathetic progress in *The Science of Sympathy*, where he observes:

[i]f scientific and medical progress was incompatible with cruelty or callousness, then animal experimentation could not be allowed to fit into common ascriptions of cruelty or callousness. Vivisection, the good outcomes of which were shouted from on high, must have had moral means if it had moral ends... Similarly, if vaccination put an end to smallpox but parents refused to vaccinate their children, then it was moral to punish them. (7)

Psychology—a field that developed alongside evolutionary biology and which had obvious interests in the functions of sympathy—similarly felt the influence of this less moral formulation of sympathy. William James writes of sympathy as “an emotion as to whose instinctiveness psychologists have held hot debate, some of them contending that it is no primitive endowment, but, originally at least, the result of rapid calculation of the good consequences to ourselves” (410). James sorts his discussion of sympathy into a chapter on instinct rather than his chapter on emotion where it sits alongside fear, play, curiosity, shame and other more affective impulses. While Darwin wrote of sympathy's demanding influence over the individual, James is fascinated instead by its fragility in the face of any distraction: “sympathy is peculiarly liable to inhibition from other instincts which its stimulus may call forth” (411). He lists a good number of these possible distractions—fear, disgust, “habits, reasoned reflections, and calculations,” love, hate, “[t]he hunting and pugnacious instincts”—and, as is often the case with James, one gets the sense that he could have easily gone on.

When Ferguson liberates Bessie from her police escort, beginning the climactic action of *The Goddess*, the two flee out into a foggy evening only to glimpse someone who appears to be Philip Lawrence dashing down a side street. The strange experience recalls them instantly to the dreamlike confusions that Ferguson has been working to contain. Bessie notices it first:



“Yes, it is odd. What’s that?”

A note of fear was in her voice. She came closer to me. I saw that her face had suddenly grown white. The hand which she had placed on my arm was trembling.

Through the mist, out there in the Fulham Road, there came the sound of a woman’s laughter. It was that curious laughter which I had heard in Edwin Lawrence’s room—soft, low, musical; yet within it, indefinable, yet not to be mistaken, a quality which was pregnant with horrible suggestion. (*GD* 131)

There is an inherently eerie quality to this unlocalized, unbounded laughter in a foggy street at night; doubly so, for those readers who had suspected Bessie but who now find “a woman’s laughter” disembodied into the mist. The truly unsettling nature of this scene, however, is to be found in how this auditory experience surfaces and spreads. Bessie has repeatedly indicated that, since the events of Ferguson’s vision, she can consistently hear the goddess’s laughter, yet another early misdirection regarding her mental illness. Even after Bessie returns to the scene of the crime and finds some peace, she admits to Ferguson: “[t]he dreadful noise! I’ve heard it ever since. I hear it all the time—I hear it now. Can’t you—hear it now?” (*GD* 80). Ferguson has not. It seems he cannot until Bessie places her arm upon him in Fulham Road. This touch—by a character already associated with uncanny interpersonal transgression—initiates a bewildering collapse into Bessie’s experience. The two characters are caught in an inexplicable, boundariless feeling that seems to return them to Ferguson’s vision, with its wash of undifferentiated horrors. They feel in parallel toward this hallucinatory, displaced laughter. In retrospect, the origin of this laughter is occulted. The figure running through the fog is not Philip but Edwin, who is hounded by the divine laughter of his murderous idol. Whether the sound of laughter rises out of his manic experience or Bessie’s traumatized memory is unclear, and it is possible that there is no meaningful difference between the two. The laughter seems to arise from a sympathetic situation, a reunion of the three surviving witnesses to Philip’s bodily collapse in the embrace of the automaton. It offers a supernatural confirmation, useless to Ferguson at this time, that yet another person was involved in the scene.

The sympathy that moves through this scene—that dredges up this occult laughter and propagates it through three individuals united by history and proximity—is of an entirely different order to Darwin’s or Smith’s rational attempts to explicate the feeling. This sympathy is neither intentional nor instinctual. It is affective but it presents an emergent situational phenomenon of shared information rather than an act or even a feeling. While the sympathies of Darwin and Smith tended to be refined through practice and intimacy, the more occult sympathies that shape the narrative of *The Goddess* spread with less logical, more associative vectors. Characters fall into sympathies due to accidents of spatial proximity or similar states of consciousness. Moreover, they speak to a fantasy of sympathy in which one could actually share rather than simply simulate the feelings or knowledge of others. In this way, the novel stages an older but persistent sympathy, born of occult analogy and “sympathetic” magic. Nineteenth-century communities of the occult, psychical research, and fringe sciences imagined sympathy as a shifting, modulating situation of feeling. Sympathy connected our bodies to the stars and our minds to our loved ones; it was an environmental connection through which we might access information and power. Cox observes that throughout the century, “Hermeticists managed or manipulated sympathy for its transformative potential, and occult physicians used their arcane knowledge of it to heal, but in either case occult perspectives were. . . a dynamic mix of the newer sciences imported within a framework the held materialist explanation as insufficient” (26). Sympathy—as mediums, mesmerists, and telepaths used the term—referred to a recognition of similar feeling, an affinity or even a mental collapse that was born of a parallel relation toward a stimulus. The simple correspondence of two people interacting in parallel emotional moments—Ferguson and Bessie’s confused audience with a divine laughter; Ferguson’s and Hume’s horrified reactions to Philip’s corpse—was enough to engender a sympathy that ran between the two affected individuals. We can consider this as a triadic structure of feeling, one in which sympathy is an effect of similarity. In animal magnetism, the magnetizer and the mesmerized subject were brought into sympathy through a mutual interaction with the ethereal “magnetic fluid” shared by all living beings. The telepathic research of the SPR was particularly drawn to this triadic structure of feeling as knowing. Their experiments attempted to build out the triad from a single interaction. Subject A looks at a playing

card, recognizes it, considers it, considers it a little longer. Subject B, who we can hope shares a sympathy with Subject A, concentrates on that shared feeling in order to also look at the same playing card. This is a fantasy of telepathic communication, certainly, but it is also a fantasy of modulating slippages of feeling. Of course, this focus on one analogous structure of sympathy was not confined to the occult. Indeed, toward the end of the century, it re-emerged through a series of *causes célèbres* as an anxious form of feeling. In *The Goddess*, however, this contextual wariness toward public sympathies finds its echo in the discomforting flux of occult sympathies with victim, criminal, and witness. This section, then, turns to sympathy as a source of anxious knowing. In doing so, it follows the movement I initiated in the first section of this chapter out into the proximities of the corpse's effects. Here, at the margins I examine the communal unease that reacts to the body and that engenders strange affinities and slippages among characters.

\* \* \*

*The Goddess* is the second of three significant thrillers written by Marsh for serialization at the turn of the century: *The Beetle: A Mystery*, bound together as a novel in 1897; *The Goddess*, in 1900; and *The Joss: A Reversion*, in 1901. I use *significant* advisedly. Though *significant* to my argument and, perhaps, to the elaboration of a cultural unease, at least the later two novels are largely unconsidered in modern literary study. More is the pity as these further iterations develop the concerns of invasion, volition, and violation that Marsh first expressed in his more famous novel. Taken together, the anxious imaginings of a Gothic empire are not so much compulsively rehearsed as considered, set up as though on “an ebony pedestal” in an artist’s atelier and appreciated from various angles (*GD* 163). These three novels are not a trilogy or an accepted series in any sense of critical canon-craft, authorial intent, or branding. Rather, I bundle them together because each novel menaces *fin-de-siècle* London with an abiding foreign divinity from the imperial reaches. Throughout these tales, the emblems and agents of exoticized cults wield an unexpected influence over England’s urban social order, caught unawares. Small, striking tropes recur throughout the ad hoc corpus: in instances, for example, of home invasion by an entranced British subject entering through the window. Perhaps

more productive, however, are the novels' differences in narrative style. *The Beetle* gathers together four characters' accounts of a mesmeric, shape-shifting creature, who has left Egypt to reclaim its former captive, the influential politician Paul Lessingham. *The Joss* similarly tells its tale of the female Gothic, of a crumbling, inherited mansion and a religious figure returned from the empire abroad, in four collected narratives. These novels are not epistolary in the term's truest sense; their extended, separated sections lack the fragmentary textual interaction of even a hybrid epistolary novel like *Dracula* (1897). If these records are correspondence in any way, it is as reportage from the other side of an imperial repression. As with *Dracula*, however, their anthologizing impulse provides a sense of breadth, of a threat that engages English society across class and gender lines and disregards apparent degrees of imperial association. The technique is particularly successful in *The Beetle* in depicting the creature as a stubborn epistemological problem. The variety of these characters' reports does not simply depict the beetle's various forms—an immense, slimy maggot, for example, an ancient Arabic man, an old gypsy woman, a beautiful young woman referred to as the Woman of Song, a human-sized beetle, etc. The English characters' separate investigations and encounters with the creature seem to inform its morphic potential, which responds, in form, to their fears and desires. Since its mesmeric telepathy and its sexually obscene assaults—each in their way a dissolution of boundaries—emerge from this shapeshifting ambiguity, the novel's parallel investigations consistently diffuse rather than define the beetle's essential mystery, producing further confusion and violence. Across these novels, each inquiry—be it Holt's, Atherton's, Lindon's, or Champnell's in *The Beetle*, Hume's, Symond's, or Ferguson's in *The Goddess*—is at pains to frame and build some context (at times, any context at all and forget the accuracy) around an intrusive ambiguity. Their work is to place an unsettling body. The body may appear as the typical corpse we associate with a murder mystery, as it does with the defaced, scattered remains of Philip Lawrence. A character's urgent need to understand, however, might as easily respond to stranger bodies: the unclassifiable morphology of the beetle or the historiess cypher of an entranced amnesiac. What shifts between these novels then is not the repertoire of their imagery nor their narrative impulse to produce and appraise Gothic figures. Rather, it is

their narrative format that morphs along with, I suggest, the affective play made possible by an iterative tale told anew.

*The Goddess* is similarly interested in the parallel work of multiple investigations. But, while its two sibling novels stage these separately and largely sequentially, with each new voice offering a partial and unfinished understanding, the various attempts to interpret the violent crisis in Edwin's apartment play out in an unbroken, concurrent narrative. The serial arrangement of testimony that we find in *The Beetle* and *The Joss* emphasize the terror and confusion of encounter with a liminal body and the prolific spread of its effects. By defaulting repeatedly to unwitting characters, these stories return to the individual (terrified) and the instance (confusing, shocking) of encounter in various novel situations strung together by new investigative attempts at understanding. But these are not the conventional investigations of mystery fiction and in undertaking a murder mystery, Marsh turns in *The Goddess* to the processual over the episodic. One of the great pleasures of mystery fiction is its emphasis on its procedure, which so aestheticizes unknowing, curiosity, and research that it renovates convention and cliché as themselves pleasurable objects, comforting markers of the deeper satisfactions of intellectual play and progress. In *The Goddess*, we have three procedures, each with its own engagement and conventions. Symonds and his police officers go dispassionately about a traditional criminal investigation. More correctly, their reactive and unimaginative professionalism acts as the strawman of police procedure, a trope that was already traditional to mystery fiction. Meanwhile, Dr. Hume, who adopts the "quasi-official" authority of a pinch-hitting medical examiner, attempts a kind of energetic, deductive investigation that would have been familiar to any reader of Doyle's Holmes stories (*GD* 29). He minutely inspects the corpse, cross-examines those who last saw Edwin alive, bustles through rooms examining clues, insists on the importance of the smallest detail, and even complains when evidence has been moved or altered. Ferguson's investigation is the outlier here. I have already mentioned that his initial investigation only peripherally engages with the corpse, a strange turn for a murder mystery. Instead, his work centres on providing some identity and sense of self for Bessie an inquiry that predates both Hume's and Symond's. However, Bessie's amnesia may be abrupt and total but it is also surprisingly brief, given the influence that it exerts over the case. Bessie loses her

memory, appears at Ferguson's window, over-nights in Mrs. Peddar's apartment, and regains her sense of self, all within the first quarter of *The Goddess*, culminating in her return to the scene of the crime. With her memories more or less intact, Ferguson's engagement with the case is more philosophical, though his gumshoe activity would admittedly seem to stand against this claim. His investigative labour for the rest of the narrative lies in contextualizing his undeniable conviction of Bessie's innocence—a feeling that is baseless, without natural explanation, and even in direct conflict with his vision of the night before. With its visions, unmanageable feeling, and unexplained plot devices, Ferguson's inquiry is more closely akin to the psychic detective narratives that experienced minor popularity in the late decades of the nineteenth century. It is, at least, not forensic. His investigation, ultimately, attempts to understand an occult sympathy that he shares with a similarly bewildered Bessie, while the body is largely left to less haunted inquirers.

With this, *The Goddess* foregrounds a form of affective scrutiny so deeply entrenched in investigative fiction's means of narrating social relations as to be methodological. When reading an epistolary or episodic text—*The Beetle* and its more famous shelf-mates, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (1818), are signature examples, here—we, as engaged, informed, and ideal readers, construct a series of sympathies among its documents. Writing on both epistolary novels and the practice of correspondence in general, Elizabeth Freeman has referred to this as “a kind of virtual coherence” (97). The textual community that we build from an epistolary novel sees obvious felt relations among characters standing alongside our more analytically-produced recognitions: similarities in diction, say, appearances of returned characters, events recorded from multiple vistas and points of view, paralleled moments of fellow feeling as in plots of unwitting, lovelorn hesitancy. *The Beetle* calls us early in the text to read for the similarities of feeling, expression, and intent that mark the coherent monster obscured behind its multiple forms. A similar demand is made on the reader to recognize the fog that menaces the Demeter and the giant dog that stalks Whitby's hinterlands as figures of *Dracula*. In reading an epistolary or anthologizing text, we construct our holistic experience through a virtual netting of textual sympathies and similarities that connect one document to a more meaningful complex. That is to say, we read for correspondence. Given this, it is hardly

surprising that some of our earliest sensational detective novels—like Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* and Charles Felix’s *The Notting Hill Mystery*—were epistolary. After all, the criminal investigations we find in late-Victorian fiction often depend upon a similar mode of engagement, now made diegetic with the introduction of an analogue for our readerly scrutinies: the investigator. Limited though it may be, Ferguson’s understanding of the violent events that occur in Edwin’s room originates in his impulse to act upon and make sense of a social relation, one that reorganizes other established relations he has maintained in his community. Sympathy incites Ferguson’s investigative efforts, stands as their object, and serves an essential role in their methodology. In order to understand his own, barely manageable sympathy with Bessie, Ferguson must navigate and analyze a shifting set of social sympathies arrayed around Philip’s corpse, each differing in feeling and relation but aligned by an involvement with the dead body. In narrating an investigation, late-nineteenth-century mystery fiction appraises sympathies, similarities, guilts, and suspicions, involvements and aversions. Contextualizing each manner and posture to make it discrete and meaningful, investigative characters work to untangle correspondences, minor and occulted connections that might bind individual narratives into a coherent case.

A tendency toward generic assemblage marks each novel in Marsh’s imperial Gothic trilogy—ironically so, given the disparate styles that he draws together. The first three accounts included in *The Beetle* drift at times from Gothic horror to science fiction and the story as a whole is strongly influenced by Egyptian mummy tales, a genre that was immensely and briefly popular in the late-nineteenth century. The novel ends with an abrupt switch from this generic flux into a bohemian, aristocratic detective’s narrative. *The Joss* transitions from its early, politically-minded narrative elements, depicting a shopgirl’s tribulations, into a haunted house tale before ending with an account of nautical horror that draws on the contemporary writing of authors like Joseph Conrad and Gaston Leroux. This *collage du pastiche* continues into *The Goddess*, finding a new design in its three investigations: a police procedural, a Holmesian deduction, and a psychic detective’s narrative. In its move to procedure, however, and in its generic emphasis on social perception, the novel’s depictions of sympathy are fluid and flowing. While the three investigators go about their readerly work of binding narratives together

into coherence, we, as readers, can trace the contours of shifting sympathies and similarities between their efforts. In place of the parallels offered by his anthologizing works, Marsh's turn to the murder mystery presents parallels made narratively good—read and recognized, gladly received or refused by characters trying to make sense of Edwin's apparent murder. Hume, Ferguson, and Symonds repeatedly find themselves in discomforting similarity with one another, at times despite and at times due to their divergent attitudes and methods of inquiry. My interest here lies less in the manner by which such ideologically-differing investigations may come into sympathy than in their sympathies' differences of texture and expression; in the easy manner by which they may be faked, refuted, or renovated; in their stubborn persistence.

Hume scrupulously defends the borders of his own grounded investigation and his rivalry with Ferguson presents as a contest of convictions and suspicions. Ferguson's assurance of Bessie's innocence is supernaturally charged while Hume's suspicions are, at least nominally, rational and so their conflicts further suggest the tropic divisions of Spiritualism and science that I touched on briefly in the first half of this chapter. As we have seen, Hume refuses to consider Ferguson's psychic evidence, though on its surface it might bolster his own case by tying his rival more closely to the murder scene. That said, Ferguson's investigation and Hume's are not as different in their underlying impulse as either character would like to imagine. They emerge as much from a shared class of acquaintance as from the bizarre events of Edwin's final night in the Imperial Mansions. Hume is unwilling to admit that Ferguson moves in the same milieu as he, a social whirl of celebrity actresses and the wealthy scions of established families. During their initial sweep of the crime scene, when Ferguson first broaches Philip's blood-soaked collar, Hume reacts by closing ranks with the Lawrences:

You are making a serious mistake in endeavouring to associate Philip Lawrence with this matter. I know him well. He is a man of high position and noble character; as incapable of such a deed as you. Indeed, I know him well enough to be aware that he is incapable; I have not sufficient knowledge of you to say, with certainty, of what you may be capable. (*GD* 28)



Responding to Ferguson's similarly detail-oriented investigation and to the suspicion it casts on his acquaintance, Hume asserts Philip's innocence by association while disavowing Ferguson. Throughout the novel, the "Imperial Doctor" measures his refinement against Ferguson's rude clout (*GD* 24). Even in later scenes, once Hume has ransacked Ferguson's room and threatened him with a pistol, his burning sense of superiority never gutters. Confronted with the possibility that his own social standing might touch upon brute violence, Hume anxiously dismisses one set of sympathies for another. He is unwilling to be aligned with Ferguson, a parvenu from a dubious past in foreign climes. Instead, Hume reasserts his connections with a fellow member of the old money. The urgency and, more strikingly, the contingency of this boundary are clear from the first but are increasingly ironized with each detail we learn of Philip's household. Hume seems unaware, for example, of the awed fear that leads Philip's servants to wait up during his nights of binge drinking. We might even presume that Hume's sense of cultivation would not include Philip's repeated physical attacks on his brother, an illicit forger. Yet the boundaries that Hume establishes—between Ferguson's amateurism and his own quasi-amateurism, between Ferguson's physical intrepidity and his intellect, between Ferguson's colonial rudeness and his refinement—are most necessary and most hostilely defended in the face of the pair's uncomfortable sympathies, particularly of acquaintance.

Despite the seriousness of the murder at hand, neither character's management of these similarities is a model of maturity. In their next meeting, Ferguson answers Hume's social jealousy with a jibe at his status—emotionally, socially, and in the case as a whole:

“This affair of poor Lawrence's seems to have affected you even more than it has me—which is odd.”

“It is odd.”

“Because I had always supposed that he was a more intimate acquaintance of mine than yours.” (*GD* 39)

With one hand, Ferguson's derisive flourish proffers a similarity—itsself unflattering to the exclusory doctor—while snatching it away with the other. Not only did Ferguson's acquaintance with the apparently deceased parallel Hume's, the boundary of his close

acquaintance with Edwin lay just beyond Hume's reach. He was *my* best friend, this grown man seems to say, not *yours*. These schoolyard contests of friendship and social capital do not improve when Ferguson and Hume each realize that the other is in pursuit of a relationship with Bessie. Their parallel affections in this love-triangle clarify their similarity and social competition, no longer a matter of mere status but of marital prospects. Desperate to define himself against this disrespectful, *nouveau-riche* soldier of fortune who has so easily paralleled his social life and affections, Hume defaults repeatedly to absurd suspicions. At times, he seems to suggest that Ferguson is working at once to pin the crime on both Philip and Bessie, individually. The hostility, however, with which he defends his fine-grained social discriminations, is not reasonable, nor—we are to believe—is it entirely typical for the man. Ferguson notes his altered affect soon after Hume's first interaction with the corpse:

I had never had much pleasure in the man's society; but this air of open resentment was new. It was as if out of Lawrence's murdered body there had come a malicious spirit, which had entered into him, and inspired him with a sudden and unreasoning desire to work me mischief. (*GD* 39)

The line initially appears as an insignificant metaphor, simply another minor reminder of the novel's broadly occult atmosphere. Upon learning toward the end of the novel, however, that the body is Philip's rather than Edwin's, this line seems less metaphorical and a more substantial reinforcement of the novel's particular deployment of the occult. The portrayal of Philip Lawrence initially provided by Hume crumbles as Ferguson's investigation advances and we learn of his private life. Edwin's personality in no way matches Hume's newfound belligerence but the character of Philip as we come to understand it—combative and domineering—certainly seems to inflect Hume's posturing. The revelations of Philip's character, of course, cast Hume's fashionable set in an ill light. More significantly, however, they doubly ironize Hume's earliest retreat into rank and style. First, in an attempt to exclude Ferguson due to his unsavoury social providence, Hume has defined his community around the novel's two most objectionable characters; second, the hostile tone behind his description of Philip's unblemished nobility itself betrays the elder Lawrence brother's true personality in an unrecognized

moment of supernatural, affective influence. That is to say, Hume's urgent need to set a boundary between his sympathies with Ferguson marks yet another similarity. Each character's investigation is profoundly and supernaturally impacted by their interaction with the scene of violence, effecting even their methodology. Most obviously, Ferguson is galvanized by a horrific vision and a barely manageable conviction of Bessie's innocence. Hume's rational investigation is disorganized by an increasingly fractious and combative attitude that moves contagiously from corpse to investigator and haunts his attempts to build knowledge.

At the end of the nineteenth century, an increasingly mediated and sensationalized news cycle manufactured in rapid succession a series of public crises of sympathy from lurid murder investigations. In Great Britain, the United States, and France, a series of *causes célèbres*—the Lifeboat Case (also known as the Dudley and Stephens Cannibalism Case), the Morin murder, Lizzie Borden's acquittal—saw various print publications amplify and feed public reactions back to a rapt readership in a loop of stylized sympathies that veered between compassion and suspicion. These shifts in attitude can be found even within individual articles and thought-pieces. Many of their ambivalent depictions could be ascribed to hedging, with a yellow-journalism jaundiced eye on sales. But at least as often, as Bridget Walsh notes, these portrayals drifted in the choppy confluence of generic literature and a new cultural awareness of criminology and psychology: “In both trial coverage and in fiction, an uneasy alliance of melodrama and a more modern outlook results in an uneven representation of the protagonist, often affording her a greater degree of sympathy, but ultimately still punishing her for her transgressions” (125). To centre a case on a young female suspect, a figure of cultural sympathy, as Richard Marsh's novel does, was to ratchet up the internal tensions of this unstable narrative. Thus, categorization and means of relation were important in newsprint's depictions of allegedly murderous women. Their attractive or plain physical features, their mannered or uninviting demeanor, their innocent history or surmounted tribulations all had an increased currency for a press that promised, at times, information for distant judges of character and, at others, a form of fictionalizing acquaintance. The media made much, for example, of Lizzie Borden's courtroom fainting spell when the skulls of her father and step-mother were produced in court as evidence. Moments like these were

ambiguous and played for their ambiguity but allowed the public to feel a frisson of horror with Borden as well as compassion for or suspicion toward her.

In a widely reprinted article entitled “The Moral Muddle About Murder,” an anonymous contributor to the December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1884 issue of *The Spectator* admits “an increasing attention, sympathetic attention, is paid to the deaths of individuals” but warns that sympathy has its own vulnerabilities (1694). “[F]ew notice the inequality with which it works,” the writer observes and sympathy is most easily and commonly “misdirected” in the sensationalized news print that swirls around murder trials (1694, 1695). Though the typical Victorian might read of a distant massacre with “emotions which in the beginning of the century would have been thought either weak or sentimental,” the commentator finds in cases of murder that public reaction shows “a certain want of sympathy for the victims” (1694). Quite apart from the drama of the courtroom, public accounts of Lizzie Borden’s swoon provide a dramaturgical invitation that enfolds the reader into a structure of feeling, a theatrical gesture that elicits our participation. We are called to feel in parallel with Borden, not with the skulls. We are invited to recognize and test this sympathy, the tenor of its compassion or suspicion. We are implicitly encouraged to build upon our sympathy a reactive, emotional interpretation and a judgment. Ultimately, we are roused—perhaps even without our full consent—to triangulate our feeling with Borden and thus to engage with the news story. In *The Spectator*, two specific scandals, clipped from contemporary headlines, provided context for the writer’s critique. First was the Morin murder and ensuing trial, when Madame Clovis Hugues—wife of the poet and politician Clovis Hugues—was accused of shooting a private detective named Morin for allegedly harassing her with false allegations of infidelity. Second was the infamous Lifeboat Case, which saw Edwin Stephens and Captain Thomas Dudley tried for murder after they killed and consumed Richard Parker, a 17-year-old cabin boy, while all three were stranded in a dinghy for 20 days with only two cans of turnips as rations. To the critic’s chagrin, public sentiment in England had strongly sided with Madame Clovis Hugues over the defaming Morin—“as if a criminal’s life were exactly like a tiger’s”—and with Stephens and Dudley—as if “the public are not at all horrified by the killing of a weak lad in order that he might be eaten” (1694).

The writer of the *Spectator* article takes particular interest in the Morin murder affair and, more specifically, in a shift in press coverage after his death. While Morin lay in hospital, with rumours circulating that he was dying in extreme pain, little was printed in praise of Hugues' attack. Only after he passed away and was no longer a concern could the public and its media move on with their "irrational and wicked sympathy" (1694). So claims the *Spectator* correspondent, who offers an evocative explanation:

The ordinary murderer, again, is an interesting figure. Men realise him and his danger, and his fear, and the terrible nature of his sentence, and feel for him the pity which his unseen, because buried victim, fails fully to excite. That one is dead and past; this one is living and here; and the public fixes its eye on the latter. (1695)

That one, this one, and the public... with this, the article delineates a complex of sympathy that is by now familiar. The correspondent's unease lies in the ambiguous relations of feeling that this complex makes possible in moments of moral inattention. Our sympathies if not willfully directed can be distracted by "the accidents of the age, by swift communication, photography, cheap newspapers" as well as by charismatic personalities, weighty punishments, sensational journalism, and courtroom stunts (1695). Marsh's mystery teases this possibility. Ferguson begins the novel annoyed with Edwin and, as new details come to light in the case, he quickly runs through his small store of respect for either Lawrence. Instead, he experiences an abiding and, notably, unthinking sympathy with Bessie, the woman who, for much of the novel, appears to have murdered Edwin, *compos mentis* or no. At times, *The Goddess* depicts this less refined sympathy much as *The Spectator's* commentator would have it, as an irrational product of emotional softness and an uncultured cue to violence. Shocked to find himself yearning for Bessie, Ferguson admits that he is unmannered due to his imperial adventures "in places where human life is not held of much account, and where one would have thought as little of killing such a man as Edwin Lawrence appeared to have been, as destroying any other noxious animal" (*GD* 83). Little sympathy for the murdered man is to be found, then, in Ferguson's breast. Ideally, we would feel a revulsion of the killer in parallel with the corpse and our horror would simulate the victim's in the last moments of their life. In the absence of the victim as a feeling subject, we are drawn to a different triad of feeling

that relates ourselves as readers to the killer, both intimidated by a powerful legal system, which is stubbornly “too abstract a thing to call up sympathy” (1694).

The “moral muddle” of these situations, then, lies in the modularity of sympathy, in the easy manner by which figures can be included or excluded, and in the new and uncomfortable relations that might be produced by simply demarcating unexpected similarities. Our entanglements in similarity and sympathy seem to teeter toward affective confusions, modulated by strange parallels of feeling. For a conservative, Victorian critic there is an obvious physical danger to sympathizing with a killer (“as if a criminal’s life were exactly like a tiger’s”). This is compounded by sympathy’s ethical and intellectual vulnerabilities which, through easy feeling, corrupt the cultural project of late-nineteenth-century English democracy and its emphasis on thoughtful, utilitarian judgement for the general good. We must not sympathize with the killer, our critic suggests, because to do so renegotiates our political engagements.<sup>13</sup> Take our mind’s eye from stolid Victorian ethics for even a moment and we might mistake one pole of feeling for another or become embroiled in a morally questionable sympathy. And thus through sympathy passes worldly glory or as *The Spectator* would have it: “It is not so easy, while such symptoms are noted, for quiet observers to be sure... that we are secure, as harder minds come uppermost—and that, no doubt, is a tendency of the day—against a return to the old barbarities” (1694). That is, precisely the most communal aspect of sympathy, the manner by which it might connect us in a shared recognition of feeling to any number of other similarly-situated subjects, is at once its most questionable and uncultured vulnerability.

Mystery fiction makes much of sympathy’s modularity and the revelations to be had from a simple shift in how we figure our parallel feelings. Often, the convention goes, the

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<sup>13</sup> In arguing the political inconveniences of sympathy and their liability toward moral reversals, the author of “The Moral Muddle” invokes a debate that has very old roots. Steven Bruhm finds a similar wariness at play in the Romantic era debates regarding the spectacular pain produced by judiciary torture and extra-judiciary violence. Here he notes: “any kind of tragedy is capable of inspiring pity, and so it is difficult to regulate how and to whom the spectator will respond” (72). The genius of sensationalised representations of murder trials at the end of the nineteenth century was to package and sell precisely this *frisson* or confusion. Again, their sensationalizing impulse to titillating implications of identity was pre-empted by authors like Byron and Shelley. For more, see Bruhm’s *Gothic Bodies*.

greater knowledge will be gleaned from refiguring our more stubborn sympathies. The greatest will lie somewhere in a sympathy we have not thought to question, as is the case with Hume and the corpse he cannot recognize as Philip's. Perhaps unexpectedly then for so sensationalized a corpus, *fin-de-siècle* mystery fiction often depends upon a form of sympathy that our writer in *The Spectator* might have, at a glance, approved. His original triad emphasizes presence and visibility. The corpse's absence from a trial's coverage pushes the public to a concerning compassion for the killer—"sympathy for the living because he is living" (1695). In the murder mystery, of course, it is the killer who recedes behind the inexplicability of his or her act. We are left in their absence to sympathize with the corpse through acts of inquiry and imagination. Investigators attempt to understand a victim's final moments by reading their thought in the trace of their actions—by perceiving desperation in the remnants of a scuffle, say, or by deciphering an intent behind unusual movements through town in the hours before death. But the corpse—though materially present and memorably so—is not a stable point of sympathy in *The Goddess*, which as a murder mystery is interested in maintaining the occult strangeness of the body, its mystery. The corpse, as Schwenger writes, "no longer matches... the subjectivity that its contours once helped to define, for itself and others" (158). That which is still present, a physical body that was once the context and container for a subject with whom we wish to sympathize, has itself been ripped from context and become uncontained. This is not to say that the corpse recedes behind the crime scene in the manner of the killer. Rather, the corpse rises as a double and a Gothic proxy for our desired (and idealizing) sympathy with the dying character. The corpse is of course a hybrid thing and to sympathize with its subjecthood, we often must first sympathize with its objecthood by tracing its wounds, its decay, its physical reality. We can only find context and explanation for the subject's final moments in the residue and viscera of a violent death. The strange unease of sympathizing with this fascinating, unaccountable, liminality emerges in this novel in disquieting images borrowed from the occult. Hume's attempts to read the corpse, as we have seen, enact a subtle change in his demeanor as he is haunted by this tattered body. Less directly, the manic and unhinged appearance of the apparent corpse, Edwin, in the novel's *dénouement* underlines the vaguely unwholesome and disordering nature of a sympathy with the unsympathetic, unsignifying dead. With its

emphasis often less on legal justice than on understanding, the murder mystery remakes our sympathy with the corpse. No longer an unarguable moral good, this affective interaction provides its own vulnerabilities: confusion, disorganization, and abject horror.

*The Goddess*, alongside the other fiction I discuss in this dissertation, plays repeatedly upon the contingency of fellow feelings. While triadic structures of feeling may become ingrown, renovated, or displaced in these texts, the murder mystery plots of the *fin de siècle* particularly rehearse sympathies as they are leveraged. That is, they imagine a sympathy that is not moral but useful. Think, here, of Ferguson's manipulation of Thomas Moore when he and Miss Adair first interrogate Bessie's reprobate brother. Thomas has shrugged off involvement in Edwin's apparent murder and is busily portraying himself as a victim of Edwin's machinations:

“Then his brother found it out, and then he came to me and threatened to tell his brother that it was I who'd done it.”

“And then you went to your sister and asked her, probably on your bended knees, to save you from exposure.”

“There was no bended knees about it; you're very much mistaken if you think there was. I'm not that kind. But I—I certainly mentioned to her something about it—she's my own flesh and blood.” (*GD* 62)

Thomas has already been implicated by the letter found at the scene of the crime and so, throughout their interrogation, Ferguson and Miss Adair attempt to demarcate the nature of Thomas's involvement in the events of the previous evening. They are as interested in how he is socially and emotionally situated in regard to Bessie and Edwin as in how or if he was physically present. In response, Thomas attempts to manage their questions by building sympathy off a mutual aversion to Edwin, the dissolute cad who, he claims, maneuvered him into a criminal act. But Ferguson has recognized Thomas' transparent bravado. Earlier in the scene, he notes: “[h]e got up with a little air of bluster which was pitiful; it was such a poor attempt at make-believe” (*GD* 60). In particular, Ferguson catches the gendered context of this bluff. When Miss Adair recognizes Thomas as Bessie's parasitic brother and rebukes him, the young man—who has so far cringed and



whimpered in response to Ferguson's implicit threats—rounds on her viciously. Ferguson informs us “he was a better match for a woman than a man” (*GD* 61). In reorienting Thomas's attention from one object to another, then, as he does in the exchange above, Ferguson pointedly displaces the forger from a structure of homosocial feeling in which he and Ferguson similarly distrust Edwin. In its place he directs Thomas into a situation of mutual respect for Bessie, a sympathetic position that he knows her less-than-chivalric brother cannot dignify. This leads directly to Thomas's admission of involvement; ironically, in distancing himself from an emotional connection to Bessie, he acknowledges more deeply his involvement with her actions.

This play of sympathetic structures—which opens new affective ground by substituting Edwin for Bessie—stems, itself, from Ferguson's sympathy with Thomas. Their connection, however, does not take the form of an agreement (as Thomas hoped) so much as a canny understanding and simulation of his disaffected posture against the world. In *The Spectator*, our nameless critic imagines sympathy to be the intellectual labour of “those who are enlightened enough to feel” correctly and writes with urgency of “educating the imagination till it can see something beyond the criminal on trial—can perceive his victim” (1695). To see the criminal clearly, however, is its own sympathy and has its own intellectual labour. While the commentator fears that a readerly public could incidentally fall into a sympathetic understanding of a criminal—and, the argument implies, grow practiced in criminal modes of thought—mystery fiction revels in characters who actively, consistently, and capably trade in these sympathies. Ferguson is a particularly hard-wearing iteration of an investigator with suspect sympathies, a forerunner of *noir*'s physically embroiled detectives, but he finds himself in good company, here, among such luminaries as Sherlock Holmes and C. Auguste Dupin.

Indeed, many of mystery fiction's suspicions and modes of inquiry are fundamentally sympathetic in nature but they would not be mistaken for the staunchly ethical sentiment advocated in *The Spectator*. Audrey Jaffe, in her book *Scenes of Sympathy*, observes that Sherlock is “famous for his self-effacement: for the skill with which he projects himself into “the criminal mind” while at the same time remaining aloof from it, as if his identity inhered, like the writer's, in non-identity: in the ability to project himself into the

identities of others” (64). Indeed, this charismatic, vaguely worrisome sympathy is often addressed within the Holmes canon. Watson and members of the London police force frequently tell the Baker Street sleuth that he would have made a highly successful career criminal. More than simply comprehending the criminal mind, Holmes consorts with the criminal element—Shinwell Johnson, his useful heavy, for example, or the Irregulars, the network of homeless children that he deploys to gather information—and often borrows from their creative attitudes toward private property. Trespassing, breaking and entering, and even theft are all means to an end for Holmes, as are intimidation and, of course, obstruction of justice. Holmes inherits this form of understanding through sympathy from Poe’s Dupin stories, which return often to depictions of mental vulnerability and simulation. Most famously, of course, in “Rue Morgue,” Dupin follows the trail of his companion’s thoughts by observing his interactions with the physical world as they walk down a Paris street. Perhaps most evocative and useful, here, is the peripheral account Dupin gives of a child who successfully relieves an entire schoolyard of its marbles through a game that appears to offer 50/50 odds. The child challenges other students to hold out a number of marbles in their closed hand while he guesses whether that number is even or odd. Over many rounds, he consistently wins due to his ability to guess the individual thought process of each mark. The child explains his talent in oddly physical terms:

When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression. (“RM” 689-690)

These scenes depict understanding as a form of sympathy and sympathy as a form of collapse—moral, behavioural, and even at times physical. The detective’s insights and intuitions often seem to offer near complete access to another’s thought, eliding the boundaries of a character’s identity. Returning then to a discussion I laid aside in the first half of this chapter, we can find in this collapsed space of observer and observed room enough for more occult sympathies, telepathy and clairvoyance. These supernatural forms

of fellow feeling promise a similar collapse into the experience of another, a disruption of two previously separated spaces as they converge into one. From this angle, telepathy and clairvoyance are no longer convincing as breaks to mystery fiction's rational posture. Rather, occult sympathies—along with all their attendant low-grade instincts and hunches—appear as aesthetic exaggerations of the often fantastic clarity and conviction with which a conventional detective can know another character's mind. We might turn for an example here to Holmes' ostentatious habit of telling his accused exactly how they managed some obscure crime, a flourish that functions as a confession by proxy. Indeed, Ferguson's interrogation of Thomas Moore, Holmes' "self-effacement," Dupin's understanding of the mind's construction in the face and Ferguson's clairvoyant dream on the night of Philip's murder, each exist on a spectrum that runs from our daily social perception to extra-sensory perception and that aligns Holmes' deductions and Dupin's ratiocinations with the telepathic.

The nature of this collapse, no matter where it falls on the spectrum, is oddly ambivalent, perhaps because it often takes place at a threshold of disclosure when a mystery is enfolded into its context as hidden information is revealed. Ferguson's interrogation of Thomas Moore works here but so does Hume's only half-accurate suggestion that Ferguson has killed Edwin because of a large debt, a claim that reads as a violation despite its inaccuracy because of the intimacy of its understanding. Often, a detective's manipulations of sympathy feel oddly discomfiting even as they are compelling. Particularly so as they are not reserved for the criminal element. What *fin-de-siècle* detective, possessed of a modicum of intelligence and a healthy hauteur, could resist a brief reading worked up on whatever subject might be near at hand? Dupin, as we have seen, first demonstrates his talents on his companion as they stroll out at night. Holmes often provides his clients with an array of intimate details in scenes of barely disenchanted fortune-telling. And occasionally these insights are painfully personal; Hume's reminder of forgotten debts joins Holmes's portrait of a wealthy intellectual gone to seed in "The Blue Carbuncle" and, less upsetting but at least as intimate, his observation of the light in Watson's washroom, revealed by an untidy shave, in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery." Such moments of intense scrutiny and sympathy mark the turn of the century detective's most decisive and, perhaps, divine bit of knowing. At

once, they also dramatize our anxieties toward being known and a sense of vulnerability that is foundational to our private and individual identity. Writing of dreaming in the Gothic canon, Sedgwick observes a “shift of focus by which a fixation on symmetrical, doubled spaces is drained by something more threatening and interesting: a dangerously insoluble uncertainty about where to place the perimeters of the self” (30). Mystery fiction finds similar misgivings in the relationship between the sympathetic and the sympathized. Here, though, psychological boundaries are not merely uncertain but suspended as the detective introduces a solution—not insoluble but utterly dissolved.

Of course, in *The Goddess* the apotheosis of sympathy takes the form of a Gothic, clairvoyant dream. Drifting to sleep and anxiously reviewing his indulgent evening spent dining, drinking, and gambling with Edwin Lawrence, Ferguson finds himself standing outside his friend’s door. Inside, Lawrence (and the narrative deliberately does not furnish this Lawrence with a first name) is under attack by a howling, laughing creature dressed in a gauzy robe. When he awakes, Ferguson will find a similar figure in his own room—Bessie, dressed in her opera cloak—and discover, the next morning, a body in Lawrence’s apartment. Sedgwick distinguishes Gothic dreaming by its doubling structure, which often seems to betray or predict aspects of the waking world. She writes:

the Gothic dream is, far more schematically than the place of live burial, simply a duplication of the surrounding reality. It is thrilling because supererogatory. To wake from a dream and *find it true*—that is the particular terror at which these episodes aim, and the content of the dream is subordinate to that particular terror. (27-28)

The unease of a Gothic dream, she suggests, begins with its symmetry to the real world, with the difficulty of telling on which side of a boundary you find yourself, with our vulnerability to those figures or circumstances that seem to move with purpose across that boundary between our dream-life and our conscious awareness. Ferguson’s unease, however, begins with his uncertainty as to whether he has dreamt at all. He cannot confidently situate himself within his own experience even as he narrates it to the reader. Nor can he tell if or how much of his experience accurately reflects the violence that occurs in Edwin’s apartment. He admits:

that night I had the most extraordinary dream; so extraordinary that I am haunted by it to this day, even in my waking hours. In appearance of reality it was little less than supernatural. Indeed, I do not mind admitting that I have been, and still am, at a loss to determine whether I was not—at least in part—an actual, sentient spectator, and not merely the subject of a vision of the night . . . (GD 7)

By presenting his vision as a dream that haunts, Ferguson first prepares us for its oneiric imagery and particularly for its stubborn resistance—even after the novel’s explanatory *dénouement*—to clear interpretation. A dream’s evocative ambiguity may frighten a Gothic character but it is more profoundly upsetting for a detective, the interpretive character *par excellence*. Ferguson’s dream, then, is distinctly a detective’s nightmare. He is allowed an eye-witness account of the murder as it occurs but cannot make good on the information his own observation provides. As with any Gothic dream, his vision offers a clarion sense of significance but without an interpretive fiat or any actionable conclusion. The dream is simply a crucible of sympathies. We might list any number of them. For example, the name—“Lawrence”—by which Ferguson identifies the human victim of “the creature” elides the murderer with the murdered. This linguistic ambiguity functions to keep the reader from a clear understanding but it appears diegetically as a kind of visual illusion. Ferguson does not notice that the Lawrence under attack is not the brother he has met. He collapses the Lawrence brothers, already united by a violent affective relationship of familial abuse, into their family name. His naming inaugurates the confusion of Edwin and Philip that recurs throughout the novel, often as a visual conflation of two nonidentical brothers. Perhaps more bizarre, the vision also collapses two peripheral figures in the archetypal scene of a murder: the witness and the weapon. Bessie’s opera cloak and the goddess’s ethereal robes, as we have already seen, are just similar enough to raise suspicion, just dissimilar enough to make a suspicion suspect. The goddess as it manifests in this scene similarly draws on Edwin’s snide laughter in the face of Bessie’s accusations, though the novel is never ultimately clear as to whether this unhinged, Gothic laughter originates with Edwin or the goddess, the two caught up in a perverse, worshipful exchange.

These ambiguities continue in progressively minor, perhaps progressively less significant similarities throughout the vision but, as the novel's central investigator, it is Ferguson whose engagement with this scene is most profoundly destabilized. Ferguson's presence spreads throughout the room through dreamlike connections and as the novel reviews that evening's violence, his position becomes less and less defined. As such, it is easier to follow one exemplary connection that confusing sympathy between Ferguson and Bessie. Ferguson's involvement in the murder scene, which is really an occult diffusion and even a kind of haunting, begins as he drifts off. His movement into sleep coincides with Bessie's shock—we might say trauma—and her own movement into an absent, mesmerized form of automatism. At the turn of the century, occult theories of consciousness—particularly the writings of Frederick W.H. Myers as they were published in the Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research—imagined sleep and hypnosis as analogous states. Far from a diminishment of consciousness, these states offered supernatural sensitivity to telepathic connections. In particular, subjects whose consciousness was suspended in parallel with another might find themselves slipping into an unintended affinity and an affective bond born of their similarity. By the end of his dream, Ferguson and Bessie have fallen into a strange and mutually influential rapport which nuances their relationship consistently throughout the remainder of the case. Ferguson is, of course, quietly confused by his total conviction that Bessie is innocent, a sympathy that proves difficult to manage both socially and emotionally. Bessie is, perhaps, more obviously effected as evidenced by the immediate shine she takes to the aging, sleepy adventurer. But in small details, we can also catch the supernatural quality of nuanced behaviour. Bessie appears in Ferguson's room immediately following his own sudden impulse to flee there from the horror of the goddess. Moreover, her appearance in his room, as well as the determination she shows to enter and her confusion as to why she is drawn to him in the first place, mirrors the earlier "uncontrollable impulse" that first draws Ferguson to her side as he walks toward Edwin's apartment.

This rapport between Bessie and Ferguson is initially surprising since Bessie is notably, even suspiciously, absent from the room as it appears in Ferguson's vision. Strategically so—the novel conceals her or folds her into the feminine appearance of the goddess and emerges with a telling, sensational, but wholly misleading image of heterosexual

violence. Her absence allows the reader some line for any early suspicion that she might indeed be the “creature” though a Gothic dream is rarely so blatantly substitutive. Certainly, the vision presents an interpretive mire, promising similarly muddy conclusions for too literal a materialist and too systematic a mesmeric interpretation, alike. We can take up another example here; one interpretation that only ever remains implicit in the novel’s mesmeric imagery would simply explain Ferguson’s experience as Bessie’s, expelled and broadcast out in crisis to the only figure in the vicinity whose state of consciousness matches her own. Ferguson claims her unclaimed experience and, it follows, cannot see Bessie because his vision—no longer a divine vision but simply perception by proxy—is focalized through her. This reading accounts for minor, nagging, insignificant details like Ferguson’s and Bessie’s similar entrance into Edwin’s apartment. Both characters—Ferguson, here, at the mystery’s inception; Bessie, later, at its *dénouement*—recount knocking on Edwin’s door before finding that it has been left open. This seems to explain, too, Bessie’s confused relationship with her own memory. She cannot remember the event because someone else collected her recollection. But Bessie’s fugue is not nearly so tidy. Bessie, of course, has no access to her name or occupation and if she broadcasts this identity with the evening’s memory, Ferguson was not the one to receive it; his conviction regarding her innocence is immediate while he must wear down boot leather tracking her identity. Moreover, Bessie will later claim that she cannot stop her remembering, in a deeply disorganizing manner, the events of the murder, not so much lost as irrepressible: “Why is it that I am always seeing this man lying dead upon the floor? Why do I always seem to be striking at his back?” (*GD* 71). This theory, too, is evocative but necessarily inadequate. We can dismiss the grotesque appearance of the goddess or the collapse of the two brothers as products of Bessie’s nervous shock were the goddess not repeatedly shown to have its own inherent, excessive animacy, were the brothers not confused consistently for the rest of the novel.

