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On the Trail of the First Professional Female Detectives in British Fiction

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Introduction

On the Trail of the First Professional Female Detectives in British Fiction

In 1864, British commuters passing by a W. H. Smith railway bookstall might have noticed something new on display: two fictional detective casebooks. What distinguished these yellowbacks—cheaply produced volumes with brightly illustrated covers and (often) yellow-tinted protective wrappers—from similar collections of detective memoirs was that they featured the first representations of professional women detectives in British fiction. Although there has been some debate over which of the two was published first, if only to assign pride of place, book advertisements suggest that Andrew Forrester, Jr.'s *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, attributed to W. S. Hayward, were produced almost simultaneously. The earliest book notice for *The Female Detective* so far discovered appeared on 16 May 1864 in the *Caledonian Mercury*. One day earlier, *Reynolds Newspaper* advertised the release of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* under the publisher's name, J. A. Berger. The trade journal, *Publisher's Circular*, however, did not announce the publication of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* until October, and then the publisher credited is George Vickers, not J. A. Berger. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that *Revelations of a Lady Detective* was ready for press at the earlier date, but that the publisher, J. A. Berger, was absorbed into George Vickers, which itself was soon to become a subsidiary of Ward and Lock, the publishers of Forrester's *The Female Detective*.¹

Concern over which came first has, at times, overshadowed the larger significance of these groundbreaking professional women sleuths: the female detective, "G," and the lady detective "Mrs. Paschal."² Further, the fact that

1. As Chester W. Topp indicates in his work on yellowback publishers, takeovers of one publishing company by another were not uncommon. See, for example, his discussion of Ward and Lock (1995).

2. See Ellery Queen (1957).

they had real-life counterparts has been completely overlooked. This introduction addresses their previous obscurity while also demonstrating why those interested in nineteenth-century studies or Victorian detection might take a closer critical look at these early representations of professional female detectives.

These two casebooks have received limited critical attention, in part, because of their publishing format. “Yellowbacks,” or “railway fiction,” as they were also called, were produced for quick sales and consumption, designed to meet the demands generated by an increasing readership among lower- and middle-class commuters.³ *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* proved quite popular as both casebooks went through several reprintings.⁴ Regarded as “light” reading rather than literature—Victorian pulp fiction—until recently, yellowbacks have commanded the attention of specialist collectors like Michael Sadleir (1951, 1967) or bibliographers like Chester W. Topp (1995), but they have been neglected by literary scholars. Scholars, however, notably have widened their scope. The increased interest in gender over the last fifty years and, more recently, popular culture has enlarged the audience for these two remarkable examples of nineteenth-century crime fiction.

Rarity has also hindered scholarly consideration of these casebooks. Yellowbacks were cheaply produced and seldom archived; extant copies of *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* are rare and in fragile condition, available only in the special collections of a few research libraries. Thus, even scholars interested in Victorian popular culture have

3. Simon Eliot writes that yellowbacks sold “at 2s or less with a racy illustration on a (usually yellow) background, it was the airport lounge novel of its day” (293). For more information on yellowbacks, see Stephen Colclough; Stephen Knight; Michael Sadleir.

4. In the course of reprinting, one notes that both the titles and the publishers of the volumes were subject to change. For example, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (advertised as *The Lady Detective* in 1864) reappeared under the same title but different publisher in 1868, and again in 1870 with a different title *The Lady Detective: A Tale of Female Life and Adventure*; in the 1870 edition in the usual place of a publisher’s name was the attribution “Sold by all booksellers in London.” Another printing occurred in 1870 and again in 1884, with a different cover as *The Experiences of a Lady Detective* published by C. H. Clarke. *The Female Detective* mutated less but was truncated more. Whereas all the same cases appear in all the editions of *Lady Detective*, the *Female Detective’s* cases were broken up in subsequent editions. Only three cases appear in an 1868 edition (“Tenant for Life,” “Georgy,” and “A Mystery”) while another edition under the title *Tales of a Female Detective* published that same year included only the two cases “The Unraveled Mystery” and “The Unknown Weapon.”

hitherto depended on the two or three anthologies of detective fiction that have included one of G's or Mrs. Paschal's cases.⁵ This new edition makes the full texts of both books readily available.

More damaging to the casebooks' reputations is the long-held perception that the two heroines are literary oddities. Although detective-type memoirs and casebooks had attracted readers since the 1840s, these were the first two, as mentioned, to feature women as detectives/narrators. In the introduction to a collection of stories about women detectives, Michele B. Slung cautions readers not to dismiss these early women detectives on the grounds that the primitive beginnings of a more established detective fiction can be found in their stories. Nevertheless, Slung tempers her advice by noting that Mrs. Paschal's revelations "have not stood up well to the test of time" and adds that "[c]ritics have held them to be stylistically tedious" (xviii). Their value has been discounted further by the absence of professional women detectives in novels following the respective 1864 appearances of G and Mrs. Paschal until the *fin de siècle*. For although later literary detectives like Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes refer back to Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste Dupin and fictional detectives who followed in his tracks allude to Holmes, the fictional women detectives that proliferate in the 1890s do not glance back at G or Mrs. Paschal.⁶ This apparent lack of imitators has led critics like Kathleen Klein to argue that these yellowback heroines had a negligible literary impact.⁷