My aim is not to stuff strawmen in briefly referring to a few interpretations, but to suggest that Ferguson’s and our trouble in reading the dream emerges from sympathy’s ambivalences. Setting aside its inexplicability and even its explanatory failures for a moment, the rapport that connects Ferguson with Bessie differs significantly in tone and purpose from that which he shares with her brother during the interrogation scene I

discussed earlier. As does this moment of clairvoyance differ in feeling and investigative value from Holmes's extra-judiciary sympathies or Dupin's practicable mind-reading. While he questions Thomas Moore, Ferguson stands as the still point in a shifting structure that he personally modifies and reconstructs. He removes Edwin from one pole, installs Bessie in that position and watches Thomas for a shift in attitude. In strong contrast, Ferguson can never accurately define, let alone manipulate, his relation to the dream, its flux of ingrown sympathies and similarities that submerge the witness into her experience and drag the investigator down with her. The difference, I suggest, lies in orientation. In the final chapter of this project, I discuss some crime scenes that have been haunted to a greater or lesser extent by the events they staged. To navigate these spaces that are inhered with violence requires a specific, controlled attitude or orientation, an aestheticized account of a researcher's considered curiosity. Faced with the murder scene, Ferguson's confused sympathies are similarly expressed through his position in space, indefinite and woozy. Years later, he cannot resolve whether he was "an actual spectator" or "merely the subject of a vision of the night"—that is, whether he physically stepped out to meet his vision or passively submitted to its transmission (*GD* 7). One of the dream's subtler transgressions lies in obscuring these two modes of engagement by playing between two occult fascinations: the sleepwalker and the sleeper's projection. As Ferguson begins his experience, he seems to be sleep-walking. He clearly narrates his somnambulant impulse toward Edwin's door; he recalls leaving his bed without a light and entering the hall wearing only his pyjamas. He narrates in detail, that is, the process of his movement. Later, Hume will find a maid who sees his terrified sprint back from Edwin's rooms to his, a sprint that Ferguson cannot recall. Bessie will also confirm that she recognizes Ferguson from her recovered memories of the crime. Ferguson's thoughtless, automatic state further parallels Bessie, whom Ferguson initially mistakes for a sleepwalker when she first enters his room. But Ferguson's movement from apartment to apartment recalls a sleep-walker's precisely because it lacks the physical immediacy of an actual movement through space. His vision lacks material interactions: he does not put on clothing; he does not require a light. His appearance at the crime scene and his eerie, unremembered retreat feel dislocated and seem to reference the belief, common in Victorian occult texts, that the soul is liable at times to just amble off during sleep,



particularly when triggered by crises, portents, or strongly felt connections. It is this more spectral engagement that informs Ferguson's disorienting experience on waking: "at the sound of the laughter, like some frightened cur, I turned and fled. And not the least strange part of the whole business was that, as it seemed, immediately after, I woke up" (*GD* 8). Ferguson's engagement with his vision is never well defined or coherent but in this last moment, while a maid witnesses him dash in panic down the hall, he seems to evaporate completely. His physical movement has become spiritual, only to be discovered as he moves again into the physical world.

Again, by presenting his vision as a dream that haunts, Ferguson also points to its persistent influence over reality, oddly durable for so nebulous an impression. While Sedgwick finds horror in the sleeper's transgression of a boundary—"[t]o wake from a dream and *find it true*—that is the particular terror at which these episodes aim"—Ferguson finds his "particular terror" in his dream's ethereal authenticity and credibility, felt despite all common sense and his own later experiences (*GD* 28). That Ferguson's dream continues to haunt even now—"to this day, even in my waking hours"—speaks, it is true, to a transgressive breach just as a ghost's revenant presence speaks to a ruptured boundary between the living and the dead. But rather than the dreamer's difficult or torturous transit across a common space that has become massively and inexplicably divided, his experience suggests that the dream has itself irrupted into the apparently rational logic of our workaday world. The shock of Ferguson's vision lies in its visceral immediacy. It is disconcerting because of "its appearance of reality" despite the bizarre nature of its showings and this disorienting sense of tangible figments is not soothed by Ferguson's crime scene discoveries the next morning. The novel's iteration of a Gothic dream, then, produces unease from the sympathetic harmony of two spaces, the waking world and the dream state, that normally function under radically divergent logics. Indeed, Ferguson's easy, instant turn from fleeing to waking in bed speaks to this convergence rather than to the violent or magical destruction that often attends the passage of a Gothic barrier. Extending the quote above, we can see precisely how easy, how ineffectual Ferguson's flight is:

[i]mmediately after, I woke up. Woke to find that, however it might appear to the contrary, I certainly had been asleep, for I was sitting up in bed covered with sweat and trembling in every limb.

I looked about me... In the moonlight I could see that someone was standing on the other side of the pane—a faint mysterious figure. ...The window was pushed open, as by an unaccustomed hand, with something of a jerk. Out of the moonbeams, like some spectral visitant, a woman stepped into the room. (*GD* 8-9)

The tension of this scene gathers in its continuities with Ferguson's vision. Bessie's silhouetted, phantom figure—recognizable only as feminine—and the impulsive movement of her “unaccustomed hand” recall the over-animated and vaguely female figure of the goddess. As with many nightmares, our fear lies in movement without change. Ferguson slips with suspect ease from dream fantasy to dream fantasy with little to indicate his relation to reality. He wakes from sleep to witness a nightmarish attack. He wakes again into a Gothic, sexualized fantasy—a beautiful woman trespassing into his bedroom dressed in bloodstained evening wear. That is, he awakes and is drawn into a murder scene and on awaking from this, is drawn into a murder investigation. It is the investigator's equivalent of running only to find that your dream self no longer recalls precisely how one might lift their foot.

The strange sympathies and connections that the dream offers up, then, are framed by the collapse of Ferguson's psychic interior into the external reality of the world. Much later, as he narrates the experience to the reader, Ferguson cannot reconstruct the boundary between this vision and his later understanding of that evening. He cannot dismiss it as merely a dream. There is, after all, ambiguity at play in his claim that “in appearance of reality it was almost supernatural” (*GD* 7). Ferguson's dream, in its felt credibility, exceeds reality and seems to offer insights that are sympathetic and occult in nature. Before the investigation can begin, they speak already to the essential similarity of the brothers, to the deadly intent of Bessie. Most troublingly, the vision may offer a glimpse at the goddess fully manifest, an appearance whose reality is supernatural. As they converge with the conscious world, Ferguson's vision joins Susan Hopley's or that of the Brahmins' homeless child. Each seems to suggest that the waking world functions on a

strange logic of sympathies that are dreamy, discomfoting, and disorganizing and that we deny in order to fashion our identity, social structures, and systems of knowledge. If we cannot wake up into a rational universe, if we cannot escape the surreality of a nightmare but instead find our commonplace life has taken on an oneiric quality, we are left to interrogate our own relation to the affective flux of our surroundings. In this way, Ferguson's dream offers a fitting rupture into the novel's period of mystery and investigation. It is this fluctuating set of affective relations that a detective must build into sense and make comprehensible. Thus, incapable of relating himself to his vision's sympathetic connections, Ferguson must spend the rest of the novel reestablishing his social connections and sympathies in a manner that again makes sense of his situation.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Perplexing Possessions: Objective Information and the Psychometric Clue

Depend upon it, there is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace.  
—Doyle, “CI,” 30

I experienced that sudden and overwhelming interest in its every feature which attaches to all objects peculiarly associated with danger.

—Green, *FB*, 33

As late as 1846 in England, the deodand or thing-liability stood as a category of material under the law created and marked by its relation to crime, particularly to violence and death. Generally, the deodand was an object, a collection of objects, an animal, or even—in the United States—a slave that had caused the death of a legal subject. These items were forfeited to the Crown with the intention that they should be used for remuneration, charity, or religious purpose. One imagines paranoid possibilities: the stone that falls from the apparently stable arch; the runaway carriage; the windfall branch; the sinking skiff; your cat, underfoot at the top of the stairs. In the eighteenth century, William Hawkins wrote “the unhappy Instrument or Occasion of such Death is called a Deodand... as also are all such Weapons whereby one Man kills another” (*A Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown* 66). Daniel Defoe, in his pseudo-memoir *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), recounts that, during London’s epidemic crisis of 1665, entire families died out with such speed and in such number that the threads of inheritance often snapped. Any items or property left abandoned without context or relation in London’s swiftly emptying houses were decreed during this time to be deodand (291). The conservative English jurist William Blackstone would remark on the deodand: “if a man kills another with my sword, the sword is forfeited as an accursed thing” (*Commentaries* 301). The normal rights of ownership, it seems, break down once the sword has moved against a human subject. A history of violence inheres in the object and supercedes questions of ownership and intent. Blackstone may not have been the one who wielded his sword but it is accursed and lost to him, nevertheless. Even so, it would be wrong to make too much

of these objects or to be overly fanciful, despite this rhetoric of curses and disease and severed ties. Deodands, in defiance of any impression of superstition, were a practical, early means of restitution and civil forfeiture. Come the nineteenth century, the law pertaining to deodands was not an obscure fossil of legal procedure but was in practical use for just such financial purposes, indeed was removed for stronger policy because of that use. And though a legal end was made to the practice in 1846 in England, this was not due to a burgeoning culture of science-minded professionals and politicians. Rather, the days of the deodand's decline came due to a rise in train accidents and the difficulties of coroner's juries in finding fair means of redress for victim's families.<sup>14</sup> And yet, there is an underlying strangeness in this otherwise practical purpose and in the idea that chattel might be forfeit in a moment of violence as though possession were compromised or complicated by the material world's newly defiant solidity, as though the object had got the taste of blood. That this thing had then to be purified by moving through a charitable exchange only furthers the latent sense that the object has, in causing harm, been itself subtly harmed and distanced from us, if only temporarily.

Doyle's canon of Sherlock Holmes stories finds in the quotidian objects of daily life rich and unexpected sites of affective encounter. These stories imagine objects saturated with inexhaustible information; objects whose history, like the deodand, quickens a latent identity; objects that speak to, sometimes even betray, the subjects of their ownership. This chapter examines three token clues, each a material object, and attempts to trace some small portion of the affects and connections that these items centre within their respective cases. Not one of the objects that I examine here is directly involved in physical violence. They share, however, in the affective logic of the deodand and the accursed weapon. They recall the fractious, history-freighted nature of evidence that is transformed by human use and human emotion. They confront Holmes's clients and colleagues, not to mention Doyle's avid readers, with questions of proximity, identity, and ownership. The Holmes stories suggest in their imagination of the clue that our

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the legal history of the deodand in a literary context, refer to Sandra Macpherson's *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*. The information that I have gathered in this paragraph can be found from pp. 42–44.

material possessions might be overwhelmed, at times, by the associative complex of feeling, fashion, implication, and remembrance that they accrue in eventful particularity. But the chief claim, as we shall see, of the Holmes stories is that the clue and the deodand may be unique but they are rarely uniquely meaningful, resonant, or agentic. The clues that Holmes finds in scenes of Edwardian and Victorian crime nestle within a wilderness of similarly signifying domestic objects. His discoveries, not to mention his smug attitude, prompt his companions and clients to attend to the material character of their environment and to the broad array of relations that make any object meaningful in and out of context.

In my first chapter, I discuss sympathy—at least, one occult structure of sympathy—as a tripartite form of feeling. In this description, my feelings, say, begin to resonate with another’s due to our shared attention to a third person, thing, event, brutally mutilated corpse, or automaton’s disembodied laugh. My interest in the clue develops this triad of feeling by presenting one possible form of that third figure through which my feelings communicate with another. As we shall see, Holmes consistently encounters the object as a liminal artefact, a means of approaching another or gaining insight into their personhood, a means of sympathizing with them though in the most abstract sense. To narrate this relation to the object, I turn to two fields of inquiry devoted to thinking the material thing as it falls within and without the accustomed subject/object relation that is integral to observational detectives like Holmes. The oldest of these is psychometry, a form of occult Spiritualism initiated by Joseph Rhodes Buchanan in the 1840s.<sup>15</sup> Psychometry underwent a slow evolution into its popular form of the late-nineteenth century but its focus consistently remained grounded in the occult interactions of objects and their surroundings. By the late 1800s, psychometers claimed that simply by interacting with an object they could glimpse its history or tell in extraordinary detail the character of its owner. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, that psychometry occasionally displays connections to the clues of mystery fiction. In *The Dead Letter* by Metta

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<sup>15</sup> Buchanan would not publish his full-length monograph on the subject—*The Manual of Psychometry: The Dawn of a New Civilization*—until 1885. Nevertheless, he was widely regarded to be the founder of this specific practice from decades prior and Denton refers to him as such.

Victoria Fuller Victor, a key aspect of the mystery is eventually solved by the investigator's daughter who reads a letter, psychometrically, for its provenance. In a *Borderland* article touting the great promise of psychometry as a future field of study, William Thomas Stead quotes a young medium who claims her first psychometric revelation came "when a gentleman put into my hand a ring... a scene of bloodshed and great horror arose, which I had no difficulty in recognising as the Indian Mutiny. I saw the jewel in the hands of a soldier who had it made into a ring and brought it to England" ("The Marvels of Psychometry" 336). Her moment of psychometric fugue parallels another, fictional depiction of a mysterious trance centering on a history-burdened object, the jewel in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*. Indeed, psychometry's approach to the object as a significant specimen had a cerebral reputation that might have made it more palatable to the investigative, the scientific, and the historically minded. As Stead writes:

Of all the avenues leading to the Borderland there are none so simple and so smooth as that which bears the name of 'psychometry.' Here, at least, the objection so frequently urged against all investigations, that it assumes trafficking with spirits of the dead cannot apply. Psychometry itself is a gift that is inherent in the human mind. ("Marvels" 332)

Indeed, at least one psychometer rejected the label of medium altogether and referred to her apparently psychic engagement with objects as a simple talent. In his article, Stead introduces readers of *Borderland* to Miss Ross, a woman who is neither a Spiritualist nor a clairvoyant but whose "one claim is that when she is put in touch with some article which has been in contact with a human being, she is able to write down with astonishing correctness a sketch of the character and what may be described as the features of his mind" (332).

Alongside this more historical thought, I also turn to thing theory, a field of critique that marked the early 2000s and formed the basis for much of the current interest in New Materialism. In "Thing Theory," his introduction to a special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, Bill Brown situates the object, a cultural and personal construct, in binary relation to the human subject, and having done so looks for those moments when we might glimpse a form of the "thing," a momentary encounter with the material alterity of our world. "We

begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us,” Brown writes, citing momentary disruptions that arrest our attention, “when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the window gets filthy” (4). The physical artefacts of our lives lie barely noticed as external, material items, thing theory observes. They recede behind their utility, their ubiquity, their habituality due to the net of cultural “codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful” within our routine and expectations (4). Brown depicts the “thing” as, in a way, the material item’s agency, independent of the subject’s designs and perceptions. As Peter Schwenger observes in *The Tears of Things*, “our existence articulate[s] that of an object through the gauge of our perceptions” (3). These two approaches to the object, then, are at their foundation deeply contradictory. Psychometry suggests that the physical world is bound into an intricate objecthood stored in the material nature of every thing from rock to stick to typewriter to portrait. Moreover, psychometry suggests that this extravagance of representation and meaning might very well exist solely for the subject’s benefit. The noted psychometrist William Denton argues “it would be strange if Nature admitted no mortal to her matchless galleries” (*The Soul of Things* 32). Thing theory looks for moments in which representation slips and we can begin to see our own ignorance toward the material world. For psychometry, ignorance would be to assume the world did not contain its own representations. Both, however, allow us to imagine a latent identity inhered within the material, to consider our encounter with that which either exceeds or descends below our habitual expectations.

Thing theory has enjoyed a particular currency within Victorian studies for some time. In *The Ideas in Things*, Elizabeth Freedgood teases a crisis of economic shifts and material meaning out of objects as diverse as mahogany furniture, cheap tobacco, and drab drapes. Talia Schaffer, writing in the wonderfully titled *Novel Craft*, finds such tensions of meaning played out within the process and creations of domestic craftwork—the decorations and indulgences of daily Victorian life. For both of these critics, it is the realist novel—with its cavalcade of material detail—that provides the richest field for their arguments. Both critics read commercial fiction and its ability to accrue meaning around material items as not merely an exploration of the capacity of a thing to mean within a cultural context but, essentially, as a simulation of the Victorian mind’s



discovery of the multiple modes of meaning that might cross through and knit together the clutter of their public and private spaces. “A strong literalizing metonymy,” Freedgood argues, “can ‘start’ fictional objects into historical life and historicize our fictions against the grain of the kinds of allegorical meanings we already know how to find” (17). Similarly, Schaffer treats the novel—both in its physical construction and as a piece of fiction—as important evidence not merely as a work of realist art but also as historical evidence, arguing that “the novel stages a climactic confrontation between the new paper finance and the older craft paradigm, a thrilling emotional test to see which realm of value can convert the other” (23). For Freedgood and Schaffer, the sheer mass of physical details featured in the descriptive passages that helped to define the realist mode provide not only a wealth of objects to pluck out for further analysis but a broad scope of surrounding material with which one can triangulate and contextualize a precise reading of the thing within its culture. Such an act, selecting an object from its milieu for further reading, however, suggests another genre’s imagination of the thing.

Despite—or more likely due to—their central fascination with a certain fictionalized form of ‘truth,’ the investigative plots of detective and Gothic fiction do not offer a similarly clear window into history as the realist fictions employed by Schaffer and Freedgood would seem to do. For this reason, however, investigative fictions offer an important extension to the realist novels explored by previous critics. Realism as a mode might offer a view into the average Victorian’s confrontation with the material realities of their existence. Schaffer, for example, reads discussions of crafting within and without fiction with a similar eye, while Freedgood reads *Jane Eyre*’s catalogue of interior decoration and a historical catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851 with the same methodology. Reading for something close to historical documentation is not possible for the genre fiction I will examine in this chapter due to the essentially fabulous qualities of both Gothic and mystery fiction. Genre fiction, however, offers to us the era’s imaginings of their physical surroundings pushed to their absolute: objects as archives of personal narratives; as pathways into alternative understandings of reality; as things altered, permanently, affectively, by moments of physical or psychological violence. The characters and plots of investigative fiction are best placed to consider the physical and its mutable capacity to mean and cease to mean, to be taken up as an affective currency by human

subjects, and to fall out of such relationships, due to their anxieties toward an objective, real truth. The essential strangeness of the material world as it exists estranged from but longed for by the human subject is perhaps best explored not through realism but through investigative fiction.

## 2.1

The Devon moors, as they loom from the pages of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, are a liminal space. Not simply wild or haunted, they emerge as a separate material world from Doyle's London, organized under occulted connections and strange, fluctuating sympathies. It is on the moors that Holmes will become the Man on the Tor, exposed as a mystery himself—"the very spirit of the terrible place"—and figured as a criminal for his companions to hunt down (*HB* 98). Here, the murderer, Stapleton, will adopt Holmes's own habits and turn of mind while Watson will bear Holmes's mantle, confronting Baskerville Hall's Gothic mysteries as a journeyman private detective. The moor disrupts the comforting order we expect of the Holmes canon. There is a beguilingly dissociative quality to the novel, as though it were a Holmes mystery that we once dreamt we read. As Michael Cook suggests, *The Hound* seems to waver on the moors between genres, affects, and tendencies: "[b]eyond ratiocination, beyond adventure, the story possesses a dreamlike quality which oscillates, as dreams often do, between the recognizable, in this case the conventions of the detective story, and an elusive sense of the intangible" (*Detective Fiction* 72). It is fitting, then, that the earliest emblem of Dartmoor in the novel—a country doctor's cane left in the sitting room of 221B Baker Street—should prompt our earliest glimpse of this shift:

I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a 'Penang lawyer'. Just under the head was a broad silver band, nearly an inch across. 'To James Mortimer, MRCS, from his friends of the CCH', was engraved upon it, with the date '1884'. It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring. (*HB* 3)

This scene is familiar—perhaps was even nostalgic for an audience eight years deprived of their beloved detective.<sup>16</sup> The cane recollects the discarded objects that initiate Holmes’s and Watson’s earlier cases: the top hat, dropped during a failed robbery, that begins “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” (1892) for example; or, in a more direct parallel, the amber briar pipe that Holmes finds in their sitting room, mislaid by an impatient client in “The Adventure of the Yellow Face” (1893). But, while Holmes breaks his fast, watchfully, at the table, it is Watson who takes the first initiative to examine the cane. In his engagement with this misplaced object, Watson attempts to realize Holmes’s repeated, often sharp, provocations to deeply consider the quotidian; as Holmes often challenges, “You know my methods. Apply them!” (*HB* 5).

Watson’s interaction with Mortimer’s stick suggests the active, even influential, role that he will take as an investigator on the moors. Holmes stories begin with the reading of an object and rarely deviate from this initiating ritual. Whether it is a client’s stationary or Watson’s own scorched slippers, the material items of daily life become, in these opening sequences, indications of an extravagant variety of information, immanent but overlooked. These passages, some of the most memorable in the canon, transform items left behind or sent ahead into referents of identity, providence, and sentiment. Appropriately, then, for a novel that will stage two parallel investigations around Baskerville Hall, the case begins with two parallel readings of the cane. Watson and Holmes each examine Mortimer’s prized memento and each derive a telling reading of its owner. The sudden doubling of this narrative ritual speaks to the variety of engagements we may have with meaningful objects, the prolific information they may betray, and the

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<sup>16</sup> Doyle had published the last canonical Holmes story in *The Strand* in December 1893, by which I have come up with this number. However, there were two less official stories published between the end of 1893 and August 1901, when *The Hound* began serialization. On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1896, *Student* published “The Field Bazaar” (1896), a brief anecdote in which Holmes seems to repeat his (and Dupin’s) trick from “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” (1893) by reading Watson’s mind. This story was written for charity as the publication was raising money for the University of Edinburgh’s new field equipment. In the July 1898 issue of *The Strand*, Doyle published “The Story of the Man with the Watches,” featuring a famous criminal investigator who goes unnamed but who matches Holmes from diction down to description. For more information on these non-canonical pieces, please refer to the 1983 Penguin edition of *The Uncollected Sherlock Holmes*.

tangle of affects, encounters, and relations that reach between subject and object. We begin, then, with Watson's examination.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the objects of daily life in Britain and America were burdened with a new urgency to mean and make sense. Writing on Victorian décor, Asa Briggs notes—perhaps sarcastically—that, “attracted by the concept of ‘plenitude,’” the era “widened the range of things much further than any previous century, eventually reshaping all earlier versions of economics to explain ‘demand’ more fully than supply” (5). As mass production turned toward the decorative and the domestic and as the products of far-flung empire were brought within reach, the middle-class urban living space filled with a proliferation of items designed, sold, and curated to bear significance. Bric-a-brac, travel mementos, curiosities, excessive swathes of fabric, prints, all spoke—as décor always will—to a specific set of tastes. It mattered whether you had laid out one fitted Brussels carpet or stacked three luxe oriental carpets; it signified whether your book spines were fashionably matched or studiously varied. “How this happens it is not difficult to see,” writes Doyle's great influence, Edgar Allan Poe, in his occasional piece “The Philosophy of Furniture” (1840):

We have no aristocracy of blood, and having, therefore, as a natural and, indeed, as an inevitable thing, fashioned for ourselves an aristocracy of dollars, the *display of wealth* has here to take the place, and perform the office, of the heraldic display in monarchical countries. By a transition readily understood, and which might have been easily foreseen, we have been brought to merge in simple *show* our notions of taste itself. (382)

Poe is busily chastising his American audience here, and after suggests that England is largely free of this impulse to lay the burden of identity and, particularly, prestige on household objects. Those more familiar with the fussy, cluttered, but highly legible interiors of the Victorian middle class might have drawn a different conclusion: that, lacking in aristocratic blood, the English middle class were often just as anxious to display an aristocratic taste. Indeed, to return briefly to the period of this dissertation's focus, Thorstein Veblen would argue for the anxious class aspirations represented by

objects in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Here, he coined the term *conspicuous consumption* and observed:

This cultivation of the aesthetic faculty requires time and application, and the demands made upon the gentleman in this direction therefore tend to change his life of leisure into a more or less arduous application to the business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way... Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure. (74-75)

Each of these arguments on taste develops an image of the room as an organized field of interrelated objects. Poe's implication of atmosphere and legibility emerging from coherence and self-reference would find expression, as well, in his information-laden Gothic and crime scenes. Poe's ideal room, as he lays it out in "The Philosophy of Furniture," closes in on itself, with only the most mediated access given to its view or outside source of light. The windows' "panes are of a crimson-tinted glass, set in rose-wood framings, of a kind somewhat broader than usual" (386). Two curtains envelop these windows—"a thick silver tissue" and "an exceedingly rich crimson silk, fringed with a deep network of gold and lined with silver tissue"—and in their repetition of silver tissue we find Poe as he begins to organize his ideal room. "The colors of the curtains and their fringe—the tints of crimson and gold—form the *character* of the room," Poe writes, "and appear every where in profusion" (386, emphasis in original). Indeed, there is hardly an object in the room that does not support, refer to, or repeat some aspect of another object. The carpet, for example, recalls the windows' and the curtains' crimson tone and its pattern of gold braid matches the gold cords that hold back the curtains and the gold chain that suspends an Argand lamp. Poe repeats the curtains' silver in "a glossy paper of a silver grey tint, spotted with small Arabesque devices of a fainter hue of the prevalent crimson. Many paintings relieve the expanse of the paper" (387). Of course, the frames of these paintings are "broad," and the furniture of the apartment is made of rosewood, each in their way matching the windows' frames. I could continue but I think it must already be clear that Poe's imaginative space is emphatically integral. Its taste emerges from the production of a room whose aesthetic logic lies in an interrelation so tightly woven that it coherently structures a space.

But as the century unfolds, we can sense an interest in complicating and individuating the referential quality of objects beyond their style. The items valued by the nineteenth-century middle class increasingly referred back to those values. We could think, here, of the popular Jenny Lind souvenir handkerchiefs, which, while in no way tied to sound, music, or performance, were purchased to metonymically evoke the memory of an ephemeral, auditory experience. Collectible ceramic ware, often ill-suited for actual use, could now bear witness to one's political beliefs, as with the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) collectible plates, or cultural aspirations, as with the exaggerated neoclassicism of Wedgwood's jasperware. We could add moralizing engravings and botanical prints, colonial weapons collections and Black Forest carving. These objects are at least as significant as idealized portraiture of their owner as they are useful or beautiful. Even the prolific craftwork—inter-generational hair wreaths, seed sculptures, and pinpoint landscapes—that ornamented the nineteenth-century home were not merely considered sentimental decoration. As Schaffer has shown, the crafted object or collected specimen, their curation, “articulated the owner's familial, domestic, and artistic (as well as national) claims” (14). Schwenger writes of this form of self-portraiture through curated collection, when he observes that the objects we cherish “contribute to an Imaginary that reflects us back to ourselves, though not in any simple way” (75); the middle-class Victorian drawing room, I would suggest, complicated this reflection by watching for it in the visitor's eyes. Of course, a desire that the material objects of our day-to-day life might affect our emotional as well as aesthetic existence might engage our intellect, might carry the burden of our memories, might speak for us as much as they spoke to us, was not new to that century. But the vast and growing variety of attainable luxuries that ushered the period into a new form of commodity culture also incited a continuing crisis in our relations to the objects that surround us. Provenance and ephemerality emerge as cultural fascinations, as do the sentimental engagements that seem to elevate mass-produced objects into the personal.

The Holmes canon is particularly attentive to the affects and information that material goods might hold in reserve. These stories consistently return us to the emblematic nature of objects and the variety of their significance. In some of these items, Holmes and his clients encounter an impression of institutional authority, though this glamour is often

transient or complicating. In “The Musgrave Ritual” (1893), for example, this aura is transformative but slow coming. After a maid’s disappearance from the Manor House of Hurlstone, the police drag a local pond. What surfaces is not her missing body but “an object of a most unexpected kind. It was a linen bag which contained within it a mass of old rusted and discolored metal and several dull-colored pieces of pebble or glass” (“MR” 102). The clue is, at first, indecipherable because the degraded quality of this debris has fallen so far from the historical and affective import it once conveyed. Holmes only reveals the provenance of this trove toward the end of his account of the case, explaining the Musgrave’s family ritual, the erratic behaviour of their butler, and his eventual death by revealing that this wreckage pulled from the pond is all that remains of the crown of King Charles I, entrusted to the loyalist Musgraves. In “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” (1892) the wealthy banker Andrew Holder has little choice but to accept a national treasure, “[o]ne of the most precious public possessions of the Empire,” as collateral for a short-term loan to a high-ranking client (“BC” 247). The coronet is, of course, valuable; the client assures Holder that “[t]here are thirty-nine enormous beryls... and the price of the gold chasing is incalculable. The lowest estimate would put the worth of the coronet at double the sum which I have asked” (“BC” 247). Its true value, however, that which marks it as a significant and cherished national object, lies in public sentiment and this sense of Britain’s ownership, care, and awe is also precisely what would bar Holder from ever realizing its material worth. He could not possibly hock the crown as it is should he need to recuperate a loss. Indeed, when Holder is burgled, the thieves stumble by accident upon the only way to find value in the invaluable coronet: by breaking it into meaningless pieces. Separated from its significance, the material can more readily change hands from Holder to thief to Holmes and thence back to Holder.

But if the referential and affective quality of these objects may complicate or contrast their materiality, that materiality can also present strange ties to its broader surroundings, falling into and out of place depending on borrowed meaning and felt connections. To narrow our field, we can stay for a time with the artefacts of nobility, those meaningful emblems which middle-class bric-a-brac recall in subtle anxiety. Early in “Case of Identity,” Holmes, in nonchalant performance, offers Watson some snuff out of a “snuff-box of old gold, with a great amethyst on the centre of the lid” (“CI” 31). On his hand,

the detective wears, uncharacteristically, a brilliant diamond ring. These luxuries present so sharp a “contrast to his homely ways and simple life” that Watson is left in shock (“CI” 31). After all, in “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891), Holmes’s previous case with his biographical ride-along, the detective declines any pay for his work. He chooses, instead, to take with him a photograph of Irene Adler, his successful antagonist. “Photography is acquisition in several forms,” as Susan Sontag observes: “[i]n its simplest form, we have in a photograph surrogate possession of a cherished person or thing, a possession which gives photographs some of the character of unique objects” (121). We should take Sontag at her word when she writes “the character of unique objects” rather than “the character of the unique (original) object.” Our possession of a significant photograph, combined with its further possession by proxy of the camera’s visual subject, builds up an individuality that emerges from a mesh of various associations, some material and many more simply felt. Holmes’s impulse to claim the photograph denies, intentionally or not, the Prince of Bavaria’s surrogate possession of Adler. “From what I have seen of the lady, she seems, indeed, to be on a different level to your Majesty,” he sniffs toward the end of the affair (“SIB” 28). In lieu of financial wealth, the detective opts for a memento rich in information and bittersweet recollection.

These mysterious new objects, Holmes explains, despite their opulence, are categorically similar. The snuff-box is a further, grateful gift from the King of Bohemia, his client when he contended with Adler. The brilliant is, he admits, payment from “the reigning family of Holland, though the matter in which I served them was of such delicacy that I cannot confide it” (“CI” 31). On one level, his explanation is archly absurd; “A Case of Identity” addresses the novelty of finding these extravagant items in a shabby rented sitting room by tying them to the reigning heads of Europe. These artefacts are as out of place as a crown in a country pond. However, the snuff-box and the ring are brought home, so to speak, through a narrative situation that orients them within Holmes’s interior decoration. Poe’s room becomes recognizably integral through a rich interplay of traits that are at once material and aestheticized. The gold braiding of the carpet and the gold chain of the lamp have little material similarity but reference each other through a complex of tastes; the silver arabesque wallpaper and the white light of the argand lamp, meant to simulate moonlight, similarly build meaning from colour and orientalizing



fashions. They provide an almost ecological network of object-relations that make the room mean through items in concert. Holmes's 221B Baker Street functions in parallel. Where Poe imagines an artful composition extrinsic to any one item's material qualities, Baker Street provides a memorial composition extrinsic to the material of its oddities and debris. Watson often refers to Holmes's contempt for tidying, organizing, and particularly for discarding. These luxuries become appropriate through their informational quality as items of valued memory, despite the opulence of their physical form. Where Poe's room is made coherent through taste, tone, and texture, Holmes's is made through a nostalgic fondness and an informational surplus. Indeed, their significance within this coherence seems to be wielded against another fixture of Holmes's sitting room. Holmes stages these items to gesture to the past cases Watson has missed now that he lives with his wife. When Watson asks if he currently has an engagement, Holmes coolly replies: "Some ten or twelve, but none which presents any feature of interest" ("CI" 31). It is not, it seems, the monetary value of these curiosities that Holmes seems to want displayed but rather their curious presence, itself—a clew for the yarn-obsessed chronicler to follow back to 221B.

When Watson notices the novelty of Mortimer's cane, then, it is against a field of meaningful rummage and his impulse, immediately, is to make the new object similarly meaningful. Eccentric artefacts clutter 221B Baker Street: the Turkish slipper that stores Holmes's tobacco, the jack-knife that pins his correspondence to the mantle-piece, the violin that Holmes fidgets with automatically in periods of trance-like thought. For the reader, the recurrence of these objects conveys a nostalgic comfort for this companionable, reliably queer domesticity. For Holmes, too, and eventually for Watson, these are objects as much recollected as collected. In "Case of Identity," Holmes's "old and oily clay pipe, which was to him as a counselor," encapsulates this patina of sentiment that seeps into our established relation to an object rather than stemming from the material particularity of the object itself (39). As we shall see, for many of the characters in the Holmes canon, such a relation distances the subject from the materiality of their possessions, involving the object into their sense of the human rather than a sense of its own materiality. As Schwenger writes in *The Tears of Things*, such well-worn objects "seem to partake in our lives; they are domesticated, part of our routine and so of

us” (3). The casual comfort offered by these items is familiar to the point of being familial, partaking in our sense of home and defining our sense of self. Holmes leans on objects as an archive of emotional history much as Mortimer leans on his stick and if there is a recognition of their material existence, it is as an empty vessel, able to be filled with an apparently-shared memory. The objects of 221B present a peculiar burlesque of late-century virtu, not merely strange but unique. Individually, their status as referents—to eccentricity, scientific curiosity, violence, addiction—exceeds their significance as, say, an improperly stored knife or half of a pair of slippers. Bill Brown writes poetically that “the life of things made manifest in the time of misuse is, should you look, a secret in plain sight—not a life behind or beneath the object but a life that is its fluctuating shape and substance and surface” (*Other Things* 51). A Turkish slipper, unmatched and kept as a tobacco pouch, however, though misused certainly, does not in Holmes’s sitting room reengage us with the thing, the alterity of a material world. Rather it surfaces from the text merely as a token of Holmes and his eccentric relationship to the physical world. Concertedly, in what might present an ideal of Victorian décor, these objects present, through their interrelated connections and complex history, an environmental portrait of their owner in his own curiosity.<sup>17</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that a novel object should register against this long-stable structure of sentimental attachments and narrative relation that otherwise functions as a furnished room. Little wonder, given Holmes’s attachment to his “old and oily clay pipe,” that he should notice a client’s forgotten briar pipe as conspicuously out of place, as he does in “The Yellow Face”. Little wonder that Watson should be shocked by Holmes’s new luxuries in a room that aggressively adheres

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<sup>17</sup> In his earliest appearance Holmes offers an intellectual self-portrait of his education and his interests expressed in the form of an imaginary and far more orderly room:

I consider that a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order. (SS 15)

to established familiars. And little wonder that a Penang lawyer should be notably out of place despite the disarray.

Watson encounters James Mortimer's cane at play between two affective registers: a need, first, for an object to signify within its cultural context and a desire, second, for our objects to bear some small sense of our self, for our personal possessions to be possessed by our personality. As we have seen, the stick is notably out of place in 221B Baker Street because it has no meaningful relation to the apartment's densely interwoven sentimental comforts. Recognizably incoherent among Holmes's archive, it is nevertheless recognizable and coherent within a wider network of cultural signifiers: "[i]t was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring" (*HB* 3). Watson reads the stick in generality, invoking the posture that such a stick would bestow upon its owner. In doing so, he highlights a set of traits born from the affective interaction between owner and possession. The cane may be solid but it is not inherently dignified. Rather it achieves dignity through its association with the cultural type of a family practitioner. Individual family practitioners then might bolster their sense of dignity, of reassuring solidity, by adopting just such a prop, reaffirming the connection, and so on. It should be noted that while Holmes considers Watson's reading inaccurate and short-sighted, it is essentially correct. James Mortimer may be a young country doctor rather than an old country doctor, as Watson decides, but if he is not of retirement age, he is retiring. While every other character hikes avidly across the moors, Mortimer tends to take his carriage or horse. He is unambitious, fascinated with an outmoded scientific interest in phrenology, and his closest friend on the moors was an aging man with whom he reminisced about the glories of empire. When the good doctor finally returns, Watson's reading is, in a way, validated: "[h]e was clad in a professional but rather slovenly fashion, for his frock-coat was dingy and his trousers frayed. Though young, his long back was already bowed, and he walked with a forward thrust of his head and a general air of peering benevolence" (*HB* 7). Absent-minded, bent, and peering, Mortimer is not the picture of a young medico. The description that Watson conjures of an aging country doctor is not essentially wrong and, in its figurative accuracy, it speaks to the values that we express in the items that we value.

Holmes, as we might expect, engages with the cane through a different methodology altogether. The detective reads the object in its specificity, ignoring largely its cultural significance in order to attend to the markers of its unique history of use and exchange. He finds bite marks from a beloved dog, speculates on the inscription which marks this cane as a gift, and theorizes as to the personality of their missed guest. He surfaces from his reading of the object with this thumbnail sketch: “a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favourite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff” (6). Holmes and Watson, then, each find in their reading of the cane an identity, a profession, and a series of affective associations. The signal difference between the two lies in their attention to specific modes of association. Watson categorizes the cane as a node within a social context. From this context, he organizes details in the life of the type of person with which Mortimer chooses to align himself. The meaning that emerges from the cane as a cultural figure speaks to a network of conventional meanings to which Watson, as a comparably social creature, is attuned and which he wields successfully throughout the Holmes canon. Holmes’s approach to the object, which finds its significance in its individuality, parallels psychometry’s interest in the object as a consistently accumulative artefact that bears the marks of its use, its vicinity, the attention it is paid, and the affective associations it holds for those who interact with its materiality. “It is a gift which enables her to see as it were with the mental eye” William Thomas Stead writes of a *fin-de-siècle* psychometer, Miss Ross, “the characteristics of the person with whom she is brought in contact by touch” (“Marvels” 332). Holmes reads the cane, and indeed most objects, as a vector, as a liminal object that might relay a relation between Holmes and Mortimer directly. He reads sympathetically through the object as a psychometer might, to the original owner and produces, in his way, a far more detailed image of his client as an individual rather than a cultural type.

“To those who have never investigated the subject,” writes Stead in his usual, breathless enthusiasm

few things seem to be more absolutely improbable than that  
a perfect stranger should be able to tell from the finger of  
your glove whether you are hopeful or despairing,

ambitious or retiring, or whether you have literary gifts, or whether you are utterly illiterate. Yet the thing has been done, and can be done over and over again. (“Marvels” 332)

Perhaps, but certainly it does happen “over and over again” in Holmes’s corner of the world, halfway between the pipe rack and the index shelves, where the light may shine fully on his troubled applicant. Just such a “thing” occurs in “Case of Identity.” Holmes observes that his new client, Mary Sutherland, has “written a note before leaving home... both glove and finger were stained with violent ink. She had written in a hurry and dipped her pen too deep” (“CI” 41). Disappointingly, Holmes does not let us in as to whether she is “hopeful or despairing,” but to divine that she was rushed seems acceptably remarkable. Sutherland, for her part, responds to Holmes’s curious ability to read identity in our material goods with “a violent start, and look[s] up with fear and astonishment upon her broad, good-humoured face” (“CI” 33). This indeed is typical of Doyle’s characters, particularly Watson, as they encounter the object through Holmes’s gaze and discover in it a witness that has until that moment remained unconsidered. Certainly, there is an implication of the mediumistic to Holmes. Often in reacting to the intuitions, convictions, and associations Holmes draws out of physical spaces or objects, his clients and compatriots figure him as occult: “[w]hy, you are like a magician,” Mary Holder tells Holmes apprehensively in “Beryl Coronet” (259); in “The Redheaded League,” Watson remarks that “those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals” (65); Watson himself, though accustomed to his friend’s methods occasionally reminds him, “[y]ou would certainly have been burned had you lived a few centuries ago” (7). In each case, Holmes’s ability to read the physical as a medium for contact with another distant subject evokes the stunned reaction. Holmes can describe the Holder household’s greengrocer from his footprint outside, for example, can read a bank robbery in trouser knees, and can discern a new maid in the sole of Watson’s shoe. Even Holmes, himself, seems at a loss at first to describe the easy process of associative connections that seem to appear to him unbidden from out of these information-laden objects. When Watson first calls him to account in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes struggles to trace his own thought: “It was easier to know it than to explain why I know it. If you were asked to prove that two

and two made four, you might find some difficulty, and yet you are quite sure of the fact” (23).

When James Mortimer finally returns for his cane toward the end of Chapter 1, he is only mildly taken aback by Holmes’s and Watson’s game of manifest associations. When Holmes observes that his marriage upsets a chain of their speculations he seems more bewildered than agitated: “Dr Mortimer blinked through his glasses in mild astonishment” (*HB* 8). Mortimer is, quite possibly, too absent-minded to provide the violent shock we find in Sutherland, for example, the panicked confusion we will eventually see in her father, or the perturbed fear of Mary Holder. The rest of this chapter addresses this encounter with the object as it is revealed under Holmes’s gaze to be meaningful, liminal, sympathetic and often lively. As I go on, for convenience, I refer to this affective recognition—be shock, confusion, or panic—simply as perplexity. Perplexity refers, of course, to the confusion that many of these characters feel in reaction to Holmes’s unexplained often illicit knowledge. But my use of the word is also synthetic as it calls upon an older and obsolete meaning: to plait, entangle, or entwine. This definition is particularly appropriate in discussions of clues, a word which in its original spelling of “clew” threads a similarly obsolete implication of tangled skeins and woven fabrics. As we shall see, to be perplexed by the information that Holmes can draw from material objects is to come to an awareness of our own involvement in a material world that recalls, records, recontextualizes, reclaims our subjecthood in unexpected encounters.

## 2.2

In his book *Other Things*, Bill Brown presents theory in the mode of a compendium of the exotic and strange items to be found in the mundane. Each page struggles to contain the sheer variety of the work’s curiosities. In an early chapter, one particular catalogue of things provides an initial passage into the perplexed befuddlement of James Mortimer, MRCS, and the “violent start” of Mary Sutherland:

Thingness can result from the object’s insistence, what Alfonso Lingis calls the *imperative* that forces the subject’s attention: as fact, as interruption, as summons... If the

thingness of the table resides in the remarkable patina of the bird's eye maple (the thing thus emerging from the physical register), the isolation of that property undoes the integrity of the object... If the thingness of the chair resides in its historicity—its historical value, its having been sat in by Hegel—the solid object has given itself over to the role of medium, the access it gives to what transcends it... When you say that there is some thing about that bust of Balzac that creeps you out, the thing is present and potent, even if it can't immediately be named or known. (Brown, *Other Things*, 23)

Brown's book provides such a profusion of exemplary artefacts that at times they overwhelm the text; elsewhere on this single page he references the stain on a lampshade, a stain on some dining-room drapes in your childhood home, a "curiously bulbous ball-point pen," and wine and bread—the last seeming to push the whole miscellany into a surreal and Freudian still-life (23). Brown does not return to these things—indeed he could never have time to, given their constant proliferation. And so he leaves this intriguing point—that the very objecthood of these objects might at times ascend to the epiphanic immediacy of a thing—to the reader. Indeed, a chair's designation as furniture once owned or at least used by Hegel would certainly seem to emphasize its objecthood to at least one individual; as would the aestheticization of the conspiracy of seasonal growth, milling techniques, and wood polish that becomes (or makes becoming) maplewood grain; as would a critical response that finds eeriness in a sculptural genre more typically associated with dignity. But Holmes's work as a pseudo-psychometer allows us a means of thinking through the strange quality of Hegel's chair alongside Mortimer's cane and, as we shall see, a typewriter and a portrait. This is objecthood that accedes to the thing's bewildering alterity.

The objects of our daily lives are more than our objects; they are abiding and promiscuous in their attachments. If we can consider "the object" as an item's appearance to us, as subjects, then the material goods that surround us often have longer lives than the objects they proffer to our perception. The historic chair may offer a surrogate interaction with Hegel but that museal thrill is a side-effect of another. We can recognize in antiques the ability of human creations to continue on over the course of generations not simply as mediums to prior owners but as artefacts in their own right—a quality that

will become crucial toward the end of this chapter when we meander into Baskerville Hall. That this thrill engages us at all implies the kind of networked object relations that dispossess our sentimental attachments; that make a chair, not our own, speak to us as meaningful and significant; that make our cane not simply our cane but an object that might readily betray our confidences. Simply put, the physical artefact—be it a philosopher’s chair or a baron’s portrait—can outlive its relation to us. Moreover, the material good may offer incrementally differing appearances to the subjects that, in turn, surround it; Watson, examining the cane, does not initially interact with the same, meaningful object as Holmes or Mortimer does, though all three are examining the same item. The origin of this eerie quality perhaps stems from an assumed claim that is made on the material when we understand it as a certain kind of object. That claim, as we shall see, seems to mark the difference of feeling toward Mortimer’s cane and the typewriters of “Case of Identity.” This is a signal lesson of the Holmes canon, which consistently presents clues as legible objects, saturated with a history of use and, what is more, with indications of its user. These imbued objects that refer unintentionally back to their owner are a crisis of the kind of representative Victorian possession that we find in domestic bric-a-brac. Indeed, these stories confront (even haunt) their characters with items so enriched with interrelations, significance, and sentiments, that detectives, doctors, and wine merchants alike must recognize the approximation and contingency of our own relations to the object, a small fraction of its existence.

Beneath its oddly comedic veneer, “Case of Identity” is an exceptionally Gothic text. The story does not seem to have the same gravity as a murder mystery like “The Speckled Band” or like “The Five Orange Pips,” nor the intrigue of Holmes’s more political work as in “A Scandal in Bohemia.” Indeed, in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, “Case of Identity” seems to fall in line with the light, inconsequential palate cleansers that separate Doyle’s more sinister tales: “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” for example, which mirrors the trope of a patriarch’s disguise donned for financial benefit; “The Noble Bachelor,” for another, which similarly presents a client in search of their partner, who has vanished on the morning of their wedding. In this regard, “Musgrave Ritual,” “The Copper Beeches” (1892), and *The Hound* often seem to overshadow “Case of Identity.” But, though the story barely suggests the Gothic tone of Doyle’s more horrific stories, it also barely



softens an inherently unsettling plot. A young typist, Mary Sutherland, hires Holmes to locate her missing fiancé, Hosmer Angel. Holmes, however, discovers that Angel is an alias of James Windibank, Sutherland's step-father. Windibank has donned a disguise to woo and jilt his adopted daughter with the intent of keeping her and her inheritance at home and at his disposal. Though the story traffics in updated hallmarks of the Gothic, rehearsing inheritance, disguise, incest, impulsive writing, and a tyrannical patriarch, it begins not with romance or fantasy but with the quotidian. Holmes and Watson discuss boredom and unimaginative cliché and, when Mary Sutherland appears, the case begins with the mechanical, uncomplicated nature of typing:

‘Do you not find,’ he said, ‘that with your short sight it is a little trying to so much typewriting?’

‘I did at first,’ she answered, ‘but now I know where the letters are without looking.’ Then, suddenly realizing the full purport of his words, she gave a violent start, and looked up with fear and astonishment upon her broad, good-humoured face. (“CI” 33)

Though it is exaggerated here, this reflexive disregard toward our possessions, clothes, tools, environments marks most of the characters that pass into and out of the influence of 221B Baker Street. Even while Watson works under Holmes's exasperated tutelage, much of his surroundings go on barely witnessed until Holmes directs his and our attention to them. Mary Sutherland's mismatched boots, unnoticed by both Watson and herself, serve as a comical example. But of all the signifying and striking objects imagined by “Case of Identity”—an antique snuff box, an oily pipe, mismatched boots, pince-nez, among many others—it is the figure of the typewriter that persistently haunts the text. As we shall see, the case's Gothic nature spreads outward from the typewriter and from typewritten text, each updated trope emblemized by or reliant upon this thoroughly modern and utilitarian creation. That the story introduces the typewriter in a moment of doubling in attention is itself significant. Sutherland's work leads her to overlook the typewriter, now merely an extension of her capability as a typist. Inconsiderate of its materiality, she cannot notice the imprint that interacting with this object has left upon her plush sleeves nor realize that such physical traces, object to object, might be recognized by Holmes. When she realizes that Holmes has no normal

means of knowing her profession, Sutherland suggests that he has already heard of her “else how could [he] know all that?” (“CI” 33). Her inattention to social situation and her inattention to the material nature of her work may seem vapid to Watson and, implicitly, to the ideal reader. However, they serve as the blind spot for Watson and Windibank as well. Both characters are surprised to learn that the typewriter’s physical identity is worn and reshaped with every address sent out to the social sphere, and more deeply altered when it is shared by a social group. Indeed, these two forms of inattention delineate precisely the space in which the typewriters of “Case of Identity” accrue their own Gothic proto-identity and individuality.

We surround ourselves with objects. We do so not simply through acquisition, decoration, and curation, but habitually through our casual disregard. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, we perceive our surroundings “sufficiently attentively to discover in them their familiar presence but not sufficiently so to disclose the non-human element, which lies hidden in them” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 322). As Holmes, the consummate Victorian seer, would have it, “[y]ou see but you do not observe. The distinction is clear” (“SIB” 8). To do so, to observe the alterity in a tool or cherished gift, would be to consider our material environment on its own terms, an often disconcerting recognition of its existence outside the specific relation we impose upon it as an object of our gaze. As Brown is quick to inform us, his interest lies “not with the object’s withdrawal from its properties, but with the adamant presence of a thingness that is fully (even exuberantly or aggressively) manifest in those very properties” (*Other Things* 23). The Holmes canon suggests a second mode of encounter with the outré qualities of the material world each time the detective surprises a character with the abundance of an object, with its potential to mean and affect. “A Case of Identity” ushers us into this perceptive, critical mode of reading. In aphoristic language, Holmes repeatedly coaches Watson and the reader to strip away our expectations, narratives, and codes: “[w]e would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence” (“CI” 30); “it is usually in unimportant matters that there is a field for observation” (“CI” 31); “the little things are infinitely the most important” (“CI” 36). On one level, then, it would be easy to argue that the affective thing—redolent of disorder, mystery, alienation—is the governing principle of the investigation while the narrativized object inhabits its

resolution; that is, to argue that we must examine the thing, out of place and unexplained, in order to return it to its objecthood. And yet the material, saturated with information, that gets involved into an investigation as “clues” cannot be simply dismissed as unmeaning *things*. They do not slip from our imposed meanings in the same manner as Brown’s things. Their slip does not suggest their material independence but an occulted narrative of human relation. Though both thing and clue demand explanation and renarration, the clue is inherently narrative. Nor can the revelation that matter might betray human activity be described as simple objectification. The Holmes stories, instead, imagine strange, instructive objects and allow us a sense that our surroundings preserve a rich archive, what the psychometric researchers William and Elizabeth Denton describe as the soul of things.

The Holmes stories portray this sense of latent environmental information, often a record of violence and of deeply emotional history, as surprising, perplexing, and even disconcerting. The same information was, of course, the comfort and curiosity offered by psychometry. Doyle, in his role as a Spiritualist ecstatic, references William Denton’s work on a different type of material excess, that of spiritual castings and ectoplasmic visitations. But here I am interested in Denton’s studies on the history of objects, which, undertaken with various mediums including his wife and sister, were published as *The Soul of Things: or, Psychometric Researches and Discoveries* (1871), a profoundly influential book in popularizing Buchanan’s concept within Spiritualism. If Bill Brown’s encyclopedic book is a compendium, Denton’s is a bestiary, a book-length collection of wild meditations and fantastic channeling that approaches objects and specimens as catalysts for visions and affective experiences. Denton introduces this collection with a set of three argumentative chapters that begin, reasonably enough, by positing that our visual recollection is properly contained in the mind and not in the eye. They end, more surprisingly, by suggesting that a daguerreotype exposure is not the only object that might record information of a certain vicinity, view, and history of use. Indeed, the photograph is simply the most obvious means of recording and the most limited, retaining only a small facet of the sheer informational abandon—optical, historical, affective, scientific, biographical, bestial—that inheres in each and every material thing:

The pane of glass in the window, the brick in the wall, and the paving-stone in the street, catch the pictures of all passers-by, and faithfully preserve them. Not a leaf waves, not an insect crawls, not a ripple moves, but each motion is recorded by a thousand faithful scribes in infallible and indelible scripture. (30-31)

The psychometric emerges in these pages as a node in a vast span of interrelations. The objects contain the history of their vicinity but the showings they offer to mediums have a strangely dislocated focalization. Rarely do they offer a simple view from the perspective of the object; instead they flit as well between those other beings, things, and subjects that surround it. Take, as an example, Elizabeth Denton's reading of a whalebone walking stick, a reading that most likely would have elicited an even greater shock from the faithful Watson:

I feel as if I am a monster... I feel like vomiting. Now I want to plunge into the water... My jaws are large enough to take down a house at a gulp... I see the inside of the whale's mouth. It has no teeth; it has a slimy look; but I only get a glimpse of it. Now I see the whole animal. What an awful-looking creature! (62-63)

The movement of this perspective is cinematographic but not entirely to be expected. Mrs. Denton, the medium, begins with a feeling that she is the monster, entire, before narrowing her focus to the whale's mouth. This might be explained by the multiple definitions of whalebone. That which was used most commonly by Victorians—in crafting, clothing, and manufacture—was in fact baleen, thus this whale “has no teeth” (62). The whalebone used to make canes was more commonly whale ivory or actual skeletal bone. But we need not look for logic in the visionary. I am more interested in this movement from inhabiting the creature to inhabiting its baleen and then moving to something outside of the whale that glimpses its entirety as an object. In the imaginary of mediumship, here, the stick becomes emblematic of the material world as it radiates out in an ecology of relations from any one single point. Denton's psychometry finds these networks of relation not only in the original material of an artefact, as with the whalebone, but often also in its history of use. Experiment LXVII, for example, examines a “[p]iece of red damask that hung over the speaker's chair in the House of

Representatives, Washington, when that city was taken by the British in 1814” (160). The fabric retains a sense of its lofty purpose imbued through years of use: “there is an air of general magnificence about it. The influence of this place is very different from what I perceive in churches” (161). A mosaic tile from a Roman bath examined in Experiment LXX suggests “great gaiety and voluptuousness... as if it must have been frequented by men and women, who, at certain times, laying aside all restraint, abandoned themselves to the intoxication of pleasure and sensual enjoyment” (173). These associational descriptions are more reminiscent of Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* than Holmes’s deductive readings. The suggestion of a whale’s tooth in a whalebone cane and a dog’s tooth imprint on a Penang lawyer are clearly differences of kind and not of degree. Denton’s experiments do, however, parallel a specific paradigm that we find throughout Holmes’s observations. Both suggest that the history of a material item, its relations to its surroundings and to any number of subjects might develop into a recognizable patina that would individuate that specific object. Moreover, both stage moments in which this individuality can be followed back, through traces available to the sensitive, to those surroundings that created in slow increments its identity.

The typewriter’s identity must wait until the final pages of “Case of Identity,” where it emerges as one of the epiphanic disclosures of Holmes’s *dénouement*. When Holmes reveals that Hosmer Angel was in fact Sutherland’s step-father, Windibank, wooing her in disguise, the revelation comes by way of a typed letter. In an effort to disguise his handwriting, Windibank has composed all of Hosmer Angel’s letters to Sutherland on a typewriter. Inviting Windibank to 221B Baker Street, Holmes, with a playfully feline brutality, tells Windibank that he expects to find Hosmer Angel; Windibank responds with “a violent start,” the same perplexed reaction shown by his step-daughter when her inattention to the typewriter allowed Holmes to learn of her profession (“CI” 44). Holmes compares Hosmer’s letters to Windibank’s professional communications and demonstrates sixteen matching instances of minor, unique wear within their typography. Windibank’s and Angel’s letters have clearly been composed on the same machine. Despite the typewriter’s apparent industrial, machinic anonymity, as Holmes states, “a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man’s handwriting. Unless they are quite new, no two of them write exactly alike” (“CI” 44). Windibank reacts in utter shock

to being discovered through the machine that was supposed to guarantee his disguise. He springs from his seat, “turning white to his lips,” only to collapse back into it again “with a ghastly face and a glitter of moisture on his brow” (“CI” 45). While the truth behind Angel’s identity is easily guessed at before this scene, this revelation of individuality in the mechanistic can be read as an encounter with the clue, with an information-laden object; Windibank’s startled response can be read as a particularly violent version of the perplexed disorientation that so often marks these encounters. Though not an antique like Hegel’s chair nor a cherished possession like Mortimer’s cane, the company typewriter that Windibank uses professionally similarly sits in the centre of radiating subject-object relations; without fully considering the weight of his statement, Windibank admits as much to Holmes, claiming: “We do all our correspondence with this machine at the office, and no doubt it is a little worn” (“CI” 44). As with the psychometric objects that fascinate the Dentons, the typewriter testifies to a web of subject-oriented relations in which it sits as a central node. Worn down as a tool of use to multiple subjects, the typewriter has developed over time its own idiosyncratic and identifying traits that it voices in the only expression it can manage. To confront the individuality of this typewriter, as Windibank is made to do, is to confront a latent identity that transcends the singular appearance of the object, an identity that is accrued through multiple relations over time.

Doyle was not shy in repeating and revising aspects of his plots across multiple iterations. This story of a woman who is manipulated by both her father figure and her romantic partner and who finds some self-reliance through typing returns in *The Hound* in the character of Laura Lyons. As Watson interrogates Laura in her Coombe Tracy offices, he pressures her to choose between maintaining her reputation and revealing the actions of Stapleton, the man she loves. Startled and uncertain, Laura automatically resorts to the contraption on the desk in front of her: “her fingers played nervously over the stops of her typewriter” (*HB* 111). The reflexive quality of her action, embodied in her fingers and slightly distanced from her self, recalls Sutherland’s response to Holmes that her typing has become, in a way, ingrained and unconsidered. Laura’s apprehensive action speaks to her own affect, of course, but it also suggests a set of associations she has constructed in her work with this machine. Whatever these associations are, they are most likely

ambivalent. Lyons might turn nervously to the typewriter because it is the sign of her self-developed, reassuring capability; because it is a memorial of Sir Charles Baskerville, the man who set her up in her typing business and who Watson is asking after; because it is the tool with which, she suspects, she lured Sir Charles out to his death. Only a psychometer could tell us for sure. The instinctual caress, however, speaks to the variety of affective interactions seen throughout Doyle's Holmes stories. Whereas the typewriter is an unconsidered tool for Windibank, a similar machine seems to hold emotional resonance for Lyons, akin to Holmes's counseling clay pipe. We have seen in the instance of Mortimer's cane and Miss Ross's readings that Victorian objects were ready reservoirs of affect and emotional history. The shock of the typewriter for Windibank lies in the discovery that identities might flourish in the dehumanized vacuum of industrial mechanization. More specifically, the typewriter, as a clue, suggests that while we may not have an emotional connection to our objects that would affect or reimagine them, a connection exists nevertheless and might even come to affect ourselves. A further shock, as we shall see, lies in the repeated instances of characters who unwittingly lean on the solidity of these nascent identities, only to later discover the extent of their dependence.

Though not overtly concerned with affect, thing theorists like Brown and Schwenger consistently resort to a vocabulary of feeling when narrating thingness, and specifically a pre-emotional, instinctive reaction. They write of startling jolts, of "the shock of the unfamiliar" (Schwenger 162), and of artefacts that "assert" (Brown, "Thing Theory," 3), of the item that "imposes" (Schwenger 36). Both writers tend to depict thingness as an event as much as a quality. They narrate the thing in the moment of encounter and in doing so often present, explicitly or implicitly, this recognition of material otherness as a strongly affective interaction. The subjective quality of the encounter—is the thing repulsive or revelatory?—is often subordinated in this genre to a description of its intensity, of the power that unexpected forms of materiality have to incite a sudden disorientation, excitement, or perplexity. Brown, for example, discusses the thing "as the amorphousness out of which objects are materialized by the (ap)perceiving subject . . . a retroprojection," a statement that seems to presage Brian Massumi's discussion of affect as a formless, pre-subjective intensity (Brown, "Thing Theory," 5; Massumi 28).

Schwenger presses this further by repeatedly undermining the typical reading that the

thing might be localizable in the revealed material reality of the object. Throughout *The Tears of Things*, Schwenger seems to present the relation of thingness to the perceiving body as a processual interplay between the subject and the object, influenced as much by “the gaze of the object” as by the gaze of the subject (41). The thing (and Schwenger’s interest, here, lies particularly in the Lacanian Thing) “is in us, not in the world though it is the discovery of the world, the world as other than us, that gives rise to that state” (10). The thing, then, is one part of a complex. It is an epiphanic event and it is an affect that emerges between ourselves and our objects. It is an intense absence in the material object and a disruption or lack in the subject as it looks out to the world; it is gestured to in the relation that unites and moves between the object and the subject. Massumi suggests precisely this type of relationship, lacking any local presence, in his aphoristic statement: “affect inhabits the passage” (*Parables of the Virtual* 217). To string this comparison along, the dichotomy as it is typically laid out in affect theory between affect and emotion can, at times, provide a productive analogue to the thing/object dichotomy. Massumi writes, “[e]motion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual points of insertion of intensity into semantically or semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized” (28). Similarly, the object, in its appearance, is often imagined as the wilderness of the material domesticated, perhaps provisionally, into our mundane expectations. For Brown, “things seem to assert their presence and power” often in extreme moments (3); for Schwenger, the thing always recedes spectrally behind its appearance as an object of our gaze. In Brown’s discussions, the arresting intensity of thingness could well be considered a disordering affect. Schwenger, who already has an eye on the emotional and melancholic, is more interested in the compulsive way that we attempt to control and narrativize this intensity. We could think, then, of the thing not as material reality itself but as the intensity of our relation to that reality, stripped of the typical modes by which we sentimentalize, habitualize, and digest its nature.

But what about the clue and the information-laden objects, decidedly not depicted as things, that seem to proliferate on every domestic surface of Holmes’s London, in every outfit, and at every crime scene? My point in breaking for a paragraph into full-throated thing theory is not to suggest that Holmes leads Windibank, Sutherland, or Mortimer to



an encounter with the thingness of their surroundings. However, in the moment that these characters realize the complex and unconsidered network of objects—the multiple connections between a typewriter and a company of wine merchants or a plush sleeve; the sheer ecology of connections between Mortimer’s cane and the country road, the dog’s tooth, the city hospital, other culturally significant Penang lawyers in the hands of another generation of country doctors—their understanding of their own involvement in a perplexing web of material and affective interrelations startles them. To my mind, their feeling, parallel to the confusion and shock that Schwenger and Brown narrate in descriptions of the thing, suggests that these characters too have recognized the material world and its objects for their affective complexity. Brown writes that “thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysical irreducible to objects)” (“Thing Theory” 5). The worn typewriters, stained gloves, marked sleeves, and battered top hats of Holmes’s world speak to a different excess, one that is irreducible to material thingness, just as it is irreducible to a singular objecthood, but like both of these remains an outgrowth of our attitude to the world. Holmes, like Elizabeth Denton or Miss Ross, often encounters in these clues, emblems, and signs, a material medium for emotions and relations, long held in reserve. Indeed, Windibank’s office typewriter calls attention to the underlying premise of those objects we witness in Denton’s experiments. Doyle’s stories and psychometry alike stage encounters with information and individuality as a form of patina. Though the manufacture of a typewriter may provide it with one identity, its history of use provides it with another, an auratic identity that emerges from various interactions and relations in concert. The wear of that typewriter is as legible as its lettering just as the dents on Mortimer’s cane are as legible as its silver band. Each bears the patina that we lend to objects through shared history, perhaps without real consideration.

Of course, in “Case of Identity,” the typewriter is notable as an absent clue. Holmes cannot manipulate it or inspect it in the manner of the cane. Like the initial photograph the Crown Prince tasks Holmes with recovering in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” the reader is allowed little access to the central clue of the story. Rather, its influence can be recognized in the identity it lends by association. In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” the image

and whatever illicit information it might convey remain a mystery, but the photograph's intensity transfers to a substitute that has been left in its place, which, as we have seen, Holmes enshrines in 221B Baker Street out of respect for Adler. Similarly, here the nature of the typewriter as a clue is considered by proxy in the evidence of its identity: the typewritten text that it produces. "As to the letters," Holmes states halfway through the story

' . . . they are very commonplace. Absolutely no clue in them to Mr Angel, save that he quotes Balzac once. There is one remarkable point, however, which will no doubt strike you.'

'They are typewritten,' I remarked.

'Not only that, but the signature is typewritten. Look at the neat little "Hosmer Angel" at the bottom . . . The point about the signature is very suggestive—in fact, we may call it conclusive.' ("CI" 41-42)

The letters themselves are "commonplace," with "no clue in them," but they stand as evidence to the story's clue. The typewritten signature is "suggestive"; it announces itself with the affective intensity of the thing. And yet it is immediately narrativized, instantiated by the knowing Holmes as "conclusive" within a mystery that he is already on the verge of solving. As we have seen, however, this narrative instantiation, which should mark its objecthood, only marks it as excessive compared to the other documents and communications that circulate through this text. Even Watson, who has been particularly unobservant in this story, can gain an inkling of precisely what sets these love letters apart. Again, this excess folds back toward objecthood and cannot engage fully with thingness. Its excess, after all, stems from Windibank's shortsighted relation to the typewriter as simply an unassuming tool in his daily business.

Friedrich A. Kittler famously discusses the typewriter as the mechanism that ended the individuality of communication. Penmanship and composition were, of course, one of the last and most personal aspects of human life to be folded into the industrial, increasingly mechanized culture of Holmes's late-Victorian London. Holmes's reading on the subject might diverge somewhat; "some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only

on one side,” he observes, referring to these idiosyncrasies as “characteristics” of an “individuality” (“CI” 44). Indeed, rather than standardize individual communication, the typewriter’s slowly accreted identity, developed not out of subjecthood but out of its material existence, bleeds back into the story’s characterizations as well as into these letters. The typewriter may not be “exuberantly or aggressively” material as Brown would have it but it is certainly disruptive (*Other Things* 23). Given Doyle’s interest in universal suffrage, divorce law, and *querrelles des femmes*, Mary Sutherland can be easily read as an image of the New Woman and, indeed, nearly all of her defining traits stem from her profession and her relationship to writing. The story consistently depicts Sutherland through the sumptuous quality of her possessions, made vaguely ridiculous in comparison to her lack of refinement. Holmes’s interest in the material trace and Watson’s penchant for descriptive passages afford us a wealth of material details regarding her appearance—from her plush sleeves, to her black beaded jacket with a fringe of jet, her gold earrings, her buttoned gloves, and “a heavy fur boa round her neck, and a large curling red feather in a broad-brimmed hat which was tilted in a coquettish Duchess-of-Devonshire fashion” (“CI” 32). Mary Sutherland’s ability to enter into the professional sphere in her own right due to her talents as a typist provide the means to “this great panoply” (“CI” 32). And that relationship to writing influences her apparel. As we have seen, her typing practice has left wear on her dress sleeves. Holmes further reads her distracted emotional state in the ink-stains on her glove; Sutherland has dipped her pen too deeply in hurriedly writing a rebellious note to her stepfather.

Near the beginning of this section, I suggested that “Case of Identity” updates Gothic tropes through the influence of the typewriter. Perhaps the primary of these attempts to renew the genre lies in the story’s interest in inheritance and exogamy. Windibank’s interest, as it is eventually revealed, is to keep Sutherland’s inheritance at his disposal since he has spent his wife’s own small legacy and sold off the family company. For her part, Mary Sutherland seems to intuit a monetary reason for Angel’s disappearance. She takes pains, when briefing Holmes on her case, to delineate precisely her family’s financial position and the origin of their funds. Her father, now deceased, “was a plumber in the Tottenham Court Road, and he left a tidy business behind him” (“CI” 34); her stepfather is “a traveller in wines” and sold the family business, netting “four thousand

seven hundred” (“CI” 34); Mary, herself, is a typist earning “twopence a sheet” and can manage “from fifteen to twenty sheets” (“CI” 34); finally, much of the family’s stable income seems to stem from Mary’s own inherited New Zealand stock of £2500 “paying 4½ per cent” (“CI” 34). This money is used by her parents until such time as she marries. Should this level of detail fail to catch the reader’s eye, Watson stresses, though he had expected to find Holmes bored by the apparent non sequitur, “on the contrary, he had listened with the greatest concentration of attention” (“CI” 34). Importantly, Mary is not kept from utilizing her inheritance due to some legal arrangement or familial abuse. Unlike a typical Gothic story, she could gain access to her annuity at any time but is barred from doing so by her sense of self-sufficiency and propriety. “Case of Identity” emphasizes the family’s tenuous economic viability and the change that might result from failing to preserve the family as it is. Losing Mr. Sutherland meant the loss of much of their business’s profitability. Welcoming Windibank into the family caused the loss of the rest of the business’s profit into the future; Mary stresses that their pay-out “wasn’t near as much as father could have got if he were alive” (“CI” 34). Mary’s marriage means her parents could no longer live off her inheritance, which, Sherlock explains, is “a considerable sum for people in their position, and the loss of it would have made a significant difference” (“CI” 45). In short, the story stresses that the Sutherland-Windibank family survives or fails based on its insularity.

“For the family to survive, the family as currently constituted must die,” observes Barry McCrea in *In the Company of Strangers*, and it is precisely this truth, that marriage must open the family to outsiders in order to continue the family line, that Windibank defies, for accepting it means financial loss (75). McCrea argues that an anxiety toward exogamy is repeatedly rehearsed throughout the Holmes canon, defining many of its familial plots. This anxiety is particularly obvious in Doyle’s imagination of the ruling class, which is presented as defensive of its failing influence and neurotically obsessed with maintaining genetic purity. Despite being staunchly middle-class, Windibank fulfills McCrea’s characterization of an “exploitative father,” a stock Doyle character defined by “the fantasy that the nuclear family is permanent and self-sufficient and that contact with outsiders will destroy it” (74). Many of the stories McCrea examines in his study begin with a contextual discussion of an old family’s hereditary line. This information may or

may not have relevance to the mystery itself. In “Case of Identity,” the transition of this trope into a middle-class context makes for an economic rather than genetic lineage. The importance placed on this history, however, is directly analogous. This is precisely the problem of the Sutherland-Windibank household. Genetic preservation seems to have been subsumed in the face of economic preservation. While Windibank serves admirably as the Gothic, tyrannical patriarch and a more clearly Sedgwickian barrier, the typewriter has similarly worked to block Mary Sutherland’s movement away from the family. Mary clearly has a desire to start a family. While Windibank opines “that a woman should be happy in her own family circle,” Mary insists “a woman wants her own circle to begin with, and I had not got mine yet” (“CI” 35). Holmes further details “that it was evident that with her fair personal advantages, and her little income, she would not be allowed to remain single for long,” and yet Mary Sutherland has remained single, her only suitor being her own stepfather (“CI” 45). Mary seems inexplicably blocked from marriage, and the story implies that this may result from her self-sufficiency as a typist. Certainly this is what has blocked her from her inheritance. Mary explains in the same sentence that she allows Windibank to draw her annuity and that she makes enough money to support herself as a typist. Even when Holmes tells her not to hold out hope for Angel’s return, she replies that she “shall be true to Hosmer” (“CI” 39). There is here none of the urgency that we might expect of a late-Victorian woman in her mid-twenties facing the economic and social insecurity of an unmarried position. Rather, the typewriter seems to function for her as a mode of economic exogamy, bringing funds rather than an outsider into the household. Laura Lyons displays a similar relationship to typing in *The Hound*, where her work expressly replaces the economic surety of her husband, who has disappeared. In this way, though it is not its materiality that is in question, the typewriter’s relation to Mary Sutherland still functions as a Gothic barrier. It seems to provide an exogamous link to the outside world and yet keeps her temporarily satisfied, bars her from claiming fully her inheritance and realizing a sexual, social, and fiscal maturity, holds her within a family unit that is bound up in self-similar preservation and perverse desire.

Mary Sutherland’s defining characteristics, her means and tendency to independence, are afforded to her by the cultural disruption of the typewriter. It is precisely in the same

disruptions that Hosmer Angel can be said to reside. James Windibank attempts to adopt the mixed significance of the typewriter within Victorian culture for his own ends. Typewriting circulates in the text as a signifier of professionalism and professional communication. Windibank's typewritten response to Holmes underlines his place as part of a larger enterprise, while the typewriter provides a career for his stepdaughter. In the letters of Hosmer Angel, typewriting does not simply occlude Windibank's hand. Rather, the typewriter's affect of formality, stemming from its mechanized simulation of the printed word, bolsters a character trait already ascribed to the fictional Hosmer Angel: a quiet, industrious, even Protestant seriousness. Such seriousness is modulated by the typewriter's design as a tool of individual expression; Angel's letters are created specifically for Sutherland by a machine that already was being culturally confused for the typists themselves. Typewritten text sits between the printed word and penmanship, the authoritative and the personal, and in creating Hosmer Angel, Windibank draws affectively from both. In this way, it is the typewriter, an object, that lends its identity to the subjects around it. Holmes is taken with the "very suggestive" fact that Angel seems to have typed rather than signed his name at the bottom of each letter but in a very literal way this could be said to be Angel's signature ("CI" 42). Typewritten text bolsters and mirrors exactly Angel's appearance to Sutherland as a serious, professional, "very neat and plain" gentleman ("CI" 36). Angel's signature, then—"the neat little "Hosmer Angel" at the bottom"—is suggestive, indeed ("CI" 42).

Windibank's relation to text is more perverse and Gothic than simple disguise, however. "Case of Identity" consistently shadows forth in context and thrown-away lines a darker possible motive for Windibank's courtship of his stepdaughter. To the general intrigue, we can add the possibility of a barely contained physical desire on the stepfather's part for his stepdaughter. Mary mentions in passing that "I call him father, though it sounds funny, too, for he is only five years and two months older than myself" before continuing to say she was upset that her mother had married someone so young soon after Mr. Sutherland's death ("CI" 33). Windibank's disguise, moreover, does not seem to have been particularly thorough; Holmes strips Angel's description of that "which could be the result of a disguise—the whiskers, the glasses, the voice"—and the remaining details are immediately recognizable as Windibank once he appears ("CI" 48). For his part,

Windibank has married Mrs. Sutherland for her money, Holmes later explains, and we are given little reason to doubt this assertion. We have, however, fewer direct details of the possibility of his desire for Mary other than, of course, the nature of his plot and his willingness to engage his own stepdaughter in order to keep her “happy in her own family circle” (“CI” 35). Strangely, perhaps the strongest evidence that we have for a submerged narrative of incestuous desire in the story is a refutation (and, at once, a confirmation) of the typewriter as a separate identity. As I have previously quoted, Mary tells Holmes that Angel did not want typewritten letters of her affection. “[W]hen I wrote them they seemed to come from me,” Mary explains, “but when they were typewritten he always felt that the machine had come between us” (“CI” 36). There seems to be no purpose to this request. Mary’s handwriting is not necessary to Windibank’s plan, nor is his desire for this specific medium of communication explained in the end by Holmes. In her book *The Sympathetic Medium*, Jill Galvan argues that, without any explanation to knit this detail back into the narrative, it remains “as figuratively significant of typing’s different capacities for expression between the two sexes” (138). Certainly, the gender politics of the typewriter inform nearly every beat of this short story, and yet this explanation fails to account for the detail on a narrative level. It is perhaps more convincing that Windibank here expresses a personal preference, a desire for actual tokens of affection from his stepdaughter. The detail, then, remains unexplained and irrecoverable in Holmes’s version of the case, specifically because of its nature as personal expression rather than considered, fraudulent plot.

In his desire for handwritten love letters, Windibank seems to aspire to a voyeuristic, one-way communication of affection. He seeks to engage his stepdaughter’s desire while remaining safely barred in his own role-play. Indeed, it is one of the small jokes of the story, it seems, that Windibank ingratiates himself using two traits that mark isolation. Angel uses a typewriter professionally, just as Mary does, and she further explains that “his eyes were weak, just as mine are” (“CI” 36). As in any Gothic plot of intra-familial desire, Windibank is already blocked off, by virtue of his social and legal position, from fulfilling his desire. He seems, then, to see the typewriter as a passage through that blockage. As we have seen, Windibank hides his identity behind the typewriter, employing its own traits to reinforce the disguise that he uses to woo his stepdaughter. In

this sense, the typewriter transmits the mutual desire of these two characters. It is possible, however, to read in his wish for a free, unmediated interaction with his stepdaughter's expressions of affection a resentment for the barrier behind which he feels he must hide. After all, we receive an indication that the plot has gone too far. Mrs. Sutherland is "angry" in the aftermath of the conspiracy and tells Mary "never to speak of the matter again" ("CI" 38). Windibank, however, strongly implies that this will not be a singular incident of voyeuristic, readerly pleasure. Rather, he tells Mary "that something had happened, and that [she] should hear of Hosmer again" ("CI" 38). In this way, the typewriter becomes a necessary but resented barrier between Windibank and his stepdaughter, one that expresses the social barriers already in place. This perhaps explains Holmes's erratic behavior toward the end of the story when he threatens to thrash Windibank, chasing him out of 221B Baker Street before denying to Watson that he will say anything to Mary Sutherland herself. "There is danger," Holmes explains, "for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman," and this snide dismissal is not simply a return for Holmes to his old misogyny after his interactions with Irene Adler ("CI" 48). The image equates Mary's deluded desire with a mother-offspring bond, a final emphatic statement on the ingrown, entangled nature of this non-productive family, with Mary now figured as Windibank/Angel's mother.

### 2.3

The portrait of Sir Hugo Baskerville—to return at last to *The Hound*—refines this figure of an historical object that develops an identity and individuality over long duration. This singular tie to history allows such an object to resist, at times, or to confuse the capricious demands we make on our subjects, as with Doyle's depictions of the typewriter. For its part, the portrait stands as one of the canon's most striking physical clues. As Holmes enters Baskerville Hall for the first time, he is struck still by an overpowering affective response to the portrait collection in the long gallery or main hall:

He stopped suddenly and stared fixedly over my head into the air. The lamp beat upon his face, and so intent was it and so still that it might have been that of a clear-cut



classical statue, a personification of alertness and expectation. (*HB* 138)

When he asks after the portrait, we learn that it depicts Sir Hugo Baskerville, the original patriarch on whose head (and throat) the curse fell. When Holmes reads an object, the Doyle stories typically stage three affective encounters with the material on three registers. Holmes engages with the object as abundantly informative and legible in its specificity; the client encounters the unconsidered extent of the object's burden and its disloyal connections to the outside world; Watson sits in between his companion's composure and their guest's shock, knowing that the physical world teems with information but being incapable, as he is often reminded, of ever glimpsing it entirely. Holmes is rarely caught off guard as he is before the portrait and rarely is he perplexed. And yet throughout *The Hound*, one of Doyle's most Spiritualist Holmes stories, the detective seems at a loss in those moments when the material world seems to waver on the brink of genre-flux, threatening to send the material world into a ghost story. For its part, the novel stages these moments often, transitioning staples of Spiritualist belief and practice into Holmes's thoroughly material but no less wondrous cosmology. This section, then, is one for Watson and the readers, an attempt to hold Holmes in that moment of unaccustomed perplexity for only a few pages longer. If the clue or any informational object in the Holmes canon can be said to be a vector or a liminal reflection of some further subject, a portrait which depicts two people must have its time. Schwenger, writing on paintings, suggests "[i]f one aspect of the gaze is that it enables the objects of the world, in all their fundamental otherness to impinge on our vision, then painting provides a way in which those objects become visible on our terms not theirs" (40). *The Hound*, however, imagines a portrait that—in its complex of signification, in its reaching out to involve a living subject, caught in canvas unaware—resists becoming distilled into a coherent object on any terms. Unlike the typewriter, which through constant wear has developed a fugitive identity, smuggled out into circulation in the language of others, the portrait of Sir Hugo bears no signs of use or misuse. Rather, it seems to have existed so long that time has cycled by and returned it into meaningful currency. Thus, the portrait means ambivalently, an object not simply of Holmes's gaze but of Sir Hugo's history and Stapleton's ambitions. As we shall see, this net of

connections spreads out through the material world of the moor, eventually gathering and patterning the physical world in unexpected significance.

Having spoiled the mystery, then, we might begin at the end. As Holmes, Watson, and Lestrade huddle in the broken ground outside the Stapletons' cottage on the night of the hunt—the hunt for the hound and the hound's own hunt—the culminating encounter of their investigation is unexpectedly delayed. A fog from off the moors insinuates itself into their ambush. The mist shortens their line of sight and, gradually covering their position, forces the trio to fall back half a mile. It is, Holmes grumbles, “the one thing upon earth which could have disarranged my plans” (*HB* 149). Who could have foreseen such a turn of events on a Devonshire moor? By the time that their game is afoot, the cottage and the path across the moors are submerged beneath a “dense white sea, with the moon silvering its upper edge” (*HB* 150). Holmes, then, has no choice but, given his usually fastidious strategies, the detective's hunt seems desperate and careless. Should the hound catch its quarry within the first half mile of its chase, there would be little the investigators could do to help Sir Henry but to scabble forward into the fog. Worse, the weather cloaks their own quarry, giving them no warning as to the nightmarish appearance that eventually leaps from the fog-bank. When at last the hound materializes, its unsuspected, spectral enormity stuns Holmes, who simply stares in a still moment of panic. The fog is thoroughly appropriate for the gloomy, Gothic atmosphere of *The Hound* but it also presents a fairly obvious metaphor: the hunting party's lack of insight made physically manifest. The low-lying fog that shrouds the Stapleton's cottage from observation speaks to Holmes's hazy understanding of the centre of a mystery that the reader believes is essentially understood. As he admits to his bait, Baskerville, “I was prepared for a hound, but not for a creature such as this” (*HB* 152).

But the fog is a figure of their poor planning, not merely a metaphor. It stages and exasperates the unconsidered qualities of their hunt as much as it represents them; it profoundly conceals the hound as much as it portrays their superficial understanding. As *The Hound* progresses, the moors around Baskerville Hall fill with similar strongly associative figures. The mist is one of many in which active and representational force are inherited or laminated together in a material thing or a physical event. Other material

figures carry an oddly allegorical quality for an Edwardian thriller. Holmes comes to the moors to hunt Stapleton, an elegant, fugitive character born of the tropics and transformed by a new identity. Stapleton, in turn, adopts many of Holmes's own mannerisms and behaviours and, when we first encounter him, excuses himself to race into the Grimpen Mire after Cyclopias, a transitory, tropical butterfly, similarly metamorphosed and out of place on the moors. Stapleton's lepidoptery, it seems, is also an image in praxis of Holmes chasing Stapleton into the mire. The moor, in its strange wash of signification, even makes ambiguous wordplay of the novel's apparently clear title. Denying from the tale's earliest diction the easy one-to-one interpretive paradigm on which the investigative genre seems to rely, the title finds two signifieds within the novel. There is an obvious, canine hound deployed by one Baskerville (Stapleton né Rodger Baskerville) to hunt down another Baskerville (Sir Henry) and who spends most of the novel penned secretly out on the moor. And then there is Holmes, who is similarly employed by a Baskerville (Sir Henry) to hunt down another Baskerville (Stapleton) and who spends most of the novel living secretly on the moor. This analogy between Holmes and a hunting dog recurs, pun intended, throughout the canon, most notably in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," where Watson mentions that "Sherlock Holmes was transformed when he was on such a scent as this" (91). As Holmes darts into the clearing around Boscombe Pool, he undergoes a profound transformation from "the quiet thinker and logician of Baker Street" to an alert and eager sighthound. Here, in an active crime scene, Holmes's intensity of observation belies any access to interiority. He runs "up and down, sometimes losing, sometimes finding the track," his nostrils seem "to dilate with a purely animal lust for the chase and... a question or remark fell unheeded on his ears, or, at most, only provoked a quick, impatient snarl in reply" (91). Here, the gulf between Holmes and his observers is taxonomic; swift, silent, head bent, the veins standing "out like whip cord in his long, sinewy neck," he is consistently figured as a predator when the game is afoot (91). *The Hound*, in resurrecting the detective, also recovers this eager, canine curiosity. Even those early London chapters imply a parallel in material form. Stapleton lifts Sir Henry's boot so that the hound might track him, returning for one with more of a patina of personal use and thus with more information for the dog; Holmes, as

we have seen, reads the misplaced cane for a similar history of use, though by different means and to a different end.

Such minor associations, self-references, and allegorical moments cannot be said to hold any great significance—at least for my argument in this chapter. They accumulate, however, over the course of the novel to provide a sense of the moors as liminal and meaningful, much as the related colours and tones of Poe’s room emerge eventually as a space’s aesthetic or as the misuse of a turkish slipper or the storage of criminal relics in a butter dish cumulatively provide a portrait of Holmes in place. Their proliferation as soon as Watson and Sir Henry leave London for bleaker climes lends the movement out to the country an unearthly quality as though it were more expedition than investigation. The loose, associative nature of their connections intimates that the information to be gathered and made sensible on the moor might partake of a different register of mystery all together. Through coincidences and repetitions, Watson’s account of Devonshire coheres in a narrative design that seems more uncanny than artful. That is, these strange sympathies and parallel incidents suggest that though the moors are utterly material, they are organized by a spiritual sensibility or occult logic that structures meaningful connections in unexamined patterning. The moors are, to this extent, the crime scene pushed to its crisis, an environment of confused narrative connections.

I am certainly not the first to observe as much, at least in so far as the novel’s more mystical subtext. Srdjan Smajić argues that “[t]he spiritualist idiom is appropriate here, not just because Doyle became a passionate advocate of Spiritualism, but because *The Hound* is already an occult text, both a transition to a new kind of mystery fiction and a return to the genre’s occult origins” (*Ghost-Seers* 131). Early in the novel, Holmes dismisses the possibility that the supernatural might be in play at Baskerville Hall:

Holmes shrugged his shoulders. ‘I have hitherto confined my investigations to this world,’ said he. ‘In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task. Yet you must admit that the foot mark is material.’

“The original hound was material enough to tug a man’s throat out, and yet he was diabolical as well.” (*HB* 23)

Yet in interactions with the moor and particularly with its token objects, Holmes often seems to revel in something akin to a sympathetic magic. As we have seen, he examines Mortimer's stick and finds upon it signs of its use, yes, but also of the character of Mortimer, a pseudo-psychometric reading that transforms the cane into a juncture for Holmes and offers a means of accessing Mortimer himself. Later, after Mortimer's second consult, Holmes spends the day poring over an immense Ordnance map of Devonshire, familiarizing himself with the location. Dry as this research may be, its mise-en-scène and Holmes's description of his studies are decidedly mediumistic. They reference wandering souls and substance-induced trance-work even as they stage his inductive powers. When Watson returns from the club, he finds Holmes ensconced in a claustrophobic cloud of tobacco smoke: "[t]hrough the haze I had a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an arm-chair with his black clay pipe between his lips. Several rolls of paper lay around him" (*HB* 26). As with the fog at the end of the story, the image of tobacco smoke so thick that "the lamp upon the table was blurred by it" has a multivalent significance (*HB* 26). It obscures Holmes, physically and metaphorically, since we seem to catch him in the midst of visionary ritual. We could compare this atmosphere to, for example, Elizabeth d'Espérance's accounts of her own seances filled with a smoky haze, often one provided at least in part by her own guests: "I had always more or less suffered from nausea and vomiting after a séance for materialization... I was usually prostrate for a day, or sometimes two, after a sitting, and, as the symptoms were those of nicotine poisoning, experiments were made" (*Shadow Land* 307-308). Holmes immediately divines, through his accustomed and only slightly less mystical methods that Watson has been at his club all day; for himself, he boasts, he has already been to Devonshire:

'In spirit?'

'Exactly. My body has remained in this arm-chair, and has, I regret to observe, consumed in my absence two large pots of coffee and an incredible amount of tobacco. After you left I sent down to Stanford's for the Ordnance map of this portion of the moor, and my spirit has hovered over it all day. I flatter myself that I could find my way about.'  
(*HB* 27)

This ritualized stupor, in which the body becomes separated from a released intelligence free to move at impossible speeds to the locus of its attention, has a clear Spiritualist context. As Smajić observes, it would have been legible to Doyle's Spiritualist readers as a rendition of "traveling clairvoyance," though I might add that the theosophist reader would have recognized it, similarly, as a depiction of astral projection (*Ghost-Seers* 133). As Smajić writes, "[i]t is initially the ordnance map, but it is the landscape itself rather than its cartographic simulacra that Holmes is referring to when he says that he has 'been to Devonshire'" (133). Smajić's interest here lies in Holmes's description of imagination as occult levitation, while mine is more flat-footed. Simply, the detective's travel to the moors is enabled by a physical object with a sympathetic connection to the space. Holmes travels by collapsing representation into materiality and an emblematic object into place. That is, he figures his intellectual work as an engagement in the productive associations and confusions of sympathetic magic. His reading of the cane, worn down upon the moor, is metonymic while his interaction with the map, a passage to the moor, is metaphoric but in both cases, the moor sits at the centre of a fantasy of signification and a strongly Spiritualist, even oneiric sensibility.

The sympathies that a man of Holmes's capacity—be that capacity what it may, intelligence or clairvoyance—can coax out of the stolidly physical in London seem to flourish effortlessly on the moor proper. Their appearance consistently shocks our usually masterful detective. Think, for example, of Selden, a man who is butted by Sir Henry's butler, prepared food by Sir Henry's housekeeper, dressed in Sir Henry's clothes, and who in his last moments is confused by Holmes for Sir Henry himself. When Holmes realizes that he has mistaken the double for the original he is so relieved that Watson worries he is having a fit: "[n]ow he was dancing and laughing and wringing my hands" (*HB* 131). Holmes uncharacteristically loses his composure again when he first glimpses the hound, more horrific and seemingly supernatural than anything he had come to expect. But Holmes's reaction to the portrait receives the most attention from Watson. The detective comments on the strange association stating: "it is an interesting instance of a throw-back, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation" (*HB* 139-140). Whether or not this line is facetious, it returns our attention as readers to the occult, as this novel

habitually will; “the one thing *upon earth* which could have disarranged my plans,” for example (*HB* 149, emphasis added). Smajić, whose interests often parallel my own in this chapter, notes that for an Edwardian audience, the portrait seems to unite genetic and theological interests: “[t]he portrait confirms the arguments of Victorian psychologists and criminologists about the transmission of hereditary traits, but is also a validation of anti-materialist and occult discourses” (*Ghost-Seers* 133). His point is important but I would suggest that the portrait is also indicative of the status of physical objects on Doyle’s Devonshire moor and of the oddly materialist occult discourse I have so far been sketching of associations made manifest in physical objects. Mortimer can be our guide here, when he observes, in response to Holmes’s dismissal, “[t]he original hound was material enough to tug a man’s throat out, and yet he was diabolical as well” (*HB* 23).

When Holmes identifies Stapleton through the Baskerville portrait gallery, he calls upon a lineage of Gothic revelations. “[D]raped in ivy... ancient, crenellated, and pierced with many loopholes,” Baskerville Hall invokes the earliest generations of Gothic novels (*HB* 57). These abound with tales of a young heir or heiress who—being temporarily lost, believed dead, or otherwise kept from their rightful authority and wealth—ultimately regain recognition and their proper claim through portraiture. The image may be of the character him- or herself or of a forebear they resemble, as in Stapleton’s case, but the clue inevitably plaits them into a genetic line, returning to them a subjecthood that has been held in reserve by an object within a larger network of other objects, the familial portrait gallery. In her book *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction*, Kamilla Elliott writes of the ubiquity of this trope and observes its inherent class ambition: “[p]icture identification inscribed a cultural mythology in which characters aligned with middle-class values and ideologies as lineal heirs to aristocratic positions, wealth, and property. These historical plots are thinly veiled prophetic parables of middle-class ascendancy” (66).<sup>18</sup> However, Holmes also recalls a similar trope of ghost identification popularized

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<sup>18</sup> In *The Hound*, however, where the revelation of Stapleton’s ancestry is not aspirational but threatening, this same class dynamic gives an early indication as to the lost Baskerville’s motives. When he attempts to explain Stapleton’s motive at the end of the novel, Holmes states that Stapleton considered three options, according to his wife. He might don an elaborate disguise. More plausibly, “[h]e might claim the property from South America, establish his identity before the British authorities there, and so obtain the fortune

early in the nineteenth century with stories such as Sir Walter Scott's "The Tapestry Chamber" (1829). In Scott's story, General Richard Browne wakes from an uncomfortable night in his friend's ancestral house and attempts to excuse himself from another night's stay. When questioned, he tells his friend that he has seen a horrific ghost in the tapestry chamber where he slept. Woodville, the General's friend, is skeptical. Indeed, he has been skeptical for years of the rumours that the bedroom is haunted. Nevertheless, Browne will leave, thank you very much. As Woodville ushers his guest out, he watches the General stop in front of the family gallery:

he beheld General Browne suddenly start, and assume an attitude of the utmost surprise, not unmixed with fear, as his eyes were suddenly caught and riveted by a portrait of an old lady in a *sacque*, the fashionable dress of the end of the seventeenth century.

‘There she is!’ he exclaimed. (“Tapestry Chamber” 146)

In the genre of the ghost story, this scene is, again, conventional. Rather than recontextualizing a subject (and inheritor) and restructuring a familial identity, however, recognition in these tales provides, in the loosest form, an experimental blind and confirmation. The unfortunate who has experienced a haunting typically has no familiarity with the portraits. On describing the ghost to another party, they are told that

without ever coming to England at all” (167–168). Lastly, “he might furnish an accomplice with the proofs and papers, putting him in as heir, and retaining a claim upon some proportion of his income” (168). In other words, he might run the estates as a going concern, according to these two quoted options, and adopt the position of an absentee landlord. He might take up the bourgeois logic of running the estates as a business rather than as charitable patronage as Sir Charles has done. This is precisely the concern implied in the newspaper clipping at the beginning of the novel:

In these days of *nouveaux riches* it is refreshing to find a case where the scion of an old county family which has fallen upon evil days is able... to restore the fallen grandeur of his line... it was his openly expressed desire that the whole country-side should, within his own lifetime, profit by his good fortune, and many will have personal reasons for bewailing his untimely end. (*HB* 15)

Holmes's investigation, then, puts an end to the possibility that a middle-class logic might govern Baskerville Hall. Instead, it preserves Sir Henry's authority to continue the work of his uncle.



they are mistaken for one reason or another to have believed in the evidence of their eyes. Later, they recognize the ghost amidst a set of painted portraits or photographs only to be told that the person is dead (confirming their suspicions all along) or, as in Scott's tale, that the person was indeed linked to the space or behaviour they saw and might very well have been the spectre (confirming, again, their suspicions all along). Such are the typical beats of these stories and we can see the connection to Stapleton. While the more standard Gothic trope functions by instantiating the genetic line and emphasizing its linearity and progression through time, the ghost story speaks to historical collapse and to the continued presence of a set of representations, images, and impulses that remain potent and often problematic though their original is centuries deceased. When Holmes tells Watson that Stapleton is "an interesting instance of a throw-back, which appears to be both physical and spiritual," then, he deploys both tropes together (*HB* 139). He suggests, of course, that Stapleton is a genetic successor to Sir Hugo Baskerville and may even be a more apt heir to a ruling family of a moor where "saints have never flourished" (*HB* 11). The temporal logic that he conjures, however, is queer and spectral, a logic of cyclical history and "a doctrine of reincarnation" (*HB* 140).

In both Gothic tales and ghost stories, the unimpeachable physicality of the portrait's testimony lends a credibility to Spiritualism and haunting experience. Moreover, picture identification as a trope, as a means of recognizing and confirming the spirit world, inheres the supernatural into the material, sometimes directly; we can think, for example, of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) in which the portrait of Manfred's grandfather steps down from its frame much like the movement described in Watson's moment of revelation: "[t]he face of Stapleton had sprung out of the canvas" (*HB* 139). The portrait collapses Stapleton into a representation of Sir Hugo and the lost Baskerville as an expression of returned history as though he might be at once material and spectral; the two physical entities, object and subject, seem to haunt each other in a strange feedback. Holmes's perplexity, then, might speak the tale's own revelation that it is a ghost story made manifest in the physical world. Sir Hugo now wanders the moors as a lepidoptera-enthused con artist but maintains the same violent misogyny, the same desire to control, and the same lust for the chase—not matter what the game may be. The monstrous hound initially discredited by Holmes is revealed by the novel to be a

monstrous hound, not spiritual but certainly a vital danger on the moors and, given Sir Hugo's recurrence in Stapleton, quite possibly another repetition of history. That these figures were once set against each other and now work in concert seems expressive of the liminal associations of the moor. More broadly, though, the material artefacts and object of the moor unfold the implications of the novel's first meaningful object, acting as a vector for unseen and occult connections. Some are barely significant: Holmes and the hound both, for example, confuse Sir Henry and Selden because of the second-hand significance of a tweed suit. Other artifacts, like the portrait, the stick, and the map are signal examples of objects that develop a patina that is spiritual and associative, not simply historical, in its affective force. The novel consistently figures the material world and specifically informational objects—that which Holmes trusts to for hidden, reliable information—as the realm of increasingly illogical and sympathetic affinities. These may be confusing or productive but they are unquestionably outré.