The lack of professional female detectives in Victorian novels may seem less remarkable when one remembers that, until the rise of New Woman fiction, professional women seldom appear in a genre that generally focused

5. E. F. Bleiler published one of Forrester's female detective's cases, "The Unknown Weapon," in his Dover edition of *Three Victorian Detective Novels* and Laura Marcus included the first of Mrs. Paschal's cases, "The Mysterious Countess," in her 1997 collection of female detective stories. Subsequently, several articles and chapter essays emerged that engage with the actual texts. Almost all of Klein's analysis of Forrester's "G," whom she calls Mrs. Gladden, is based on "The Unknown Weapon." Two more recent essays on Mrs. Paschal—one by Carolyn Dever (2002), the other by Geri Brightwell (2005)—draw on "The Mysterious Countess."

6. Fictional *fin de siècle* and Edwardian professional female detective heroines include: Clarice Dyke (1889); Loveday Brooke (1894); Dorcas Dene (1897); and Dora Myrl (1900) and Lady Molly of Scotland Yard (1910).

7. In the first genuinely scholarly treatment of the figure of the woman detective, Klein (1988, 1995), argues that G and Mrs. Paschal "are anomalies; these novels apparently led to neither imitators nor followers. Certainly the lack of additional similar characters and the absence of further British female private detectives until the 1890s diminishes the status of these precursors through silence and omission" (29).

on middle- and upper-class women. Professional women detectives, as will be discussed shortly, do make their appearance in the wider world of Victorian popular print, the ephemeral or pulpy quality of which may be one reason their impact has been devalued. The chief evidence of their anomalous nature, however, stems from the insistence by police historians and literary critics alike that there were no women hired as police officers, let alone detectives, for at least another generation.⁸ Consequently, when both G and Mrs. Paschal are made to claim professional relationships with the police, scholars have viewed their authors as “engaging in a fantasy of female empowerment completely at odds with actuality” (Kestner 13). According to this view, these two yellowbacks were imaginative feats, the pot-boiling of two hack writers cashing in on the success of the detective casebook genre. This presumed absence of real-life antecedents diminished scholarly interest in these two heroines.

While women probably were not accepted into the official ranks of the Metropolitan Police until the twentieth century,⁹ mid-nineteenth century newspapers and court records indicate that there were actual women who

8. Slung, in discussing the two yellowback heroines, remarks that, “There were no women actually attached to the Metropolitan Police in London until 1883, when two women were appointed to oversee female prisoners” (xviii, 1975). Other critics from Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan (1981) to Joseph Kestner (2003) have traced this same history.

9. See Chloe Owings (1925). Owings traces the conception of a female police officer as far back as the eighteenth century. She writes that “during the hearing on a case in court—*R. v. Briggs*—there was a discussion of the legality of women to serve in a certain compulsory office. A judge remarked: ‘I do not know why a woman should not be appointed to be a constable.’ However a century passed before women were employed in police departments. In 1883 the Metropolitan Police in London appointed two women to supervise women convicts. Later, it was considered that one woman could quite easily manage the amount of work which existed” (2). Martin Fido and Keith Skinner claim that Commissioner Sir Neville Macready took credit for having “invented” women police when he claims responsibility for “following a Home Office Select Committee’s recommendation that the Met regularize the position of the volunteer Women Special Police Patrols and Women Police Service in London” (165). These volunteer organizations had been founded only a few years earlier and their primary responsibilities focused on patrolling areas frequented by prostitutes. Women Police were only given limited powers of arrest in the 1920s and it was not until 1973 that Women Police integrated directly into the main force (289).

identified themselves or were designated by others as female detectives.¹⁰ As early as 1853, a brief news account described a Scottish woman's determination and ingenuity in tracking down a fellow factory worker who had stolen her clothing.¹¹ The clever way in which the woman pursued the thief prompted the headline "A Female Detective." In this early instance, a woman demonstrates detective-like behaviors. In 1855, newspapers covered two events in which women were hired specifically to do the work of female detectives. The first was a criminal conversation case, *Evans v. Robinson*, in which a Mr. Evans employed ex-Chief Inspector Charles Frederick Field to collect evidence of his wife's adultery.¹² Field, in turn, employed several women to infiltrate the house that Mrs. Evans and her lover frequented; he gave them rudimentary training in spying and a special gimlet with which to bore holes in a door so that they could spy on the adulterous pair. As a result of "ocular testimony" these women procured (along with Field's own observations), *Evans v. Robinson* led to *Evans v. Evans*. In its report on the divorce proceedings, *The Daily News* reminded readers of the earlier case, "in which a husband, suspecting his wife's fidelity, hired the services of several female detectives, under the orders of Mr. Inspector Field" (June 11, 1857). Another female detective made news in 1855 when she was hired by the Eastern Counties Railway to halt luggage theft from the first-class waiting room.¹³ Although the papers do not name her, court transcripts from the Old Bailey identify her as Elizabeth Joyes.¹⁴

Women detectives were reported working in the colonies as well as in the metropole. In 1859, *Lloyd's Weekly* picked up a story from the *Bombay Gazette* that included a feature on female detectives hired to detect the crimes of infanticide and abortion.¹⁵ The *Friend of India* also cited the *Bombay Gazette* in their "Weekly Epitome of News":

10. Recently established online searchable databases allow scholars to cross the "lead desert" of nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals and, thus, find evidence that challenges the claim that these two books are historically anachronistic and literary anomalies. Gale-Cengage's British Library Newspapers and Nineteenth Century UK Periodical databases have been particularly valuable in tracing the figure of the woman detective in Victorian print culture.