The portrait is only one of two objects in the scene of picture identification in *The Hound*. When Holmes falls under the gaze of Sir Hugo/Stapleton, he is transfigured as “a clear-cut classical statue” (HB 138). We should consider this other object, the object that the novel's most masterful subject momentarily becomes, then, before closing out this chapter. Schwenger begins his discussion of paintings in *The Tears of Things* by invoking the phrase “seeing things”:

a phrase that hovers disturbingly between two senses. It indicates on the one hand that the reality of things is comprehended above all by the eye, by an act of visual perception. At the same time, if we are said to be ‘seeing things’ it means that we are suffering from hallucination, that form of fantasm that is taken to be reality. (35)

Both of these visual possibilities were in play in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in discussions of haunting experiences. Spiritualist believers attended séances and manifestations in order to see the fantasm for themselves amongst a group of corroborating enthusiasts. For their part, skeptics pointed to the overwhelming scientific research that presented the unreliable nature of our visual apparatus. The argument had deep roots; Sir Walter Scott, for one, had opined in the early decades of the century that a

nervous system or immune system in disarray, either due to disease or to substance abuse, might in turn leave the senses in disarray: “[i]t is a disease of the same nature, which renders many men incapable of distinguishing colours; only the patients go a step further, and pervert the external form of objects” (*Letters* 22). It is just this form of perversion that Holmes enacts upon the painting. After dinner, he takes Watson over to the gallery and blocks Hugo’s rakish lovelocks from Watson’s view:

He stood upon a chair, and holding up the light in his left hand, he curved his right arm over the broad hat and round the long ringlets.

‘Good heavens!’ I cried, in amazement.

The face of Stapleton had sprung out of the canvas.

‘Ha, you see it now. My eyes have been trained to examine faces and not their trimmings.’ (*HB* 139)

To recognize one of the material ghosts that haunt the novel, Holmes must misuse the portrait and intentionally overlook its external form. He observes because he does not see. His perceptual training lies in directing his attention and controlling what he does not see as much as what he notices.

Schwenger discusses paintings in general as an artistic, literalizing play with Lacan’s screen, a blind spot “created by our cultural conditioning, a conditioning that has taught us how to see, what to select out of the field of vision, and in the process how to achieve a selective blindness” (38). On one level, Holmes seems inured to this blind spot. Watson and Sir Henry have lived alongside this gallery for days, eating their meals under Sir Hugo’s gaze. Barrymore has tutored Sir Henry in the various portraits—their painters, subjects, and histories—and yet neither has noticed the apparent similarity between their closest neighbors and the family’s most notorious patriarch. Perhaps more surprising, James Mortimer, a frequent figure at the Hall, who has trained his eyes to examine the bone structure of faces rather than their trimmings, for years remained utterly oblivious to the connection. As much as they are trained by their tutoring or medical education, these characters are led by cultural conditioning to consider a portrait as an artwork that, should it signify, will provide meaning in a specific and intentional manner. This is the joke in

retrospect that begins Chapter 5 when Watson and Holmes spend two hours at a picture gallery. Watson observes, “[h]e would talk of nothing but art, of which he had the crudest ideas” (*HB* 41). Later, in front of the portrait, Holmes responds with a smug jibe, claiming “Watson won’t allow that I know anything of art, but that is mere jealousy, because our views upon the subject differ” (*HB* 138). Holmes is entirely correct and, as usual, in a highly literal way. The canvas of the painting presents the field of our personal interpretive tendency, which grounds not only our interpretation on an aesthetic or analytical level, but even the basic information that becomes available to our eyes. Watson understands the figure of an object like Mortimer’s stick as it should read within its wider social context, redolent of fashions, tastes, socioeconomic indicators, and professional attachments. Watson’s eyes are similarly conditioned by an understanding of painting that would recognize a canvas within its wider context, social and spatial. He can recognize a gallery as a collection of “the modern Belgian masters,” of which Holmes knows apparently little. He reads the gallery of portraits as it is meant to be read: as an assemblage conferring dignity and authority through unbroken linearity, through quality and, importantly, through quantity; as “[a] dim line of ancestors, in every variety of dress, from the Elizabethan knight to the buck of the Regency” (*HB* 60). On a second level, however, Holmes claims to have deployed a blind spot upon the portrait, blocking out the temporal signifiers that would seem to remove it from its relevancy to an Edwardian criminal case. In a previous story, “The Greek Interpreter,” Holmes admits his descent from the painter Vernet, though which painter Vernet remains unclear. Here, Holmes shows himself capable, like Schwenger’s artist, of witnessing, engaging with, and playfully counteracting the blind spot. Less like a nineteenth-century painter, however, Holmes sees the painting in its specificity, the jaw in its specificity, the brow in its specificity, the eyes in their specificity, and so on. That is, he misreads the painting not as an ideal depiction but as a person, a subject and a subject of his analytical gaze.

But Holmes often engages with the object, as we have seen, in order for it to reflect back some other subject. In the novel’s opening sequence, when Watson first picks up Mortimer’s stick, Holmes asks for his interpretation of the object without turning around from his breakfast:

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

‘How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.’

‘I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me,’ said he. (*HB* 3)

Holmes’s apparent clairvoyance, enabled by a reflection, prefigures his psychometric reading in which he will similarly establish remarkable insight from simple observation and engagement of the object. This reflected image of Watson, however, seems to recur in the novel. As Watson stares out of Stapleton’s window onto the endless moor, his host seems to catch a glimpse of him in the glass and responds to his inner monologue: “Queer spot to choose, is it not?” said he, as if in answer to my thought” (*HB* 71); after a brief explanation of his past, Stapleton admits, “[a]ll this Dr Watson, has been brought upon your head by your expression as you surveyed the moor out of our window” (*HB* 72). The moment repeats again as Watson watches Barrymore looking out to the moors with “his white, intent face pressed against the pane” (*HB* 91). The portrait, then, fulfills on a series of reflections and doubled representations in which characters find more insight examining an object related to the subject than in the subject, himself.

William Denton, in his opening theories on psychometry, begins with a poetic passage of reflection, here in the eye of another, that might have been lifted from Stapleton’s description of his pensive, city-bred guest:

By looking into the eye of an individual beholding a landscape, we can see therein a picture of the fields, houses, trees, and objects generally that come within the range of his vision. That is because rays of light proceeding from these objects pass to the retina of the eye, and there form images or pictures of them. Nothing is apparent to ordinary vision until it is painted upon this window of the soul. (*The Soul of Things* 11)

This version of sight is remarkably passive. It accepts the incoming image as a simple interaction of material: the houses, nature, objects, and retina interacting through beams of communicating light. It would be familiar, too, to Schwenger’s readers, as he suggests

that “it is the eye that is mastered, that becomes the recipient of a vision that actually *shows* itself” (37). I will end this chapter, then, on Denton’s psychometry which, in theory and practice, embraces the skeptical discussions of a nineteenth-century scientific community eager to separate the spiritual from the material and the spectral from the visual. Visual aberrations, ocular spectra, and after-images all found a place in Denton’s writing, confirming his own theories regarding the haunting history of objects. Indeed, they are his opening witnesses, proof of the material nature of the eye and the brain. Similarly, the diseases and fevers that authors like Scott warned might hamper or augment our visual interactions with the world were in fact key demonstrations, in moments of hallucination, that we hold memories, unsuspected and unconsidered, in a vast, internal reservoir. If objects could hold appearances, histories, and affects within their soul, his opening chapters establish that the mind is no different. Its materiality maintains an intricate, photographic history that emerges only through meditative concentration or when, in moments of sickness, our subjecthood and consciousness are interrupted. That is, in order to recognize the soul in things, we must intentionally or accidentally assert our own materiality in a moment of controlled and negative composure. We must, say, recognize a painting as a subject and ourselves as the object of its gaze. Should we manage this mediumistic control, we might glimpse a world of interwoven objects whose affect and history emerges from their assemblage as reliably as Poe’s aesthetic emerges from his interior design. Denton’s guide offers an image of the world as a network of informational traces, a mesh of memories and appearances that bind us into the object world:

in the world around us radiant forces are passing from all objects to all objects in their vicinity, and during every moment of the day and night are daguerreotyping the appearances of each upon the other; the images thus made, not merely resting upon the surface but sinking into the interior of them; there held with astonishing tenacity, and only waiting for a suitable application to reveal themselves to the inquiring gaze. (*The Soul of Things* 30-31)

Holmes offers this inquiring gaze, born of blind spots and misuse and a recognition of the informational soul of things. In doing so, in confronting the intricate patterning that

connects the spiritual to the material on the moor, he briefly is involved into that material world. He becomes an object form of himself. He becomes utterly perplexed.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Moored Space: Unlocked Rooms and Porous Domesticity

I have heard myself say that a house with a death in it can never again be bought or sold by the living. It can only be borrowed from the ghosts that have stayed behind to go back and forth, letting out and gathering back in again, worrying over the floors in confused circles, tending to their deaths like patchy, withered gardens.

—*I Am the Pretty Thing that Lives in the House*,  
00:00:23 – 00:01:16

When Anna Katharine Green's<sup>19</sup> mystery novel, *The Filigree Ball*, first introduces Moore House, it does so by delineating precisely the affective capacity of the space. Though the crumbling, Washington mansion "has always escaped the hackneyed epithet of 'haunted,' families that have moved in have as quickly moved out, giving as their excuse that no happiness was to be found there and that sleep was impossible under its roof" (6). A certain discomfort is to be expected; the Gothic family seat has staged three identical, inexplicable deaths over the previous century—not to mention the suicide that begins the novel's investigation, proper. The restlessness of Moore House is more deep-seated than just the rumours of its history, however. Often, in nineteenth-century and *fin-de-siècle* literature, feeling and sentiment work their way into the grain of a place over long periods. We might think, here, of Harriet Beecher Stowe's depiction of House of Pride, the Legree Mansion in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), slowly deteriorating and, in doing so, testifying to the neglectful and tawdry corruption of Simon Legree. In Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-1853), the Court of Chancery—entropic centre of the novel's orbiting plotlines—has developed a sense of obscurity and inescapability to match its exhausting legal procedures; candles give off no light, stained glass gives out no colour, and a

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<sup>19</sup> There is an odd confusion regarding the spelling of Green's name and whether it should properly read Anna Katharine Green or Anna Katherine Green. Michael Cook refers to her with the "e" spelling and, indeed, this is the spelling used by the first edition of *The Filigree Ball* itself. Most of her other novels and collections, however, were published with the "a" spelling and it is this that Patricia D. Maida uses in her biography *Mother of Detective Fiction*. I will be using the "a" spelling, inappropriate though it may be for this particular novel.



constant fog covers the space “as if it would never get out” (15). Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895) offers an extended example in Christminster’s empty alleys, so saturated with history that “it seemed impossible that modern thought could house itself in such decrepit and superseded chambers” (114). As Jude Fawley moves through these time-logged spaces, an evening stroll turns spectral. He communes with their abiding sense of the thoughts and achievement of Christminster’s former scholars. This affective séance only ends when, embarrassed, Jude realizes that he has been performing mock-conversations with these past luminaries in a moment of entranced, imaginative mediumship. So common is this archiving of affect across nineteenth-century styles and genres—melodrama, detective, Gothic, sensation, sentimental, realist—that it itself fades into the woodwork, receding into a stylistic exaggeration rather than an obtrusively supernatural effect. And yet- whether it is corruption, exhaustion, or inspiration—feeling lingers here in spaces revealed to be haunted by a residual history of sensation. Of course, these novels are not credibly ghost fiction and it is not my intent to argue in this chapter that they are. Rather, my interest lies in the extent to which our normative methods of writing and reading affective spaces take on forms of spectrality. Thus, when Moore House is said not to be haunted but merely inexplicably incapable of domesticity, the statement is made to stand as though to be haunted and to house historical, contractable misery and restlessness were somehow distinct.

Despite its early foreclosure of the supernatural, *The Filigree Ball* is a mystery novel keenly fascinated by the apparent ability of a space to retain vestiges and patterns of history. Its most notable creation lies not in a memorable character, nor in an innovative plot device—though these were aspects of Green’s fiction for which her previous novels had been praised—but in its setting. Described throughout the novel as variously a place of disease and a “house of tragic memories,” Moore House stands as singularly unhomey—a domestic space fundamentally displaced by repeated violence (8). The manor predates the City of Washington and, though now enfolded into a suburban environment, it retains a subtle separation from the rest of the town. The house rots, semi-abandoned, behind an old tree-line, set back from “the dreary vista of this the most desolate block in Washington” (9). The block itself remains undeveloped except for the manor and, across the street, a shack buried in overgrowth where a disinherited Moore

scion, Uncle David, jealously guards the land. Even the gas lamps on this stretch of the street shine “with a more feeble ray than in any other equal length of street in Washington” (9). A clear marker of nineteenth-century urban development, these street lights seem incapable of illuminating the house. The building stands in “shadows which acquired some of their sombreness from the tragic memories” of a century of unexplained death (11). Moore House is twice removed from its surroundings: a rural plot in a city suburb; a colonial artefact untouched by the turn of the century. Hidden behind its tree-line and ringed by empty lots and a labourer’s cottage, the manor stands as a relic of plantation-era agrarianism as though it were caught in the post-revolutionary era, the moment of its first violence.

Writing on our ambivalent fascination with abandoned buildings, Joshua Comaroff and Ong Ker-Shing observe that in the presence of these places our “fear is of death ascendant seizing pockets of the civic life-world just next door” (98). Their concern lies in incongruity and a spreading decay that similarly charge the presence of Moore House in Green’s novel and make more of it than many of the other architectural curiosities that dot *fin-de-siècle* mystery fiction. In the mansion’s various border spaces, where its Gothic intensity abuts against a more familiar, prosaic twentieth century city, this presence seizes and violates. Uncle David’s dog, Rudge, intently avoids the mansion’s side of the street throughout the case, refusing to cross into the disordered property marked out by failing gaslight. Within the house, a violent and uncanny history has gradually tainted the rooms that surround the library—the scene of each of the building’s deaths and the novel’s “locked room.” Insomnia and a free-floating disquiet unsettle the master bedroom above while rotten food, debris, and dust fill the neighbouring halls and rooms of the main floor. Decay and neglect have so eroded the library that many of its rare volumes are no longer legible. This chapter reads the locked-room mystery somewhat perversely. Prior critics, notably Mark S. Madoff and Michael Cook have developed a series of influential and generative readings of the locked room as a space apart, an emblem of enclosed violence and repressed horrors. Here, death is ascendant, to employ Comaroff’s and Ong’s vocabulary, and it has seized a pocket of our world, moving it into its own entropic cosmology. Throughout this chapter I trace a parallel set of conventions and associations that suggest the locked room is also a ruptured space, evidence that the outer world may

breach at any time into the structures of our domestic life. The locked room is never truly sealed and the mystery at the heart of any locked-room case lies in the precise nature of its porous failure to structure and secure its inhabitants. This chapter divides into two sections. In the first, I examine the arguments of Madoff and Cook and suggest the tensions that their theories raise in a number of *fin-de-siècle* locked-room cases. In the second, I tease out a few of these lines of tension in Green's novel, focusing on certain objects that seem to orient themselves toward the exterior world while still attempting the processes and affective structures of turn-of-the-century domesticity. As we shall see, death truly is ascendant in Moore House and its seizure of intruders and inhabitants, proximal rooms and nearby properties are a product of the disorienting, contradictory complex of interior and exterior that lies at the heart of a locked-room mystery.

Moore House is notorious, known across Washington for three matching deaths, occurring in a series that moves from tragic episode to sinister coincidence to family curse. One after another, the corpses of a family acquaintance, a young Moore cadet, and a wedding guest are discovered lying on the Moore's library hearth. The bodies show no sign of any injury but the interval between each discovery is, perhaps, their most mysterious feature. The deaths take place over generations, with decades between one case and the next. Absent any apparent cause of death, successive coroners' inquests have assumed that each victim's heart failed for unknown reasons. The last incident occurs just prior to the novel's action, at the wedding of Veronica Jeffrey (*née* Moore), the teenaged socialite and inheritor of the Moore fortune, who reopens her family's mouldering house for the occasion. A week later, Veronica returns to the library and commits suicide. This rupture of repetition leads to an investigation that will eventually reveal the three previous deaths to be murders committed via a trap built into the room itself. Though the ensuing inquiry seeks to parse out the means and motives that led to four deaths in the library, the novel's broader narrative explores the prolonged effects of a repeated violence on a domestic space and on the family whose identity rests in it. Indeed, if the "it" of the previous sentence seems ambiguous, referencing both domestic space and repeated violence, that is because for the Moores these two concepts have become inextricably entwined. As the case slowly reveals, the Moore family binds itself to a space disoriented by the affective weight of its own history.

Though *The Filigree Ball* was an early attempt for Green at a locked-room mystery, it was also her twentieth mystery novel in twenty-five years. As such, it feels at times almost impatient with the standard beats of the genre that Green herself worked to establish. Her earliest novels—particularly her first, *The Leavenworth Case* (1878)—grounded the mystery genre with a new standard for scientific and legal accuracy and, due to their rigorous plotting, remained influential for later authors, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie among them.<sup>20</sup> Critics also commonly reference Green for being amongst the first writers to popularize reoccurring detectives. Her characters Ebenezer Gryce and Amelia Butterworth each had their own series of cases and even “crossed over” into each other’s in, for example, another locked-room mystery, *The Circular Study* (1900). Little critical attention is paid to *The Filigree Ball*, however, which seems to push those conventions of a mystery novel to their crisis. Michael Cook, one of the few critics to address the mystery, observes that *The Filigree Ball* joined *The Leavenworth Case* and *The Circular Study* in establishing the body-in-the-library trope that would later become a hallmark of cozy, Golden Age murder-mongering (44). The novel razes more than it reinforces, however, and there is an early sense of anti-detective fiction in its constant erosion of readerly expectations. The investigation hinges on a suspicion held by the narrator—an eager, young police officer, never named in the text—that Veronica Jeffrey was murdered. Initially, this hunch is bolstered by a series of impressions—that Veronica would not, for example, commit suicide in a darkened room—and some leading circumstantial evidence—in one suitably Gothic instance, a discarded candlestick. By the novel’s end, none of this evidence holds its original significance. This is not all together unexpected in a typical mystery, post-*dénouement*, but here even the crime under investigation drifts from its moorings, so to speak. The novel explains away and dismisses many of its leads early in the case while it leaves others by its end to the reader’s own informed conclusions. Often, evidence uncovers a parallel investigation rather than moving toward a solution or satisfying any desire for progress in the case. Both Uncle David and Veronica’s new husband, Francis Jeffrey,

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<sup>20</sup> Patricia D. Maida offers further detail on the correspondence between Doyle and Green (29) and on Christie’s particular fondness for Green’s female protagonists (51). For more information, please see her biography of Green, *Mother of Detective Fiction*.

have been avidly exploring Moore House's secrets, it seems, leaving fingerprints and misplaced books in their wake. Broaching the possibility of Veronica's murder to the coroner at the beginning of the case, the unnamed narrator casts suspicion on Cora Tuttle, the victim's step-sister. Immediately, however, he realizes that to accuse such a woman, blessed with so innocent a visage, is simply too, too unbelievable. He then devotes the rest of the novel to undoing the effects of his own early investigation. Green's detective differs starkly from the masterful Sherlock Holmes, with his supernormal capabilities. After a lengthy inquest, our narrator's initial hunches and circumstantial clues lead back to their origins: Veronica, indeed, committed suicide. Moreover, while she may not have been murdered, she was the murderer the detective did not know he had been pursuing. Desperate and guilty, Veronica shoots herself after her restless sleep-talking reveals to her new husband that she murdered one of their wedding guests with the library's trap. In a final burlesque, Veronica does not even kill her intended victim. While she believed the man to be her first husband—who, we learn, vanished years ago—her victim turns out to be his improbably identical brother. Veronica never learns of this last indignity. On this level, the novel may frustrate generic convention, our critical expectations, and—frankly—readers, in general, but it has a certain latitude to do so since this looping and barely sensical plot ultimately acts as a misdirection from the novel's three locked-room mysteries. The previous deaths in the Moore library stand as the violation at the heart of the novel and, though the truth of these murders surfaces unexpectedly in the course of the suicide investigation, it is their plotline that allows the novel a satisfying *dénouement*. Many *fin-de-siècle* mystery novels and stories implicitly invite the reader to engage in the ludic nature of the text, to anticipate with each clue the investigator's interpretations. *The Filigree Ball* offers a rare call to the reader to locate the mystery itself. It is not until late in the case—after the revelation of a hidden diary and a secret confession—that the investigation confirms the reader's suspicions: the cursed deaths of Moore House indeed represented the novel's murder mystery.

The later trend of anti-detective fiction that we most often associate with postmodern authors like Jorge Luis Borges and Paul Auster tends to destabilize mystery fiction's otherwise iron-clad narrative by infusing into it irruptions of postmodern pastiche and, later, deconstructionist thought. Anna Katharine Green's novel is uniquely off-kilter in

that it achieves a similar uncertainty—as to the talent of the detective, the nature of the crime, the event under investigation, and even the logic of its cosmology—by the manner in which it adopts Spiritualist imagery and Gothic conventions. Where *The Hound*, which finished its serialization in the previous year, shrouds its detective narrative in a Gothic aesthetic, *The Filigree Ball* only thinly veils a profoundly Gothic melodrama with a criminal investigation. At times, the novel may seem over-stuffed with classically Gothic and occult tropes. Many of the occult conventions we have already discussed recur throughout the novel: entranced movement, objects testifying to a violent history, identical siblings. When the wedding party learns that one of the guests, Wallace Pfeiffer, has become the library’s third victim, they panic. They abandon everything in a desperate scramble to escape the apparently-still-haunted house, leaving all the wedding’s trappings and refreshments to rot. When the detective enters Moore House on the night of Veronica’s suicide, he notes that the “broken glass, crumpled napery and withered flowers made all the corners unsightly and rendered stepping over the unwholesome floors at once disgusting and dangerous” (36). As if the house’s eerily exact repetitions were not enough to imply its spectral temporality, the wedding ritual—meant to initiate a new domestic phase—congeals in the moment of its interruption, suggesting only meaningless excess and inappropriate affects. Later in the novel, the detective discovers a key piece of historical evidence in a hidden diary and a murder confession minutely written into the hair of a haunted portrait. In a trope clearly suggesting Poe, the two Moore Houses—lineage and building—often become conflated or confused. Characters speak figuratively of one when referencing the other but, more directly, the family and house exercise occult influences over each other in affective exchange. As we shall see, the renovations the Moore patriarch performed on the house left him restless and paranoid. This behaviour inheres in the house, itself, spreading to houseguests and tenants alike. It also spreads out to other spaces. Once Veronica has interacted with the library’s trap, she too falls victim to disordered and restless sleep though she now lives with her new husband across town. These signal tropes of supernatural fiction consistently work to blend generic patterns throughout the novel. The weaponized room and murderous ambition that represent the Moores’ primary inheritances eventually becomes inextricably linked, uniting the eugenic, criminological anxieties of

contemporary mystery fiction with the Gothic fascination for inherited secret histories. Further, the unnamed narrator, when he follows a trail of matches or glimpses an old portrait, depicts his investigative hunches as a series of thrills. His more Gothic range of feeling within the house marks those objects that will later become important to the crime's rational solution while freighting them with a ghostly, even fateful significance. Indeed, the central conceit of the novel—that a locked room left unsolved might repeat its violence, becoming not just an apparently impossible but a cursed space—would seem to unite the shared interest of mystery and Gothic fiction in enclosed spaces. As Mark S. Madoff observes, “like the locked-room mysteries of detective fiction, the locked rooms of the Gothic also enclose an ambiguity: they are repulsive yet attractive, contemptible yet fascinating, places” (52).

### 3.1

But why the locked room? What is it in this particular expression of mystery fiction that has made the “impossible crime” trope of such universal appeal to readers and writers? A simple answer might lie in the convention's mythic originality. Poe's “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Purloined Letter” (1844) may not have been the first locked-room mysteries—let alone the first detective stories—but they remain canonically the first-of-their-genre, concretizing and initiating mystery fiction as it is recognized today. Thus, as Donald A. Yates argues, the locked room “highlights the ‘closed’ nature of the detective tale and is, unquestionably, its most traditional expression” (273). Tradition, however, does not satisfactorily explain the extent to which the locked room has joined the murder to become instantly metonymic of an entire genre. Not all mystery stories feature a murder; many revolve around other similarly recognizable violations such as heists, cons, and assaults. Famously, in Doyle's classic collection *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, only three of the twelve investigations examine an instance of murder and yet I, at least, when imagining Holmes in the field, picture him examining a corpse. Neither are all mysteries, even amongst those that stress the importance of place, locked-room mysteries, and yet as with murder there is a quality to this category of investigation that distills something inherent to the genre. For murder, this would seem to be the extremity of its mysterious violation. For the locked room, perhaps it is the elevation of

place to a mystery in and of itself that marks the problem as representative. In *The Legacies of the Rue Morgue*, a monograph detailing Poe's influence on French genre fiction, Andrea Goulet suggests that "the text of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' registers a specific spatial imaginary—one that brings the philosophical and scientific concerns of the nineteenth century to bear on the narration of crime and its investigation" (3). Goulet writes lyrically of the "geo-paleontological imaginary of crime" that Poe and his contemporaries buried deep in our conception of crime fiction. The term references our general sense, largely fictitious, that the solution to a crime lies in historical information left as a hidden residue at the specific site of a violent act. This concept returns in full force in the next chapter but here I will simply observe that the locked-room mystery presents a focus on and a crisis of this spatial logic. Generally, only the placement and the situation of evidence can testify against the room's impossibility, leading the investigator to grapple with a space's significance in its particularity. As we shall see throughout this chapter and the next, *The Filigree Ball* dramatizes forensic research as the work of orientations and disorientations. In order to comprehend the history of Moore House, the novel's detective must become oriented to its "specific spatial imaginary" in which violation, information, and feeling are precisely situated. Indeed, for many mysteries at this time, the placement of these qualities is often as important as their history to ultimately explaining a problem. Moreover, the location of this historical residue—of feeling, of uncanny rupture—often serves in locked-room mysteries as the wrong that must be righted. The detective must urgently explain the impossible space because its tonal shift disorients the space from its structural, and often domestic, purpose. That is to say, the locked room is as often a structural and affective problem as it is a murder mystery. Indeed, as a crime scene, the locked room expressly dramatizes the situatedness of mystery fiction, making evident the involvement of location in the rupture at the narrative's core.

In a seminal essay on the Gothic nature—what we might call the Gothic affects—of the locked room, Mark S. Madoff suggests that violence in an enclosed space fundamentally alters its relation to the rest of the world:



In the detective's realm, 'inside' is a place of unexpected, inexplicable peril, of chaos which seems to sweep aside even the usual laws of physics. In the detective's realm, 'outside' is a place of banal order and reason, of hopeful safety from the rage whose results stay locked inside a room. It is a place of solved cases. (50)

Madoff writes of various associations that mystery fiction has inherited from the Gothic in its imagination of an impossible crime scene—"experience;" "danger;" "chaos;" "subconscious;" "anarchy;" "licence"—and the world at large—"innocence;" "security;" "order;" "conscious;" "civilization;" "repression" (49).<sup>21</sup> Throughout this chapter, my attention consistently returns to a contrasting affective tension in the *fin-de-siècle* locked room, one which posits the outside as a violent and turbulent space against which we can never fully lock our doors. Moore House, for example, may be a transgressive space but it is also a space into which the threats of the outside world have transgressed. It is worth spending some time, however, with the binary that Madoff constructs in this essay between a disorienting interior and a sensible exterior because this binary has come to predominate current criticism on the locked-room convention. Moreover, Madoff's understanding has deep roots stretching into the earliest examples of locked-room mysteries. Poe's "Rue Morgue" provides perhaps the most obvious instances, and its

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<sup>21</sup> These represent the earliest version of Madoff's descriptions, but he accretes a sense of the inside and the outside throughout his essay. Here is another, longer representative quote:

Outside is the modern, civilized, orderly, banal, decorous place, where the Gothic protagonist, like the reader, begins and, probably, ends. It is a place where appearance and reality are trusted as a reliable match, where word and deed seem to complement each other. . . In history, the Gothic outside opens toward the present, in which its typical faculties of mind—reason, common-sense, and sympathy—will dominate human affairs. Outside contains those actions and attitudes proudly called modern, civilized, enlightened.

Inside is the ancient, barbaric, disorderly, passionate, indecorous place where the Gothic protagonist, like the reader, arrives only through apparently accidental transgression. . . The protagonist, like the Gothic audience, transgresses the boundary between outside and inside *because* the outside is open, obvious, familiar, and unsatisfying in its simplicity and rationality; *because* the inside is closed, obscure, exotic, alluring. . . a forbidden, dangerous place whose articulation with the common, outside place is problematical. Inside is usually a place for neither beginning nor ending but for undergoing a change, while just visiting. (51)

“madman” misdirection is a useful example: while Dupin slowly spools out his approach to solving the double homicide and the locked room, the story’s narrating Poe-substitute begins to feel “a creeping of the flesh” as he reflects on the incomprehensible violence perpetrated on the L’Espanayes (423); “‘A madman,’ I said, ‘has done this deed—some raving maniac, escaped from a neighboring *Maison de Santé*’” (423). For the narrator, the mystery that has delineated the L’Espanayes’ apartment as a separated, locked space of irrational violence can only be explained by the intrusion of a man, escaped from another separated, locked space of irrationality and violence. His theory depicts the victims’ profaned domestic space as it is oriented to parallel places, similarly held at a remove from society. Read by the light of Madoff’s argument, it is perhaps easier to compare the locked room to other violent spaces as they exist in their own category, even their own cosmos; it is their relation to the workaday world that unsettles.

Literally so in the case of the unpopulated, undeveloped block around Moore House, which exhibits the tense adjacency of a borderland between the mundane and the mysterious, the interior and the exterior. On the night of Veronica’s death, Uncle David leads the detective back to the mansion under the pretext of investigating a light in the abandoned building. As they prepare to enter the mansion’s grounds, the novel pauses to glimpse across this border into the ‘inside’ and to mark its separation from the street. Uncle David, we will eventually learn, has already witnessed the disorientation of this space and knows all too well what the detective will find inside. He has made a habit of burgling the library in search of family secrets and, tonight, has witnessed the building’s spectral cycle of violence recur; he has watched his niece return to the library and, inexplicably, take her own life. He is understandably spooked by the business. As he blusters his way out of returning, he lays out specifically the nature and the scope of Moore House’s disorder: “whether it’s the bull’s-eye of a burglar—perhaps you don’t know that there are rare treasures on the book shelves of the great library—or whether it is the fantastic illumination which frightens fool-folks and some fool-dogs, I’m done with it” (13). The light winks across a borderland, distorted by its location. That an image typically associated with domestic presence and warmth, a candle in a bedroom window, should invoke instead the criminal and the uncanny speaks to the building’s reorientation toward violence and death and to the interpretive possibilities that this affective shift

brings to light. Here, the unhomely intensity of Moore House emerges as, on one hand, the material threat of criminal activity or, on the other, the otherworldly lure of a will-o'-the-whisp. Either way, the house is altered, uncanny, and unwelcoming even to Uncle David, normally so possessive of his family's seat. But as we shall see, these two possibilities do not set up a binary so much as a spectrum. The *outré* events of the mansion's interior never truly conform to either possibility but fall somewhere along a gradient between the spectral and the criminal. The detective peers up at Moore House through the shadows but he can neither frame nor trust what he sees.

Not that superstition lent its terrors to the lonely scene, but that through the blank panes of the window, alternately appearing and disappearing from view as the shutter pointed out by Uncle David blew to and fro in the wind, I saw, or was persuaded that I saw, a beam of light which argued an unknown presence within walls which had so lately been declared unfit for any man's habitation. (12)

Put simply, the detective glimpses a light. His syntax, however, is so checked and so guarded against any impression of superstitious thought, that it betrays itself. In roundabout syntax, he seems to suggest some ill-defined influence or persuasion—perhaps, by that “unknown presence within walls”—may have shaped his observations. The suggestion recalls earlier rumour regarding Moore House—that, though not a haunted house, one might “discern in its slowly darkening walls the presence of an evil which if left to itself might perish in the natural decay of the place” (*FB* 6-7). The detective's uncertainty as to what he has seen is, in itself, significant, if not to his investigation then certainly to the figure of Moore House within the novel's environment. The mansion is a place where even the most basic forms of knowing—in this case, to see with one's own eyes—become unreliable.<sup>22</sup> As Madoff observes, “[t]he relation between the pain and evil inside the locked room and the seeming normality outside is a

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<sup>22</sup> In his book, *Ghost-Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists*, Smajić offers a richly-researched history of the reliability of observed experience in nineteenth-century discussions of hauntings. His chapters, “The rise of optical apparitions” and “Inner vision and spiritual optics,” are particularly helpful in laying out this connection if you would like to delve further.

maddening challenge to the ingenuity, observation, and deductive skill of the detective” (49).

That feeling—not only of irrational “pain and evil” but of the horror of inexplicability, the “maddening challenge” of disorienting relation—recurs throughout *fin-de-siècle* locked-room mysteries. Doyle’s *The Sign of the Four* (1890), stages a parallel moment of peering over the border between interior and exterior. As he looks through a keyhole into the locked laboratory of Bartholomew Sholto, Watson experiences a vertiginous doubling:

I stooped and recoiled in horror. . . Looking straight at me and suspended, as it were, in the air, for all beneath was in shadow, there hung a face—the very face of our companion Thaddeus. There was the same high, shining head, the same circular bristle of red hair, the same bloodless countenance. The features were set, however, in a horrible smile, a fixed and unnatural grin. (*The Sign of the Four* 80)

Thaddeus, of course, stands alive and well, though bereaved, beside Watson as the two investigators prepare to break down Bartholomew’s door. It is his twin who sits inside but the horrific irrationality of the locked room’s interior disorients Watson, however temporarily, leading him to confuse the living with the dead. This liminal confusion becomes more intimate in “The Adventure of The Speckled Band” (1892) when Julia Stoner collapses at the door of her bedroom into the arms of Helen, her twin sister. As with Green’s novel, “The Speckled Band” speaks to an anxiety that, should the nature of a locked-room mystery go unsolved, it will repeat its spectral violence in nightmarish cycles. Helen recounts her experience to Holmes because she has moved into the bedroom in which her sister died, and she fears that its inexplicable violence might return. In this case, the glimpse into the unsettling doubling of a locked room is focalized through Helen, herself, rather than through the eyes of an investigator. The feeling of premonition—the feeling, not just oneiric but occult, of having glimpsed the image of one’s body in its final moments and, now, of waiting for that history to recur through a different perspective—informs the rest of the case.

Doyle's later novel, *The Valley of Fear* (1914-1915), features a further confusion of identity in a sealed room. Here, a shotgun blast so horrifically disfigures a would-be assassin that he is confused until late in the text for his intended victim. This plot recalls the slippages of identity that we saw with Philip Lawrence's corpse in Marsh's *The Goddess*, a mystery that begins by suggesting the possibility of a locked room with only the balcony as a viable entrance. Through its occult flux, in which one identity might supplant another, the locked room often gives space to latent identities and desires, expressed through bodily violence. Indeed, as Madoff would have it, the locked room at times transforms spontaneously into a kind of *boudoir de Sade*: "[i]nside, sexuality breaks down the contemptible limits of convention, violence bursts into murder or rape, desire and passion flow into dreams of power and their fulfillment" (52). In Gaston Leroux's *Le mystère de la chambre jaune* (1907), perhaps the most famous example from this period, a victim of a locked room remains haunted by a looming, unexplained threat on her life, which takes the form of her abuser's double identity. Mathilde Stangerson is discovered brutally beaten and comatose in a room of her father's castle, the *Château du Glandier*. Mathilde cannot testify against her attacker but later attempts on her life as she convalesces indicate that she is not yet free from her association with the violence of the room. This last example makes evident the Gothic structure undergirding Madoff's reading of the locked room. Sedgwick's argument that the Gothic can be recognized in its conventional separation of one space from another—inexplicably sweeping "aside even the usual laws of physics" (Madoff 50)—aptly describes Mathilde, whose paralyzed silence after the attack marks her relation to the rest of the world as "one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication" (Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Convention* 13). Of course, this returns us to the top and to Poe's Rue Morgue. Perhaps the most Madoffian and Sedgwickian locked room, the most violent and separated, is also one of the genre's most viciously satirical portraits of social structure and identity flux. Standing on the stair with the horrified neighbours of the L'Esplanayes, we might confront the violently disjointed interior as we hear events unfold on the other side of the door. Like Watson, Helen Stoner, and Green's detective, we struggle to orient ourselves to this strange, further space. So foreign are the agents of this separated domain that we cannot identify even the language that is spoken there; rather, we can only hear the

blathering and violence of this irrational, irrationally removed space. Spanish, Italian, French, German, English, and Russian all seem to resolve into a basic definition of the exterior against the interior, of the rational against the senseless, of the social against the other. This first interaction with a locked threshold marks an ur-moment for mystery fiction. The confusion of a barely visible candle, guttering by a window in Moore House, then, draws from the confusion of these half-heard shrieks to imagine its disoriented, disrupted interior.

For Madoff, our fascination with the locked room develops not merely from the inexplicable physical separation of interior from exterior. Like Sedgwick before him, Madoff's interest lies in exploring what we might term the affective gap between these two spatial categories: "how to discover a passage between inside and outside, how to acknowledge and explain the fact that both inside and outside are places within the same universe, though they afford perspectives of that universe as different as the killer's and the victim's" remains the central conceit of the genre (50). Madoff coordinates the central actors in a murder scene with his established domains. The killer aligns with the interior—chaotic, brutal, insane—and the victim joins the detective in their connection to the outside world—rational, naïve, civilized. Of course, such an intensely violated space produces various forms of affective tension. Whose domain is the victim's, for example: their domestic interior or, as Madoff suggests, the world at large? The L'Espanayes, for example, might be surprised to find themselves associated with the outside world rather than with their own sitting-room if they were not so distracted by the massive, murderous ape who has burst in from that outside world. Those in the Washington D.C. police force who are familiar with Moore House might find this association—the killer with the interior; the victim with the exterior—convincing, however. Indeed, it is helpful to view *The Filigree Ball* as Madoff might read it, as a nested series of separated spaces: the library removed from the rest of the house; the house removed from the street; the street removed from the rest of Washington. As he prepares to enter Moore House for the first time, the detective calls upon the closest beat cop, Hibbard, for assistance. Openly unwilling to enter a reputedly haunted building, Hibbard suggests that the investigation lies decidedly outside of their jurisdiction: "[p]istols and lanterns are no good here," he grumbled. "What we want at this blessed minute is a priest with a sprinkling of holy

water” (9). The possibility of the spectral allows Hibbard to express the severity of the affective gap between interior and exterior much as Madoff describes it, as a logical or even cosmological gap. Stolid police-work would be incongruous inside Moore House, Hibbard implies, because the space fails to offer the basic cause-and-effect relations that would make an investigation tenable. Lacking the simple grammar of a rational encounter, we must instead make sense of the space through a theological and a sympathetic one. Behind the spirits that Hibbard fears as he enters into the house lies another persistent spectre—that of an investigative failure with its own unfinished business. Indeed, *The Filigree Ball* imagines a space that has not just separated from the outside but positively curdled over decades of neglect because no detective has offered acknowledgment or explanation to clarify that “both inside and outside are places within the same universe.” Three previous inquests have failed to satisfactorily connect the library deaths to Washington’s expectations of law enforcement and, thus, to ground this isolated violence within reality. Indeed, Hibbard’s first shock as he enters the house addresses locked space itself, suggesting a spectral killer:

He had clenched my arm and was pointing to the door  
which was slowly swaying to behind us.

‘Notice that,’ he whispered. ‘No key in the lock! Men  
use keys but—.’ (FB 17)

Madoff’s suggestive, often-cited essay has had an outsized impact on how critics—literary and architectural, alike—conceive of violence in situ and of spaces tainted by irrational action. Michael Cook is one of these inheritors of Madoff’s schema of associations and classic Gothic conventions. In his monograph, *Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction*, Cook argues that nineteenth-century mystery tales, and particularly those featuring a locked room, can be productively considered “a genre of the *intérieur*” (51). In a chapter on Green’s *The Filigree Ball*, he writes of a readerly relation to architectural space, prompted by the library’s central place in Moore House’s mystery. Green’s novel was, he contends, one of the earliest to popularize the body-in-the-library trope and to explore the self-referential quality that a book about death placed within a book collection affords. Cook suggests mysteries that focus on structural and architectural constraint turn “inward to consider the clues arising from a world limited by

the confines of closed dwellings and limited numbers of characters. . . We are reminded of the enclosure motif in ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ in which both detective and victims lead sequestered lives of isolation” (51). Indeed, the Moore’s library has an early ancestry, he writes, in Dupin’s bibliophilic apartment. Cook’s is the most significant and elaborated study on locked rooms. Throughout, he expands on the arguments of narrative theorists such as S.E. Sweeney, who have habitually read the locked room as a *mise en abyme* for the tight narrative strictures of the detective story in general. Cook’s innovation is to combine the argument with Madoff’s observation regarding the Gothic nature of the interior, separated from the outside world. He emerges with an understanding of the locked room as a form of enclosure that is, apparently inextricably, entwined with the closure offered by an investigative plot. Each works structurally to contain the violence at the core of mystery fiction. Throughout Cook’s writing on the locked room, an emphasis on enclosure aligns mystery fiction’s typical narrative conventions with the specific situatedness of violence. Cook’s theory is seductively diagrammatic and can be briefly mapped out as follows:

The desire in the text for narrative closure actually functions as a result of an *enclosed* structure in three parts: the story of a crime often preceded by a thematic introduction, the conduct of the investigation, and, finally, the presentation of the solution to the mystery. Thus the main body of the narrative, the investigation of the crime, becomes enclosed by its antecedent, the crime itself, and its subsequent resolution. . . (7)

The locked room presents, for Cook, a sealed space of violence and, at once, a metaphor for mystery fiction’s narrative closure. His criticism concretizes earlier theorists’ use of the locked room as a narrational metaphor by precisely constructing walls that might contain an investigation’s uncertainties. Under one analogy, Cook unites narrative theory and affective criticism, structure, setting, and metaphor. Thus, he argues that throughout Green’s novel “the position of the locked room as the centre of the textual labyrinth is a self-reinforcing entity, as ultimately all the signs it contains refer to itself and the secrets it contains” (54). By fusing closure with enclosure, Cook further melds the situatedness highlighted by a locked room with narrative. His reading convinces through its easy collapse of the various levels of engagement in mystery fiction, not least of all our own as



readers. The mystery fan may pick up a locked-room mystery, experience violence with a voyeur's or tourist's curiosity, and shut the book to return to normal life; in doing so, we mimic the investigator, Cook suggests, traversing into and out of the enclosed space of violence, into and out of his own investigation.<sup>23</sup>

But the detective's movement into and out of the locked room is typically the second incursion into that space. It follows an original violation, which is registered not only in the obscene location of its violence—the corpse in a cozy bedroom or sitting-room, in a studious library or laboratory—but in the unsuspected failure of architectural structure. As Madoff observes in the quote above, an investigation into a locked room always attempts to “discover a passage” between interior and exterior (50). We might be more accurate, however, in saying that the investigator's role is to *rediscover* a passage, one that often has first been used by the killer. Something must have originally entered into the room in order to affect the violence that we find there and, evidently, it has now got out. Concomitant with the chaos, violence and disorder that Madoff associates with closed spaces, the locked room offers the reader a pervading sense of vulnerability born of exposure and insecurity. To the extent that the exterior world is a “space of hopeful safety from the rage whose results stay locked inside a room,” it is, as well, the origins of that rage (50). The lines of tension that I am drawing between these affective registers mark a border zone between Gothic convention and the narrative of investigation.

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<sup>23</sup> As a tangential point, these assertions could stand closer scrutiny. Narrative theorists like Cook place the metaphorical convenience of the locked room itself under immediate strain since what this schema encloses is no longer the sealed and hidden presence of violence or crime. Rather, under this precise diagram, the crime becomes a reliable certainty. It is no longer mysterious, occulted, or alluring but a fact of violence, serving as one wall to shut in the narrative period of investigation, a duration of pleasurable violation in which the narrative defers closure. Cook walls this section of the investigation off, it would seem, because on the level of narrative it presents the reader with a period of unstructuring—of stasis, flux, and uncertainty—similar on one level to the curious rupture which the room itself presents to the investigator. There is an affective, tonal difference, however, between the manner in which these two structures manifest, not to mention the subject matter they enclose. By deferring the pleasure of closure, the investigation's static and uncertain lingering enacts a readerly pleasure of its own by indulging in the narrative possibilities of a mystery without apparent progress. In contrast, the stasis and uncertainty of the locked room are not symptoms of narrative pleasure but reasons for disquiet and, occasionally, horror (pleasurable though this horror may actually be). It is the fixed nature of the locked room's aftermath, its appearance as an illicit tableau, that gives it the untethered, unstructured appearance of removal. The locked room becomes a displaced metaphor of enclosure by conflating crime scene with investigation. Convenient but vaguely defined, it is too circumspect to circumscribe.

Madoff's writing articulates the locked room in its Gothic presence, as it first appears to the detective. However, the tendency of the mystery story to the forensic and the occulted recalls our attention, as readers, not to the room such as it is but to its violent becoming. To focus solely on the sealed nature of the locked room, on its enclosure, is to ignore what is fundamentally mysterious about its nature: precisely, its involvement with the outside world. A case of murder-suicide behind a closed door is not a mystery but a tragedy; a case of murder-suicide behind a closed door, while the weapon remains outside the room is a mystery. The locked room emphasizes anxieties around security, accessibility, and exteriority, even in those rarer cases in which the killer never, ultimately, makes their way into the interior. Leroux's *Le mystère de la chambre jaune* exemplifies this. Though she is discovered unconscious and battered in a locked room, Mathilde Stangerson was not beaten *in* that room. Rather, she has been brutally assaulted by the celebrated detective Frédéric Larsan. Larsan, in fact a highly successful criminal, married Stangerson in secret years prior under a different alias and now wants to reclaim their abandoned marriage. After the beating, fearing further repercussions, Mathilde hides her wounds and locks herself in her room. This keeps Larsan out, but Mathilde cannot shut the door on the trauma of the incident and, later in the evening, she swoons and hits her head. The violence of the outside might recur within the locked room, as it does here, but it does not originate in that space. To solve the mystery is to locate Stangerson's two connections with the external world—her wounds and her secret, broken marriage—both of which connect her locked childhood bedroom to a wider, crueler world.

Rather than assume their absence, the locked-room mystery convention imagines, uncovers, and catalogues the obscure passages between one space and another. Rather than stage a hermetically sealed nightmare, the locked room constructs a deeply disoriented structure. Often the locked room's contradictory affective impressions emerge from a domestic space whose involvement with the external world has overwhelmed its own sense of interiority. In a locked-room mystery, we know full well that the space is not truly separated. Indeed, that is the mystery and our fear: that those spaces we believe to be reliable and secure are, in fact, unguarded. We can think of the shorn nail in the L'Españaye's bedroom window, the vent that connects Helen Stoner's bedroom with her stepfather's, or the mechanism that runs from the Moore's master bedroom down into the

library. With every entry in the subgenre, we are reminded in anxious repetition that no space is inviolable. Though we have shut the doors and bolted the windows, the violence of the outside world may still at any moment breach into our most cherished spaces. To attend to the locked room's porous relation to the world necessarily troubles Cook's thesis that "the locked room itself is the architectural realization of the genre's own enclosed narrative" but it does so, I think, in a productive manner (14). Despite the natural connection between structural enclosure and narrative closure, the *dénouement* of a mystery always demonstrates that the room was never as sealed or discrete as it initially seemed. In this way, the tale's narrative enclosure must, by the end, stand in ironic contrast to its architectural revelation. The explanation's closure will always disclose space. The linear structure of the locked-room mystery—united in theme and content, metaphor and setting—contains, then, moments of unstructuring that provide readers with a richer tension between plot, theme, and form. We can glimpse Poe's mischievous influence, I think, in this complex of enclosures and disclosures. They leave us, ultimately, with a violated space that is porous rather than sealed. They leave us, as well, with an eerie form of closure, a sense that—though this specific passage has been located—our architected spaces are more virtual and spectral than we might like to admit.

In the *fin de siècle*, mystery fiction presented various means of narrating this sense of alien incursion and of a broader fascination for the interior's involvement with externality. In perhaps the earliest and most blatant of these strategies—certainly the most frequent in the mysteries I have mentioned, here—the threat is an emblem of the colonial project or somehow representative of foreign, often orientalist climes. Of course, the killer that Poe imagines in "Rue Morgue" is not a madman—a figure of confined chaos and irrationality—as the narrator first suspects but an orangutan—a wild creature and token of France's colonial efforts in Southeast Asia. Goulet observes the extent to which the L'Esplanade's apartment building is already embroiled in the outside world in a prolonged list of comparisons, of which I will quote just three:

Local: witnesses in the apartment building are questioned for testimony; Global: interpreters are called in, as these inhabitants of Paris hail from Italy, England, Spain, Holland, and France... Local: on the floor of the scene of

the crime are found four Napoleons, an earring of topaz, three spoons made of *metal d'Alger*; Global: the coins and trinkets invoke France's colonial reach and hint at its centrality to the mystery's solution. Local: this seems to be a Parisian crime, born of urban danger; Global: it has in fact been committed by an orangutan brought to France from the East Indian Islands on a Maltese vessel, through a transnational circulation of commerce that brings with it a fear of the exotic Other that will only increase throughout the century. (1-2)

The eponymous goddess statue in Richard Marsh's novel has a similar colonial origin. Here, the statue was created for a local temple by an inventor in Allahabad and, seemingly, brought back by Edwin Lawrence on a whim. Ferguson recalls Poe's story as he tries to contextualize his vision on the night of Philip's death but the statue proves too transgressive even for this allusion: "though I had no notion what the creature I had really seen was, I was persuaded that it had had nothing in common with any member of the ape family" (*GD* 36).<sup>24</sup> Again, this central figure of transnational involvement has its echoes throughout the text. The apartment building in which the murder takes place is named the Imperial Mansions and both murderer and investigator have been imperial adventurers before returning to London for a quieter life.

Doyle often adopts this imperial Gothic quality, staging invasive colonial or foreign figures deep in the heart of the British Empire. The failed assassin in *The Valley of Fear*—who begins the novel dead and misidentified on the sitting-room rug—is, apparently, conspicuously American. It is his outsider status as a newly arrived presence in a rural English county that excites Holmes's initial suspicion. Moreover, much of the

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<sup>24</sup> Initial reviewers of Marsh's novel noticed this connection. One anonymous review, published in *Graphic* opined:

Mr. Richard Marsh, when he wrote "The Goddess: A Demon" (F.V. White and Co.), evidently made up his mind to go one better than Poe's story of the murders in the Rue Morgue—to which, by the way, one of his characters refers. Not that a previous acquaintance with the earlier work will be of the slightest assistance in helping the amateur detective to guess at the nature of Mr. Marsh's murder. For the rest, its combination of ghastliness and ingenuity is completely in harmony with the methods of the Master, of whom its conception is by no means unworthy. (qtd. in Marsh 180)

latter half of the novel is devoted to parsing out the connections of the intended victim, John Douglas, to a crime syndicate in America. The process mirrors the discovery of obscure passages between spaces that is inherent to any locked-room mystery. In “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” Dr. Grimesby Roylott has returned from a violent career in India to retire in Stoke Moran, his family seat. Into this staunchly traditional pile, he has brought a series of threatening colonial pets: a cheetah, a baboon, and, of course, the fabulous swamp adder that he deploys as a murder weapon. His grounds, too, are home to a local group of Roma, a Victorian referent of a nomadic and vaguely “foreign” lifestyle. *The Sign of the Four*, in its solution, makes manifest the racial and orientalist implications of Poe’s ape when it reveals the murder to have been effected by a blow-pipe wielded by an Andamanese islander named Tonga, “a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair” (*SF* 125). Much of the novel is interested in interrogating the apparent distance of colonial ventures in a gesture that mimics Poe’s original locked-room tale. The troubling nature of the East-Indian project and the chaos inherent in its imperialist abuses of power come home to the docks, sitting-rooms, and foggy streets of London in a narrative that consistently demonstrates the questionable implications of colonial enterprises on internal affairs. Tonga, then, serves as the orangutan’s analogue, having arrived on a ship as the companion of an imperial citizen, being capable of seemingly inhuman acrobatics, killing due to miscommunication and ignorance. Descriptions of his physical appearance at once literalize and fold back upon their original referent, the orangutan: “[n]ever have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with a half animal fury” (*SF* 125).

Alongside these emblems of externality—external to domesticity, to national culture, and even, in the case of the orangutan or adder, to species—we can find persistent images of the interior’s occult involvement with the exterior. The locked room is not simply a space that has been breached before being ultimately sealed. Rather, it displays a continuing orientation to the outside world. We might think, here, of duplicated images: Helen Stoner, outside the door while her twin, Julia Stoner, faces the adder; Thaddeus Sholto, in a panic outside the door because he knows something is wrong with his identical twin,

Bartholomew; Edwin Lawrence, suddenly indiscernible from his brother, Philip, as he runs from the locked room; William Pfeiffer, who Veronica cannot differentiate from his brother, Wallace. The prevalence of identical siblings in these stories recalls the cluster of nineteenth-century superstitions and conventions that I first discussed in Chapter 1, centering on a supposed coherence between twins and, more broadly, between identical counterparts. Nineteenth-century accounts often staged movement between states or across barriers—death was the most common—as a means of suggesting the durable, unconsidered connection between a body and its double. If one twin was sick, the other might feel it. If one twin died, the other might know of it or might even pass away due to symptoms completely alien to their current context.<sup>25</sup> The trope emphasizes an occult association, born of physical or representational similarity, that creates a strange, unidentified passage into a space or state that we typically believe to be sealed, be it death, sleep, or simply personal thoughts and experiences. Twins, in the nineteenth-century imagination, present a boundary failure. To stage one twin within a locked room and the other without is to trace an uncanny involvement between two spaces, one that belies our stuffy, practical assumptions regarding locks, bolts, and seals.

As I have noted, in “The Speckled Band,” Helen’s experience as she watches her twin sister die in the doorway of the locked room always threatens to become a premonition of her own death in the same room. That is, her vision of death threatens to draw her across two boundaries—into the scene of the crime and into death. Indeed, the story reveals from the outset that she did not live long after the case. The detail suggests that, though

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<sup>25</sup> Catherine Crowe rarely discusses twins but she does provide this suggestive story of twin-telepathy and occult sympathy:

This admirable sympathy, although necessarily in an inferior degree, is generally manifested, more or less, between all persons twin-born. Dr. Passavent and other authorities mention several instances of this kind, in which, although at some distance from each other, the same malady appeared simultaneously in both, and ran precisely a similar course. A very affecting instance of this sort of sympathy was exhibited, not very long ago, by a young lady, twin-born, who was suddenly seized with an unaccountable horror, followed by a strange convulsion, which the doctor, who was hastily called in, said exactly resembled the struggles and sufferings of a person drowning. In process of time, the news arrived that her twin-brother, then abroad, had been drowned precisely at that period. (100)

she survived this reiterated version of her sister's passing, her fate was still sealed and her orientation was toward a further passage. The appearance of bodily doubles in *The Goddess* and *The Filigree Ball* play upon beliefs that such reiterated images portend catastrophe. Indeed, the story behind Veronica Moore's mistaken vision of the return of her first husband, lost to adventure and the frontier, on the day of her wedding and the tragic deaths that follow, reads like a late century ghost story of doppelgängers and retribution when taken out of its context. Watson's confusion of the Sholto twins, however, serves as the clearest example in the cases I cite here, of the failure of structure and location that twins make imaginable in locked-room stories. Looking into Bartholomew Sholto's laboratory, Watson's horror is as much a response to a moment of unstructuring as it is to the death of Bartholomew, himself. Disoriented, presented with an incontinent room, Watson displaces the two brothers, fantastically collapsing the exterior type and interior "antitype" (to use Crowe's term) (*Night-Side of Nature* 263). More radically, however, Watson subtly dislodges the violence and death within the locked room, negating its separation from the outside world, through his description of the Sholtos' shared features: "the same high, shining head, the same circular bristle of red hair, *the same bloodless countenance*" (*SF* 80, emphasis added). Death escapes the room through the double entendre of bloodlessness, describing the corpse within the chamber in its similarity to their living companion. In Watson's momentary disorientation, there is no longer a discernible inside or outside, no longer a differentiation between the living and the dead. As we shall see, this sudden confusion is a typical affective response to the violation of a space. With the discovery of a violent breach, we are left disoriented in space that is boundless and uncategorizable.

Of course, the most convenient and adaptable figure to suggest the liminal, transgressed quality of the locked room is the ghost. *The Filigree Ball* adopts the imagery and conventions of Spiritualism to articulate, in more and less subtle ways, the architectural and domestic failure of Moore House, which worsens with every murder it furnishes. Most memorably, Hibbard believes from the first that the killer in the library must be a ghost, as do Veronica's wedding guests, it seems, and much of the rest of Washington. Though he may mock Hibbard mercilessly in his account of their first foray into Moore House, Green's detective is prey to the same instinctive fear. He admits as he approaches

the door to the library that “while I had never known myself to quail before any ordinary antagonist, I, like others of my kind, have no especial fondness for unseen and mysterious perils” (*FB* 20). Often, when we think of hauntings, we think of their confinement to a specific location over long periods, their cyclical repetitions of situated events. That is, we think of the closed space of their irrational stasis, a form of being well suited to Madoff’s locked room. We will consider this spectral cyclicity and the queer quality of its temporality in the next section of this chapter. For the present, however, it is enough to notice that in the nineteenth century the spirit world was also a source of liminal, unfettered movement. For an example we can turn to an account by the medium and painter Georgiana Houghton, describing one of her own sessions:

We asked and obtained permission to have a light, when we found that the spirits had brought into this room (where doors and windows were all carefully closed to exclude every particle of light), and had placed on my head, in exact position, a most lovely wreath of everlasting flowers in every shade and hue, to our great astonishment and delight (126; vol. 1)

In Houghton’s account, the miraculous power of the spirits is, specifically, to move into, to alter, and to move out of a closed space. Indeed, contact with the spiritual realm is recognizable as such only because of that closure, which is the sitters’ proof that something wondrous has occurred. Despite their attempts to carefully seal the space, contact with the dead can still occur because, for the Spiritualist, death ushers in a liminal materiality. We have already seen as much in the occult sympathies that emerge in the space around Philip Lawrence’s dead body. As Simone Natale writes, “séances broke the alleged inviolability of Victorian houses with their promises of communication with an external entity—the spirits of the dead” (61). But the ghosts are not the only incursion in Houghton’s scene; the séance sitters and guests, too, have made their way into the Victorian home. The parlour in the nineteenth century became one of a series of paradoxically defined rooms, at once expected to present private, domestic comfort and public entertainment. Libraries, too, were one of these categories of spaces that opened over the century to the outside world. These spaces were oriented at once to interiority and exteriority in coiled tensions and disorientations. Their presentation of interior



comforts was for the public, their inclusion of guests was an extension of domestic hospitality. For the Spiritualist, whose home was constantly interpenetrated with spiritual impressions and energies, this opening of domesticity was two-fold, then. Natale continues, “the house was, for nineteenth-century Spiritualists, not only the ‘true locus of religiosity,’ but an increasingly permeable space that allowed for the introduction of social gathering and play into the private and familial sphere” (61). In Houghton’s account, there is an eerie, permeable quality to the séance’s “astonishment and delight” that undermines its cozy, domestic play. As with any Victorian parlour, we find flowers brought in from outside but here the garland originates in a further exteriority, not the garden but the Spiritualist Summerland. The boundaries these spirits have crossed, walls and states of being, involve the interior with the exterior, the domestic with death.

In Green’s early chapters, Hibbard’s belief in bumps-in-the-night plays as a comic turn. There is, though, a satisfying logic behind his idea of a ghostly killer. The incorporeality of a spectre answers all the difficulties of solving the crime, of course. More than this, the ghosts conjured by Houghton and fellow Spiritualists fulfill both of the affective registers of the locked room—Madoff’s Gothic, closed space and, as I am outlining it, the exposed ruins of an intrusion. The ghost allows for a closed space and an uncanny, alien violence. If the locked room is hermetically sealed, truly closed and separated from the world, nothing material could move into and out of its structure. If the locked room is hermetically sealed *and* its violence did not originate in that room as in my murder-suicide example—that is, if it is indeed a mystery—then only an immaterial force could have breached and broken this space. Whether explicit or not, the suspicion of a ghostly killer is, ultimately, what an investigation into a locked room sets out to disprove. The investigator’s work to find a material connection, to “discover a passage” between interior and exterior is a practical refusal to accept the supernatural quality of the impossible crime and its killer. Dupin knew this from the first and, as they recall the murder scene, he tells his companion to disregard the possibility of the easiest explanation for the L’Espanaye’s murder: “[w]hat shall we first seek here? The means of egress employed by the murderers. It is not too much to say that neither of us believe in præternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L’Espanaye were not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deed were material, and escaped materially” (“RM” 416-417). Of

course, Dupin must simply set aside the question of metaphysical malfeasances and insubstantial improprieties. Perhaps the only argument he can level against the spectral killer is to prove what we long expected, that the irrational space was always actually rational but permeable and exposed.

Small wonder, then, that the locked room—where doubles abound, ghosts may walk, and exotic beasts scabble at the casement—seems to be a place entirely apart. This assemblage of intrusions, external anxieties, and cross-boundary associations overlays the hermetically sealed room of irrational violence, tidily separated from the normalcy of daily affairs. These conventions and tropes trace lines of tension across the locked room. If this space feels separated from other interiors or from the outside world it is because it is oriented, in self-contradiction, to both; it is an interior space breached by outside forces, by death, and by the presence of inexplicable mystery; it is a site claimed by externality that has, nevertheless, been apparently contained. The locked room is overwritten with a complex of interrelated, often contradictory impressions, tendencies, and significances, each made legible according to a certain generic or readerly expectation. As Hibbard stares in horror at the “slowly swaying” front door to Moore House, he experiences the full weight of this contradiction. His fear is, at once, that they have wandered into a sealed and separated minor cosmos only to be explained by the spiritual and, as well, that this space has become unsealed and available to mere mortals such as they. He fears that only a ghost could open a locked door without a key and, as well, that such a ghost would need to use a door. Hibbard’s panic is comedy and not to be taken seriously but it works well with a more serious—though no less ridiculous—moment of confusion, Watson’s panic as he peers in Sholto’s lab. In each case, the investigators are deeply disoriented. By this I am not referring to a sense of disengagement or that the characters misunderstand the space. Rather, their disorientation presents a duration of affective confusion between the various orientations that emerge from their environment. The locked room involves the investigator into its confusion of interior and exterior and in these cases this, ultimately, is the confusion and the mystery that insists on a solution.

Throughout their book of exuberant and often fanciful architectural criticism, *Horror in Architecture*, Comaroff and Ong warn their readers of structural failures that destroy our confidence in the architectural. In an extended section, they consider our anxieties toward the incontinent, porous object “in two major variants: herniation and pollution” (128). Here, they consider the influence that poorly designed or abandoned buildings may have upon the atmosphere of a neighbourhood and upon our own feelings within their vicinity. They write, particularly, of:

the entity that emanates influences beyond its envelope. This is the radiant being, the ‘sick’ building. Not herniation, that is, but pollution. . . narratives of urban haunting draw heavily upon the idea of contagion, and upon the assumed communicability of morbidity and traumatic history. Points of contact with the spectral realm—haunted houses, shrines, and cemeteries—are nearly universally associated with a risk of possession, sickness, and tragedy. Sites of violence and perversion are to be avoided for the same reason” (134)

Such pollution streams from Moore House. It poisons the surrounding suburban development, much as Comaroff and Ong warn, and it presents a stranger haunting than a mere killer ghost. As Hibbard soon learns with great relief, the disturbance at Moore House is the result of an active crime scene—in fact, a few crime scenes—and not actually the presence of a spectre. The novel’s canniest misdirection, then, lies in staging this clearly false ghost while obscuring a more subtle haunting through disavowals, dismissals, and discomfort. We might recall, here, Uncle David and the detective, standing aghast before the mansion and trying to discern its details. Though David dismisses the possibility of a haunting with a snide reference to a will-o’-the-whisp, nevertheless he will not go inside. As we later learn, he has been unsettled, having witnessed for himself the building’s spectral cycle of violence. Though the detective addresses himself bravely to the house, his sight, it seems, is subject to persuasion and an unseen presence, “[n]ot that superstition lent its terrors to the lonely scene” (12). This pattern repeats itself in compulsive denials throughout the text. Though Moore House “escaped the hackneyed epithet of ‘haunted,’ . . . no happiness was to be found there and . . . sleep was impossible” (6). Though we are rational readers and Green’s detective is a rational man, “one might surely be pardoned a distrust of its seemingly home-like

appointments, and discern in its slowly darkening walls the presence of an evil which if left to itself might perish in the natural decay of the place” (6-7). As the library begins to possess the detective, urging him toward the fatal trap, “[a] crawling sense of dread took the place of my first repugnance; not because superstition had as yet laid its grip upon me, although the place, the hour and the near and veritable presence of death were enough to rouse the imagination” (34). I could continue listing these but my point is simple. In each quotation, the haunting exceeds the explanatory power of the denial, never to be refuted as Hibbard’s beliefs are. In each, the haunting excess presents a strongly affective tendency or impression communicated by the physical space itself. Finally, in each the impression exudes from the building in a miasmic, spreading involvement that belies the sealed nature of a locked room. The detective and David can feel the building’s influence from the street. I devote the rest of this chapter and portions of the next to this stranger haunting. In doing so, my interest lies in this felt complex of rational denial, mediumistic disorientation, and the spectral quality of affective spaces. Perhaps the second argument we can level against the spectral killer is to prove that the material space was always spectral, diaphanous and insubstantial.

The locked room, as I read it, is marked by a particular emphasis on unstructuring. The discomfort and fear that we feel when presented with the L’Espanaye’s apartment, Sholto’s laboratory, or the Moore’s library is often not the voyeuristic experience of an exhibit of violence, a discrete space moved through in curious leisure. Rather, it is the realization—brought close to home—that the architectural structures of our daily life cannot fully remove us from the disorder and confusion of the world, at large. There is a clear absurdity to an ape arriving through one’s bedroom window or, in *The Sign of the Four*, to a village cycling enthusiast, revealed to be a hard-bitten American assassin. This absurdity, however, does not strain verisimilitude so much as it reminds us of the breadth and reach of an irrational world’s violent and obscene potential. These spaces imaginatively dismantle the security, domesticity, and history that we invest in the settings of daily life. The violations of mystery fiction, its ruptures and solutions, often reveal a fragility in the comfort and familiarity offered by architectural structure. Indeed, the presence of violence in the sealed domestic space more radically suggests the contingency of our command of space itself, and of our capacity to understand, orient,

structure, and separate the places that we appreciate and cultivate. Often, in the locked room, it is our sense of spatial definition and structure that has been breached. The convention gestures insistently at the virtual nature of our concept of a room, defined as a separated and securable space. Though we may begin a locked-room mystery—like Hibbard—with the suspicion that only a spectre could have entered this space, we often end with the recognition that the space itself was always somewhat spectral.

### 3.2

Throughout much of Green's novel, the titular object remains a tantalizing unknown. No mention is made of the filigree ball until the detective returns to Moore House in the final quarter of the book, after exhausting every theory and lead he has. Here, obscured behind other volumes in the library, he discovers a set of a family documents in which a Moore ancestor references "the talisman of our house, of this house" (Green 309); the Gothic collapse of lineage and location, so reminiscent of Poe's doomed Usher family, could not be more blatant. This bauble, worn by the Moores on the watch-chain, promises aid to the "true Moore" should they find themselves in a desperate situation (308). According to a document among this collection written by Uncle David, all the Moore heir need do in troubled times is retire to the southwest chamber, a bedroom once inhabited by the family patriarch, and open the clasp on the gold bauble. Events would transpire with fatal momentum from there. The detective learns the next day that this gold bauble is an object, so to speak, of minor embarrassment for the department. Though an officer entered it as evidence, the ball vanished before it could be gathered and brought to the station. Driven by desperation and ambition—a state of mind befitting a Moore—the detective returns for a second investigative vigil in the mansion, combing through the "Colonel's Own" bedroom, though "[i]t seemed a hopeless cause from the first" (318). His search reveals nothing new until, in a final epiphanic moment, he takes up the curtain tassels that hang close to the table where the ball was last set down:

you may call it an impossible find or say that if the bauble was there it should have been discovered in the first search for it! I will not say no. I can only tell you what happened. When I took one of those tassels in my hand, I thought, as it twirled under my touch, that I saw something gleam in its

faded old thread which did not belong there. . . I picked at this thing and found it to be a morsel of gold chain that had become entangled in it. When I had pulled it out, it showed a small golden ball at one end, filigreed over and astonishingly heavy for its size and apparent delicacy.

How it came there—whether it rolled from the table, or was swept off inadvertently by the detective’s hand, and how it came to be caught by this old tassel and held there in spite of the many shakings it must have received, did not concern me at this momentous instant. (319)

Nor will it ever concern him. The detective is approaching by this point in the novel a kind of mediumistic acceptance of the bizarre that I discuss in more depth in the next chapter. I think, however, that we might pause briefly to concern ourselves in this private family matter. On one level, the filigree ball is emblematic of the tense coexistence of enclosures and disclosures that I have been trying to sketch out in the first section of this chapter. Not only is it a talisman of the Moores and of their house in general, it is emblematic, in its way, of the building’s locked room. At least, there are suggestive parallels between the library and the object that makes sense of it. It is at once luxuriously blatant and held secret by the family. A large gold bauble worn on a watch-chain is not a subtlety, no matter its hidden significance. Similarly, the Moore’s death-trap library—a sign of upper middle-class prosperity and culture—makes for an opulent receiving room. Indeed, in each case, luxury at once belies the presence of a secret and provides the means to hide one. High ceilings and excessive architectural details make the library’s deadly weight inconspicuous. When the detective finds the bauble, he notes the weight of its extravagant gold filigree which, at once, covers for the magnifying glass held inside and references the deadlier weighted ball that the bauble will reveal. To push these material similarities to their limit, the filigree ball, by its nature, is a porous enclosure, comprised of wire tracing and negative space. Its porous quality winks toward the hole that links bedroom to library, allowing the “true Moore” to sight and time the trap.

The nature of the filigree ball forebodes—implicitly but with a chilling, linear clarity—its eventual revelations. In a series of draws, impulses, and showings, the ball leads the desperate individual through a process that has occurred repeatedly in that space. The ball

opens to reveal a magnifying glass inside; taking up the glass draws one toward the portrait hanging over the mantle; written into the hair of this portrait, in miniscule lettering, are a murder confession and a set of instructions on how to use the library's trap; these will then lead the curious over to the closet where a cabinet can be secretly used to set and spring the mechanism. A murderous Moore descendent can peer through a loophole down to the library and watch a weight drop on the victim below, killing but not splitting the skull. To open the filigree ball is to learn of the passages between spaces and, it seems, necessarily to take advantage of them. Even the detectives must try the mechanism. In the investigation scene I relate above, the ball seems oddly complicit in this occult process that involves a participant in fulfilling the library's mechanism. The ball, kept secret for so many years on a chain, now seems intent to keep itself secret in a cord. It clings there, waiting with a strange patience for the emotional state in which it might become meaningful and even useful. The detective comes to the room ambitious to outshine the colleagues who have mocked and challenged his investigation, and desperate to free Cora Tuttle, who he has wrongly accused. He is not drawn to fiddle and pick at the curtain tassels, however, until these feelings mix with a kind of defeated resignation. The situation—by which I mean the coincidence not just of ambition, desperation, and resignation, but of location and of object, as well—invokes a paler version of Veronica's mindset on her wedding day and the Colonel's, when he designed the trap. One needs to be oriented toward a certain affective trajectory, it seems, oriented within a lineage of emotional and situational recurrence, in order to become oriented to the space itself. Having found this receptive feeling, the detective will move through a set of orientations, relayed from one object to the next, until he learns the Moore's family secret.

I am tipping my hand, somewhat, here. There is, of course, a spectral quality to this recurring cycle of violence, affective states, and location-specific behaviours. As we have seen, there is also a hauntingly virtual element to our concept of reliable structures, a quality that the Moores know intimately. In the investigation scene I relate above, however, the ball demonstrates an excessive, ghostly willfulness that implies a more literal spectre than either of these. This section reads four of these objects—the filigree ball, the settle, the Colonel's bed, and a drawing—to suggest that this more blatant, more traditional haunting is, in fact, intimately involved with the building's cycle of

unstructuring violence. In this section, I turn from my discussion of the broadly generic to the highly specific. My interest lies in a collection of objects and in a Gothic history of haunting that is only sketched in brief details and implications throughout *The Filigree Ball*. Of course, this novel differentiates itself from many of the others I have mentioned in the chapter insofar as it presents a space that is intended to kill, rather than a space that is intended to secure domesticity. Doyle's "The Speckled Band," of course, is another of these trap locked rooms. So far, I have been interested in the multivalence of locked rooms—their orientations to interior and exterior, barrier and transgression. Intentionally allowing violence into the domestic—indeed, constructing the domestic in preparation for violence—layers a further orientation on to the locked room and alters the intimacies it may stage. This orientation, as we shall see, does not negate an older one. It may even be informed by or help shape an established orientation—the relation between the two being more contextual than serial. New tendencies and behaviours emerge, however, in the ruptured domesticity that follows, and these are formed as much by the tensions between orientations as by the orientations themselves. In this case, the hauntings of Moore House consistently strive to enact the structure and interiors that define domesticity, despite the building's orientation to externality and violence. At times, this takes the form of a family comprised of only those *on the inside*, as it were, of the family's occult knowledge. At others, it takes the form of repetitive cycles that structure the family and its guests while orienting them into closed loops of violent reiteration. In both cases, the interior is oriented toward the external, leading to as much as it responds against the threats of the outside world. I began the previous chapter with a brief discussion of deodands in order to introduce the concept of items that have been altered in some subtle but foundational manner by their history of use. Here, the objects involved in Moore House's identity have taken on, as their individuality, a willful tendency to relive their history of violence in spectral repetition. If we attend to the tensions of enclosure and disclosure, we can find an *unheimlich* domesticity in these perverse returns.

In her biography of Anna Katharine Green, *Mother of Detective Fiction*, Patricia Maida argues that "[t]hough the old or haunted house has traditionally been a Gothic motif, Green uses houses in a variety of *other* ways. There are no castles—just stalwart American structures . . . Because Green defines environment as significant to behavior



[sic], it is appropriate that she focuses on the house” (49). Though Maida is writing primarily of Green’s more famous, more conventional homes—particularly, the mansion of *The Leavenworth Case*—the distinction is essential to the moods and manner of Moore House. For all of its shrouded mystery and its Gothic props, its violent history and its haunted spaces, Moore House is not a Gothic castle. The mansion’s sense of security runs parallel to that of a keep but to an opposite end. Moore House is, in a sense, a generically savvy space. It figures the outside world as a threat to the domestic, it prepares for the inevitable breach, and it protects instead of trying to secure the interior. Whereas a castle, keep, or fortress achieves a feeling of security by manufacturing the illusion of total and enforceable separation from the outside world (here, we may think of Castle Dracula, perched high in the Transylvanian mountains), Moore House makes a virtue of its permeability through hospitality, catching the outside world and its threats as they incur into the domestic. By its nature, the trap stands as a recognition that the Moores cannot remain separated from the dangers of the outside world; rather, the library-as-trap bargains a sense of structure for one of security, a sense of domesticity for one of respectability, inviting the dangers of the world inside. However, the creation of a trap within a home has its affective consequences as does the adoption of this trap as fundamental to a family identity. As Moore House dramatizes, to do so is to reorient a space from a fantasy of domestic structure to an explicit acceptance of violent transgression. The Gothic nature of this bargain and its consequent reorientation of domestic space extend back to its original installation. In the early 1800s, the novel eventually reveals, the family patriarch Colonel Alpheus Moore was a rising political figure until he was threatened with exposure by a comrade, General Lloyd, who was privy to some unnamed abuse that Moore had committed during wartime. In response, the Colonel installs the library’s trap and invites Lloyd, returned from out of his repressed past, to tea. A servant finds Lloyd dead within the library before the Colonel has even come down to greet him. With the general’s death, Moore House’s security is cleaved from its domesticity, the family’s respectability is divorced from its hospitality, creating a gulf that, by the end of the century, can be felt as an emotional disorientation by those who enter this disordered home.

From this initial murder, the permeability of structured space and the ability to usefully wield the slippages of outside and inside become the Moore birthright. *The Filigree Ball* responds to anxieties of structured space by reimagining them as a Gothic secret.

Through the talisman of the gold filigree ball, an understanding of porous or incontinent architecture becomes a dangerous inheritance and a marker of the Moore line. Edward Moore, most likely the grandson of the Colonel, inherits the gold ball and later breaks ties with his younger brother, Albert, in a struggle for the hand of a local woman. The feud eventually devolves into a duel that Albert wins. Edward capitulates and ushers him into the library to rest, where the younger brother becomes the second victim to be found on the library's hearth. The death dramatizes the extent to which the authority of a Moore heir lies in his or her definition of interior and exterior, domestic categories that include Moore House both as a location and as a lineage. Albert, ostracized by his brother and kept from the house's secrets, is positioned as an outside threat to the continued Moore line as it is defined and desired by the legitimate Moore. Indeed, by mid-century, recognition of the virtuality of domestic space has come to represent the identity of a "true" family member. As Uncle David scrawls in the hidden dossier on the family's murders, he is told by his father that his coming of age: "means that you must be told certain facts, without the knowledge of which you would be no true Moore. . . It is the legacy which goes with this house and one which no inheritor as yet has refused either to receive or to transmit" (308-309). He is told no more, however. His brother suspends this occult initiation into the Moore's unsettling knowledge by revealing some deed—again, never revealed—that, unworthy of a true Moore, bars David from the family circle. His brother, instead, becomes heir and receives the ball. In this moment, the unnamed Moore is admitted as a node in an ongoing lineage, one that combines architectural cynicism, genetics, and the reproduction of a Gothic secret. He does not fail "to transmit" these to his daughter, Veronica.

Reading with an eye to the novel's play of inside and outside reveals the tragic joke of Veronica Jeffrey's victim, the third corpse to be found in the library. On her wedding day, Veronica believes that in the crowd she sees her first husband, whom she married while she was in finishing school—a man she had assumed was dead. When this man follows her to Moore House, she has him brought to the library while she retires to the

“Colonel’s Own.” Desperate to salvage her current relationship, she opens the ball, reads the instructions, and deploys the family’s trap. The library has, by this point, become a true receiving room, a space in which inside and outside might engage, defining one against the other. Of course, the man she has killed is not William Pfeiffer, her adventuring husband, but Wallace Pfeiffer, his brother, who has returned from the West to confirm what she has long suspected; her husband has died in the gold fields, and she is free to marry. What Veronica thought to be an external threat—a secret and disavowed partner with ties to the frontier—proves too external to have been a threat at all—a man to whom she has no living connection. Nevertheless, Veronica’s impulsive actions are intended to secure herself against the world. While her maids of honour attempt to help her change in the Colonel’s Own, Veronica locks the door: “I would not let them in. I was set upon testing the secret of the filigree ball. . . .” (392). These reiterations—the Moores’ attempts to defend against threats to the house, both as structure and family—each in their turn reorient the affective capacity and representational power of Moore House as a locus of domesticity. In this way, the filigree ball fulfills its status as a talisman of both forms of the house, cyclically involving the Moores into the mechanism by which the building instantiates its identity. As Michael Cook observes, “Green’s works read like a warning of the dangers of jeopardizing domestic stability and harmony by irrational behaviour” (47). While classic locked-room mysteries imagine how our relations to space may be disordered by a death or some other violation, *The Filigree Ball* considers a space that is constructed and kept—to the extent that it is maintained, at all—intergenerationally in direct relation to death.

The domestic, of course, is always a particularly freighted affective economy. Anna Katharine Green wrote within a culture, however, that archived many of its most cherished institutions and sentiments in the home. Elizabeth Freeman suggests that, as early as mid-century, “writers figured maternal love, domestic bliss, romantic attachments, and eventually even bachelorhood as havens from a heartless world and, more importantly, as sensations that moved according to their own beat” (Freeman 5). Each of these affective categories has its own trajectories and modes of feeling that overlay and interweave, accreting to form a space’s complex textures. Moore House emphasizes certain qualities of feeling over others. Alpheus did not work merely to

introduce the possibility of violence to his home, however; in doing so, he also inadvertently parsed the period's domestic affects and bargained some of them—privacy, intimacy, comfort—for others—security, respectability, legacy. Indeed, in his confession, Alpheus frames his act explicitly as an exchange of feeling: “[t]he hindrance is gone from my life, but a horror has entered it beyond the conception of any soul that has not yielded itself to the unimaginable influences emanating from an accomplished crime” (323). The ruined wedding party, after all, is not merely a Gothic folly; its neglected remnants throughout the first floor asserts the triumph of a specific affect—the house’s menacing sense of security—over more normal affective orders. That the party’s remains rot at the very front of the house only reinforces a sense that this celebration of normative domestic affect failed as it intruded into the borders of Moore House’s secure preserve.

The mansion is not always so stark nor so binary in its presentation to the outside world, however. When Green’s investigator first enters the library, he is appalled by the “monstrous and patriarchal bench” that each of the home’s victims sat upon when they met their end (35). Designed to “invite rest,” the settle is only upholstered beneath the falling weight (323). The oddity of an only-partially-upholstered seat elicits in the investigator “[a] crawling sense of dread” (34). Narrating this first encounter, the investigator speaks to the perverse invitation to comfort offered by the settle, noting: “how the long and embracing arm which guarded this cushioned retreat was flattened on top for the convenient holding of decanter and glass, feeling to which I can give no name and which I had fondly believed myself proof against, began to take the place of judgment and reason” (35). His violent reaction is clearly informed by the strange cycle of violence that recurs in that seat, but this is not the detail that draws his attention. The locus of his dread lies in the settle, with its cozy design and “long and embracing arm,” rather than in a more obvious and grim aspect of the scene: the cold stone hearth, for example, where each victim was found, having slumped from the upholstered seat. His discomfort lies, instead, in the seat’s claim to comfort, in its invitation to a specific posture and scenario of hospitality. He responds to deadly comforts and the tension between orientations, one toward *fin-de-siècle* home-making and the other toward hostile preservation.

The comforts of the settle are not negated by the presence of death but reoriented toward it in a manner that maintains familial, future-oriented domesticity (though for a patently different purpose from its usual, reproductive utility). The object of the narrator's confusion seems to be this eerie reorientation of a domestic setting, which quickly overwhelms and disorients his own position toward the room. Upon observing the care with which the seat is designed—and suspecting the threat that lies behind this emotional appeal—the “feelings to which [he] can give no name” physically overpower him. He moves mechanically according to the historical pattern of the trap-room: “Before I realized the nature of my impulse or to what it was driving me, I found myself moving slowly and steadily toward this formidable seat, under an irresistible desire to fling myself upon these old cushions—” (35). This moment of *l'appel du vide* is a vivid illustration of investigative fiction's spatial disorder. Here, the narrator's orientation to the room is, in a moment of intense affect, subsumed completely into the room's own orientation, which hauntingly begins to repeat its ingrained past. The moment recalls the Spiritualist fascination with haunted furnishings that take on a liveliness of their own and, in doing so, redirect human behaviours that expect their docile compliance. Aviva Briefel observes in a recent article that nineteenth-century “things possessed by spirits liberate themselves of their intended purpose. . . The innumerable descriptions of animated furniture during the early period of Spiritualism emphasize this persistent refusal of function” (214). Here, however, the settle yearns for use, though in attempting to orient the detective into the position of past victims, it still errs toward the destructive and compelling.<sup>26</sup> Its energy, it seems, stems not from a specific, agentic spirit that desires communication but from an ingrained process that seeks fulfillment. Indeed, the detective

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<sup>26</sup> Ghosts often had an penchant for the dramatic and the destructive. Aviva Briefel points to Richard Holt Hutton's essay for an example:

What is most remarkable and universal amongst them is the muscular sense, and their great delight appears to be to rival the ancient Egyptians in lifting great weights by associated efforts, - but unlike them, their exertions are usually by no means humble and constructive but vainglorious and destructive and except when they dash a thing to pieces, which is not uncommon, they only lift it and put it down again like children, to show how much they can do. (R. H. Hutton qtd. in Briefel 222)

is the only character throughout the novel who experiences both sides of the impulsive drive toward this operation to sort individuals into external threats and internal adepts. Faced with the settle, early in his investigation, he is compelled through spectral procedure toward the victim's seat. Later, once the detective has become fluent in the Moores' history, the filigree ball will usher him through the parallel procedure that haunts the Colonel's Own.

Breaking from the settle's "accursed charm," the narrator recalls that his "investigations were but half completed," returning to himself through the memory that he too can orient and master space. Of course, the investigator is profoundly disoriented by the settle—here, disoriented even from his own emotional response, which he will not name. It is difficult to locate the nature of his overpowering feeling upon seeing the seat, be that feeling anxiety, panic, confusion, or some less explicit reflex. Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, speaks to the importance of expelling death and its reminders from our daily spaces: "Death too has a 'location', but that location lies below or above appropriated social space; death is relegated to the infinite realm so as to disentrall (or purify) the finiteness in which social practice occurs, in which the law that that practice has established holds sway" (35). Sometimes anxiously, often ludically, mystery fiction rehearses the failure of this foundational gesture when the law no longer holds sway and death cannot be suspended from our everyday experience of space. The locked room refines this concern by emphasizing location: the intrusion of death's "location" into a sealed location and the sense of unstructuring that occurs in this violent collapse; the dislocation felt by those experiencing this newly enthralled or impure space. In, for example, Watson's confusion at the laboratory door or the loss of self experienced by Green's investigator, we witness death's incursion interfere with those affective relations one may have with an environment that usefully allow us to inhabit and move through space, that is, with our orientation to space. As Michael Cook observes of Green's detective, "[t]he task facing the detective, therefore, is to read and understand the house; this applies as much to its fabric as it does to the lives of the people there" (47). However, in the Moore's seat, with its inviting design and "long embracing arm," *The Filigree Ball* elaborates on this disruption, depicting a domesticity that fails to relegate death to a position "below or above appropriated social space" in the first place.

For Lefebvre, the failure of that separation results in the enthrallment or impurity of space, which takes the form, in the Colonel's Own, of the house's affective haunting. Responding to Lefebvre, Sara Ahmed reminds us that "[s]pace acquires 'direction' through how bodies inhabit it, just as bodies acquire direction in this inhabitation" (12). In doing so, she points to precisely what is affective in our relations with daily places, to the looped reinforcements that accumulate into a fluency with the built world. For Ahmed, this process develops in the home into a comfortable homecoming, a personal—though largely heteronormative—domesticity. I will have more to say about this process in my next chapter. A similar history of feeling and exchange, however, imbues Moore House's domesticity with impurity, to use Lefebvre's vocabulary. As the building's past is incrementally revealed across the novel, we can trace a slow bleed of domesticity from rooms constructed in relation to death.

Over the nineteenth century, these spaces shift from privacy to a predatory receptiveness and so on to decayed uselessness. The Gothic remnants of the Moore wedding party, left in the hallway and parlour, give a sharp and unsubtle introduction to this decline but it is most pronounced in the Colonel's Own. Late in the novel, the narrator discovers a travel journal hidden in the Moore library, written by "an English woman who had been in America during the early part of the century, and who had been brought more or less into contact with the mysteries connected with the Moore house" (288). After a sleepless night in the Colonel's Own, during which the English woman staying as a guest feels watched by the "the strange eyes" of a young woman's charcoal portrait that hangs over the mantel, she asks if the room is haunted. Her host, Callista Moore, vehemently denies any supernatural events but admits that "every one finds it impossible to sleep in that bed or even in the room. I do not know why, unless it is that my father spent so many weary years of incessant wakefulness inside its walls" (292). Indeed, the disordered behaviour long predates the Colonel's death. In his confession, Alpheus describes years of obsessive, repetitive movement:

A mania is upon me which, after thirty years of useless resistance and superhuman struggle, still draws me from bed and sleep to rehearse in ghastly fashion that deed of my early manhood... When the hour comes, as come it must,

that I can not rise and enter that fatal closet, I shall still  
 enact the deed in dreams, and shriek aloud in my sleep . . .  
 (323)

From the beginning of the novel, Moore House's free-floating insomnia betrays the unwholesome nature of the structure and the extent to which its domesticity has become disordered. Here, Alpheus ascribes his repetitions of a violent past to "mania," using the term to describe behaviours and feelings that are inexplicable to him. In depicting his restlessness as a state of heightened affect, however, he points incidentally to the obscure origin of his insomnia, which stems not from an unsound mind nor from an unsound house but from the feedback of feeling between the two. Given the room's later ability to disturb others' sleep, there is no clear distinction between Alpheus's influence on the room and the room's, on him; speaking of the closet, Alpheus confesses, "I can not resist it" (323). This restlessness knits the Moores and their house together. In the novel's *dénouement*, Francis Jeffrey admits he knew his wife was guilty of the wedding guest's murder because in her sleep Veronica repeatedly returned to the act. "It was some dream-horror she was laboring under," he admits, "a nightmare of unimaginable acts and thoughts" (355). Alpheus is called in his sleep by the mechanism to rehearse the moment in which he radically altered Moore House's affective capacity; Veronica contracts the same disturbed sleep as her birthright and carries it with her to a new domestic setting. This is home-unmaking by way of homemaking, deconstruction by way of renovation. In redirecting the master bedroom toward a violent act, the Colonel works against the possibility of intimacy, privacy, and comfort in the room and empties it of its therapeutic domesticity. While Ahmed points in the quote above to a feedback between ourselves and our dwellings, the Colonel and his descendants are trapped in a positive feedback loop, a Gothic amplification of his reorientation. Though Alpheus has chosen the room's direction, its momentum has taken him by surprise.

If, as Elizabeth Freeman suggests, the domestic registered with contemporary readers as a category of "sensations that moved according to their own beat," it is in Moore House's syncopation that we find a further confusion of orientations. The affects and rituals of the middle-class American home had, by the time of Green's writing, enshrined in the domestic a cyclicity that kept pace with technological progress, social upheaval, shift



work, and the period's various other calendars of sequential history. The home's tightly controlled loop of 24-hour time oriented the home into a therapeutic and ever-available refuge from the outside world. For Freeman, enshrining this cycle in the house allows for the accelerated momentum of industrialized culture as "the idea of time as cyclical stabilizes its forward movement, promising renewal rather than rupture" (5). The disordered sleep that haunts Moore House, however, registers a space that is incapable of fully engaging with the wholesome cyclicity of a home. This is not to say that the mansion is without its own cycles; deep in his insomnia, Alpheus laments, "*I can not be content with having pressed that spring once*" (323, emphasis in original). But repetitions of a violent past are a cycle that lacks the renewal promised by domesticity. Moore House can not dislodge its violent history and thus can not become a refuge from linear time.

Instead of a highly regulated, cyclical sense of time, Moore House suggests a snarl of feeling oriented by turns to its hidden history and to its expectation of future violence. The disordered sleep that radiates from the Colonel's Own speaks to an orientation not merely to violence but to a past moment that has been unnaturally preserved along with its defunct affects. Repeatedly, characters refer to "the room of ancient and unhallowed memory" (7) or "that room of awesome memories and present death" (59), one of many in a "house of tragic memories" (8), containing "that old seat of sinister memory" (24). Repetitions of this sort may seem like a generic lapse into exaggeration; however, by returning unerringly to this description, the novel produces a sense that the abandoned mansion houses a history rather than a family, that its domesticity is directed toward its own past. Indeed, Moore House's historic homemaking grants agency to its history first, its residents second. Early in the novel, the reader learns of a quaint family superstition that places a ban on the removal or movement of any of the artwork or wall-hangings throughout the house. Introduced briefly, this detail seems to simply add Gothic flavor, suggesting the extent to which the Moores have credulously accepted their own myth-making. Later, when the narrator finds Alpheus' confession inscribed into the portrait in the guest bedroom, we are expected to draw our own connections.

The ban on art removal acts as a mechanism to establish a breach of domestic time that freezes the room in its most useful state. To seek to personalize and update the art, the

most affectively freighted furnishings in Moore House, is to seek to recuperate space in a very practical way from its backwards-glancing orientation to violence. In a lyrical passage on the pleasures of unpacking, Ahmed describes furnishing a home as “coming to inhabit spaces, coming to embody them, where my body and the rooms in which it gathers . . . cease to be distinct . . . . It is a process of becoming intimate with where one is” (11). Implicit in the still tableau of Moore House’s wedding remains and decaying, century-old furniture is a denial of this personal interaction with a dwelling, of Ahmed’s “becoming intimate.” In myriad small ways, domesticity breaks down in the Colonel’s Own and this superstition, which threatens punishment on those who would reorient the room’s temporality and its utility, emphasizes the primacy of a secret history over inhabitation, comfort, and recuperation. If the introduction of violence to Moore House disturbs a character’s sense of structure and space, *Filigree Ball* suggests that the maintenance of violence within a space leaves no room for characters within a structure. Rather they are pushed to the margins of their own dwellings by a history of recurring violence.

But as a preserve of secret history, Moore House is necessarily also oriented to futurity. An expectation of future use—and thus of repetition and return—lies behind its persistence as a useful space. The library’s trap must be jealously hidden in order to suppress the more lurid details of the family’s rise to prominence; tied to this self-preservation, however, and more keenly felt by the family is an instinct that the mansion might prove useful once more. “Coward that I am,” the Colonel confesses, “I am willing to throw upon posterity the shadow of a crime whose consequences I dare not incur in life” (322). This line opens his hidden account of the trap and frames the statement as one of anticipation and apprehension as much as admission and remembrance. Alpheus’ “shadow” is hazy—a Gothic mixture of reputation, temptation, and guilt—but it clearly falls upon Alpheus’ neurotic, repetitive relations to space. Indeed, in the melodramatic climax of his statement, Alpheus portrays himself as an instrument of the house’s repetitions:

I can not resist it. To tear out the deadly mechanism,  
unhinge weight and drum and rid the house of every  
evidence of crime would but drive me to shriek my guilt

aloud and act in open pantomime what I now go through in fearsome silence and secrecy. When the hour comes, as come it must, that I can not rise and enter that fatal closet, I shall still enact the deed in dreams, and shriek aloud in my sleep and wish myself dead. (323)

We can see at play in this description an enchantment and impurity to Moore House—qualities of space, Lefebvre suggests, that are not dislocated from death—and certainly the novel has already suggested the house’s supernatural spatiality, but we should not be too ready to take the Colonel at his word. Alpheus eagerly acknowledges his command of space when discussing his ingenuity—“Master in my own house, I contrived a device...” (322)—but feels commanded by space when contemplating his guilt—“I can not resist it” (323). In the extended quote above, the Colonel projects a doomed futurity onto his surroundings, denying himself agency (and, notably, culpability) in his own fascination. In a convenient self-disregard, he defers to “the unimaginable influences emanating from an accomplished crime” (323). The violence of the space will recur, he claims; the trap will continue to deploy; whether the instrument of violence remains or not, Alpheus must repeat the violent act into the future. Indeed, to fail to do so, he admits, would be to feel fully his own guilt. Writing on the spatiality of anxiety, Sianne Ngai observes that projection often conjures up a beneficial distance:

the externalizing trajectory that anxiety becomes secures this disposition as a form of self-liberation . . . based partly on the claim to peripheral status which this movement makes available. The way to freedom via projection . . . occurs only in the claim of an initial ‘surrender’ to thrownness that registers in the form of impotence or passivity. (*Ugly Feelings* 245-246)

The Colonel’s repetitions may not be self-liberatory, indeed they are clearly self-abnegating. But by indulging an affective relation to space that rehearses his own passivity, Alpheus defers the accountability that would come with agency, a shadow he casts upon posterity. The Colonel desperately throws agency at the wall and, this being an *fin de siècle* novel, such a gesture is not without consequence. Something of it sticks. The agency and forward-orientation he projects on the space for much of his adult life, eventually works itself into the woodwork. This futurity engrained into Moore House’s

spaces, then, from the Colonel down to Veronica, is an expectation of repeated violence; as well, though, it is a deferral of self-understanding that has subsumed the family into their house.

Neither Moore House's expectant manner nor the sensibility of preservation I discussed earlier stray far from the typical affective economy of the idealized fin-de-siecle American home, which served as a cultural seat of reproduction and nostalgia. Nor does Moore House leave behind the cyclical time that Freeman highlights as central to the home. The cycles of repeated violence over the course of the nineteenth century are similar in kind, if not in periodicity or result, to the daily cycles of homelife and, ironically, similarly provide a temporal refuge and remove from the outside world. Contrasting domestic time to sequential linearity, Freeman writes "[i]f time becomes history through its organization into a series of discrete units linked by cause and effect, this organization in turn retrospectively constructs and imagined plenitude of "timeless" time to which history can return and regroup" (6). In Moore House we find a similar plenitude of time but one that has been violently wrenched from its ability to renew. Rather the affective stillness of space, its sense of removal and security, is synonymous with waiting, with a patient, predatory anticipation of usefulness. Early in the novel when introducing Moore House to the reader, the investigator remarks that "one might surely be pardoned a distrust of its seemingly home-like appointments, and discern in its slowly darkening walls the presence of an evil which if left to itself might perish in the natural decay of the place, but which, if met and challenged, might strike again" (*FB* 6-7). This evil is not merely the replacement of therapeutic affects—comfort, timelessness, nostalgia—with violence. Each of the orientations that I have outlined—violence, then preservation and expectation—enacts a new affective topography, radically shifting ones relation to space. Violence unstructures our sense of built space and its securities; preservation gradually limits our possible interactions with space to a custodial repetition; expectation, particularly of repetitions, defers recognition of our continuous reorientations of space.