11. *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (December 08, 1853).

12. *The Times* (April 4, 1855).

13. *The Morning Chronicle* (December 3, 1855).

14. See Old Bailey Online, Reference number: t18551217-115 "John Cotton Curtis, Theft simple larceny." (December 17, 1855).

15. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (March 27, 1859).

Two female detectives have been added by the Deputy Commissioner to the Police force.... [t]hey wear the Police belt, but under the “saree”[...] It certainly involves a refinement of espionage not yet thought of in England, though we believe the French Police numbers several females, and is assisted by scores of female spies.¹⁶

Newspapers carrying stories of women detectives in the 1850s consider them to be novelties; nevertheless, they do provide evidence that women operated as detectives both in Britain and in the colonies in the decade prior to the publications of *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*.

Such evidence gives scholars reason to consider these yellowbacks afresh in terms of their representations of actual working women rather than merely fantastic or titillating innovations. The representations of both G and Mrs. Paschal, when combined with contemporaneous newspaper reportage and court records, indicate that women worked as “detective police spies” (*FD 2*). Although it would be “another fifty years before there was a Women’s Police Service and longer still before they were permitted to perform a detective function” (Worthington 170), Victorian popular print suggests that women worked as detectives—both for the state and privately—long before they show up in official documents, even if that work was off the record and assigned on an ad hoc basis.

From at least 1875, advertisements for private inquiry offices appear in such papers as *The Times* (London) touting the services of women detectives. For example, ads for confidential agencies such as Arthur Cleveland Montagu’s began running in *The Times* (March 2, 1875) and mention having available “experienced detectives male and female.” Over the next twenty years and with increasing boldness, advertisements promoted women detectives. In a series of ads, Henry Slater’s detective agency offered “SLATER’S FEMALE DETECTIVES of all ages—The finest organization of female detective talent in the world for divorce, secret watchings and secretly ascertaining private addresses....” This ad was followed by others, one with the copy, “SLATER’S WOMEN DETECTIVES. Many men say women have been their downfall but Henry Slater owes his success to his lady detectives for secret watchings, secret inquiries, &c—a specialty of which he is the pioneer....”¹⁷

16. *The Friend of India* (March 3, 1859).

17. Both Slater ads appeared in *The Times* (April 2, 1896).

Advertisements such as these may have piqued the interest of women looking for work. One such woman, “Zilla,” received the following response in the journal *Hearth and Home* (October 13, 1892) to her query concerning detection:

We should have imagined this employment would have been a most objectionable one to well-brought up girls but to our regret we have received several letters, evidently from well-educated ladies, respecting it. On making enquiries on their behalf, we learned that the profession is overcrowded and that one firm alone received eighteen hundred answers in response to a few advertisements for assistants.... However, as we answer all questions relating to the employment of women as far as we are able, we will inform “Zilla” that we believe from five to ten shillings a day, with expenses, are paid to female detectives. Of their duties, we cannot speak accurately.¹⁸

The discouraging tone evident in this response is amplified when, several years later, a columnist in the same journal responded to another query concerning “Detective Careers,” more specifically about the kind of work involved:

You would not sit at home, à la Sherlock Holmes, working out beautiful theories. You would have to go among difficult—often unpleasant—surroundings, and, undercover of service or friendship, find out matters you will later on betray. Do you not see what hideous work a woman detective would be employed for?¹⁹

Regardless of the expressed disapproval, both of these responses indicate that by the end of the century detection was a possible if not wholly desirable professional opportunity for women. Judging from instances of the female detective in advertisements, advice columns, and elsewhere over the course of the nineteenth-century, professional female detection became an increasingly pervasive and, to some extent, naturalized idea in popular print and culture.²⁰

18. Over the next two years, *Hearth and Home* ran a series of short articles on women’s occupations. The series eventually was published under the title, *What Our Daughters Can Do For Themselves: A Handbook on Women’s Employments*, and included a section on detection (63-64).

19. *Hearth and Home* (January 11, 1900)

20. John Sutherland connects the rise of sensation fiction not only to the professionalization of the London Metropolitan police force but also to changes in marriage and divorce laws. He argues that the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act “mobilized a whole new

In addition to real-life antecedents, *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* had literary and dramatic successors for which they have not been sufficiently credited. Ephemeral and periodical publications as well as theatrical manuscripts and notices that proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth-century reveal the contribution that these yellowbacks made to a growing awareness of and fascination with the figure of the female detective. Within a year of the publication of Forrester's *Female Detective*, theatrical notices heralded a new play called *The Female Detective*. From 1865 onwards notices in *The Era*, for example, report and review numerous productions that use either "Female Detective" or "Lady Detective" in the title or prominently cast a woman detective character.²¹ In addition to the popular theatrical female detectives, one can find jokes, poems, cartoons, short or serialized stories that feature women detectives, especially in the 1880s and '90s.²²

These, then, are reasons why we have been inhibited in seriously considering these two yellowback collections of detective stories: their relative

army of amateur and unofficial detectives: namely the suspicious spouse and his or her agent" (244). The already cited *Evans v. Robinson* involving Ex-Chief Inspector Field and his 'female detectives' offers an early manifestation of suspicious spouses and their agents at work, an alliance that figures in the pages of newspapers and periodicals throughout the second half of the nineteenth-century.