In her suicide note, Veronica Moore provides some insight into the disorienting, corrupting experience of wielding the locked room:

I am haunted now, I am haunted always, by one vision,  
horrible but persistent. It will not leave me; it rises between  
us now; it has stood between us ever since I left that house  
with the seal of your affection on my lips. Last night it  
terrified me into unconscious speech. . . . a man's form  
seated at the end of the old settle, with his head leaning  
back, in silent contemplation. (*FB* 395)

What haunts Veronica in her final moments is the image seen through the passage into the locked room. The revelation of the structural contingency of Moore House, its uncanny connections between spaces redefines her sense of domestic interior and exterior. The knowledge bars her from experiencing the domestic unity of her new household; it rises between her and Francis Jeffrey. At once, it collapses their bedroom with the haunted, sleep-disordering bedroom of Moore House. It transgresses from interior to exterior, emerging from the lips in an unguarded moment of automatic confession. To understand Moore House as a space is to radically reorient yourself, it seems, to boundaries and transgressions. For the reader of *The Filigree Ball*, Moore House exists primarily as an affective site rather than as a credible structure. Even diegetically, the mansion appears to consist of a collection of details, generic flourishes, and historical moments rather than as a complex of spaces, forms, and materials with which the investigator, to say nothing of the reader, might feel some fluency. We cannot orient ourselves within Moore House, a building riddled with gaps and orphaned rooms. Whether a murder has taken place incidentally or, as in the Moores' case, been planned for and engineered, the locked room is an incontinent space, one that interrupts our sense of the intimacy of architecture. The apparently sealed space of violence represents a concern that cannot be quieted until its connections to other spaces, which we know must exist, are specified and catalogued. However, often even the discovery of these passages is, itself, disquieting. Comaroff and Ong warn their readers of the horrors of a “functionally-specific aperture” which, when appearing out-of-place, disturbs our sense of the reliably structured “territoriality” of bodies or spaces (*Horror in Architecture* 122). In Moore House, the porous nature of the locked room extends outward from the library into the Colonel's Own; here, the trigger for the library's trap-weight functionally collapses these two rooms into one larger mechanism. The spaces meet in the loophole that haunts Veronica in the hour of her death. Providing “a very wide glimpse of the

library beneath” so that the trap can be sighted, the aperture is almost invisible from below, a fact which casts a pall over the investigators (*FB* 336). Comaroff and Ong write that breaching the boundary of two spaces in such a way is fundamentally related to the private made public, to an orientation to the exterior: “As the hole opens where it should not, the incontinent object releases that which should be kept inside... The interior refuses to remain so; those elements that should rightly be hidden burst into public” (123). Though it is the privacy of the bedroom that has been employed, here, to hide the trigger, just as it was the hospitable comfort of the settle that was meant to lure victims, both of these domestic affects are slowly tainted by their orientation to violence. The library becomes a receiving room; the master bedroom becomes a guest room. Privacy and intimacy are precisely what are bargained in the lurid, violent gaze of the room’s aperture. Ideally, the nineteenth-century master bedroom is a space that unites discreteness with discreetness; in the Colonel’s Own, neither can be maintained. Indeed, with their reorientation to death, the library and the bedroom are unstructured, physically and emotionally, to the point of being incapable of separating domesticity from death.

## Chapter 4

### 4 The Mind in the Place: Reading the Room and its Hauntings

#### 4.1

A haunt may be a space but it may, just as frequently, refer to a mode of inhabiting space. A haunt may be a spectre but it may, as such, also index our more spectral links to well-remembered places. Beneath the word's relatively recent Spiritualist or Gothic resonances, *haunt* still retains its sense of a habit, formed spatially. In fiction, the ghost or spectre is often encountered as an individual consciousness, often with a surprising agency. We can refer here to any number of nineteenth-century ghost fiction tropes: the spirit who returns as a violent force, as a voice of moral authority, as a rehearsal of past trauma or injustice. Considered as a whole, however, the haunting speaks to a more ambiguous, more personal relationship to memory, feeling, and space. The haunting extends beyond an individual ghost or a single encounter; it refers to a phenomenon, a pattern of placed behaviours, as well as to the excess of meanings, untidy affects, and magical thoughts that often, in fiction, attend on an encounter with liminal places. In the previous chapter I read for spaces that were disrupted by violence and for the affects and reactions that this unstructuring produced in those who called that space home. This chapter turns, largely, from the inhabitant to the investigator of a space. The stories I consider here each suggest that the investigation of disrupted spaces involves an emotional register and an affective communication between investigator, architecture, and inhabitant. In this chapter I read *fin-de-siècle* ghost stories against mystery fiction because their investigations frequently present an analogous set of behaviours, affects, and narratives. In both genres, the disrupted space—be it a crime scene or a haunted house—produces a strange affective topography. It retains, as we shall see, historical traces of feeling and behaviour that are narratively convenient but eerily inexplicable. To investigate such a space involves a specific affective engagement: a sleuth's knack for disorientation and a medium's ordered discipline.

Algernon Blackwood's "Empty House" rigorously imagines the sensibility of an investigation of place, beginning with the union of feeling and architecture. Opening as Poe would, with a thematic and apparently disconnected musing, Blackwood's tale introduces two affect-laden objects in parallel: the face of a stranger and the façade of a home.

Certain houses, like certain persons, manage somehow to proclaim at once their character for evil. In the case of the latter, no particular feature need betray them; they may boast an open countenance and an ingenuous smile; and yet a little of their company leaves the unalterable conviction that there is something radically amiss with their being: that they are evil. Willy nilly, they seem to communicate an atmosphere of secret and wicked thoughts which makes those in their immediate neighbourhood shrink from them as from a thing diseased.

And, perhaps, with houses the same principle is operative, and it is the aroma of evil deeds committed under a particular roof, long after the actual doers have passed away, that makes the gooseflesh come and the hair rise. Something of the original passion of the evil-doer, and of the horror felt by his victim, enters the heart of the innocent watcher, and he becomes suddenly conscious of tingling nerves, creeping skin, and a chilling of the blood. He is terror-stricken without apparent cause. ("EH" 1-2)

Aligning these two surfaces, Blackwood's comparison lends a face's expressive capacity to a façade and implicitly aligns the hidden processes—thought and haunting—each surface conveys. Their expressions, however, seem to be neither intentional nor discrete. These opening paragraphs depend upon "communication" of feeling, by which subjects and space, memory, history, and emotion are each superimposed until a cohesive ghostly image emerges. We can detect an affective signal, most obviously, in "an ingenuous smile" that nevertheless inadvertently conveys a sensation of estrangement and moral otherness. But this unintended, unmanageable transmission of feeling also proceeds from the evil-doer to his setting—in the form of lingering "passions"—and from the setting to any intrepid subject who should enter the space. From this perspective, the unsettling stranger's evil thoughts and the house's malingering emotion are not merely placed in parallel. Rather the former is directly projected as the latter. The building is haunted by



the murderer's malicious feeling and by his victim's betrayed terror; its spectres emerge from this phantom affect.

This chapter explores Blackwood's empty house with revenant repetition while reaching out to other similar Gothic complexes of affect, site, and history. Throughout, I read *fin-de-siècle* genre fiction for spaces that upend our typical affective relations to our built surroundings. These tales depict the haunted house and the crime scene, two environments glutted with an enduring record of affects and subjective information. Turn of the century readers, as we shall see, inherited a century of thinking that stressed the material presence of the past, of ancient information that sat latent in every surrounding. The concept of deep time, of course, remade the environment as a present record of an affect-charged past, as inherent to the sedimentary stones of London's foundations as to the sod of England's countryside and the layered white cliffs of Dover. Moreover, the rhetorics of Spiritualism and nineteenth-century theology argued that our environment teemed with past identities and with the actions, intent, and mentality of historical moments, an infinite presence that could be sensed and proved if considered correctly. This chapter reads sites of excessive information as forms of haunting—not to demonstrate their occasionally improbable capacity as archives nor their occasionally supernatural agency but to provide a vocabulary for their affective collapse of subject, site, and manner. In its various permutations, the word *haunt* moves easily from space to person, event to memory. Each can be haunted or haunting and often are both at once. Should some hapless character find herself in an abandoned building and silently trailed by a ghost, either the house or the victim might be accurately described as *haunted*. But one need not be a spectre to have old haunts, places that one turns to repeatedly. Similarly, an eerie memory—the recollection, for example, of an old haunt to which we can no longer return—can haunt us as capably as a ghost. The word has its own ethereal play that merges the supernatural with the natural. Ghost stories and mystery fiction rehearse and challenge the affective orientations we establish with our environment. The difficulty of managing these engagements comes to a head in an investigation, a non-normal exploratory mode of moving through and keenly observing space. The haunting in “Empty House” is unearthly but, as we shall find, it cannot be extricated from the grounded realities of domestic labour or the earthier feelings of lust, hatred, and cruelty.

To engage this lingering history, to investigate the empty house—or Moore House, for that matter, or Stoke Moran Manor—requires an investigator who can balance intuition with deduction, divination and mediumship with exploration and observation. We begin, then, with a building that remembers its inhabitants’ passions, with the affective collapse of subject and space, with the past’s spectral presence in our material surroundings.

“All these speculations,” writes William Whewell in 1837, “are connected by this bond,—that they endeavour to ascend to a past state of things, by the aid of the evidence of the present” (398). The statement—which might as easily have been voiced by a Dupin or a Holmes, in one of his later, more philosophical turns—describes a stance or attitude toward our daily surroundings as much as it does a study of past chains of events. Defined by its backwards-glancing curiosity, this stance was the essential element uniting nineteenth-century palaeontology, geology, archaeology, and philology—sciences that sought to channel the imminence of the past. Whewell would describe these disciplines as key examples of the palaetiological sciences but we might extract from this, more broadly, the palaetiological as an affective mode of being in the world. Such an affect dominates both mystery fiction and the ghost story, two genres whose fictional investigations routinely imagine the past’s material persistence. We can trace it, as we shall see, in their fantasies of perfect reconstruction—in the consistently legible crime scene; in the full, spectral appearance—and in the tidy universality of their causes and effects. Under the banner of the palaetiological, as Whewell would observe, “inquiries concerning the monuments of the art and labour of distant ages . . . the origin and early progress of states and cities, customs, and languages” joined “research concerning the causes and formations of mountains and rocks” in a general understanding of modern life as the cumulative effect of endless, obscure, but ultimately discoverable processes (397-398).

Whewell writes here of a clade of disciplines that are not inherently material; philology, for instance, was always a favoured science for the logician. Educated Victorians throughout the century, however, were attuned already by scientific advancements to a material imagination of the past. The early writings of James Hutton and Charles Lyell read in the strata of England’s coastline not only a disanthropic enormity of time but an

eventful register of dynamic, periodical change. Hutton's strata were so profoundly past that they could more conveniently measure time than be measured by time. Implicit in these findings is the sense of an unthinkable span of time made physically present. Despite the euphemism of a *geological record*, layers of stone are not entries, documenting at a remove ancient matters in a chronicle. Rather, the new geology presented the British bedrock as a fragmented vestige of the pre-human. Whether standing in cliffs on the coast or piled at the feet of Dupin's companion in "Rue Morgue," stones were tactile, graspable shards of the unimaginable. For the eighteenth-century archaeologist William Cunnington in his excavations of English barrows, stone and sod had been an impediment to bringing the past to light; Lyell's writing traced a past inherited in the stones themselves. Sod would have to wait for Lyell's protégé, Charles Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* similarly imbued the behaviours and the features of contemporary life with a context of epochs of struggle and flux. The late-nineteenth century's renewed enthusiasm for archaeology—particularly in the wake of Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* and the fieldwork of researchers like William Petrie, Howard Carter, and Augustus Rivers—carried new significance, emphasizing in bone shards and scattered artefacts our own brief implication in a material past. William James, who was significantly influenced by Darwin's theories, began his early attempt to align psychology with evolution by turning to the embodied presence of a cosmological past:

all the new forms of being that make their appearance are really nothing more than results of the redistribution of the original and unchanging materials. The self-same atoms which, chaotically dispersed, made the nebula, now, jammed and temporarily caught in peculiar positions, form our brains. (146)

James emphasizes an intimacy with ultimate spans of time here, imagining its presence within the physical apparatus of each thought. At once, he also highlights the permeability of our bodily self and our observed environment, each of which teems with strange provenance. Increasingly, we can find by the *fin de siècle* a cultural feeling that the past is environmental, present in every interaction with our daily places. No longer simply contextual, the past surrounds us as a substantial, if often mysterious, presence.

This palaeological mood colours Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," of course, with its wash of time, and the valley of Egdon in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878). Here, "an ancient permanence" of wild heath has intimately inflected the local culture down to their clothes—"We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive" (7)—and here the silhouette of a woman on a barrow can transport the traveller back to Celtic prehistory. The reader is left with a yawning disorientation in time, akin to a Victorian dolly-zoom. Such depictions push historical background into a distant context of deep time while at once drawing it close into a deeply personal intimacy. What appears is a material world that is at once comfortably tactile and evocative of a discomfiting frame of reference. Genre fiction seems to have been briefly, fervently enchanted with this form of the palaeological. The archaeological digs in Egypt helped to associate its entire continent for Western readers with a feeling of temporal collapse. *Fin-de-siècle* adventures with an African setting—H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886-1887), for example, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, or even the boom in mummy fiction in the last three decades of the century—often reveal the ancient past to be far more vital and enduring than the Western protagonists believe possible. In stories like Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan" (1890), early weird fiction would adopt the palaeological in its most eerie mode, gleaning from it a sense of humanity's brief existence while denying readers the possibility of Whewell's "ascension" to understanding. Despite their differing attitudes toward the past, these texts each emphasize its presence, physical but fragmented, in the margins of our daily life. At times this takes the form of a space coloured by emotion. The effect, though, is ultimately more nuanced and often less conspicuous than the pathetic fallacy's transference. When Thomas Hardy's reddleman, traveling through Egdon, envisions a prehistoric echo in the figure standing on a barrow, his projection is pathetic (to use the obscurer definition) but his sympathy lies in a harsh, sparsely populated landscape that seems to have been untouched since the Celts. Rather than pour his own alienation into the landscape, then, the traveller imagines the valley to already be filled with a history from which he is culturally and temporally alienated. The ancient quality of the tableau, he imagines, is a characteristic of the valley—a natural, residual association—rather than a product of his

own affective stance toward this new terrain as an outsider without a personal history in the space.

The palaetiological indicates a particular imagination of the material: as a confused archive of existence and action, behaviour and purpose. It evokes a suspicion that our own engagement with the material environment will leave some obscure trace in the world, waiting only for the intelligent observer to knit together the confused clues and loose threads into a single narrative strand of history. The Palace of Green Jade in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) develops this concept past comfort. Providing a mirrored version of our dolly-zoom, the novel casts us into an unfathomable future rather than a deep past. In the palace, the time traveller finds a technology exhibit displaying artefacts of his own period and the centuries after. As museum-pieces, these objects have been preserved or unearthed because their endurance is notable. The museum, however, is falling apart. Its ruins give the disconcerting sense that the palaetiological work to make meaning of our own period has at some point ceased to have any relevancy in the cyclicity of long durations. Our culture is past, as is the culture that found a palaetiological curiosity in us. The palace defamiliarizes the comforts of contemporary life, dislocating them from our current surroundings. A similar scene, and a similar imagination of the material, plays out on an autumn evening in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound*, which affords us a final example of the literary palaetiological. Hunting the escaped convict Seldon on the moors, Watson discovers a neolithic hut filled with Edwardian camping supplies: cooking utensils, a bed roll, some tinned food. Ever the careful observer, Watson remarks: "I satisfied myself that the place had indeed been used as a habitation" (*HB* 120). It is a sly joke at the doctor's expense, one that highlights the cyclical collapses of time consistently driving this novel. This hut was, of course, once a dwelling. Like the hound on the moor, and like Stapleton, the disguised Baskerville, the inhabitant of this hut has a previous iteration. Though Watson's meaning is clear, his observation cannot help but reference the building's original inhabitants. The use of the hut's prehistoric artefacts—table, bed, and hearth—marks the appropriateness of this current occupation while the physical presence of their immense age accentuates a feeling that Holmes's modern comforts are out of place. More to our purpose, the scene directly connects the forensic reading of our environment with the palaetiological. The evidence

of inhabitation here—legible even to an experienced amateur like Dr. Watson—within an archaeological site suggests that attempts to “ascend” to a previous moment, to read the history inhered in the material world, is not solely the study of a remote past.

Throughout his career, Charles Lyell was intimately associated with palaeontological inquiry, not only through the geological research that I have already mentioned but also through his work as an avid patron of other palaeontological researchers. To the science-reading public, his name seemed rarely to be far from the significant innovations of the day in geology, archaeology, palaeontology, and even, despite his early misgivings, evolutionary theory. Though Darwin’s was clearly the brightest and fastest rising star to emerge from Lyell’s firmament. Perhaps the strangest palaeontological document in his orbit, however, was Charles Babbage’s *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, which Lyell edited in 1837. As Babbage’s unauthorised response to the eight Bridgewater treatises on Natural Theology, the book was in large part an attempt to align a predominately literal reading of the Bible with recent mathematical and palaeontological findings. As such, it cited Lyell’s research and correspondence liberally. The volume is, in this sense, consummately Victorian; it attempts an apologia for both religion and science, imagining that the two might reinforce rather than contradict each other. It is best remembered for its ninth chapter—“On the Permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we Inhabit”—in which Babbage offered his theory of the final judgment. Beginning with the action-reaction law, he writes that our every movement sends unending, unsensed reactions rippling out into the material world. Writing prior to a general understanding of entropy and information loss, Babbage suggests that every word uttered might still be heard, every action taken might still be traced through its spreading effects, if only our senses or instruments could be so finely tuned: “what a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom, impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base” (112). On its surface, when compared to Lyell’s geological discoveries, Babbage’s argument seems to suggest a precisely reversed feeling toward our environment. Lyell’s backwards glance took in the immensity of time, recognizing our human insignificance; Babbage returns human action to the centre of things. Here, our affairs and concerns imbue the physical surroundings

with a moral gravity, with an anthropocentric significance; our matters matter to the matter of creation.

Nevertheless, Lyell's grounded geology and Babbage's more ephemeral physics share an orientation to the world that is essentially palaeiological. Each imagines the past to be inherent to our surroundings with its significance fixed, awaiting those capable of making their environment legible. Admittedly, Babbage's argument lacks the magnitude of geological time; instead, it offers a vision of a world whose surfaces thrum constantly with an incalculably detailed history. The two perspectives approach each other then in the supreme density of information contained in their physical environment. For each, the sense of surrounding is similarly sublime. Moreover, Babbage argues that this information is necessarily retrievable, though it is not yet available to Victorian technology. In this sense he frames the moral history of human action as a palaeiological field for the same eventual ascension to a comprehensible past as Lyell's geology. In the *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, the record of each motion or remark carries with it an emotional and moral context reflecting upon the soul. "The atmosphere we breathe is the ever-living witness of the sentiments we have uttered," Babbage stresses—twice—and the earth's atoms are "impressed with good and with ill," with the guilt of the murderer and with the "cruel mandate of the tyrant" slave trader (115, 112, 118). We can read in these descriptions the palaeiological—an essentially analytic or deductive perspective—as it is modulated by emotion, becoming not merely an affective orientation but one that is directed towards affects. Babbage's vision freights our surroundings with cruelty and guilt, agony and benevolence and in doing so imagines a material "testimony of man's changeful will" that might bear witness to God in a final judgment (112).

Babbage's palaeiology, then, is essentially forensic. His ninth chapter presents two cases of apocalyptic reconstruction that are not merely of moral but legal importance. A murderer's guilt, Babbage imagines, eventually becomes ubiquitous. As his body breaks down, his individual atoms each carry some small trace of his crime—"some movement derived from that very muscular effort, by which the crime itself was perpetrated"—as they move out into the world (116). This supernatural evidence, Babbage suggests, remains in the world, as irrefutably tied to violence as Cain's original mark. The ninth

chapter culminates with a second, more disturbingly detailed scenario, that of a slave trader as he drowns his slaves in order to hide his crimes. In an apocalyptic fantasy of divine justice, Babbage imagines the testimony offered by the crime scene itself, the sea and the air, and the final moments of the slave trader's judgement: "confront the murderer with every corporeal atom of his immolated slave, and in its still quivering movements he will read the prophet's denunciation of the prophet king" (119). By introducing the palaeological into a Christian cosmology, *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise* also suggests a sacred antecedent for palaeological inquiry and a sense of moral consequence to the field's concept of a material record. Babbage's theory imagines a world haunted by vibrations that are at once judicial, rational, and divine. He portrays his deity as an investigative impulse that will "endeavour to ascend to a past state" of kindnesses and cruelties (Whewell 397). As in the scenes of forensic investigation mystery fiction would popularize later in the century, Babbage's examples revolve around an evidentiary model of justice that weighs materiality against uncertainty. In these cases, however, the material is not, in and of itself, damning. Rather, its significance lies in its potential as an archive of affect, intent, and context. As "the never-failing historian of the sentiments," the crime scene is information made manifest (112).

"Thus considered," Babbage enthuses, "what a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom impressed with good and with ill" (111-112); his musing returns us to "Empty House," which offers a similar sense of the unseen, environmental presence of historic feeling, an "atmosphere of secret and wicked thoughts" ("EH" 1). Indeed, the *fin-de-siècle* ghost stories and mystery fiction I read in this chapter develop a spatial imaginary of emotion and thought, not to mention misdeeds and injustices. They each rehearse feeling as a specifically local experience, suggesting that our past orientations to space might be communicated through various—sometimes supernatural—means to an investigative mind. Blackwood's empty house is itself a "never-failing historian" and its architectural memory of feeling grounds the tale's imagination of the spectral. Indeed, disregarding this emotional context, Blackwood's tale offers a simple, even stereotypical Spiritualist ghost story. In a 1912 story, "Outside the Door," E.F. Benson would fondly caricature such stories and their predictable



houses in which, as a rule, some crime or act of extreme emotion or passion has been committed, and in which some echo or re-enactment of the deed is periodically made visible or audible. A murder has been committed, let us say, and the room where it took place is haunted. The figure of the murdered, or less commonly of the murderer, is seen there by sensitives, and cries are heard or steps run to and fro. (154)

The description fits “Empty House” down to the passion, the cries, and the steps. In Blackwood’s iteration, the intrepid sensitives are Jim Shorthouse and his Spiritualist enthusiast Aunt Julia. At her invitation, Jim Shorthouse reluctantly accompanies his aunt on a midnight exploration of a notoriously abandoned local house—an English counterpart to Moore House. Inside, the pair witnesses in fragmentary impressions a crime that occurred a century previous when a groomsman hid until midnight in the building’s cellar in order to assault and subsequently kill one of the housemaids. As Jim and Aunt Julia investigate the space, they endure the normal abnormal events: odd sounds, a slammed door, gusts of air, and momentary apparitions. These conventional frights, however, are largely incidental to the central contest of wills between the haunting and the two investigators. Blackwood’s house functions under a localized logic akin to Babbage’s cosmology. The crime scene re-enacts the maid’s murder for Jim and Julia much as the slave’s atoms, gathered from the sea, testify to his death. In Blackwood’s horror, however, there is no room for Babbage’s sublime satisfaction. The sensitives enter the house out of a palaetiological curiosity but can only bear passive witness to its history and attempt to avoid experiencing its emotional excess.

“[S]omething of the original passion... and of the horror” of the historical crime has come to reside in the space and “Empty House” offers this affective testament—its inexplicable persistence, its easy transmission—as a horrific phenomenon itself.

Babbage’s belief that even the smallest utterance might ripple out into the world with unanticipated significance proved to have a poetic prescience of the religious and scientific concerns of late-century Spiritualism, though he might not have entirely recognized the ripples that his own writing would effect. On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1882, Babbage’s Bridgewater arguments were highlighted in the “Fairy-Land of Mathematics” column of the Spiritualist journal *Light*, the third instalment in the column’s series

“Matter and Spirit.” Here, his difference engine is greeted as a messianic creation—Babbage’s “extraordinary iron-child”—which the columnist, Mary Everest Boole, portrays as having enunciated *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, realizing in it a Spiritualist scripture. She writes, in diction reminiscent of James Murray Spears, that “the utterances of his wonderful infant were a foreshadowing of some mighty apocalypse awaiting its time to be revealed; and his “Bridgewater Treatise” is a note of solemn prophecy” (Boole 578). The next week, Boole’s column returned to the treatise, quoting heavily from its chapter addressing the scientific importance of miracles. Babbage had argued in the *Treatise* that the Christian miracles were not supernatural; rather, the fact of their mysterious inexplicability simply implied that we had not yet grasped the fundamental laws of the universe. Within the context of a Spiritualist journal, Babbage’s theology was implicitly converted to an argument for the legitimacy of psychical research. Indeed, despite being largely overlooked in favour of Babbage’s more influential work in mechanical engineering, *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise* experienced a second life across the remainder of the century in religious and particularly in Spiritualist writings. The American Unitarian clergyman and mathematician Thomas Hill responded to and expanded upon Babbage’s theories in his own theological work *Geometry and Faith: A Fragmentary Supplement to the Ninth Bridgewater Treatise* (1874). Returning to the ninth chapter—“which none have ever read without a thrill of mingled admiration and fear” (46)—Hill argues that the simultaneity of Newton’s gravitational relationship only strengthens Babbage’s theory, effectively broadcasting any information instantly across the universe. To match this cosmic scope, Hill offers a Spiritualist image, a current “cloud of witnesses that ever encompass this arena of our mortal life” (48) in the place of Babbage’s analytical God, returned for the final judgement: “As they journey from star to star, and roam through the unlimited glories of creation, they may read in the motions of the heavens about them, the ever faithful report of the deeds of men” (48). In 1863, Babbage’s reference to the air as “one vast library” provided the epigraph to William and Elizabeth Denton’s book on psychometry, *The Soul of Things* (10). By 1912, the idea had reached enough of a cultural acceptance for E.F. Benson, again in “Outside the Door,” to present it as a useful, if tiresomely common, Spiritualist theory: “The atmosphere has somehow been charged with the scene, and the

scene in whole or part repeats itself, though under what laws we do not know, just as a phonograph will repeat, when properly handled, what has been said into it” (154). His description references a technological trend that returns us to Babbage’s own interests in engineering. By the Edwardian period, famous inventors like Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi were attempting to perfect the phonograph, the microphone, and the radio in order to pick up infinitely attenuated sound waves they thought might represent the leftover voices of the dead. In essence, they were taking Babbage at his word and attempting to replicate the omniscience he had ascribed to a metaphysically demystified God.

In their imagination of place, these disparate concepts—drawn from natural science, natural theology, and popular belief—suggest a broad cultural fascination with environmental information, highlighting our affective relations with our physical surroundings. In this regard, the forensic examination of mystery fiction’s crime scenes and the psychical exploration of ghost fiction’s haunted locations reveal a consonant understanding of space. Victorian genre fiction often seems fascinated with a palaeiological sensibility, an understanding of a material world that teems with potential traces of a previous time, that orients us—with or without our knowledge—within that contextual past. To sense this information one had to be keenly adept, with a sensitivity and affective composure supplied by a scientific education or (pseudo-) religious practice. In referencing Whewell’s scientific writings, Babbage’s moral physics, or Spiritualism’s spectral archive, my intent is not to suggest an origin point for this fantasy of a material archive. Rather, I turn to these as examples, spanning various discourses and disciplines, of the cultural queues that encouraged Victorian and Edwardian readers to imagine our built and natural environments as ongoing records, ones that might be affected by human engagement. When we view these individual instances together, we can trace a constellation of thought emerging from small threads of connection. Some of these lines are apparent. Responding to Whewell, Babbage figures the retrospective scrutiny of the final judgment as a moment of divine palaeiological inquiry. In turn, Spiritualism finds in Babbage an apparently scientific foundation for their belief in the enduring presence of the dead. Other associations are more surprising: the shared space of Neolithic archaeology and a potential crime scene in *The Hound*, for example;

Benson's image of the house as a phonograph, itself a reference to Edison's research, reaching back to Babbage's affective waves. Green's Moore House and Blackwood's empty house exist primarily as storehouses of a history of feeling and, as with the unceasing communication of Babbage's materiality, they do so long after the original inhabitants have passed on.

The emotions and behaviours of an eventful history of dwelling remain in these spaces as virtual layers of orientation, sediment that awaits a palaeological gaze. Indeed, all of these examples are linked by a depiction of the physical world as an affective archive standing outside of our selves. Each addresses our material surroundings and in doing so imagines our history in a location as a characteristic of the space rather than of ourselves. The virtual space of our orientations, in this sense, falls into place, becoming indistinguishable from the material reality of our accustomed haunts. This information often extends beyond emotional projection but "Empty House" and the other texts gathered here depict a prevailing interest in an altered affective relationship with space. Rather than depicting our emotional reactions to objective, architected sites, these texts consistently portray feeling environments in which the subject must, in order to succeed or survive, remain unfeeling. The next section provides one way of thinking of feeling space and spatial archives. The chapter's final section reads investigative characters for their muted composure and the manner by which they investigate sites that brim with affect.

## 4.2

Before the haunting, before the investigation, "Empty House" begins with the dislocation of affect. Affects are not precisely ghosts in this story. Nevertheless, by emphasizing an "atmosphere" that cannot be attributed to either the house or its visitors and which moves formlessly between the two, "Empty House" imagines the spectral and the affective as they approach a vanishing point. "There was manifestly nothing," Blackwood writes, "in the external appearance of this particular house to bear out the tales of the horror that was said to reign within" ("EH" 2). The evil passion that radiates from the house upon approach, then, is explicitly not an aesthetic effect. The house is indistinguishable—down to the last architectural detail—from its fifty decidedly not-dreadful neighbours in the

housing estate. But if this malevolence cannot be located in a discrepant doorway, a suspect step, or some bleak box borders, neither can it be located solely in the visitor. Musing on “[w]herein lay this marked, invisible difference,” the tale’s prefatory remarks suggest that the atmosphere “cannot be ascribed *wholly* to the imagination” (“EH” 2, 2-3; emphasis added); after all, the building’s influence engages even those who are ignorant of its history. “Wholly,” here, seems arch. At once playful and clinical, it establishes the story’s early, wry attitude toward the investigation, a tone that quickly evaporates upon entering the house. Moreover, the line suggests in its ambivalence that this evil passion, which throughout the story appears to reside in the house, in fact exists between investigator and space; that is to say, the “atmosphere” involves the observer, their imagination and emotion, actively and unwillingly in an affective relationship.

Spilling out from the house to engage visitors and tenants, and concerning the town at large, the affects of the empty house are uncontainable and thoroughly undomestic. The emotional character of the empty house is, of course, unhomey in the Freudian sense that it pushes intimately familiar settings toward the unsettling. Yet, in its haunting, the space is also oddly settled. Blackwood’s tale refers to a “series of innocent tenants who had tried to live in it and been forced to decamp at the shortest possible notice” (“EH” 3). Here, the empty house mirrors Green’s Moore House, where, though “it has always escaped the hackneyed epithet of ‘haunted,’ families that have moved in have as quickly moved out” (*FB* 6). In both texts, there is the sense that history brims and overflows from these spaces. They are so filled with information, with the residue of past affects and behaviours, that they have no room left for new dwelling, new orientations or attachments. This run-off, what I referred to as expression or unmanageable transmission in the opening of the chapter, by its nature further ruptures a particularly turn-of-the-century conception of the domestic as at once discrete and discreet. Tenants come and go from these haunted spaces and their movement opens the houses to public opinion. Just as Moore House has acquired a “discreditable fame” (*FB* 288), the serial emptiness of Blackwood’s building has become “little less than a scandal in the town” (“EH” 3). While their residual affects overflow, then, these hauntings also rupture the thin membrane of propriety that carefully circulates information into and out of the domestic space. Blackwood’s house, then, along with Green’s Gothic mansion and many of the

spaces I cite in this chapter, abandon the intimacy of inhabitation. Revealing a history of private feeling, the house involves outside observers in an involuntary, disorienting intrusion. In this sense, the building's affect is dislocated from its material appearance, from its observers, from the social category of its space, even from the integrity of its history. Its atmosphere emerges as an unconstrained, unstructured availability of forensic information.

Blackwood's empty house stands in a development of identical buildings, figuratively addressing the square with "an open countenance and an ingenuous smile" that cannot mask its latent malevolence ("EH" 1). Amidst a crowd of matching façades, only this one instance evokes an unwholesome affect. The image might draw us back to Baskerville's wall of ancestral portraits—a similar crowd of similar faces—and to Holmes as he stands caught in stunned epiphany before them. Throughout *The Hound*, this portrait collection appears to be a simple aesthetic ornament, generic shorthand for the estate's oppressively Gothic sensibility. Watson notes that the "dim line of ancestors... stared down at us and daunted us by their silent company" during dinner on his first evening at the Hall (*HB* 60); Sir Henry Baskerville spends his time studying the portraits with Barrymore in order to form a deeper understanding of his lineage. Despite this repeated attention, however, despite the collection's central location in the Hall, and despite Hugo's relevance to the history of the family curse, Holmes alone notes Sir Hugo's portrait and its striking resemblance to Sir Henry's closest neighbour, Stapleton. Seized by the portrait's indexical confusion, Holmes is transformed: "[t]he lamp beat upon his face and so intent was it and so still that it might have been that of a clear-cut, classical statue" (*HB* 138). In an elegant coincidence, Aunt Julia is similarly transfigured as her investigation of the empty house reaches its crisis:

An extraordinary something had come into her face and seemed to spread over her features like a mask; it smoothed out the deep lines and drew the skin everywhere a little tighter so that the wrinkles disappeared; it brought into the face—with the sole exception of the old eyes—an appearance of youth and almost of childhood. ("EH" 25-26)

Holmes is fascinated, here; Julia, panicked. The nature and the signification of their two interactions differ sharply. As she is refigured as a younger woman in the same room to which the groom chased the young maid, Julia's emotional response integrates her within the space's history of abuse. In this moment, she is subsumed within an affective encounter that overwhelms personal agency and identity. The indiscriminate strength of the room's affects contrasts the obscurity of the portrait's evidence, so inconspicuous that only a Holmes might recognize its importance. The movement of affect, however, within their two interactions corresponds, perhaps unexpectedly, as does the significance each text locates in a character's reaction to setting. Despite differing feelings, Holmes and Julia are both seized by an affective revelation that is portrayed as a distinctly static and passive engagement with their surroundings. I will discuss that engagement at length in the final section of this chapter. For now, I am concerned with surroundings and with an affective encounter with placed information. *The Hound* and "Empty House" each depict investigative research as essentially palaeological, at once as an orientation to space and a narration of history. In doing so they join many other *fin-de-siècle* ghost stories and detective narratives that imagine a topos steeped in fragmentary emotional echoes, spaces that are disrupted and haunted by passion and fear, for example. These stories tend to imagine affect as a form of information that might linger in a space, one that aids the investigator and the reader alike in coming to a more holistic understanding of the placed history of an event.

In ghost fiction written at the turn of the twentieth century, the past often must be interrogated and ultimately reconstructed through fragmentary impressions. Characters' understanding of the past is informed by their interactions with the supernatural as well as by historical documents, physical evidence, interviews, and deductive reasoning. That is to say, ghost stories stage an investigation much in the way of mystery fiction, as a means of narrativizing—often in shared locations—a confused encounter between past and present. In particular, ghost fiction suffuses settings with excessive feeling and meaning: a library window filled with yearning for a dead scholar, for example; a room that recollects its previous owners' wallpaper, dresses, objects, and reflection. These tales emphasize emotional experience as a form of knowing and often the endpoint of such an investigative plot is simply to piece together some fuller understanding of the lived

history of a space. In “Empty House,” Aunt Julia and Jim need no proof of the supernatural. The seriousness with which they approach their night in the house implies that they have little doubt of the presence of spirits in that space. Neither do they enter seeking to prove or disprove the historic understanding of the crime. Rather, their investigation involves achieving a clearer *emotional* understanding of both supernatural phenomena and that original crime; they wish to experience this lingering history for themselves. Of course, ghost fiction’s investigations, as we shall see, are not always forensic in nature, nor do they offer the same promise of judicial satisfaction.<sup>27</sup> The groom of the empty house, it seems, will continue his pattern of abuse before every witness that enters the house, no matter his punishment in life. This emphasis on emotional experience and ephemeral knowledge registers as well in readerly experience. Tales like “Empty House” present clues that are not immediately legible and must be weighed without the interpretive guarantee of an explanatory *dénouement*. As Jim and Julia prepare themselves for a final ascent to the servant’s quarters, late in their investigation, they each take a large swig from Jim’s flask to brace themselves. Coming immediately after Julia’s transformation, this moment too seems to rehearse an earlier moment in the building’s history. There is an implication from his spectre’s unsteady walk that the groom had also been drinking before he climbed to the servants’ rooms but this is never clearly stated. Neither does the story return to that moment. We are left instead with an unsettling, eerie feeling that functions on implication and emotional interpretation.

Appearances of a more empirical cosmology to the contrary, *fin-de-siècle* mystery fiction often hinges upon the trope that intense experiences will leave some remnant of their occurrence in the surroundings. From this perspective, crime scenes rehearse a similar relationship with place as Blackwood’s tale: a sense that an intense and even violent experience will ultimately engage and alter the affective capacity of its surroundings. *The*

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<sup>27</sup> W.W. Jacobs’s story, “The Toll House,” offers a bleak form of investigative ghost story. The narrator tragically comes to understand the power of a haunted space after a night in the house with his companions, but he leaves in the morning with only an implicit sense of how the house kills its residents and with little insight into the origin of its haunting.



*Filigree Ball*, for example, freights its crime scenes with residual affects that the detective channels under the genre's vocabulary of observation, deduction, or simple inspiration. These less objective clues recreate investigated space as a low-fidelity medium of communication, one that may transmit unconventional information to the investigator: the feeling and the mental state—not simply the physical actions—of a previous presence in that space. In mystery fiction, ingrained feelings are rarely as conspicuous to us as readers as they are in ghost fiction. Nevertheless, these affects are common remnants in a crime scene as we might find by lifting Sherlock Holmes's interpretation of footprints from a few texts. Doyle's canon presents Holmes as a particular enthusiast for footprints. In *The Sign of the Four*, Holmes admits that he has written a "monograph upon the tracing of footsteps, with some remarks upon the uses of plaster of Paris as a preserver of impresses" (SF 12). At times, in stories like "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and "Beryl Coronet," Holmes is capable of envisioning whole crime scenes as well as their ensuing investigations by simply examining these traces. The deductions he takes from them always seem perfectly plausible. In "Beryl Coronet," for example, he reasons that someone must have patiently stood in the snow for a good length of time, since his footprints have melted through to the ground. Footsteps, indeed, are the first forensic evidence with which Holmes engages in his first fictional outing, *A Study in Scarlet*. Holmes correctly identifies that as the murderer paced up and down an abandoned room, he became more agitated, a fact the detective gleans from "the increased length of his strides" (SS 37). Less coherent is Holmes's confident claim that "Patent-leathers and Square-toes came in the same cab, and they walked down the pathway together as friendly as possible—arm-in-arm" (SS 36). This finding is made without explanation. Though we can follow it vaguely—we can, for example, assume that Holmes noticed there were no signs of struggle—readers are left to wonder what fatal acceptance or cowed obedience might look like in a footprint, what marks friendliness as a footprint's affect. In *The Hound*, James Mortimer misreads the trace of a half footprint, believing Sir Charles Baskerville was walking on tip-toe. The misdiagnosis leads Holmes to cry out: "He was running, Watson—running desperately, running for his life, running until he burst his heart" (HB 28). When on the scene, however, in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and "The Resident Patient"—and, indeed, many other early

cases—Holmes reads the trace of a half footprint as a sign that the character had snuck through a space: “Tip-toes, tip-toes! Square, too, quite unusual boots! They come, they go, they come again” (“BV” 92). What marks the separation between an older man running across the grass, in these texts, and sneaking across the grass? Here, the evidence John Turner has left in the grass is ambiguous, particularly in the context of the broader canon, but Holmes inevitably breaks toward the correct interpretation. The presence of this affective information, explicable or not, and its discovery mirror the emotional experience stressed by ghost fiction’s investigations. Indeed, these crime scenes only wait for the right medium to channel the extra-ordinary information that lingers in the environment into a sensible narrative. Readings such as these may appear in bad faith or overly invested in the trivial but my point is simply that each of the affects found in this evidence—patient waiting, agitation, friendliness, cunning, panic—offer nontrivial detail to our engagement with the story, not to mention an investigator’s interpretation of events. As we see at times in some of Holmes’s or Dupin’s more heroic leaps of logic or in the stranger twists of *The Filigree Ball*, it is less necessary that the setting of this information be believable than that it be present. Anything less would disappoint our narrative expectations, as generically-savvy readers.

These stories imagine information, and particularly a history of feeling, to be imminent within our material surroundings. My interest, then, lies in the affective mechanics and ramifications of this convention. Blatant spectres and imperceptible evidence do not stand in opposition. Rather, they each exist on a spectrum of possible affective engagements in spaces haunted by affective and informational excess. Indeed, other texts in this dissertation sit along this spectrum. Moore House in Green’s *The Filigree Ball* seems to find a place somewhere near its middle. On first entering The Colonel’s Own, the detective is caught by a drawing that seems to lack artistic merit or meaning: “[y]et I not only paused to look at it, but in looking at it forgot myself and well-nigh my errand. Yet there was no apparent reason for the spell it exerted over me, nor could I account in any way for the really superstitious dread which from this moment seized me” (*FB* 40). Layering negative statement on negative statement—“Yet... Yet... nor”—and forgetfulness on top of bewilderment, the detective emphasizes the inexplicable affect of the space—“dread which from this moment seized me”—and his own passive loss of self.

The small moment is never explained. We are left to read his urgent feeling as a hunch but such impressions haunt the space as a more traditional spirit might. The interaction seems to combine Holmes's engagement with a different portrait and Julia's panic as well as the blatant nature of a haunting and the obscurity of evidence. In Blackwood's ghost story, the space's horror and passion are unnatural precisely because they are housed, not embodied. For Green's *Filigree Ball* or Doyle's *The Hound*, a similar setting of emotion and historical behaviour—these hunches and suspicions or the insomnia that persists in Moore House—appears as a comparatively natural situation, perhaps one that stretches our belief but not one that conspicuously troubles generic expectation. All of these texts, however, invest the built environment with an abiding archive of information that springs from our daily practices of inhabitation.

Sara Ahmed delineates the nature of this practice when she observes that “[i]n a familiar room we have already extended ourselves” (7). Such an extension is not a simple matter of identification or sentimental attachment. Rather, Ahmed imagines it to be a continual, affective process of dwelling, fundamental to our orientation to the world. As such, it begins in our most rudimentary acquaintance with a space. This initial engagement with a room may involve internalizing its topography. Or, if it is a room in which we are living or working, we may furnish it, remodel it, refurnish it. Both of these examples remain at play throughout Ahmed's theory and we can read in them the movement of a space into an increasingly virtual familiarity. In an early chapter of her book, *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed describes our disregard of background material as “acts of relegation” (31)—that is, through repeated use of a space our attention overlays an experiential terrain, one that selects for and emphasizes the room's receptivity and availability to an inhabitant, rather than its physical presence. This “relegation” finds a nineteenth-century correspondence in William James's writing on attention and spatial observation: “every field of seen things comes at last to be thought of as always having a fringe of *other things possible to be seen* spreading in all directions round about it” (186).<sup>28</sup> James similarly emphasizes the virtual, constructed nature of our relationship to

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<sup>28</sup> William James's quotation discusses a dryer, less emotionally suffused orientation to space than Ahmed's, clearly, but it is helpful to reference senses of virtuality from the *fin de siècle*, itself. That being

lived space, and of our sense of a periphery of material significance that arises in our earliest attempts to orientate ourselves within a space. As will become important later in the chapter, to gain a fluency with our daily spaces is also to streamline our own inattention, to populate this fringe. Those items and areas that are not useful, to which we do not have a habitual or sentimental attachment, shrink from our perspective and become relegated to a subdued backdrop.<sup>29</sup> For now it is enough to emphasize Ahmed's point that interactions with our dwelling—from the behaviours of house-keeping, to the placement of a sofa, to the recollection stirred by your front room in leafy sunlight—are born from emotional engagement with the built environment. Through this we extend to our surroundings a sense of the (often careless) intimacy that we normally reserve for our own self.

Ahmed writes of dwelling as negotiated praxis and imagines it as a form of unfolding, a movement with a distinctly outward trajectory; therefore, “we come to inhabit spaces as if they extend our skin” (10). To be extended into the familiarity of a room, then, is to make the space subjective—not simply comfortable, useful, or memorable, but a borderland of our self. Ahmed's use of such a tactile figure is significant; she returns to skin repeatedly when discussing the processes of dwelling. The image ascribes to dwelling a sense of extra-physical embodiment and depicts our habitual rooms as spaces of sensation and feeling. To develop a fluent understanding of a dwelling, according to Ahmed, is to direct our attention at the availability of its useful material features, as well as the tendencies and behaviours they make practicable. It is to attend to “some objects more than others, including not only physical objects but also objects of thought, feeling,

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said, James's more pragmatic understanding of attention, orientation, and virtuality is inextricable from the affective. Two paragraphs after this quote, James speaks at length of the subjectivity of our sense of extensiveness. He points to how the sensation of pain can inform our relation to our own body and to external surroundings, might even in a painful moment fuse our understanding of bodily spaces (a blister and the finger that touches it).

<sup>29</sup> In this, we are discussing a theory similar to Bill Brown's understanding of our relation to the things of daily life. Here, however, our inattention to things as they are stems from the slow numbing of habit whereas Brown often is more interested in the deeply ingrained expectations that obscure an object from its first arrival in our life.

and judgment, as well as objects in the sense of aims, aspirations, and objectives” (56). Gaston Bachelard, who at times anticipates Ahmed’s collapse of structure and subject, elegantly traces a corresponding movement, an enfolding to Ahmed’s unfolding. He writes of the inherent spatiality of reminiscent affects, which place them within a history of feeling and return us to that place: “[c]enters of boredom, centers of solitude, centers of daydream group together to constitute the oneiric house which is more lasting than the scattered memories of our birthplace” (17). For both of these theorists, our identification with personal spaces involves, in no small part, their incorporation into the framework of our feeling. Ahmed’s portrayal of dwelling places our thought and feeling within our daily structures; Bachelard’s, moreover, structures thought and feeling as dwelling-places. Each imagines the subject in space as an affective complex that consistently situates a personal history within the logic of one’s daily surroundings. Familiar architecture can organize our feeling, providing a virtual topos in which various affects endure. Refuge, anxiety, comfort, and grief may each be placed specifically in our environment and through their presence, dwelling seems to place us within a surrounding affective record of events and emotions, evident only to ourselves. While our familiar spaces remain sites of labour, use, and quotidian living, by this intersection of intimacy and virtuality, we may also come to understand them as complexes through which we may feel and think.

To engage with our built environment, then, is to extend a portion of our subjectivity out to that space, and indeed to accept a portion of that space into our subjectivity. The result is a dynamic, affective relationship that reconstructs spaces as virtual, meaningful topographies. In “Empty House,” as in *The Filigree Ball*, just such a virtual site haunts the crime scene, providing its palaeological sense of an intrinsic history. Despite the original inhabitant’s death, her orientations linger in slow decay like an attenuating signal or a Gothic ruin. This trope of a space haunted by its past orientations recurs, as we shall see, in a surprising number of canonical *fin-de-siècle* ghost stories. As a convention, it provides the eerie implication of a haunting uncoupled from a spirit’s intentions and instead emergent from a site’s temporal relations. The remainder of this section picks up the threads of similar relations to environment that knit together an otherwise diverse collection of spatially-invested genre fiction. Ahmed and Bachelard both generally

ground their orientations to architecture in a positive understanding of familiarity, which reads as a comforting intimacy. In a haunted house or in a crime scene, a character's impressions of the site may well develop from strongly-felt affective modes. Typically, though, these tend toward the unhealthy, concerning, or even sinister. I begin, then, with familiarity before moving on to other situated emotions that might seem more natural to Baskerville Hall, Moore House, or the empty house. Familiarity, after all, can breed contempt, jealousy, obsession, and even be a negative affect of spatial fluency in its own right.