21. The play, *The Female Detective, or Foundling in the Streets* (soon referred to simply as *The Female Detective*) was successfully staged in London, toured the provinces, and was performed in New York from 1865; it was still being revived well into the 1880s. From the 1860s on, in addition to the revivals of *The Female Detective*, at least twelve other productions featured women detectives either as heroines or as "gods in the machine" thus resolving outstanding problems (sometimes they serve as both): *Ordeal by Touch* (1872), *A Mother's Dying Child, or the Female Detective* (1875); *Old Knockles* (1884), *The Lucky Shilling* (1888); *The Judge* (1890-91), *England's Defenders* (1895) (contains the musical number, "The Widow of Sherlock Holmes"); *Honour Bright* (1897); *Frolicsome Fanny* (1897); *The Tiger's Grip* (1898); *A Stranger in New York* (1898); *The Wrong Mr. Wright* (1899-1900). One play started out as *Bilberry of Tilbury* (1898) but soon had its title changed to *The Lady Detective*. The British Library holds the Lord Chamberlain's collection, which contains many of these plays in manuscript.

22. Popular print references to women detectives include this witticism, "A female detective—a blush," (*Fun*, October 8, 1864). A later humorous "Diary of a Female Detective" (*Funny Folks*, October 20, 1888) derisively depicts a woman detective, whose "feminine" interests in fashion, her own looks, and romance distract her from her work. Again, new word-searchable databases such as Gale-Cengage's Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals open popular print culture to an exciting variety of questions concerning social perceptions of female detectives specifically, and professional women more generally.

rarity, their outsider relationship to previous canons, and the difficulty of establishing context for the stories prior to word-searchable databases. I have also suggested why these reasons no longer need apply. But, assuredly, the most persuasive evidence of their value as windows into the emergence of a profession and a genre can be found in the texts themselves.

The detective profession itself was—throughout the nineteenth-century—being created, both in the “real” world and in literature. This invention found one vehicle of expression in yellowbacks. Although detective fiction can be traced to *Richmond: Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Runner* (1829), the 1849 publication of *Recollections of a Police Officer* by “Waters” (the pen-name of William Russell) popularized detective stories. This memoir launched a line of generic successors like Russell’s own *Recollections of a Detective Police Officer* (1856), Thomas Delf’s *The Detective’s Notebook* (1860), and *The Diary of an Ex-Detective* (1860) as well as a third by Russell, *The Experiences of a Real Detective* (1862).²³ That these last three were published as yellowbacks indicates the popular interest in what was a fairly new profession, the first plain clothes Detective Branch of London’s Metropolitan Police having been formally established only in 1842. Accounts of crime-solving capabilities gratified the growing appetite of a reading public infected with what Wilkie Collins would soon call “detective fever.”

Andrew Forrester, Jr.’s *Revelations of a Private Detective* (1863) built upon what was by that time well-covered ground. In literary terms Forrester’s male detective had both English and French antecedents beginning as early as the 1820s with *Richmond, Scenes in the life of a Bow Street Runner* and the *Memoirs* of French thief-taker-turned-head-of-the-Surêté, Eugene Vidocq. This tradition continued into and beyond the 1850s and ’60s and reached its apotheosis in Sherlock Holmes.²⁴ Forrester’s great fictional innovation, then, was not his male private detective, but his female professional detective.

The emphasis on professional is important because of a tendency to call anyone who functions like a detective, a detective. Wilkie Collins’s seamstress heroine Anne Rodway (1856) has been hailed by some as the first fictional

23. The detective notebook has its roots in the memoirs and ersatz recollections of the 1820s attributed to a variety of thieves turned thief-takers, Bow Street runners, and police officers. See Knight (2004) on this generic tradition. See Bleiler (1976) on “Richmond.” See Emsley (2006) on Vidocq.

24. By mid-century, novelists begin appropriating detective characters as crucial but limited parts to a novel’s large whole. Such detective characters include, famously, Charles Dickens’ Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House* (1852) and Wilkie Collins’ Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* (1868).

woman detective because she deftly pieces together the evidence that leads to the identification of her friend's murderer.²⁵ An even earlier candidate can be found in Dickens' character Mrs. Bucket, who has a "natural detective genius" and ably assists her husband, Inspector Bucket, in apprehending a murderess (*Bleak House* 804). Yet, neither Mrs. Bucket nor Anne Rodway call themselves detectives, nor do they get paid for their work. Forrester's female detective G (like the lady detective, Mrs. Paschal) does both; she self-identifies as a police detective and receives payment for her detection.²⁶ In the course of one case, "The Unknown Weapon," G reinforces her connection to the police; not only does she identify herself numerous times as a detective but also as "an old police-constable" (*FD* 115) and a "police officer in petticoats" (*FD* 125). As if to accentuate the authenticity of her experiences and her authority as a police detective to tell her own story, Forrester takes credit only as the editor of these cases.

Virtually nothing is known about Andrew Forrester, Jr., except that the name was likely a pseudonym. His anonymity is not surprising since a host of writers, about whom we know little, wrote original works to be published as yellowbacks. Writers like Mary Braddon, Wilkie Collins, and Walter Besant had their names emblazoned on their novels reissued as yellowbacks. Others, however, either used pseudonyms or would not be named at all; their books would be designated simply as "by the author of" followed by a list of titles to their credit.²⁷ Scholars, thus, have speculated concerning the innovative

25. Both Bleiler (1978) and Kestner (2003) nominate Collins' Anne Rodway as the first female detective because of her clever pursuit of her friend's killer.

26. Neither of these fictional women detectives reveals how much she gets paid. When asked by a private client how much remuneration G expects, she requests reimbursement for her expenses "and payment for my time at the ordinary pay I receive from the Government" (*FD* 36). The woman detective's income appears to comprise government wages, pay from private cases, and special rewards for solving crimes such as robbery. Without exact sums either in the casebooks themselves or from official accounts, it is difficult to compare the woman detective's income with what other (actual) women earned. But, in the world of the casebooks at least, it seems as if she had the potential to earn considerably more than other professional women. Suffragist and member of the Langham Place Group, Bessie Raynor Parkes writes that in a semi-mechanical occupation such as working in a telegraph office, a professional woman might hope to earn annually between £50-£75 (183). An educated woman working as a governess could expect to earn £50 or more per year ("A Year's Experience in Women's Work 1860).

27. For example, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* is advertised as having been written by the author of other yellowbacks such as *Anonyma* and *Love Frolics of a Young Scamp* (see n. 1).

Andrew Forrester's identity. E. F. Bleiler has posited that the pseudonym "Forrester" may have derived from the two Forrester brothers, John and Daniel, who were "detectives for the City of London and were pioneers in the application of scientific method" (*Three Victorian Detective Novels* viii-ix). Stephen Knight proposes "a female candidate for authorship" in a Mrs. Forrester, who began publishing gentry-romances a few years after new works by Andrew Forrester ceased appearing (36). Most recently, Judith Flanders has offered persuasive evidence that "Andrew Forrester, Jr." was the pseudonym of writer/editor James Redding Ware (14-15).

Authorial speculations aside, Forrester's works have held interest long after their initial publication. The legal specificity in *Revelations of a Private Detective* helps explain why microfiche copies can be found in law libraries across the country. *The Female Detective* bears comparison with Forrester's earlier casebook, in part, because we can more easily discern the latter's similarities and its departures from the traditional male casebook memoir. Such a comparison also makes apparent that detection was gendered as masculine or feminine in the early development of the genre.

Neither of Forrester's casebooks offers a sustained narrative nor can they be classified as novels. Instead, they each comprise a succession of unrelated cases. Both present these cases as based in real-life experience. The *Private Detective's* narrator prefaces his cases with the claim "that the narratives which occupy the following pages are true in substance and in nearly every point of detail." The detective narrator qualifies this claim by adding that names and places have been "altered and suppressed and here and there, in order to conceal an identity, an incident has been varied" (Preface). As mentioned above, a comparable claim for the veracity of *The Female Detective* can be found on the frontispiece which says "Edited by Andrew Forrester, Jun.," a credit that implies that the cases have an actual source.

Forrester's first-person narrators reveal little about themselves. The narrator of *Revelations of a Private Detective* never discloses his name, while the female detective reveals (well into her first case) that she uses the name "Miss Gladden" when she adopts the identity of a seamstress; we also learn that her colleagues in the police force call her "G."²⁸ Little personal information means that both memoirs are less character than plot driven. Often cases involve fairly complicated set ups of an actual or attempted crime, followed by a quick denouement. Neither of Forrester's narrators have "sidekicks"—that is, observers who serve as helpers and, more importantly,

28. Some critics refer to her as *Mrs.* Gladden, but she never designates herself thus.

bear witness to the detective's brilliance—but both occasionally summon assistance, as in the private detective's case "Mrs. Fitzgerald's Life Policy" or the female detective's case "The Unknown Weapon." Without a sidekick, the narrator has to make claims for his or her own talents or reveal these through the plot. Both of Forrester's detectives, consummate professionals, express more interest in the case than in puffing themselves.²⁹

Despite these parallels, differences between the male detective and his female counterpart extend beyond their professional positions: his as a private detective, hers as a police detective. One obvious difference is their sex and marital status. The private detective reveals his private life, while hers remains a complete mystery. Though anonymous, the narrator of *Revelations of a Private Detective* is most certainly male. He twice mentions having a wife. Although generally reticent about his personal life, in "The Forger's Escape" he offers a peek at what looks like a cozy domestic circle: "One evening as I was chatting with my wife, playing with my two children at home, I was called upon" (134). This humanizing glimpse of the detective's domesticity ends abruptly when, after being told the forger had been spotted in Southampton, he comments, "It was the work of a few minutes to put on my coat, fill a carpet bag, hail a cab, and make my way to the South-Western station in time to catch the next train." A hundred pages and several cases later, he again refers to his wife:

One day, as I sat quietly musing in my offices, with comparatively little to do, and was planning a nice trip to Ireland with my wife, solely for the purpose of our mutual enjoyment, and with no concealed or latent professional intent, I was called upon by a person who bore a letter of introduction from a solicitor who had some time previously made use of my services in probing and extinguishing a gigantic fraud upon young scions of the aristocracy. (235)

This is the last mention the narrator makes of Mrs. Private Detective.