In *The Filigree Ball*, Uncle David's life and happiness have been largely suspended in the decades after his disinheritance; without the family manor to anchor his identity, he is figuratively un-Moored. This collapse of self into a once-familiar space exceeds the simple sense of status offered by the building. David consistently fuses his subjectivity, not simply his pride, with the old ruin that he guards and illicitly wanders. Late in the novel, David indicates the extent of this possessive unfolding: suggesting that his niece's suicide inconvenienced his habitual burglary of her library, he claims "[a]nything done in this house was in a way done to me" (*FB* 410). The unhealthy extension of self toward place is a Moore hallmark, one that always seems to waver between obsession and possession. Indeed, in its portrayal of each of the dynastic Moores, Green's novel extensively rehearses the darker possibilities of familiarity, of incorporating a space into one's subjectivity. Some, as with Veronica Jeffrey, identify themselves through the family property in private and public gestures. Others become utterly oriented to the space, as with Alpheus who obsessively interacts with its uncanny architecture. This familial fascination with identity and dynastic defence so deeply alters the building's domesticity, as we saw in the previous chapter, that others can sense its virtuality. Particularly, the detective can sense a historic attention drawn to the Colonel's Own, the portrait, and the settle, objects that are intimately associated with the building's murders. The rest of the mansion, including its further rooms, are largely relegated by this haunting sensibility to basic setting and indeed serve no function in the detective's investigation. If Ahmed is interested in the gradual growth of person into place, the broad sweep of Green's Gothic mystery provides the reader with enough time for that growth to become decay.

In perhaps his most famous passage, Bachelard observes that “[t]he finest specimens of fossilized duration concretized as a result of long sojourn, are to be found in and through space. The unconscious abides. Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (9). When approached from this oblique angle, the experience of our most commonplace rooms has a ghostly quality; we fill our intimate haunts with our own personality and history, which linger in a gauzy topography. Moore House is haunted, at its root, by these other houses, by the accreted associations and sedimented spaces where the unconscious of prior inhabitants still, fantastically, abide. The metaphorical connection of these two forms of haunting—one an artefact of virtuality and inattention, the other a fantasy of the returned dead—is certainly convenient but it is also a well-established convention, appearing in ghost stories throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and still in use during the *fin de siècle*.<sup>30</sup> We might turn, here, to Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s “The Southwest Chamber” (1903) in which a room is haunted by the fastidious house-making of the home’s previous owner. Sophia and Amanda have inherited the family mansion from an extraordinarily spiteful aunt. In order to afford their new situation, they rent out each of the bedrooms only to find that the aunt’s bedroom occasionally recollects its past furnishings. The wallpaper and drapes change back to those the aunt had hung. Her clothes cannot be taken from the wardrobe for long before they mysteriously return. The mirror, at times, reflects the wrong image. That is, there seems to be no room for new domestic attachments in this old and inhospitable space. Needless to say, renting the room out cannot exorcise these old tastes, touches, and ties. Margaret Oliphant’s “The Library Window” (1896) offers up a home—and particularly a cozy window seat—haunted by an unwholesome yearning for a connected spectre in the next building. The seat is suffused with an obsessive desire originally experienced by a loving fiancée who was left to pine, generations earlier. Now each woman who comes to sit at the window-sill is

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, this convention remains in use long after. Perhaps one of its strongest expressions in ghost fiction is well outside of the temporal scope of this dissertation. Edith Wharton’s famous story “Pomegranate Seed” (1931) in which a widower is haunted by his cruel first wife, whose personality remains present and legible to him in their home, but whose presence remains inaccessible to his new wife. The ghost manifests from a confused mixture of guilt, grief, and unpleasant recollection, his response to an environment oriented to their shared history.

overwhelmed by the same impressions. In this, Oliphant joins Freeman and Green in their concern with the slow diffusion of dwelling. Their interest in our relations to space lies in the repetitive practice of daily inhabitation, the routine actions that emphasize and shift our perceptions until behaviours, emotions, and expectations haunt the space in their virtuality. Or course, in the repetitive activities of this inhabitation, we invoke *haunt's* first definition: to develop a habitual relation to a place.

Generally, however, crime and ghost fiction more often explore spectres born of crisis than of continuance. Though Ahmed's relation to space is structured by a gradual familiarity, there are other affective modes—at work throughout *fin-de-siècle* genre fiction—that may tinge a room with memory and emotional resonance. Blackwood's story addresses this explicitly from its earliest paragraphs, specifying that it is the “passion of the evil-doer” and “the horror felt by his victim” that provide the house's lingering “aroma of evil deeds” (“EH” 1). These emotional remainders mark the moment in which the domestic was disrupted for the victim and assailant and the means by which it is disrupted for later generations of inhabitants. Tales like “Empty House,” then, construct spaces that still echo with the affective shock of a character's sudden mental or mortal crisis. Against domesticity, familiarity, and spatial fluency, these tales offer violence, trauma, and disaster. In doing so, they stage events that break orientations, that so deeply alter a character's relationship to an environment that they register their occurrence in the surroundings. Thus, the empty house is not haunted by the maid's typical engagement with each room. Jim and Julia cannot access the care, labour, or fluency that she invested throughout the home as the tenants of Freeman's “Southwest Chamber” can interact with the aunt's home-making. Rather, the spectral images and emotions Blackwood's investigators encounter proceed from the maid's assault and murder. That is, the story forgoes the spectres of a gradual orientation in order to haunt the house with the moment in which that orientation was altered, in which the maid's association with the space shifted from familiarity to horror.

Again, it is helpful to turn to some of the period's other canonical stories to sketch in this paradigm of haunting. Margaret Oliphant's “The Open Door” (1885) features at its core a haunting stripped down to a repeated phrase—“Oh, mother, let me in!” (15)—and a sense



in the observer of an invisible body collapsing. When Colonel Mortimer leases an estate outside of Edinburgh, his son strays too close to the haunted ruins of the defunct servants' quarters. The child falls ill, feverishly repeating the ghost's entreaty, and in his sick bed, he begs the Colonel to investigate the haunted doorway to the ruin. In the story's climax, the haunting is recognized by a local priest as the spiritual remnant of a servant's prodigal son. Returning to find his mother had passed on, the son collapsed at her door, begging her to let him in once more. Significantly, the priest exorcises the haunting not through a ritual but by addressing the negative affects—selfishness and melancholy—that have kept the ghost, as well as their effect on the current household. The climax of the story is essentially therapeutic: once these affects have been addressed, the melancholic entreaties cease and the Colonel's normal domestic life is restored. O. Henry's bleak tale "The Furnished Room" (1904) provides an American example, depicting a man haunted by a spectral scent and compelled by a lingering behaviour. Having come to the city to find his lost love, the man takes a room in a lodging house after five months of fruitless investigation. As he prepares to rest, his room fills with the scent of his former partner and he searches frantically for a sign that she might have once lodged in the same room. When the scent dissipates, the man is overcome with despair, having found no obvious evidence that she might have lived in the building. He tears the sheets from his bed, stuffing them into the cracks under the door, and turns on the gas. Only after this scene do we learn that his lover committed suicide in the same manner and in a moment of similar despair a week prior. The scent was, itself, spectral evidence of her tenancy.

These tales depict the persistence of something other than Ahmed's slowly developed relation to space, as we see it in Oliphant's window or Freeman's rented rooms. As such, they might be shelved with "Empty House," in that they suggest panic, rage, guilt, and despair as mediums of emotional engagement with a place. In many *fin-de-siècle* ghost stories, a depiction of feeling is an implicit gesture—at once to the emotional object and to the reader. A description of a character's fear returns our attention to what is fearful, at once also modelling an ideal engagement with that object for us, as readers. On both the level of attention and of emotion, the description is a reaction, emphatically reinforcing the narrative centrality of the horrific. William James suggests this modelling is a key benefit to fiction over medical description: "as emotions are described in novels, they

interest us, for we are made to share them” (448). Here, however, certain feelings—we might think of the passion and fear of the empty house—bear a further significance as they are the affects that reorient these sites, the emotional evidence that recalls an initial violence or trauma. In particular, these feelings rehearse the moment in which domesticity was irreparably lost, much as we saw in the previous chapter. The son in “The Open Door” persists as the gestures of his emotional collapse, as the downward movement of his faint and as the whimper he made, begging his dead mother to welcome him home once more. The lover of “The Furnished Room” remains as a spectral scent that engenders an overpowering impulse to suicide. As with the locked-room mysteries of the previous chapter, these stories explore the fragility of familiarity and the persistent unsettling of dwellings tainted by violence. In these tales, however, the evidence is often strictly emotional as the mystery is essentially one of virtuality, association, and orientation. To be made to feel these emotions, then, is to engage in the textual investigation and to trace the history of a space.

Green’s *The Filigree Ball* stages a similar form of haunting as a strongly felt intuition whenever the detective interacts with furnishings tied to the library’s trap, the origin of its unhomeliness. Upon first encountering the settle beneath the suspended weight, he experiences “[a] crawling sense of dread... not because superstition had as yet laid its grip upon me... but because of a discovery I had made” (*FB* 34). As we have seen, the detective will soon return to this vocabulary. Later that same evening, he faces a “really superstitious dread” as he is inexplicably drawn toward a portrait that contains the trap’s hidden instructions (*FB* 40). The narrator’s invocation of “superstition,” first in denial and later in abashed confession, insists on his rational, science-minded stance toward the crime scene. The term brackets this more affective, intuitional form of understanding from the rational forensics that Green’s detective feels marks the professional. The wash of emotion he experiences is either disconnected to a belief in ghosts, as in the first instance, or is not so rough as to swamp his more rational self-awareness, as in the second. What seems to escape the detective’s notice is that, whether superstitious or not, his dread is a non-sequitor, a conspicuously out-of-place emotion. The detective himself seems to foresee this confusion, recalling feelings that “clung with strange insistence to me here” (*FB* 41). In retrospect, the detective remains confused even after the mystery’s

solution: “Why this picture... should have held my eye after the first glance, I can not say even now” (*FB* 40). As readers, we might expect an investigation to elicit confusion, interest, or a triumphant realization. This ghostly, remnant foreboding, however, is not naturally to be expected in response to a pencil drawing or an investigative discovery. Rather, the narrator’s feeling originates in his engagement with a house that has been forcefully wrenched from domesticity by the family’s own bleak apprehensions. His fascination with the portrait rehearses Alpheus’s fascination, his dread echoes the family’s dread. Both Blackwood’s and Green’s narratives, then, are haunted by the sudden failure of any possible domesticity. In the information those hauntings record, we can often trace a violently revised affective stance to one’s surroundings. In these spaces, violence and death have caused a seismic shift in the virtual topography, which creates difficult terrain for those who would enter after.

We can turn then finally to those who must engage with that virtual terrain. Early in their vigil in the empty house, Jim Shorthouse warns Aunt Julia, “any sound or appearance must be investigated at once, for to hesitate means to admit fear. That is fatal” (“EH” 13). Jim’s urgency, betrayed by his “at once,” ascribes an unexpected temporality to a haunted space. Rather than the dormant archive one might expect from a haunting that has abided for a century, the spectral presence in the empty house is dynamic and disconcertingly alert. The building’s emotional history is still vital and Jim and Julia must actively work against their contact with this history. As a statement on their impressionable condition, Jim’s warning directly contrasts fear with the physical activity of investigation. Throughout the story, fear emerges as its own paradigm of a bodily engagement with the house, albeit as a passive and largely involuntary engagement. Blackwood’s tale traces the circulation of fear—and its related negative affects—as communication, both in the sense of infectious transmission and disclosure. In effect, we follow a feeling as it builds and drifts between the two investigators and the site itself. As the night wears on, each of Jim’s and Aunt Julia’s reactions to the haunting follow a distinct descriptive pattern. First, the pair will physically react: “[t]hey had not gone up more than a dozen steps when they both simultaneously stopped to listen” (“EH” 17-18). They, then, progress through an emotional experience: “looking into each other’s eyes with a new apprehension across the flickering candle flame” (“EH” 18). Finally, the reader is

allowed in to their feeling, given access to the stimulus of their reaction: “[f]rom the room they had left hardly ten seconds before came the sound of a door quietly closing” (“EH” 18). Depicting their feeling in this order, the tale disrupts our routine engagement with horror. The descriptive model briefly builds our tension but, importantly, it separates our experience and the characters’, working against the mimesis that James finds in typical fiction. And yet there is an irony to this separation, which engages a physical, behaviouralist sensibility. If there is a disposable component in this pattern it is, surprisingly, the emotion itself. Throughout the story, this descriptive order shifts at times but only ever to contract by eliding the characters’ interiority. Often, an immediate physical response stands as a metonym for the emotional experience of, say, panic. Blackwood had read William James, citing him repeatedly in both *The Centaur* (1911) and in his autobiography *Episodes before Thirty* (1923). Through this descriptive pattern, “Empty House” develops a clear cognate in the investigators’ reactions to James’ behaviouralist models of feeling. As he writes in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), James’s is a primarily physiological theory of affect: “*If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no “mind-stuff” out of which the emotion can be reconstituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains*” (451, emphasis in original). Emotion, for James, knits up two definitions of feeling, both physical sensitivity and emotional sensibility. He describes our interiority, its impressions and sentiments, as largely a secondary sensation. It is the body that provides a first response to affective stimuli, that reacts with a visceral sensibility.

Emotion in “Empty House” errs toward these physical behaviours. By consistently staging physical feeling, Jim’s shudder down his spine or Aunt Julia’s trembling limbs, the narrative emphasizes the immediacy of their bodies within a hostile environment. It suggests the physical threat of otherwise ephemeral qualities: affective ties and spectral topographies. Through its Jamesian descriptions, the tale upholds the physical body as a field of material feeling to parallel the material feeling of an architectural space haunted by residual passions. The body is reimagined as a contested site, caught between an external environment of hostile feeling and the character’s interior self-control. In this, the story’s Jamesian sensibility rhymes well with Ahmed’s emphasis on the situated body

as a tactile membrane for affective encounter, within which the subject might reach out to or recede from its surroundings. Fear in the empty house is felt as an impression on the skin and the intimacy of its interaction, the ambiguity of its origin, and the attention we must pay to it as a significant metonym of feeling admits us into a Gothic complex of material emotion. Indeed, in establishing a Jamesian sensibility, the story emphasizes an encounter between concretized feeling and embodied feeling in approach, often catching the brick-bound haunted space and the flesh-bound mental space in moments of resemblance or identification. As he prepares for the evening's investigation, Jim bolsters his mental separation: "he kept himself and his forces well in hand the whole evening, compelling an accumulative reserve of control by the nameless inward process of gradually putting all the emotions away and turning the key upon them" ("EH" 3). Locking away his emotions, he establishes his sensibility as a discrete space, bounded by a deliberate composure (what I will refer to in the following section as a negativity). In establishing a structured manner toward the haunting, Jim imagines himself as a built environment, one which might sustain emotion and separate it from the outer world as the empty house has done for a century. More than introducing the possibility of emotionally freighted space, this early moment suggests its power to organize a sense of interiority and, specifically, Jim's continuity with the built environment.

In response to Bachelard, Dylan Trigg writes "[p]lace and body form a hybrid, each glancing toward the other for their identity and animation" (12). Indeed, while Jim structures his feeling architecturally, the empty house expresses its sensibility with a strange subjectivity. These two categories of feeling, these two interiors, increasingly communicate as the story progresses, fittingly in sequences that involve doorways. The trend begins early in the evening. Jim must "make the first call upon this store of collected strength... once the door [is] closed" upon Aunt Julia's house ("EH" 7). His early self-doubt, figured as a movement through both internal and physical doors, implicates doorways in the affective drama that will play out when they arrive at the haunted house. Thresholds join physiological responses—and candles, as we shall see, and the staircase—as legible material markers of the investigators' decaying composure. Upon first entering the front door of the empty house, Jim and Aunt Julia hear a man's

cough, “so close that it seemed they must have been actually by his side in the darkness” (“EH” 10). Later, as they enter the scullery, the two face a second apparition:

The door was standing ajar, and as they pushed it open to its full extent Aunt Julia uttered a piercing scream, which she instantly tried to stifle . . .

Facing them, directly in their way between the door posts, stood the figure of a woman. She had dishevelled hair and wildly staring eyes, and her face was terrified and white as death. (“EH” 16)

Later still, the two return to the drawing room to investigate a set of folding doors that have closed quietly behind them. Here, they encounter the sound of rushing feet and the face of the murderous stable hand appears before Jim as their candle is stamped out. Each of these brushes against the building’s history occurs in close relation to the opening of a door. The implication, it seems, is that the work done by Jim and Aunt Julia to physically orient themselves within the house is at once a progress toward orientation to the building’s historic violence. Through these situated apparitions, the empty house offers a confusing engagement with the total emotional intensity of the crime it replays. The investigators gradually experience in fragments the crime itself as well as the preceding climate of abusive obsession. The brief sequences figure the doorway as a point of affective collapse. Each exacts a price upon their reserve and, at once, orients the investigators into historic paradigms of abuser and abused. The spectral impressions bear an affective resonance, proceeding from a warning to a complaint to a threat, as expressed through the house’s past. The appearance of the victim’s “dishevelled hair and wildly staring eyes” colours their intrusion into the house with pseudo-sexual significance. The implication of sexual violence is bolstered by a material form of feeling, arising from a door, left slightly open, that is pressed open wide. Jim and Julia struggle to remain disengaged from this affective communication, but with the opening of each communicating door they become integrated into a historic grammar of power. If the scullery door portrays the investigators’ trespass as sexual in nature, the intimidating presence in the drawing room establishes the pair as the watched and resented victims of abuse. This residue of historic feeling, expressed through material interactions, informs each observation. Jim and Julia move on to the dining room: “[e]verything, they felt,

resented their intrusion, watching them, as it were, with veiled eyes” (“EH” 14). The space’s emotional quality, which exudes from unassuming detritus and nondescript furnishings—“[b]are walls, ugly mantel-pieces and empty grates” (“EH” 14)—takes its vocabulary of feeling from the “passion” left behind by the stable hand. The jealousy and territoriality of the space, its anger and desire to do physical harm, implicitly align these rooms with his abusive nature. These spectral feelings remain in space made thoroughly undomestic by their originals, which propelled the initial murder and disrupted the home. Their felt outcome is a spatial sense of hostility that orients the investigators as intruders, abusers, and victims rather than guests.

Returning to Jim’s warning with the context of these threshold experiences, we can parse the pun at play in his phrase “to admit fear.” *Admit*, here, sits at the border between Jamesian affect and the more spectral associations with space outlined in this chapter. The advice wavers between admit’s doubled meanings. In essence a contronym, the word might indicate a letting out or a letting in, expression or reception. Shorthouse warns Julia not to confess her fear to the house and its entities and, in the same breath, not to allow the building’s spectral affect to prey upon her mind. This doubled movement carries a strongly Jamesian quality, found in his vision of the body as an affective boundary and in his advice for self-control. “Refuse to express a passion, and it dies,” James observes in his theorization of emotional discipline. That is to say, to confess one’s fear to the house is at once to allow that fear an interiority. The pun, then, is one of engagement with the house. It is a warning against giving way to an affective relation with the house. Structural impressions, akin to the sense of intrusion that materializes in a shoved door, extend throughout Blackwood’s tale. Gradually, these physical emotions come to correspond with the investigators’ own Jamesian physical feeling. The convergence of the two reaches a crisis when Jim and Aunt Julia enter the third-story room in which the groom assaulted the maid:

In spite of the chillness of the night there was something in the air of this room that cried for an open window. But there was more than this. Shorthouse could only describe it by saying that he felt less master of himself here than in any other part of the house. There was something that acted

directly on the nerves, tiring the resolution, enfeebling the will. (“EH” 22)

The fear that moves through this room originates in the maid’s horrific encounter, but it has collapsed into the logic of the space itself. A third-story window would not have been useful to the maid, desperately hoping for escape. Rather the room betrays an architectural expression of an impulse for free movement. Read closely, this impulse works on them constantly while they are in the space. Jim opens the window and, as they settle into the space, he places “the candle on the floor of the cupboard, leaving the door a few inches ajar” (“EH” 23). Soon we find that the door to the hallway has also been left open. Given that the story has already established that their emotions are something that must be guarded, must be kept under lock and key, given that these internal doors have been opened with every spectral appearance on various thresholds of the empty house, Jim’s and Julia’s sudden decline into the horror of the site is not surprising. Jim “suffer[s] the wholesale depletion of his vital forces” as his separated composure is fully oriented into the physical openness of the space (“EH” 22). We can return, at last, to Aunt Julia, in panicked revelation as she is integrated into a history of feeling. Where Ahmed discusses an unfolding into space, we can recognize here a spatial collapse. “[S]lowly robbing them of self-confidence, and the power of decisive action,” the room merges physical openness with emotional admittance, current fear with historical fear, the investigator with the investigated (“EH” 24). The room provides an uncontrolled access to affect, that figuratively and literally transforms investigator into victim.

### 4.3

How would one investigate a spectral topography? Scientific discourse in the nineteenth century provided palaeontological scientists with a growing set of protocols and behaviours, even rhetorical paradigms for inquiry. Such as they were, these strictures allowed the geological enthusiast, say, or the academic biologist to regulate affect, theoretically reducing biased surmise built on preference, intolerance, ambition, or over-eagerness. But how could one best examine “[t]he finest specimens of fossilized duration” found in the sediment of historic orientations (Bachelard 9)? Given the difficulties Jim and Julia encounter in the upper chamber of the empty house, a



productive engagement with haunted spaces might require its own protocols and behaviours. Indeed, before they enter the house, Jim lays out one basic rule for the evening: “[t]hat you guarantee your self-control if anything really horrible happens” (“EH” 6). So far, I have attempted to sketch a conventional form of haunting that suffuses a space with the remnants of past emotions and associations. Such an environment, with its material record of feelings, acts, and orientations, would dovetail well with Babbage’s rationalized Christian cosmos but often feels naggingly incredible, eerie, or even horrific in the tales considered here. In this final section, then, we can turn to the affective practices and manners that investigators and ghost-hunters employ to manage their own emotional condition when confronted with the mysterious, with a feeling space. As we ended the previous section with the Jamesian feeling of Jim and Julia at the crisis of their investigation, we might fittingly begin this section with James’s advice on how the pair could “guarantee... self-control.” In his chapter on emotion, James observes: “[e]veryone knows how panic is increased by flight” (462). The comment is not simply stiff-upper-lip stoicism, however; it arises out of the embodied nature of James’s understanding of feeling. He continues: “if we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves, we must assiduously, and in the first instance cold-bloodedly, go through the *outward movements* of those contrary dispositions which we prefer to cultivate” (463). James’s vision of self-control imagines a productive form of disorientation. It suggests that we might, through conscious action, disorient our mind from our embodied emotion—that is, deny and redirect its initial physical feeling of, say, panic—and, in doing so, disorient our feeling body from its affective involvement with its environment. Though behaviouralists would most likely scoff at the affective environments laid out so far in this chapter, a similar process becomes all the more important in spaces that are haunted by emotion, as we shall see. In the genre fiction drawn together by this chapter, similar disorientations—from body, from environment, from sensibility, from stimulus, and even from social expectation and connection—recur time and again and provide one possible answer to my question above: an investigative practice for spectral topographies.

In the previous chapter, I described one possible form of disorientation, distinct from a disengagement from space or a misunderstanding of its parameters. I suggested that a duration of affective confusion between various surrounding orientations might also

disorientate. In *The Filigree Ball*, for example, Green's characters struggle to associate with a place and to define themselves in relation to Moore House's various histories, secrets, and intimations. For characters attempting to live within a historically compromised space, disorientation becomes profoundly dysfunctional. Here, ghost stories like "The Southwest Chamber" and "The Library Window" can join *The Filigree Ball* as examples; as we have seen in those stories, the extension into a dwelling as it is described by Ahmed only adds to the over-determined confusion of the space. For investigators, however—particularly for those snooping throughout "Empty House," *The Hound*, and *The Filigree Ball*—disorientation is often shown to be productive of revelatory knowledge, especially when it approaches a passive receptivity. This final section, then, considers the emotional engagement that these texts require from their investigators in order to engage in an emotional palaeontology, to access the affective archive of their surroundings. Where the empty house overwhelms with its affective excess, Sir Hugo's portrait withdraws and abides. The urgent, uncontainable haunting and evidence's hidden trace describe distinct affective experiences but, as we have seen, they may correspond to the extent that they imagine spaces that teem with unnatural information and past feeling. What separates these two experiences, then, is the strength of their signal rather than the information that signal conveys. Blackwood's house, Green's plantation, and Doyle's crime scenes do not differ in kind but in degrees—of amplitude, of consent, of memory. As we shall see, to engage the signal, the investigator must channel history through a conscious self-control that parallels another practice of emotional and historical engagement: Spiritualist mediumship.

In 1885, Underhill published her autobiography *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*. Underhill was the eldest of the Fox sisters and, though never as famous a medium, was the one most directly responsible for managing their early religious celebrity and cultural influence. Much of the memoir compiles short anecdotes and testaments of belief, a trove of reassurances for her readers of Spiritualism's legitimacy, efficacy, and solace, gathered over the course of her meteoric career. These sketches—often recounted with a conversationally circuitous structure and pacing—are deployed throughout the book to strategically place Underhill in a favorable relation to her critics, her followers, and her competitors within the movement. Toward the autobiography's

end Underhill expands her scope in a chapter titled “Some Observations on Mediumship,” which implicitly addresses skeptical attacks on Spiritualism through tangential portraits of failed mediums. These wry accounts suggest that factual inaccuracies and public scandals associated with spirit communication might result from three causes that do not themselves disprove a spectral world. Fraudulent or egotistical mediums might disrupt our contact, as might manipulative spirits, and most notably, improper feeling:

If there is one mental condition, on the part of mediums and sitters, more constantly insisted upon by good Spirits as necessary toward the attaining of good results in the manifestations, it is that of “*passivity*.” If a sitter earnestly desires a particular thing, has his heart and thought and will strongly set upon it, that is precisely what he is least likely to obtain, or to obtain it clearly and satisfactorily, if he obtain it at all. The expression is sometimes used that both medium and sitter must keep themselves in a *negative*, as distinguished from a *positive*, condition. If they are “positive”—especially if persons of strong will—their magnetic or Spiritual “positiveness” seems to work adversely instead of harmoniously with that of the invisibles. (*ML* 405; italics in original)

Underhill’s use of negativity and positivity borrows, somewhat loosely, from the vocabulary of contemporary telecommunication by figuring her mental composure as a pole to which spectral messages might flow. The spiritual telegraph was a definitive idiom for imagining the process of mediumship in the nineteenth century and both Underhill’s vocabulary and ritual are inflected by the image. Compared to the group channeling popularized by séance circles, her process places her directly within the mechanics of a spiritual telegraphic apparatus. With petitioners and witnesses seated around her, Ann Underhill would typically chant out the alphabet until an otherworldly knock interrupted her, at which time an appointed observer transcribed the letter. Building an eventual text compiled by her amanuensis from these serial sounds, Underhill’s ritual figures the medium as a telegraphic receiver and her partner as operator. To modern readers, coming to Spiritualist writing after the affective turn of mid-1990s scholarship, the spiritual telegraph—a delicate current of frisson between two communicative poles, defined by interactive emotional engagement and existing at once

within and outside of language—almost necessarily evokes the concept of an affective relationship. As with the old hoax of the spirit photograph, earlier exposure to one shadows forth into our image of the other. This association between affect and wire, though anachronistic, is fruitful; Underhill concerns herself largely with the interactivity of feeling as it passes through this connection and with its emergent communication. In its attention to appropriate emotion, the passage above marshals a variety of feeling into a familiarly religious sensibility. It advocates for an essentially meditative contact with the dead. A proper receptivity to spectral presence, the spirits insist, can only be gained through passivity, equanimity, and an ego-less attention, emptied of expectation. Delineating the elements of her affective negativity, Underhill aligns channeling with other religious traditions of emotional experience—most clearly with Christian prayer and practices of mindfulness. The line, however, runs parallel without intersection. Submission, attention, and self-control may more typically be associated with religious self-reflection or divine communion; such engagement, however, preserves the subject's identity—at times even emphasizes its individuality. For Underhill, such a “positive” state would interfere with the signal from the other side. Here, the same submission and emotional control empty the medium of self-reflection, preparing her instead as a transmitting wire for spectral effect. Even without the context of Deleuze, Tomkins, or Sedgwick, then, Underhill imagines in the spiritual telegraph a line of communication through which the interplay and feedback of feeling build between two engaged entities, affecting each other in relation. Underhill invites the medium to remain for a time within the current of affect, refusing to feel it, to subjectivize it as emotion.

Trance-like moments of inner composure, similar in feeling to Underhill's receptivity, appear throughout *fin-de-siècle* investigations. Their consistent repetition speaks to a particular imagination of research-as-sensibility as well as to the emotional work, a quality of affective discipline, that these fictions bind up with the production of knowledge. Srdjan Smajić draws attention in his influential book, *Ghost-Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists*, to Holmes's study of an ordnance map of Devonshire, early in *The Hound*, to which I have already referred. Returning from an afternoon at his club, Watson finds, behind a cloud of tobacco smoke, “a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an arm-chair with his black clay pipe between his lips” (*HB*

26). Roused from his thought, Holmes claims that he has been to Devonshire “in spirit,” that in examining a map of the moors his “spirit has hovered over it all day” (*HB* 26, 27); “[m]y body has remained in this arm-chair,” he adds, “and has, I regret to observe, consumed in my absence two large pots of coffee and an incredible amount of tobacco” (*HB* 26-27). As I mentioned in my first chapter, Smajić’s interest lies in nineteenth-century discourses of vision and he traces in this interaction with the map a common Spiritualist belief in “travelling clairvoyance” (184). The illusion returns us to material mediumship, of course, but here I think we could productively read the symptoms of Holmes’s reverie. This example is one iteration of a canonical trope that sees Holmes adopt a reduced or muted affect when deepest in thought. This includes his closed eyes and tented fingers when listening to clients (*SF*; ch. 3), and his cocaine-induced stupors that substitute for mesmeric thought between cases. Thus, in a novel that builds space for the supernatural within the rational world of Sherlock Holmes, this “travelling clairvoyance” feels conventional because it relies upon an established trope of affective discipline. It is Holmes’s abnormal focus, depicted conventionally as a trance-like moment of passivity, that allows him to separate spirit from his more positive, physical desires, and to channel the signifying capabilities of a municipal map.<sup>31</sup>

Jim Shorthouse spends the hours before his ghostly expedition in a similar state of focus, conserving a “store of collected strength”: “[i]nstitutively, by a sort of sub-conscious preparation, he kept himself and his forces well in hand the whole evening, compelling an accumulative reserve of control by that nameless inward process of gradually putting all

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<sup>31</sup> Really, there are too many trance-like moments from the Holmes canon to choose any one representative example. Another of the more suggestively Spiritualist is Holmes’s propensity for automatic playing. Holmes turns to his violin throughout the canon as a means of achieving a thoughtful, receptive state:

I see that I have alluded above to his powers upon the violin. These were very remarkable, but as eccentric as all his other accomplishments. . . . When left to himself, however, he would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognized air. Leaning back in his arm-chair of an evening, he would close his eyes and scrape carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy. Occasionally they were fantastic and cheerful. Clearly they reflected the thoughts which possessed him, but whether the music aided those thoughts, or whether the playing was simply the result of a whim or fancy, was more than I could determine. (*SS* 17)

the emotions away and turning the key upon them” (“EH” 7, 6). Having their roots in psychological research, Blackwood’s tales often share a conceptual vocabulary with Underhill’s writing. In his story, “The Whisperers” (1912), the spectral ideas left by an unused book collection haunt a writer; his surrender—described as “fearful, *negative*, *receptive*” (93, emphasis added)—to the churn of their confused inspiration closely parallels Underhill’s mediumistic “mental condition” both in feeling and in vocabulary (*ML* 431). In “Empty House” that condition, originally a form of controlled passivity, approaches impassivity. The emotional work that organizes Underhill’s passivity and Shorthouse’s impassivity, however, remains essentially similar. Underhill does not parse “passivity” from “negativity.” Though she depicts passive composure as a negative pole that might attract affects, structuring emotional impulse as electrical pulse, her primary concern lies in reducing interference, to use an appropriately telegraphic term. Any feeling or positive reaction that might feed back into the flow of affect, that might alter or reframe the encounter, would bias an interpretation of the signal. Negativity, or a muting of emotional reaction through a self-control that mirrors Jim’s “nameless inward process” becomes associated in her writing with a receptive passivity when it seems to be the affective mechanism of a deadpan composure.

Initially, the reduced feelings of these trances, musings, and meditations may seem unlikely candidates for affective analysis, particularly as they contrast with the amplified, traumatic emotion that I pursued in the first half of this chapter. In following the sensibilities of evidence, though, and the emotional qualities which we often imagine to linger in spaces disrupted by death and violence, fictional investigators will frequently channel past events through paradigms of feeling that are more typically associated with spiritual communication. Holmes’ statuesque stance in front of Sir Hugo’s portrait and his absorbed absences, for example, may be passive, are even portrayed as receptive, and yet they are fuelled by a fierce curiosity and frustration that Underhill might find entirely inappropriate for mediumistic composure. In turning to Underhill in this section, then, my intent is not to provide direct lines of correspondence between the emotionality that she outlines and those seen in this dissertation’s primary texts. Rather, her accounts of engagement with a stream of information and experience provide us with models of behaviour that can inform a less overt pattern of attention in fictional investigations.

Reading for a mediumistic composure in these texts allows us to delineate a more productive model of disorientation. If disorientation represents, as I have defined it, a duration of affective confusion between various orientations, an investigator's passive composure marks the possibility of a temporary encounter with orientations and emotions that might still linger in a space of violence. Negative receptivity, then, describes the emotional correlate to the intellectual work of research and observation, one that is often unstated but shadowed forth in *fin-de-siècle* investigations.

Each of these examples—Underhill's receptive passivity, Holmes's absent-mindedness, Shorthouse's wary impassivity—depicts a muted composure as the emotional effort necessary for intellectual labour. This negative feeling emerges as a productive temporary state in preparation for communication, analysis, and inquiry. Incomplete understanding awaits those who fail to achieve a mediumistic state of controlled affect, it would seem. Two prolonged anecdotes follow Underhill's description of restrained receptivity; in each, a more emotional engagement with the dead results in untrustworthy, even unhealthy communication. The first example, an unnamed clergyman who believes he will become a "high priest" of the Spiritualist movement, cannot separate his ambition from his channelling (*ML* 433). He is humbled, finally, by a false message from unruly spirits, which sends him and his wife out on a fruitless mission of mercy. The second example presents "a wealthy gentleman doing a large business" whose enthusiasm for Spiritualism coincides with strange, disordered behaviour (*ML* 408). At times he snorts loudly, he is prone to self-harm, and "his lucid moments were few and far between" (*ML* 409). The gentleman disdains the Rochester knockings that made the Fox sisters famous. He prefers, instead, the automatic speech and writing performed by charismatic "magnetic circle" séances, a group-form of mediumship informed by mesmerism. In her account, Underhill dismisses these meetings as "promiscuous" (*ML* 408); the description, however, is never clarified. Read for its use elsewhere in *Missing Link*, the word appears to indicate the popularity and shifting membership of these séances. "Promiscuous"—in its sense of cultivating multiple transient social relationships—though, also traces the movement of eager expectation around the circle from one mesmerized guest to the next. "When you sit in the circle," Underhill's spirits scold the businessman via a tapped message, "exerting every faculty of mind and body, with your hands on the table and

your feet on the floor, all your brain forces escape through your extremities and are absorbed by the more receptive members of the circle” (*ML* 409). The spirits’ message depicts a séance circle that is overwhelmed by sthenic affect but strikingly empty of spiritual presence. Their concern—also, conveniently, Underhill’s concern—lies in a social space where uncontrolled collective feeling builds through feedback and at once impedes and simulates religious encounter. In these parlour séances, “mediums are quite as susceptible to an action exerted upon them by spirits *embodied* as by the *disembodied*” (*ML* 410). Converted to the truth of spirit-rapping and chastened of his uncontrolled eagerness, it seems, the gentleman is cured by the warning Underhill conveys.

Depictions of disorientation in investigative fiction are more readily apparent and more memorable as such when they are physical. Classic detectives typically occupy and encounter space in an idiosyncratic or even queer manner. Often their distinct perspective is embodied, announcing itself through a posture or attitude toward their physical surroundings. Inspector Bucket’s greatest ally is his guiding forefinger, immediately suggesting his eccentric point of view, much like the distracted gaze of Green’s most successful detective, Ebenezer Gryce, or the nocturnalism of Dupin. Holmes lacks a single distinguishing tick in this way; his characteristic features—an aquiline nose, amused eye, and sardonic tone of voice—speak more clearly to an aloof detachment from social rather than physical settings. Nevertheless, as we have seen already in his “coiled” armchair meditations and his statuesque regard of Hugo’s portrait, Holmes moves through various postures of thought that demonstrate his disorienting engagement with space. His unique bearing at crime scenes emerges fully formed from his first forensic outing. Early in *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson, Gregson, and Lestrade watch as Holmes, wielding measuring tape and magnifying glass, “trotted noiselessly about the room, sometimes stopping, occasionally kneeling, and once lying flat upon his face. So engrossed was he with his occupation that he appeared to have forgotten our presence, for he chattered away to himself under his breath the whole time” (*HB* 32). Holmes’ strange murmurs mark a social disengagement from his forgotten companions, as they stand awkwardly on the edges of his attention. As products of his focus, however, these mutterings seem to arise from a deeper, more intentional, act of disorientation. In treating the space seriously as an object to be observed and researched, he works to find fresh



modes of engagement with it. Here, and in many other iterations of similar scenes across the canon, Holmes manages his point of view on the space much as he manipulates James Mortimer's cane in the morning light in *The Hound*. Examining his surroundings through uncommon perspectives and motions, Holmes physically disorients himself from the space as it is normally experienced. He breaks expected orientations toward the room as a room by moving through it and examining it out of its social context. If, as Ahmed and many theorists before her suggest, rooms are social as much as spatial constructs, staging grounds for accepted behaviours, Holmes is misusing this particular room, productively. Thus, his examination is described in terms of a social faux-pas.

This is to say that, by lying on the floor, by trotting and kneeling and studying, Holmes's physical disorientation from a crime scene is at once an affective disorientation. Approaching the fatal bedroom of Helen Stoner, his client in "Speckled Band," Holmes first examines the room's window from the outside, looking for a weak hinge or space for a jimmy. Later, in the bedroom proper, he performs his usual, disorienting examination—" [h]e threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand, and crawled swiftly backwards and forwards" ("SB" 188)—while also engaging with the space as a node of various orientations and affects. Holmes pulls a chair into a corner while his gaze wanders "round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment" ("SB" 187); he uses the room's bell pull; standing over Stoner's bed, he spends "some time in staring at it" ("SB" 188). His investigations are no longer met with the same confusion, here, but they are coded as approaching impropriety. Beyond physically altering his literal point of view, he channels other orientations through the space. Holmes draws from the physical behaviours of a nighttime intruder—checking for entry points, weak hinges, staring down at Stoner's bed—and borrows the casual privilege of inhabitation—moving furniture, interacting with a bell pull that Stoner herself has never used. In observing the room as it is, rather than what it means socially or what it demands through courtesy, Holmes's work seems to involve disorienting himself from a perspective that is at once an embodied relation to space.

By familiarizing himself with the room, Holmes is presented as overly familiar, a social condition that emerges from the orientations he is willing to adopt. "The work of

inhabiting space,” Ahmed writes, “involves a dynamic negotiation between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar, such that it is still possible for the world to create new impressions, depending on which way we turn, which affects what is within reach” (7-8). What she proposes as a practice of domestic living is also central to the method by which fictional investigators find meaning in space. Holmes’s cases endlessly rehearse this negotiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the expected and the disregarded. In doing so, they dramatize the “work” Ahmed finds in that “dynamic negotiation.” Holmes’s solution to “Speckled Band” lies in his disengagement from the adjoining bedrooms of Helen Stoner and her step-father as legibly domestic spaces. After the examination, Watson admits to Holmes, as he often does: “You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me” (“SB” 191). Holmes demurs. Rather, the two characters simply read these spaces according to two separate grammars. Both pay close attention to the rooms’ furnishings. Watson, who displays all the finely tuned discernment of a middle-class Victorian, is too acculturated and too carefully bound to his own mannered orientations to look past their social import. He notices their size, sparseness, homeliness, age, and quality, reading the rooms “after the fashion of old country houses” (“SB” 187). Holmes pays fastidious attention to the placement and interrelation of the furnishings. He questions why a ventilation duct would be installed between the two rooms rather than on an outside wall, why her bed would be bolted such that “[i]t must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope” (“SB” 192). Both notice a chair against the wall in the step-father’s room: Watson recognizes its “plain wood” austerity, in line with the manor’s reduced fortunes (“SB” 188); Holmes recognizes the wear on its seat, betraying its use as a stool when Stoner’s step-father coaxed a viper through the ventilation shaft.

Ahmed observes that “[e]ven in a strange or unfamiliar environment we might find our way, given our familiarity with social form, with how the social is arranged” (7). Read in the context of an investigation, her writing speaks to the discipline required to disorient ourselves from conditioned familiarities. For those seeking to see an environment from a strange or unfamiliar perspective, even one’s relationship to the social must be disarranged. As we see in his precise readings of clients’ clothes and manners, Holmes is not blind to social contexts. Unlike Watson, however, he seems able to regulate his

engagement with their orientations. His disorientation—physical, social, and affective—is one form of the “work” involved in achieving that “dynamic negotiation” between what one expects of a Victorian bedroom and what one disregards in order to maintain that expectation. In both of these crime scenes, then, Holmes forgoes a traditional mastery of social space for a deeper mastery of a specific space. His ability to see his surroundings in their particularity is tied to his willingness to be disoriented by them. The crime scenes we find in the Holmes canon contest our fluency with new spaces. Watson, Lestrade, and the numerous other characters who involve themselves with these crime scenes consistently demonstrate their fluency with space. They work to interpret unfamiliar surroundings through the context of their received knowledge. Holmes, by contrast, demonstrates his fluency with newness and his comfort with remaining, for a time, among the uninterpreted.<sup>32</sup>

In this way, Holmes’s detachment relies upon a pattern of feeling that is also subtly explored in Underhill’s mediumistic writings. Underhill contends that, if given a talented amanuensis, “I can sit, as I have often sat, for hours at a time, receiving the letters through the raps and alphabet, with no idea of their connection or meaning, nor any such knowledge possible to any listener, and at the close every letter, word, and sentence will be found perfectly correct” (*ML* 410). The claim speaks to a scale of religious fervency at which small fractures in practice or ritual appear as wide gulfs of opinion. The improbable accuracy of her prolonged sittings stands in response to the businessman’s

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<sup>32</sup> Such a reading may seem strained when applied to a character who is conventionally read for his constant, near obsessive interpretive attention. Holmes’s disorientation is more than a mere observational exercise, however. His willingness to suspend familiar interpretive modes is consistent and central to his emotional and intellectual characterization. In an early chapter of *The Hound*, Watson wonders at the pleasure and distraction Holmes finds in a gallery exhibition while still embroiled in his case: “Sherlock Holmes had, in a very remarkable degree, the power of detaching his mind at will” (41). Watson is caught up with the Baskerville mystery and writes of his friend—“entirely absorbed in the pictures of the modern Belgian masters... of which he had the crudest ideas” (41)—with barely an attempt to conceal his confusion and frustration. For his part, Holmes has at this point nothing in his investigation left undone and seems more content to shift his attention elsewhere, passively waiting for information or development. The gallery scene is a relatively minor moment in an affectively charged book but it speaks to Holmes’s composure and—contrasted with Watson’s impatient curiosity—to the emotional discipline that informs Holmes’s moments of crime scene detachment. Moreover, the scene is lent an anticipatory weight by its parallel scene when Holmes, in a similarly absorbed moment of receptivity, recognizes Stapleton among the Baskerville portrait collection.

enthusiasm for mesmeric séances. Thus, she asserts the reliability of spirit raps over automatic speaking and writing. In the context of the clergyman's and the businessman's emotional positivity, however, and of her delineation of an ideal "mental condition," this scene of alphabet-calling also models Underhill's perfected passive negativity. In contrast with her male counterparts, Underhill's legitimacy as a medium lies in her temporary refusal of interpretation. That being said, her composure can best be tracked in the moment that this refusal fails. Underhill writes with frustration of inexperienced amanuenses who interrupt her trance to clarify a letter and inadvertently break "the telegraphic connection, for the time, through which Spirits operate, exactly as the telegraphic wires are affected by a thunder-storm" (*ML* 410). Returning to herself to answer a question, attempting too early to make sense of the stream of information, hinders the process. It is only after her session, typically, that Underhill will read the message and understand what she has communicated: "when the message is finished it will be found to be perfect and unbroken from beginning to end—in accordance with the intelligence of the Spirit, not that of the medium" (*ML* 411).

This annoyance with the inexperienced amanuensis reveals a temporal structure to her ritual and an intentional deferral of understanding. Underhill's trance disorients her from language for a time. She productively moves toward unmeaning, working to individuate each letter from its cohering significance. As with Holmes's investigations, Underhill produces knowledge by briefly foregoing mastery. Her disorientation is perhaps not as dramatic as a grown man "crawling backwards and forwards" but it is fundamental. The ritual places her in a temporary state of asemia through interminable recitations. "It is impossible for any mortal to sit and reiterate the letters of the alphabet as fast as they can be repeated, hour after hour," Underhill contends, "and retain in the mind the structure of the sentences and chapters communicated. I defy anyone to do it" (*ML* 410). Underhill's sittings, as they emerge in her descriptions, display a striking integrity. They are coherent, from her practice's pseudo-semantic satiation down to her insistence on a mental condition that accepts affect without process. Indeed, these two levels of self-denial, in ritual and in composure, are tightly interwoven. It is that latter suspension of feeling that enables her deliberate suspension of interpretation. Moreover, her refusal of positive emotion is a refusal of the interpretive power of feeling, its ability to process

affect into personal experience. Mediums, she warns early in the chapter, will alter what comes down the line through emotional interaction. Thus the image of a spectral telegraph repeats when she describes her passivity and her interrupted letter-calling. As with expectation and positive emotion, Underhill depicts conscious attention to the spirits' language as electrical interference, a disruption of the information's flow. Underhill's disorientation in practice, like that of Holmes, is also—necessarily—an affective disorientation. Her sittings model a pattern of feeling over time that is also central to the sensibility of an investigation. Underhill stretches out the moment of curious interaction into periods of disorientation and conclusion. Her knowledge-production splits receptivity from interpretation: in her ritual, this emerges as a separation of utterance and understanding; in her manner, a separation of affect and feeling.

In opening this separation between affective involvement and a more productive, more composed receptivity, we find the space where *The Filigree Ball* plays. To encounter Moore House is, it seems, to become involved in the remnants of its ingrained orientations. All the same, the experience of disorientation promised by the structure's deeply rooted affects is not intrinsically a revelation. The domestic lack, the restlessness, and fear that haunt Moore House offer an ambiguous history of feeling. They must be felt, certainly, but also traced through ancillary physical evidence in order to reveal the house's original violence. The novel's hybridity, which we touched upon in the previous chapter, resides in the interaction of affect and narrative, then, as well as on the more recognizable level of generic tropes and aesthetics. The novel overwhelms its characters with unconstrained affect, borrowing a structure of feeling from ghost stories and Gothic fiction, but requires that those characters build narrative from this fragmented material according to the expectations of investigative fiction. Read this way, a spectrum of affective engagements emerges throughout the novel, a variety of feeling that moves toward the composure necessary to solve the problem of Moore House. Though the narrative of *The Filigree Ball* nests Gothic melodrama within a murder mystery, this investigation is, itself, portrayed as a kind of professional *bildungsroman*. The unnamed investigator's early career advances alongside the investigation and his development into a successful, recognized detective is framed as a form of emotional maturation. We can turn here to the novel's opening sentence: "For a detective whose talents had not been

recognized at headquarters, I possessed an ambition which, fortunately for my standing with the lieutenant of the precinct, had not yet been expressed in words” (*FB* 1). This unspoken yearning encompasses achievement and the recognition of his superiors but it centres on professional capability and insight. The detective hopes that, if given an opportunity, he should “do something with it—something more, that is, than I had seen accomplished by the police of the District of Columbia” (*FB* 1). It is this ambition to gain a clearer understanding, to see a crime in its complexity—in other words, to crack the case wide open—that drives the detective to risk professional achievement and recognition on a suspicion that Veronica Jeffrey was the victim of murder rather than suicide. It is also directly tied to his misreading of the Moore House crime scene: “the death I looked down upon was not a suicide, *but a murder*. The excitement which this discovery caused to tingle through my every nerve had its birth in the ambitious feeling referred to in the opening paragraph of this narrative” (*FB* 28). By the end of Green’s novel, we know that Veronica died at her own hands and that the detective has initially mistaken the presence of a witness at the crime scene as evidence of a murderer. Eager for a unique interpretation of the crime, the detective allows his own positive feeling to interfere with the information that surrounds him. It is only once the detective renounces his orientated engagement with the space and his stubborn belief in flattering interpretations for a more negative receptivity that he can approach the house’s actual secrets.