Like her male predecessor, the narrator of *The Female Detective* remains nameless. Giving even less personal information than the private detective, G deliberately underplays her sex, her marital status, and the circumstances that led her to detection. As if to avoid being stereotyped, she enigmatically calls attention to and then dismisses central markers of Victorian femininity—marital status, motherhood, age, respectability—as she introduces herself:

29. Mrs. Paschal, in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, does not have a sidekick; but she does have an admiring superior in Colonel Warner.

Who am I?

It can matter little who I am.

It may be that I took to the trade, sufficiently comprehended in the title of this work without a word of it being read, because I had no other means of making a living; or it may be that for the work of detection I had a longing which I could not overcome.

It may be that I am a widow working for my children—or I may be an unmarried woman, whose only care is herself.

But whether I work willingly or unwillingly, for myself or for others—whether I am married or single, old or young, I would have my readers at once accept my declaration that whatever may be the results of the practice of my profession in others, in me that profession has not led me towards hardheartedness. (*FD 1*)

Here, the female detective differs exceptionally from her fictional male counterparts. Forrester's private detective shows no anxiety about how the state of his heart is judged and, earlier, Poe's Dupin prides himself on his ratiocinative abilities. At the same time, G's self-defense from the charge of hardheartedness seems peculiar since she seldom exhibits sentiment. Indeed, G shows less anxiety over her womanliness than she does over public perceptions of the detective's profession itself. As Dickens wrote to allay public concerns and curiosity regarding the recently established Detective Branch and its members in *Household Words*, so G asserts that she writes "this book to help to show, by my experience, that the detective has some demand upon the gratitude of society" (*FD 2*).³⁰

Forrester's two detectives also justify their work differently. The private detective explains that he is employed as a measure of last resort. For example, he introduces "The Forger's Escape" with a brief account of the problem and then the explanation, "Ordinary means, such as the offers of rewards and employment of common detectives, having failed to discover the delinquent, I was set to work, being told to spare no expense, as the stake was very high" (134). Frequently hired by solicitors, the private detective handles many cases that concern legal issues, some theft and often fraud.³¹ He seems particularly

30. See Haining (1996).

31. Two of the thirteen cases do not concern the narrator. The second story in the collection tells of the narrator's friend, Inspector Slimy, "a ladies man," that is a plainclothes Scotland Yard detective assigned to "scent out, watch and capture elegant thieves of the gentler sex, who plied their vocation [pickpocketing] in or about the model parish of St. James" (54). The last case, "Arrested by Suspicion" is narrated by a "civilian" who seeks to save his sister from jail after she's been falsely accused of

adept at dealing with inheritance and insurance fraud. In this regard, the private detective is a conservative figure, one that protects capitalist institutions. Forrester's private detective never deals with murder or violent crime, which are evidently police concerns. Generally, the private detective takes on cases out of economic interests rather than an abstract sense of justice; but, occasionally, private citizens hire the private detective as in the case "Farmer Williams and his Bride, or the Matrimonial Agency."³²

The private detective seems able to take for granted that his cases are matters of general interest. Forrester's female detective, in contrast, positions herself defensively. She declares that she writes "to show, in a small way, that the profession to which I belong is so useful that it should not be despised" (*FD 1*) and then argues for the necessity for women detectives as well as men:

I am aware that the female detective may be regarded with even more aversion than her brother in profession. But still it cannot be disproved that if there is a demand for men detectives there must also be one for female detective police spies. Criminals are both masculine and feminine...and therefore it follows that the necessary detectives should be of both sexes. (*FD 2*)

Being a woman who works outside the home for pay rather than in the home for love might well evoke aversion in the 1860s. Forrester is writing, after all, in the decade following Coventry Patmore's paean to Victorian domestic femininity, "The Angel in the House" (1854).³³ G not only works as a paid professional, she uses her womanhood as a guise in order to infiltrate homes, eavesdrop, and observe those who least suspect her. As the columnist of *Hearth and Home* described it, the woman detective's "hideous" work requires that she lives "upon the sins or misfortunes of [her] fellow-

pickpocketing (though not by Inspector Slimy), and as the narrator (her brother, John) is able to prove, it is a case of mistaken identity.

32. That case concerns the liabilities of coverture. A man advertises for a wife, only to discover after he gets married that he is responsible for his wife's debts including those contracted before as well as during their marriage and even after she has left him. The farmer hires the detective to trace her location so that he can gain a divorce. Even here, the detective operates conservatively in the sense that the results of his investigation protect the farmer's fortune.

33. Hellerstein et al. (1981) write that "The phrase the angel in the house is now much more famous than the poem from which it derives, but in Victorian England—and America—'The Angel in the House' (1854-56) by Coventry Patmore sold better than any other poetic work except Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'" (134).

creatures.”³⁴ In her status as a “female detective police spy,” G transgresses gender norms *and* violates the ideal of a free and private citizenry, a national characteristic the British enjoyed and one that distinguished them from other countries, particularly the French.³⁵ The aversion, or perhaps more accurately, the anxiety generated by the professional female detective may explain why she is so seldom the hero of her own tales.

In a casebook entitled *The Female Detective*, one might expect that the cases would be success stories and that the eponymous narrator would play a major part in solving the crimes. Surprisingly, the female detective participates actively in only four of the seven cases in the first edition. The reader may come away with the satisfaction that a mystery has been solved, but few of the seven cases resolve conclusively. The female detective’s efforts seldom result in culprits being brought to trial or victims receiving reparation. Nevertheless, on her own terms she succeeds. In the first case, “Tenant for Life,” G states, “Indeed it may be said the value of the detective lies not so much in discovering facts, as in putting them together, and finding out what they mean” (*FD* 17). Despite what, to modern readers, seem like needless complications, the plots themselves warrant our attention not only because they are the first in the genre, but because they reveal something about the epistemic role of this female detective: she is allowed to find satisfying explanations of surprising events, but, often, that is as far as it goes.

G introduces her casebook by pointing out that

... in a very great many cases women detectives are those who can only be used to arrive at certain discoveries.... But without going into particulars, the reader will comprehend that the woman detective has far greater opportunities than a man of intimate watching, and of keeping her eyes upon matters near which a man could not conveniently play the eavesdropper. (*FD* 2)

Whether women or men are better as detectives or spies is worth the reader’s consideration. G strives to convince the reader of the viability of professional female detectives as she demonstrates her skill in penetrating into the heart of a household to gather information and carefully observe, especially in her two longest narratives, “Tenant for Life” and “The Unknown Weapon.” In that latter case, G not only performs detective work herself but requisitions from

34. See n. 16.

35. Carolyn Dever (2002) discusses the literary fascination with the *agent provocateur* during the period that *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and other detective stories and memoirs were written.

“headquarters ... one of our own people;” specifically, she asks for another female detective, who then poses as a maidservant in order to gain entrance into a suspect household.

“The Unknown Weapon” deserves special notice. In the course of this complex case (as in others), G relies on quick, acute perception, the careful assembling together of evidence, cunning stratagems, occasional flashes of intuition, some histrionic skills—female detectives pride themselves in their abilities to act—and, most often, the convenient gift of getting people to disclose the precise information she needs. E. F. Bleiler describes this story as “[r]emarkable for its period, it offers the germs of scientific detection in its use of the microscope to analyze dust, and it centers on a very original colorful crime, considerably more advanced thematically than the exploits of Forrester’s contemporaries” (*Three Victorian Detective Novels*, x). By the story’s end, the reader thoroughly understands what happened but is not allowed to witness any punishment because the culprit escapes.

While G does not disdain the economic rewards accompanying detection, they do not primarily motivate her. Unlike her male counterpart, for whom economic incentives and professional pride dominate, G seeks knowledge in spite of cost or ultimate outcome and regardless of mistakes made along the way. This may explain the inclusion of two tales of ratiocination in which the female detective’s role is minimal and a final sealed-room mystery in which she doesn’t appear at all. The cases that use Dupin-esque powers of ratiocination spring from contemporary headlines. The first, “The Unraveled Mystery,” is based on the unsolved “Waterloo Bridge Mystery.” On October 9, 1857, a dismembered body was discovered in a carpet-bag on an abutment of Waterloo Bridge. The body was never identified, and no one was accused or arrested for the murder. The case became a *cause célèbre*, one puzzled over for many years afterwards.³⁶ In Forrester’s fictionalized version, G serves as the interlocutor to a medical man who infers from evidence that the body belonged to an Italian nationalist and that he was killed by one of his comrades. G appears in the second tale of ratiocination only as the recipient of a manuscript by the same medical man, and she carefully qualifies its inclusion:

36. I wish to thank Judith Flanders for pointing out the connection between the “The Unraveled Mystery” and the Waterloo Bridge mystery. For a graphic description of what was found in the carpet-bag, see the report on the Coroner’s inquest in *The Times*, October 13, 1857, p. 7.

I have had great doubts as to the desirability of printing the following narrative. I do so, because I think it worth record. Strictly speaking, it is no experience whatever of mine. It was given to me in manuscript by the medical man who induced me to follow up the Bridge mystery. Perhaps flattered by the respect I paid his first communication, he offered me a second (*FD* 92).³⁷

This case, entitled “Child Found Dead: Murder or No Murder,” retells the Road Hill Mystery in which the body of young Saville Kent was found brutally murdered. At the time of *The Female Detective*’s publication in May 1864, the murderer had not yet confessed. In Forrester’s version, Hardal, an old school chum of the medical man (who is here called Roddy), convincingly explains that the clues all point to a sleep-walking nursemaid, who must have killed her charge in an unconscious fit of homicidal monomania.³⁸ The story breaks off with Roddy and Hardal (the ratiocinative genius) rushing off to tell the father of the dead child, “Mr. Cumberland,” what they believed happened. Not only does it end inconclusively, but contemporary readers would have known that the murderer was still at large. Saville Kent’s half-sister, Constance, did not confess to the murder until April 1865, though Inspector Jack Whicher of Scotland Yard suspected her almost from the start of his investigation.³⁹