Which is not to say that the detective avoids the crime scene’s insistent affects. His initial reaction to the house, however, is to reject its sensibility for his own. The detective first enters Moore House with Hibbard, the closest beat cop to hand. Though “the biggest fellow on the force . . . as stolid and imperturbable as the best of us,” Hibbard shrinks from the house (*FB* 14). He is involved utterly into its atmosphere. He chatters and cowers in a comedically frustrating depiction of humbled authority. He offers to give the detective his own gun and matches if he might be allowed to wait outside and, twice, he nearly bolts. For his part, the detective responds to the house with a mixture of impassive resolution and scorn. He deliberately refuses to interact with Moore House as a haunted space, “[b]eing anything but anxious to subject [himself] further to its unhappy

influence” (*FB* 22). The house, however, is not easily denied and, upon finding a body in the library, the detective experiences a deeply disoriented intuition:

That was a new experience for this room . . . As these thoughts crossed my mind, I instinctively glanced again toward the fireplace for what I almost refused to believe lay outstretched at my feet. When nothing more appeared there than that old seat of sinister memory, I experienced a thrill which poorly prepared me for the cry which I now heard raised by Hibbard. (*FB* 24)

In the ensuing discovery that the remains are those of Veronica Jeffrey’s suicide, this passage is quickly eclipsed and, in context, it has a fleeting, eerie quality. The more so because the feeling it describes arrives without a clear origin or explanation and recedes from analysis. Reading it retrospectively, we get the impression of a parallel avenue of investigation, glimpsed briefly as the detective drives on. His sensation is, primarily, one of literal disorientation. He reflexively glances to the fireplace to find the corpse he knows to be at his feet and, in doing so, displaces himself in relation to the body and to the settle. This early in the novel, the reader is left to assume that his reflex springs from the building’s reputation and its effect on his emotional state. The detective himself anticipates this effect, initially worrying that Veronica’s corpse might represent “some strange and terrible fantasy of my aroused imagination” (*FB* 23). Anticipated or not, these feelings cannot be isolated from the room’s own affects. After all, only minutes—and some eleven pages—later, the detective is overcome by “feelings to which I can give no name and which I had fondly believed myself proof against,” and finds himself moving, again reflexively, toward the settle (*FB* 35). Independent of the detective’s own understanding, the settle is more than associated with a history of violence; it is oriented toward violence. Further, his intuitive superimposition of the corpse and the settle shadows forth the motive of Veronica’s suicide, offering a sense of her culpability and, indeed, her own affective involvement with its repetitive violence. These particularities of feeling—the detective’s expectation, the library’s orientation, the corpse’s guilt—gather into an insistent impulse that highlights the centrality of the settle, one that threatens to disorient the detective. At the end of this chapter, he comments, “Evidently her reason was unseated by the tragedy which threw so deep a gloom over her wedding”

(*FB* 25). The detective does not get closer than this statement to the nature of the mystery until the climax of the novel, but in this moment with the corpse at his feet he encounters the tragedy, her unseated reason, the possibility of his investigation, and, indeed, the gloom, all merging into an uncomfortable confusion that he cannot allow himself to feel.

Our detective's mistake is also the mistake of Underhill's clergyman, "an excellent man but very ambitious to excel in doing good" (Underhill 406). The clergyman believed himself a Spiritualist medium-in-waiting and fervently anticipated the messages and information that would reveal his latent capability. His position parallels the detective's initial "hope that... I should be found able to do something with [a big case]—something more" (*FB* 1). Neither figure can easily suspend their expectations and ambitions as they interact with information, be it the interpretive field of a crime scene or the flow of spiritual instruction. Their engagements must exist on their terms. The clergyman and the detective form relationships to affect in their own image and in this way they compromise the nature and the trustworthiness of the knowledge received. They provide practical examples of the counterproductive influence of positive feeling. Underhill recalls that the clergyman developed an ambition to become Spiritualism's "high priest" and that eventually this "innate something which belongs to the natural man performed the office of his own mind" (*ML* 407). This memory drawn from early Spiritualism helps to illustrate her previous warning: "If a sitter earnestly desires a particular thing... that is precisely what he is least likely to obtain" (*ML* 405). Ambition blinds the clergyman to the pranks of the spiritual world. Their message seems to flatter his self-importance but ultimately underlines his inadequacy as a leading medium. We can see a similar, irreflective ambition openly at work when the detective decides Veronica has been murdered, a drastic reinterpretation of the crime scene that provides a more impressive—if less supportable—theory than "the apparent one of suicide embraced by Hibbard" (*FB* 29). The detective so eagerly yearns for professional success that he errs toward the unprofessional. We can also trace a form of this feeling in his guarded denial of Moore House's orientations. Early in their investigation, the detective notes "Hibbard seemed to share my feelings, though from an entirely different cause" (*FB* 17). Both officers feel anxiety and fear as they proceed through the ground floor, but where Hibbard acknowledges the possibility of supernatural disruption, the detective rejects any cause



other than the criminal. The detective has difficulty hiding his “disgust” for Hibbard’s emotional reaction to the house and his characterizations of his companion are telling in their professional and intellectual disdain (*FB* 14). Hibbard is not merely a coward; his fears are “evidence of weakness” and mark him as an “idiot” and a “fool” (*FB* 18, 17). Thus, upon encountering the possibility of a productive disorientation—of “feelings to which I can give no name and which I had fondly believed myself proof against”—the detective turns aside (*FB* 35). He encounters these moments with the same disdain as he harbours for Hibbard’s panicked reactions. He cannot allow himself to be disoriented by the space, it seems, because to do so would be to approach the behaviour of a police officer he feels to be inferior.

The clergyman is chastened by a bootless errand in search of a nonexistent New York address “not very far from them” (*FB* 407). The detective has to go considerably further in his search. He reaches Tampa, Florida seeking witnesses before realizing that he is without a lead. It is only on the train ride back to Washington, as he considers the case as a whole, that he returns to the disorientations he suppressed. Lacking evidence, his attention turns to the possible significance of Moore House’s affects. He notes that “all investigation had hitherto started, if it had not ended, in the library. I was resolved to begin work in quite a different spot. I had not forgotten the sensations I had experienced in the southwest chamber” (*FB* 286). The final quarter of the novel sees the detective come into his own as a distinctly mediumistic investigator. Cued by “flitting visions of things seen in this old house and afterward nearly forgotten,” he recovers a dossier of family documents (*FB* 287); among these, the diary of a houseguest who recorded her anxious discomfort while staying in The Colonel’s Own. The coincidence of his feeling and the guest’s leads him to the bedroom. Here, the detective completes his emotional arc and engages with the building without pride or positivity:

No: guessing would not answer. I must trust to the  
 inspiration of the moment which suggested with almost  
 irresistible conviction:

*The picture! . . .*

Why this object should have suggested itself to me and with such instant conviction, I can not readily say. Whether, from my position near the bed, the sight of this old drawing recalled the restless nights of all who had lain in face of its sickly smile, or whether some recollection of that secret law of the Moores which forbade the removal of any of their pictures from the time-worn walls, or a remembrance of the curiosity which this picture excited in every one who looked at it. (*FB* 320-321)

Since his train ride, the detective has traced the affects of this room through an associational logic. On the night of Veronica's death, the investigator stood before the picture appalled by "the really superstitious dread which from this moment seized me" (*FB* 40). He comes to believe this feeling must have some uncanny consequence within The Colonel's Own. He similarly follows a set of connected feelings through the history of the room. The renter's restlessness reaches back to the houseguest's unease, which has its roots, we discover, in the Colonel's fevered insomnia. Standing before the picture with magnifying glass in hand, however, the detective loosens even these associational ties—remarking that "guessing would not answer"—and enters an acceptance that resembles negative receptivity. The bedroom's sensibility surfaces from a wash of remnant impulses. In its affective confusion, it corresponds to the detective's earlier, baffling displacement in the library as he stood over the body. As with that rejected disorientation, this intuition could be attributed simply to his prior knowledge and expectations. He notes "some recollection of that secret law of the Moores," which is evidence enough for his suspicion of the picture. This possibility, however, sits between two examples of the building's pervading and inexplicable affects. The detective is no longer interested in the plausible deniability of a rational explanation, nor does he care to narrow the ambiguous origins of his impressions. Rather, they simply influence his and our narrative experience of the room's history. Each of these phantom orientations—the bed's restlessness and the picture's fascination—offers an uncomfortable engagement with the emotionality and behaviour of the murderers who have previously inhabited this room. The impetus left over from the Colonel's obsessive interactions with the weapon he created seem to ground the room's insomnia in an unhinged, subtly violent haunting. The picture's attraction—despite its apparently unattractive aesthetic—orients the viewer into a familial inclination toward its hidden meaning. Indeed, to feel the picture's presence—as

the detective does—is to mimic Veronica’s behaviour on the day she killed her brother-in-law. With the Moore secret lost to time, only a disorientation into its haunting appeal can reveal the library’s trap to the murderer and the detective. The novel’s solution turns on this room’s sensibility, which directly leads to the Colonel’s confession and the hidden murder weapon. Given its supernatural fusion of forensic significance and historic behaviours, we can read this orientation as the narrative fulfillment of the detective’s earlier failure in the library to indulge in curious feeling. Returning to the house from the ruins of his own investigation, he finds a second chance at disorientation and a negative engagement that will lead him to professional success.

We can consider this engagement, which involves the temporary suspension of an orientation and its eventual return, as one form of Ahmed’s “dynamic negotiations.” It is, though, a rather simple one. The startling excess – of feeling, information – that Holmes experiences before Baskerville’s portrait or that Green’s detective initially encounters at the library’s settle suggests that suspension at times requires its own more complicated, more dynamic maintenance. With Underhill’s temporality in mind, we can turn one final time to “The Empty House” to find the moment of disorientation magnified to the length of a short story, imagined in all its negotiated granularity. As I have traced it throughout this chapter, the complicated management of Jim’s and Julia’s emotional involvement suggests their attempts to manage the intimacy of knowing. The other texts I have mentioned in this chapter tend to portray the emotional discipline necessary to Underhill’s negative receptivity only obliquely. We can glimpse its effort in Holmes’s trances and preoccupied investigations, in his single-minded focus. Over the length of *The Filigree Ball*, we glean the impression of a more experienced discipline in the detective’s maturation from disdain. The difficulty of remaining composed in an emotionally charged environment, however, functions as the central drama of “Empty House.” We witness Shorthouse’s early discipline, its incremental decay, and the eventual effort required to return to a healthier engagement with the building’s haunting. Though the context of a half-forgotten crime frames Jim and Aunt Julia’s exploration of the house as an investigation of a space, the story strips the narrative apparatus we have followed in mystery fiction. There is little in the way of reoriented consideration and less of investigative *dénouement*. The crime that originally disrupted the space was solved a

century prior and neither Aunt Julia nor Jim present as Spiritualist doubters seeking certainty but a form of emotional knowledge. Julia tells her nephew early on the circumstances of the crime: the murderer hid in the basement, ascended late at night to the servants' quarters, chased his victim down the stairs into a closet-room, and then threw her down the stairs. She even spoils the ending, such as it is, explaining that the stablehand, "[w]as caught, I believe, and hanged for murder; but it all happened a century ago, and I've not been able to get more details of the story" ("EH" 6).

Even compared to some other ghost stories I have mentioned—Oliphant's "The Open Door," for example, or O'Henry's "The Furnished Room"—Blackwood's tale leaves scant room for inquiry. From the earliest pages of "The Empty House," we know the nature of the crime and we know a haunting resulted from it. Mysteries neither forensic nor metaphysical will receive their hearing, here. Rather, Jim's and Julia's investigation emphasizes "details" and the narrative nature of the crime. It emphasizes as well the manner by which we wish to learn overwhelming or distressing information. "The Empty House" offers its investigators two modes of engagement with its violent past, and thus two forms of knowing: observation and participation. With this binary, the story parallels the forensic examinations that we find in mystery fiction, in which a crime scene offers either a clear insight or a more compromised judgment depending on the manner of one's engagement. But where Watson's disciplined receptivity provides merely an amateur's understanding of a historical trace, Jim's and Aunt Julia's threatens a too-intimate involvement in that history. The subtle suggestion through the story is that they might move from a third-person experience of the building's history into a first-person experience, that they too might be thrown down the staircase. Near the climax of the narrative, the pair ascend the stairs, "avoiding with their eyes the deep black space over the banisters" (28-29); as they descend, after witnessing the maid's spectral fall throughout that space, they can sense a murderous presence at their back, step after step. The haunting's latent threat is, it seems, to fully enfold the two into its patterns of violence, ending in a similar fall from the landing. The two investigators must carefully control their engagement and observations, must delay the possibility of emotionally interacting with their ordeals, lest they approach a first-hand understanding of the space's historical abuse.

The difference—between insight and shallower understanding, on the one hand, and observation and participation, on the other—lies in the affective logics of two genres and in their treatment of intention, consent, and the nature of disorientation. The crime scenes of mystery fiction are typically imbued with faint, attenuated historical feeling and information. The examinations of these spaces stress the special capability of those investigators able to discern evidence from orientation. The sensibility required to pick up on traces left behind by previous acts of violence involves, as we have seen, the disciplined willingness to actively disorient oneself from the stronger and more positive signals of one's own expectations. In stark contrast, each of the ghost stories I have referenced in this chapter menaces its characters with the disconcerting power of a historical paradigm of feeling. In both genres, disorientation is often revelatory, providing access to some key information, but in ghost fiction it is not necessarily an achievement. Rather, disorientation in tales like "Empty House" is an uncomfortable, often dangerous encounter with the affective disruption of a space. As in mystery fiction, emotional discipline is critical but, for the haunted, composure provides some bulwark against the dangers of knowing something unwholesome or spiritually sublime too well. W.W. Jacobs' story "The Toll House" (1909) joins O'Henry's "The Furnished Room" in imagining the deadly ramifications of succumbing fully to the disorientation offered by haunted places. In their own way, Veronica in *The Filigree Ball* and Sir Charles Baskerville in *The Hound* each present a more grounded form of this concern; too absorbed by their family's historic behaviours, they are each eventually consumed by them.

To engage with such a space without negotiating one's receptivity is often unproductive of any useful form of knowledge. Richard Marsh's *The Goddess* offers a key example in this regard. Bessie returns to the crime scene halfway through the novel, drawn there in her entranced state to relive the events of her traumatic break. Early in the scene, Ferguson points to the significance of this spatial repetition: "[i]t needed but a brief glance to perceive that, in her present environment, she might pass through some sort of crisis which would bring about the result I so ardently desired" (*GD* 67). The crime scene is not haunted in the sense of Moore House or the empty house but Bessie's automatism populates the room with phantoms, nonetheless. As her past identity attempts to surface

and to subsume her experience of the crime, Bessie's recuperative process takes the form of a repetitive series of highly emotional attempts to orient herself. In increasingly confused iterations, Bessie rehearses the situation and location—the blocking, we might say—of each of the figures involved in the original violence: herself, the idol, Philip, Edwin, and Ferguson. She repeatedly tries to place herself within a scene that is no longer taking place: “[l]et me see how it was. He was here, and I was there,” she intones repeatedly, in variation (*GD* 68). In her automatic state, however, Bessie has so far been defined by her inability to mark categorical differences. She does not know who is a stranger and who is a friend; she needs Ferguson to tell her if her hands are clean after she has washed. Here, she is fully disoriented into the space, partaking of both its historic presences and its absences. Her collapse of identity allows her, it seems, a sympathy with each of the characters originally involved and she inhabits each of them, incapable at times of discerning who was the killer and who, the victim: “I killed him; it hacked, hacked, hacked; his blood is on my cloak and hands; the dead man lying on the floor” (*GD* 72). With every attempt to separate out and situate the various characters of her traumatic scene, Bessie falls back into her flux of sympathies. It is as though the imaginative act of orienting these phantasmatic memories, engages as well the disorienting rupture between her present moment and the past violence of the space. When she first enters the room, she is not confused by the blood on the carpet but by the realization that it is dry.

Bessie's participation in the moment of her mental breach is therapeutic but it is not capable of bringing useful information or recollection to the investigation. Her confessions are singularly unbelievable, and her descriptions of the murder are impenetrable, both because of the grotesque murder weapon and her constantly shifting focalization. Once she reasserts her personality and memories, it is over and at the expense of the experience, which becomes safely repressed and forgotten. This is to be expected. Though to a modern eye, the cultural touchstone in this scene would most likely be a traumatic flashback, Bessie's disorientation depicts nineteenth-century conventions regarding entranced individuals. As the famed psychical researcher Frederic W. H. Myers wrote on the mystery of somnambulism in 1889, “all we can say is that the subject is not quite the same as in the waking state, and that there is generally a more or

less complete forgetfulness in the waking state of what has passed in the ‘trance’” (“Professor Pierre Janet’s ‘Automatisme Psychologique’” 267) During the height of her confused episode, Bessie claims to be experiencing this, precisely: “[i]t is as if I were two persons, and each keeps losing the other. Can there be two persons in one body? My brain seems blurred—as if it were in two parts. When I am using one part, the other—the other’s all confused” (*GD* 70). Somnambulists, in particular, were seen to participate in layered, affectively-enriched topographies. The sleep-walker might reform their surroundings, believing they were in one location and synthesizing this with the space through which they moved. Accounts of somnambulists and mesmerized individuals also stressed their ability to orient others, at least virtually, into their mental theatres. They haunted present individuals with past acquaintances and might even reconvene situations, drawing upon the affective significance of a specific place. Watching from the side of the room, Ferguson observes that Bessie seems to be grappling with her own mind: “[t]he contest seemed physical as well as mental; she swayed to and fro; I thought she would fall. Then reason got the upper hand” (*GD* 73). The moment—which finally ends her automatism, though not her amnesia—recalls her earlier impulse to lie where the corpse fell as she slips into an uncontrolled reorientation to the space: “[s]he made a sudden movement, as if to hurl herself headlong to the floor, which was so realistic that I started forward to save her from a fall” (*GD* 68). Bessie physically participates in her traumatic fantasy, and in doing so her struggle layers on another physical engagement with the variety of the room’s orientations. Her struggle has its physical implications on Ferguson, Hume, Florence Adair, and a police constable. Each character stands well back from Bessie trying to avoid involvement and participation in her disorientation. Ferguson even hides behind one of the curtains hung along the room’s walls. They distance themselves, as well, from each other, avoiding the reorienting sympathies and shared feelings that I outlined in the first chapter. Ferguson recalls: “[a]lthough I did not turn to look at them, I knew that there was something strange on the faces of Miss Adair and Hume” (*GD* 68). Each character, in observing Bessie, also works to negotiate their own receptivity to what is an essentially haunted scene. Still, they cannot make productive use of this disoriented knowing. So earnestly do they remove themselves from Bessie’s hysteria that Ferguson refers to her as “[t]he girl within,” as though her disorientation, mentally and physically,

had manifested its own enclosure (*GD* 68). As Robert S. Cox observes in *Body and Soul*, “somnambulism addressed the limitations of sympathy by creating an embodied world in which those limitations did not exist, where sympathy by its very nature, overcame atomism and individualism to create a renewed community bound in sensation and affect” (35).

Ferguson and the rest of the onlookers are wary of being pushed into just such a community, and of being bound into the sensations and affects that the space seems to offer the disoriented individual. High up in the closet room of the empty house, Jim and Aunt Julia slowly approach precisely this form of community and of affective communion. As Jim listens to the haunting progress over the course of the evening, he finds that he cannot orient himself to its sensibility. At first, he strains to hear sounds in the kitchen that seem to rehearse the murderer, creeping from his hiding place in the basement. And yet “[e]very time he fastened his attention on these sounds they instantly ceased” (“EH” 24). Attempting to orient the haunt within the space, he simultaneously becomes disoriented and receptive to its emotional involvement. As he becomes more frightened and more compelled by the space’s spectral events, they resolve, instantaneously into clearer sounds from the “horrid gloomy little servants’ rooms. . . upstairs where the victim had first been disturbed and stalked to her death” (“EH” 25). Terrified, at once disoriented by the movement and now increasingly reoriented to house’s historic abuses, Jim turns to Aunt Julia:

He stared in speechless amazement—amazement that was dangerously near to horror. It was his aunt’s face indeed, but it was her face of forty years ago, the vacant innocent face of a girl. He had heard stories of that strange effect of terror which could wipe a human countenance clean of other emotions, obliterating all previous expressions; but he had never realised that it could be literally true. . . the dreadful signature of overmastering fear was written plainly in that utter vacancy of the girlish face beside him; and when, feeling his intense gaze, she turned to look at him, he instinctively closed his eyes tightly to shut out the sight. (“EH” 26)



Julia's horrific expression serves as the story's climactic fright, a depiction of utter disorientation into the logic and the imagery of the empty house. The moment returns the reader to the opening description of the empty house, itself, which presented the image of a façade completely oriented, despite itself, toward its interior emotional life. Here, Aunt Julia—who has become, as well, oriented to the house's emotional (after)life—exudes an unambiguous image of pure terror expressed in architectural terms: she is “vacant.” Her face also returns her to the appearance of the deceased girl; as she becomes receptive to the terrors of the house, she also becomes involved into its history of abuses.

Jim's decision to shut his eyes, then, might seem callous but it is informed by the affective loop of fear that has built in sympathy between the two intrepid investigators and the need to establish independent feeling. Their work, now, is to manage their receptivity and their orientations. That is, they must fulfill on Underhill's advice but also on James's, regarding the importance of disorienting one's disciplined self from one's feeling body in crisis. Sitting in a room of open doors and windows, they must work to re-establish the discrete emotional spaces that separated their feelings from their bodies and their bodies from their surroundings. This work begins with Jim closing himself off from Aunt Julia's terrifying aspect. Once he has “his feelings well in hand,” Jim turns back to Aunt Julia and opens his eyes; he finds her similarly changed: “his aunt was smiling, and though the face was deathly white, the awful veil had lifted and the normal look was returning” (“EH” 26). In order to survive the evening, Jim's and Julia's challenge lies in avoiding a too-intimate form of knowing, a participatory re-enactment of the emotional states and the ultimate end of the servant girl in that same room. To reorient themselves, they leave the room and ascend the stairs that the servant descended in panic, fleeing her assailant. As they do so, the haunting in an anti-climactic moment simply moves right through them, leaving them largely unaffected but also still uninformed as to the precise details of the events that night a century prior. They descend the staircase, “arm in arm, walking very slowly, without speaking a word or looking once behind them. . .” (“EH” 31). In these final moments, they present negotiated receptivity in praxis, managing one another's emotional states without articulation or communication, moving through the space with purpose but without hurry and thus

refusing to embody its fears. Should they express their fear and reorient themselves toward the house, the haunting promises a faithful participation in its original events:

the whole way down the stairs they were conscious that someone followed them; step by step; when they went faster IT was left behind, and when they went more slowly IT caught them up. But never once did they look behind to see; and at each turning of the staircase they lowered their eyes for fear of the following horror they might see upon the stairs above. (“EH” 31)

There is a latent triumph in this exit, for all its horror and unknowing. It represents a moment in which the haunting becomes reoriented and reorganized to their own pace down the stairs, attending, following, and catching up when it might have “overmastered” their descent.

To end this chapter with an instance of averted eyes and lost details is not to end on an investigative failure but on an example of the complicated nuances of involvement and receptivity that mark any investigation and any scrutinizing engagement with space. In turning to *The Filigree Ball*, I raised the possibility of a spectrum of affective engagements that spans the novel’s depictions of Moore House. In their variety, these encounters with the space resolve into a possible temporality of investigative disorientation. We can refer, here, back to Underhill and her frustration with unskilled amanuenses who interrupt her trance for clarification. Her annoyance emphasizes an intentional deferral of understanding and the implicitly periodic nature of her ritual. Underhill’s trance disorients her from meaning, an experience that ideally continues until the flow of spiritual information ceases. Her sittings model a pattern of engagement and suspended mastery that corresponds, productively, to the sensibility of the *fin-de-siècle* investigation. In *The Colonel’s Own*, Green’s detective has a clear and intuitive understanding of the context of his feeling and their excessive significance. Unlike his vertiginous moment before the settle, a moment he dismissed in disdain, the detective is able to break down this eerie wash of impulse into a selection of natural and supernatural influences. More importantly, he recognizes these negatively, without judgment regarding their rationality or explicability. They are realities of feeling that he accepts for their usefulness within the context of the crime, without concerning himself regarding the

uncomfortable confusion of their origin. In order to more fully understand, he allows himself a brief leniency toward unknowing. Holmes gives up a certain mastery in order to recognize the significance of a space. Jim and Julia forgo a deadly, tempting intimacy of knowing for a less detailed but safer understanding. Chanting out the alphabet, Underhill delays the moment when she might gather each individuated letter into meaningful text and we see a similar impulse in the detective's willingness to allow for a productive confusion before reorienting himself to his own procedures within the room. Underhill and the detective both stretch out the moment of curious interaction into periods of disorientation and conclusion. This, ultimately, is the work of Ahmed's "dynamic negotiation": to sustain affect briefly before it is processed as feeling, to observe space for a moment before it recedes behind our orientations, to temporarily suspend the expectation, and then to return to the familiar and process this information.

## Conclusion

### 5 Some Brief Notes on Receptive Suspicions

One of the more glaring omissions so far from my long litany of occult materials is the titular figure of Richard Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon*. When I examined the novel in Chapter 1, I was involved primarily in parsing its expressions of transgression and boundary collapse. My interest lay in those moments when sympathy—generally a congenial affect—seemed to counteract our sense of self or opened a character to dizzying and ill-defined complexes of various identities. Much the same could be said regarding my brief return to Marsh's novel in Chapter 4. This interest largely left out the novel's bizarre murder weapon—a possessed statue—for precisely the failure of investigative suspicion that I am about to outline. No dissertation that claims to address the infusion of mystery and occult possibility into the material space would be complete, however, without a few, final words circling around the core occult image of *The Goddess*. As the final chapters of the novel unfold, the Goddess of the Scarlet Hands concedes itself to be an orientalist curiosity, caught between an idol and an automaton:

Later, the thing was torn to pieces; its anatomy laid bare...  
It was simply a light steel frame, shaped to resemble a human body, to which was attached a number of strong springs, which were set in motion by clockwork machinery. The whole had been encased in scarlet leather, so that, when completed, it resembled nothing so much as an artist's lay figure. In the leather were innumerable eyelet-holes. Through each of these holes the point of a blade was always peeping... In the head was an arrangement somewhat on the lines of a phonograph; it was from this proceeded the sound resembling a woman's gentle laughter, which was not the least eerie part of its horrible performance. (*GD* 165)

How deeply disappointing this explanation is and how inadequate when compared to the “mass of whirling movement” that Ferguson first glimpses in his dream, “covered with a flowing robe of some shining silken stuff, whose voluminous skirts whirled hither and thither as it writhed and twisted” (*GD* 8). Ferguson's earlier arabesque vision of frenzied movement implied through slower, trailing fabrics can barely be reconciled with the

doodad of steel and leather that he eventually uncovers. His dry, technical revelation is all the more dissatisfying as we have just witnessed this object murder Edwin Lawrence and take, apparently, great satisfaction in the act. In an intensely violent and unsettling scene, the automaton rises at Edwin's invocative command as a "writhing, gibbering puppet," imbued with something more unearthly than clockwork programming (*GD* 164).

Ferguson has difficulty, he admits, in remembering that this manic "creature" is merely mechanical and, hitting the goddess over the back with a chair, attempts to distract it as one would a dangerous animal. Ferguson is, we will recall, a soldier of fortune and colonial enterprise. When this "light steel frame" clad in leather has finished Edwin off, it does not seem to merely wind down. Rather, "[a]s if its lust for blood was glutted, it rolled over, lethargically, upon its side, leaving its handiwork exposed—a horrible spectacle. A grin—as it were a smile, born of repletion—was on the creature's face" (*GD* 165). The block quote above—Ferguson's description of the idol's true physical nature—follows immediately on this description of eerie movement and sublime affect in a supposedly wound-down curio, "inanimate at last" (*GD* 165). Psychosexual this bizarre "lay figure" made of steel and springs and perforated leather may be, but satisfying it is not. Though I complain, I would like to briefly sketch out in these last pages an argument that the automaton in *The Goddess* is precisely *not* a satisfying object, that is—to court intent—that we would do well *not* to be satisfied by this *dénouement's* revelation. I believe that the text works to involve us into this dissatisfaction with an anemic solution. I believe, as well, that there is a productive space for suspicion in this final explanation which Ferguson, the readers' trusted narrator, fails at the last to supply. Why is the Goddess's final revelation so deeply and, I would argue, so productively unsatisfying? Why does it urge us on in an irritated desire to know more when the solutions to other mysteries seem acceptable—if not always entirely credible? I have another omission, then, to briefly address in this conclusion if I am to turn to this question of involved frustration. One of the affects that we as readers most typically associate with mystery fiction, one that remains largely unaddressed—at least explicitly—is suspicion. In what follows, I trace a mode of engaged, playful suspicion that is, in Ferguson's solution, playfully disappointed by the blatant gulf between the Goddess and its emptied avatar.

My aim here is simply to suggest that should the novel elicit our suspicion, it has already taken us down the path to the occult.

In his now classic essay from 1966, “The Typology of Detective Fiction,” Tzvetan Todorov observes that “[a]t the base of the whodunit we find a duality... this novel contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation” (44). These two stories proceed along their parallel tracks through the text, describing two separate, eventful periods and often through two differing narrative expressions. I recognize that by turning to Todorov in my conclusion, I am ending this document where most discussion of mystery fiction now begins. My concern, however, lies in playing out one affective moment that Todorov discusses in passing later in his essay. Referring to the suspense novel, which he describes as a fusion of thriller and whodunit, Todorov writes “[t]he two types of interest are thus united here—there is the curiosity to learn how past events are to be explained; and there is also the suspense” (51). Previously, Todorov has discussed the second story—the detective’s story—as a research narrative, as a coming to knowledge which produces our own readerly understanding of the meaningful past. Here, however, he characterizes the affective intensities (in an affectively intense subgenre) that drive one narrative backward and one narrative forward for the reader. I would suggest that the character who is embroiled in the narrative’s on-going events must, almost necessarily, experience a con-fusion of both feelings, a desire to orient themselves to a mysterious string of unknown events, past and future. I tend to consider this mixture of urgent curiosity and apprehensive concern as a form of suspicion.

Todorov’s momentary turn to the affective qualities that mark these two narratives draws me to Sedgwick’s observation on the anticipatory nature of paranoia, which often takes the form of an endlessly associative and particularly intense form of suspicion: “[t]he unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia generates, paradoxically, a complex relation to temporality that burrows both backward and forward: because there must be no bad surprises, and because learning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that bad news be always already known” (130). Todorov might have found these twin temporalities, progressing in lock-step as a paranoid stance develops, strangely familiar. They offer, through a highly suspicious

engagement, one that is generative but unprofitable, an affective parallel to the doubled narratives that, he suggests, are key to the detective's poetics. Suspicion—at least, its fictional form—must always have its cues and its predictions, must narrate past events in anxious repetitions and reconstructions in order to generate its imaginative futures. We could add to this parallel—between the experience of research and the impulse to research—a third valence in the form of the hauntings that I have attempted to describe throughout this dissertation. These felt interactions—with a body, a clue, a place—collapse two eventful but separated periods of time down into a single shuttling intensity between past action and present observer. Whether one tries to learn from hauntings, rectify them, or simply survive the past's temporary pre-eminence over the present is largely a matter of whether one is in a mystery, Gothic, or ghost story (or a combination of the same). Like suspicion, a mediumistic attention to hauntings and occult possibility drives and influences research and our coming to know, though occasionally its effects and impressions are more subtle than suspicion's. Up to a point, my argument in this dissertation could be categorized by these two affective expressions of the impulse to research—suspicion and receptivity—and the consistent lingering presence of the latter in a genre that volubly articulates the former. But in saying so, I would like in these last pages to urge that these two modes are rarely entirely at odds. When Ferguson accepts the mechanistic results of the automaton's autopsy he refuses to take seriously his own description of the idol as a "puppet," as an empty and useless thing that is controlled at times by an inhabiting agency. I am drawn to this refusal because it marks a foreclosure of both suspicion and receptivity. Throughout Ferguson's investigation these two modes of engagement entwine. After all, his occult sympathy urges him to follow one suspicion (centering on Philip) over another (centering on Bessie). In this final moment, his failure of receptivity to the animating intelligence behind the puppet is a failure of suspicion and vice versa.

Spiritualism had its own sly uses for suspicion. Though mediums decried an openly hostile attitude, they often invited the observer to adopt a curious stance and to participate as investigators into the afterlife. Whether in test séances or more relaxed evenings of parlour entertainment, Spiritualism convinced its adherents through demonstrations and showing that consistently made theatrical room for the playfully sceptical Spiritualist.

Suspicious participation might take as simple a form as holding an attenuated conversation with a spectre, judging whether it could provide information that was presumably known only to yourself and the dead. At other times, however, the audience was called to more elaborate involvement. Well respected audience members might find themselves, for example, testing the knots in the ropes binding a young medium to her chair while she attempted a spirit manifestation. These spirits would, themselves, invite suspicious participation, and I use that phrase advisedly. Marlene Tromp writes that the spirits conjured by flirtatious seventeen-year-old medium Florence Cook were, by wondrous coincidence, similarly flirtatious. They moved through the darkened séance room, inviting audience examination, and “engaged with sitters, tendering kisses or the chance to squeeze their limbs or feel their hips as proof of their materiality” (Tromp 22). And yet, there is a quality of the ridiculous, on various registers, to Spiritualism’s portrayals of suspicion. I am drawn here to a moment toward the end of the Fox sisters’ investigation into a pedlar’s murder, which I outlined briefly in the introduction. As I mentioned, on the final day of digging, the Foxes and their coterie faced down the violent anger of a local group of farmers who were friendly with the accused couple. That night, Underhill writes, as the Fox sisters sleep at David Fox’s farmstead, the mob returns with apparently violent intent. “They drove up the road, into the yard,” Underhill remembers, “and one woman jumped through the window of the kitchen, *hoops and all*. She was in the kitchen before any of us knew they had entered the door-yard [sic]” (*ML* 27, emphasis in original). There is something utterly absurd in this image of hostile suspicion toward Spiritualist means of knowing. The woman crashing through David’s kitchen window in full, impractical mid-nineteenth-century crinolines, arrives in the text with little context for her actions or explanation for her intense dislike and dismissal of the Fox sisters’ investigation. The narrative never returns to her and, given that the mob immediately disperses, we are left to presume she simply leaves—we can only hope through the more conventional door. This infenestrating woman occurs in Underhill’s narrative as, simply, an image of disbelief. She presents a humorous and satirical foil pushed to a ridiculous aberration. Against her, the text can define its (idealized) depiction of Spiritualism’s broad cultural adoption and against her kind many Spiritualist showings can define their practices and methods of engagement.



The tension that I am attempting to sketch—in which Spiritualism invites and even constructs its practices upon suspicion only to ridicule that form of engagement—exists more starkly in mystery fiction. Mystery fiction, as a generic trope, incites its readers to suspicion. To engage *correctly* with the mystery is to consistently construct and discard peripheral narratives (phantom forms of Todorov’s first story). These conjectures intend to offer an explanatory, theoretical framework, to make sense of the investigator’s situation, whatever they currently may be. Lest the mystery reader miss the tale’s prompts or find themselves utterly baffled by the scenario, the text itself will often stage this behaviour on their behalf. To illustrate this we can return to a quote I discussed in Chapter 3. As Dupin lays out his intellectual process toward solving “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” his companion cannot help but offer his new theory: “I felt a creeping of the flesh as Dupin asked me the question. ‘A madman,’ I said, ‘has done this deed—some raving maniac, escaped from a neighboring *Maison de Santé*’” (“RM” 423). Dupin, of course, immediately lets him know that his suspicions are incorrect though “in some respects... not irrelevant”—a small dose of encouragement for our own attempts at solutions and suspicions (“RM” 423). *The Hound of the Baskervilles* achieves a similar effect, albeit more subtly, constructing and discarding a peripheral narrative of investigation generated by the narrator’s experiences of suspicion. Here, the peripheral, fantastic narratives that rehearse our readerly involvement are organized in a parallel investigation and marked by a more generic depiction of the occult. Watson’s suspicions lead him into a highly Gothicized investigation of conspiring servants, operating through midnight rendezvous in the empty rooms of an old manor house. Holmes’s more useful suspicions out on the moor engage, by contrast, a more diffuse, more folkloric, and less aestheticized engagement with Baskerville’s old occult myth. When Watson first glimpses the portrait of Sir Hugo Baskerville, he recognizes a gloomy Gothic set-piece. When Holmes sees the same portrait, he notices something closer to Catherine Crowe’s fetches and ominous doubles. In staging the suspicion-driven investigative process, peripheral and unproductive but nevertheless at play, the mystery story involves us into the fiction with the same intricacy that Spiritualists used to stage, regulate, and ridicule skepticism.

Watson, as a focalizing character, consistently aligns himself with the reader and his suspicions are often our own. He and Dupin's unnamed companion—alongside many other narrative voices in mystery fiction of the period—model a readerly involvement through generative, suspicious readings, and yet suspicion itself is generally singularly unproductive in these stories. Unless it is wielded by a central investigator, suspicion typically transforms into something laughable, harmful, unhinged, or ignorant. Think for example of Lestrade's tendency to snigger in the stories depicting Holmes' early career: "Lestrade laughed. 'I am afraid that I am still a sceptic,' he said. Theories are all very well, but we have to deal with a hard-headed British jury" (93). In this case, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," Lestrade's suspicions question both Holmes' methods, as seen here, and the innocence of a wrongly-accused young man. Not merely comedically ignorant, they present the possibility of harming an innocent person in the absence of Holmes' forensic gifts. Dr. Hume, from Marsh's *The Goddess* stands as one of the most hostilely and unreasonably suspicious characters in the tales I discussed in this document. We can turn, for an example, to the following passage in which Hume believes he has caught on to Ferguson's presumably nefarious designs:

He stood with his back to the window, and his hands behind his back, regarding me, as I entered the room, with a keenness very like impertinence. There was something hawk-like in his attitude, as if he was ready to pounce on me the instant he could find an opening. I had never had much pleasure in the man's society; but this air of open resentment was new. It was as if out of Lawrence's murdered body there had come a malicious spirit, which had entered into him, and inspired him with a sudden and unreasoning desire to work me mischief. (*GD* 39)

Suspicions have involved Hume into the narrative and transformed him in this tableau into a burlesque of Holmes, himself. I cannot help but read as a reference his position in the room; Holmes canonically places his interviewees in seats flooded in full light. Hume's "hawk-like... attitude" and predatory manner similarly align well with the detective of reasoned insight. Here, however, Hume's embodiment of these tropes feels unbalanced and unreasoning. Ferguson ascribes them to an expression of unacknowledged receptivity—the haunting experience of laying out his friend's

mutilated corpse—that has been perverted into a form of suspicion. Ferguson observes later on in the scene, “I was beginning to wonder if the doctor himself was not stark mad” (GD 40). I should note, however, that just such expressions of pure receptivity, unalloyed with suspicion, receive their own ridicule both in mystery fiction and, perhaps more surprisingly, in Spiritualist texts. We can refer, here, to Underhill’s accounts of two uncritical mediums, which I discussed briefly in Chapter 4. Their naïve trust in the spirit world makes them dupable and vulnerable to, in one case, social embarrassment and, in the other, actual illness. We can think also of the credulous Dr. Mortimer in Doyle’s *Hound*. Perhaps the one man in the district who has a unique talent for recognizing facial structure and who regularly visits the Manor, he still misses the portrait. While focused on his belief in one form of recurrence, he misses another that lives and breathes and travels in his set.

Ultimately, for the reader of mystery fiction and for the Spiritualist, suspicions are only ever properly a ludic engagement. They are a light involvement, an adopted posture that shapes and is shaped by receptivity. While the reader of a mystery story might consistently imagine explanatory models and while an avid Spiritualist might cross-question the spirit world, each faithfully expects their posture to be disproven. However clarifying a reader’s peripheral fantasies of suspicion may seem, they are constructed in the hope that they are incorrect or, even better, inadequate. Is there really much fun to be had in a case when the mystery is immediately obvious, when we can guess the killer and the solution from the first chapter? Holmes, for whom few cases present any true novelty anymore, is perennially bored by such predictable fare. And however firmly the Spiritualist chains down the young medium, however much the two undergo a theatre of scepticism, they are receptive to the belief that there is some portion of that medium who is always essentially freed. In the mystery fiction I have already referenced, the suspicions of Dupin’s companion, of Watson, and particularly of Hume and of Lestrade are never a productive means of coming to knowledge and neither are our own. Indeed, they have a tendency to divert attention and energy from the proper track. They are a distinct departure from the investigations of these narratives’ central detectives who, as I have indicated throughout this dissertation, inform suspicion with receptivity and vice versa. In each of these texts—*The Goddess*, *Hound*, as well as *The Filigree Ball*, and

“The Empty House” (not to mention “Rue Morgue”)—there is something strikingly occult that is still subject to rational analysis and something stolidly physical that is still subject to occult association. If the investigator of *The Filigree Ball* can be taken as a model, the detective must be able to move between suspicion and receptivity in a way that the credulous Hibbard cannot. Alternatively, Ferguson must learn to move between suspicion and receptivity in a manner that the paranoid Dr. Hume cannot. If Spiritualism and mystery fiction both invite and ridicule suspicion, I would suggest that these could be read as two separate moments of incitement. We are called to involve ourselves in suspicion but mocked for taking suspicion too seriously as a means for more than involvement. We are ludicrously called to think as detectives and Spiritualists.

Before returning, then, to Ferguson’s foreclosure of suspicion and receptivity, I would like to close a loop that I began early in my introduction by arguing that the mystery story is inherently a story about *mysteries*, that is, it is an occult narrative that might prompt us to look more closely for the hidden associations lying latent in the material world. In his study of occult writing, specifically during a discussion of nineteenth-century theosophy, Joshua Gunn suggests that Madame “Blavatsky’s use of esoteric language was demanded, to some extent, by the assumption that the ineffable (for her the “Divine Principle”) is beyond representation and thus commands the use of the peculiar term or unusual phrase to better approximate the divine. That is, regardless of the occultist’s intentions, ambiguity is a better approximation of the ineffable than is accuracy or precision” (72). That is, abstruse or even incomprehensible language functions in the writings of Blavatsky, Eliphas Lévi, and other nineteenth-century occultists not entirely as semicommunication but as a prompt to notice language’s inefficiencies as well as the inefficiencies and limitations of other rational, organizing structures: logic, grammar, and ultimately our own conscious modes of thought. I would suggest that other modes of occult writing at the time attempted to reveal occult truths by prompting similarly uncanny revelations, though they used alternative epiphanic modes. Catherine Crowe’s *The Night-Side of Nature*, for example, deployed a bewildering number of cases, anecdotes, and iterations for each phenomenon that she addressed in an attempt to suggest paradigms and patterns from mere accounts. Late in the century, the SPR would use the same tactic of overwhelming numbers in an attempt to push anecdotes into data.

The effect of both is a sense that the material world teems with a hidden tangle of unexplained synchronies only waiting to be made meaningful by the intrepid adept. But if Crowe and the SPR played the quantity game, I would suggest that Spiritualism and mystery fiction during the *fin de siècle* were more often interested in ushering their participants into a certain *quality* of feeling. Observing the entertaining nature of Spiritualist practices and their connection to Victorian parlour games, Simone Natale writes: “[p]rivate séances might thus be considered a kind of highly regulated table game that followed a set of shared rules and contributed not only to the spiritual life but also—and perhaps even more—to the amusement of the sitters” (53). As Natale suggests, Spiritualism was often packaged as entertainment and its great genius lay in how it involved participants into a series of playful attitudes and postures, games and activities in order to usher them finally to an affecting finale. The playful qualities of the séance invited involvement through skepticism in order to transform that involvement into belief. Similarly, I would suggest that the moments I have pointed to in this dissertation—revealing a life in a walking stick or murderous recollection in a settle, for example—usher us into a feeling of immanent, occulted meaning in the world. Moments of sympathy, perplexity, and disorientation function in these texts as models through which we might recognize the mysterious affects inherently in mundane materiality.

We might end, then, with Ferguson’s departure from this mode of receptive suspicion toward the material world. Ferguson’s suspicions regarding the decontextualized figures of the automatist and the twin each reveal, in their turn, a secret identity. Indeed, there is the sense that his investigation forms, in the vaguest terms, an occult path of knowing, a series of keys or steps that must be undertaken in order to access the further mystery. Seriously crediting his vision and his sympathetic impulse, despite its confusing nature, allows Ferguson to resolve his mysterious mesmerized home-invader into Bessie Moore, London’s celebrity beauty and rarely-murderous star of the stage. Only once Ferguson knows Bessie’s identity does his other inquiry, into the increasingly erratic and violent behaviour of Edwin’s brother, find its own resolution. As if through divine coincidence, Bessie and Ferguson meet Edwin himself at the train station as they are about to flee the country. Immediately, Ferguson grasps what Dr. Hume will later struggle to comprehend: the body in Edwin’s apartment was a switch, left behind as Edwin tried to kill off his old

identity. Ferguson's suspicions chart a clear line of inquiry: Bessie's identity opens—through strange synchrony—Edwin's identity, which opens the corpse's identity, which reveals the goddess as both the weapon and manipulator of the tragedy. It is at this point, however, that Ferguson turns away from an investigative stance.

The idol is perhaps the clearest and most obviously occult parallel to Philip's body. Most obviously, the automaton and the body are each pierced in the moment of their embrace: "Even from its eyes, mouth, and nostrils had sprung knives," Ferguson remembers, and this image of penetration—the knife moving through the automaton's "skin"—corresponds to Philip's literal defacing (*GD* 164). Further, both the goddess and Philip work to control Edwin while remaining partially captive to his whims. Like Philip, the automaton is driven by impulse toward extraordinary violence. We can think here of Philip's "little, awkward, jerky movements" once he has lost himself to his temper; they are eerily reminiscent of the idol's jerking, mechanical movements (*GD* 162). We could go on chalking out these connections. The figure of the twin and the mesmeric automatist each emerge from the crime scene as iterations, in a deeply occulted manner, of Philip's corpse as I mentioned in Chapter 1. But the figure of the automaton is not an iteration. It is the original, which refashions the corpse in its image and through this material vector—the ruined body—it transforms Bessie and Edwin into further expressions. The uncanny, emptied quality of a body that shares in something human—"there was something about the creature which was terribly human," Ferguson confesses (*GD* 8)—but falls short of its motion (for the corpse), of its identity (for Bessie), of its individuality (for Edwin) recur here in the idol. The goddess's movements, identity, and individuality all seem to transgress and exceed those of a clockwork puppet, which has, implicitly, become a temporary vessel for the divine.

That Ferguson finds the idol's later autopsy an acceptable explanation—that he finds, for example, "an arrangement somewhat along the lines of a phonograph" a credible resolution to his and Bessie's experience of unlocalized laughter in the fog—feels like a rather abrupt and incongruent boundary for his suspicions (*GD* 165). This is, ultimately, the novel's most mysterious object and yet it elicits little curiosity from Ferguson.

the creature had originally been intended for sacrificial purposes... On certain days such a puppet would be produced by the priests, with a flourish of trumpets. One could easily believe that miraculous power would be claimed for it...Of what might have been the objects on which it exhibited its powers one did not care to think. Some queer things still take place in India. (*GD* 165)

Ferguson does not address himself to the autonomous nature of the idol, to its indulgent desires, its occasional dislocation from the manikin, its mesmeric charisma; of these details, “one did not care to think.” He avoids them by dismissing the thing as technological and as foreign. Having clarified each of the previous occult figures, his denial of suspicion feels significant. It describes the final curve in a satisfying, if largely eclipsed, character arc. Having met Bessie, Ferguson develops from the hard-drinking, high-stakes soldier of fortune whose apartment contains a vast collection of colonial weapons. By the end of the novel, he has become a grateful, doting, and familial husband, integrated within the British middle class. To pursue the nature of this mysterious, violent object brought from the colonies suggests the continuance of adventures and explorations that defined his old life. To research its occulted identity—the goddess whose true form he seems to have glimpsed during his astral travels in the novel’s opening—would be to revert from the growth that we have witnessed over the course of the novel. Ferguson then forgoes his investigation, having solved enough of the mystery to satisfy himself. I would suggest, then, as a final word that if the reader is not satisfied with that conclusion, it is because the reader has been inculcated into an occult curiosity. Ferguson’s failure stages an affective moment that prompts the reader to consider the divinity that might be missing from the statue. It is an incitement to further mystery, to Spiritualist association, and to an occult dissatisfaction with the mundane.

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