The female detective’s concern for full professional disclosure also explains why several stories show her taking false steps (“Tenant for Life”), mistaking appearances (“Georgy”), or misreading evidence (“The Judgment of Conscience”). When comparing *Revelations of the Private Detective* to *The Female Detective* it is unclear why the outcomes in these two casebooks—that is, types of closure achieved—differ. One might assume that fulfilling conventional ideas of success—such as property restored, reparations made, or wrong-doers caught and punished—would be imperative in both a private detective’s business and a police detective’s work; however, while male private detective typically “gets his man” or recovers the loot, the first of the

37. Although Heather Worthington (2005) only glances at *The Female Detective* in her conclusion, her second chapter, “Making a Case for the Professionals,” demonstrates the close connection between the work of physicians and that of detectives.

38. The footnote to this story insists that the case is not the same as the Road Hill murder though it is like it in practically all the pertinent details. Although the surname is changed from Kent to Cumberland, the two older half-siblings of the murdered child are called Constance and William, which were the names of the two Kent children suspected of murdering their younger brother.

39. See Kate Summerscale’s account of the murder, the mystery and the scandal that surrounded the death of Saville Kent (2009).

woman detectives does not achieve the same material successes. Nor is she a ratiocinative genius; she works hard to figure out the truth. In her willingness to admit “the blanks [s]he may have drawn” (FD 59), she shows herself to be ordinary. At the same time, this ordinariness as a respectable if lower-class woman facilitates her detective work, allowing her to slip into homes, secretly watch and listen, and finally make sense of the sometimes horrific crimes she encounters. Perhaps, too, her ordinariness accounts for the popularity, the market appeal, of her unusual but still everywoman adventures.⁴⁰ On the other hand, G’s limited successes serve to offset her pioneering position by reassuring readers that not only was the female detective not about to displace her male detective associates, but that detection itself, though “a necessary business,” was not the efficient “system of spydom” and social control that the mid-Victorian British public feared (FD 60).

The female detective G was joined on the bookstall shelves by the lady detective, Mrs. Paschal. *Revelations of a Lady Detective* invites numerous comparisons with *The Female Detective*. One similarity lies in the uncertainty concerning authorship attribution. Some critics have cited “Anonyma” as the author of *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. “Anonyma,” (subtitled “Fair but Frail: A Tale of West End Life, Manners, and ‘Captivating’ People”) was the first in a “series of stories about the smart world, the half-world, and the underworld of Victorian London” (Sadleir 8).⁴¹ The British Library catalogue does not name the author of *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. It does, however, list W. Stephens Hayward as the author of *Skittles* and *The Soiled Dove*, both part of the “Anonyma Series,” and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* is advertised as part of the same series.⁴² While critics have attributed authorship of this series to E. L. Blanchard as well as W. S. Hayward, Michael Sadleir believes Bracebridge Hemming is the most likely author. Sadleir qualifies his informed guess by adding that the series was “in all probability, developed into a product of a syndicate” (8). In other words, the writers or publishers (or both) saw an advantage in associating *Revelations of a Lady Detective* with the licentious “Anonyma” series by implying that they shared the same source.

With both casebooks, we see the publishers seeking to spur sales by linking to past successes. The publishers Ward and Lock use the advertisements for *The Female Detective* to position it as a companion to

40. See n. 3.

41. For further information on the Anonyma “series,” see Rachel Sagner Buurma (2008).

42. See, for example, an advertisement in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* December 17, 1864.

Forrester's earlier casebooks *Secret Service* and *Revelations of a Private Detective*. The newspaper ad copy refers to all three books as part of "a series of revelations, startling and tragic in their domestic interest and extraordinary ingenuity."⁴³ The yellowback cover illustration of the 1864 edition shows a woman entering a room where a male figure lies prone on the floor, while another woman kneels nearby. The second woman's distressed expression and the clasped hands situate this apparent murder in the realm of the sensational, but the impression conveyed by the woman entering the room in the upper-left quadrant of the illustration is one of calm seriousness as she surveys the scene rather than melodrama. The words "Uniform with Secret Service," in a smaller font placed directly above the title—*The Female Detective*—forge a link with the previous works of professional memoir by Andrew Forrester, Jr.

In contrast, advertisements for *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, along with the cover illustration, place Mrs. Paschal's casebook in the racy company of "Skittles," "Incognita," and "The Beautiful Demon," previous publications of George Vickers. In addition to the list of chapters, further ad copy seems to take a swipe at *The Female Detective*: "The very curious revelations in this book surpass anything ever before published."⁴⁴ The oft-commented upon cover shows a woman with a lit cigarette in one hand while with the other hand she raises her skirt to expose her quilted red petticoat up to her calves; her direct gaze coolly assesses passersby. Despite these sexy signifiers, Mrs. Paschal never works undercover as a prostitute. At times, she admits to maintaining dubious associates and in her last case she attributes her deft skill in opening a bottle of soda water to having worked in her youth as a barmaid in a railway refreshment station (*RLD* 132). When she feigns conversion in order to gain entrance to a convent, Mrs. Paschal remarks that "detectives, whether male or female must not be too nice" (*RLD* 73). While she may dispense with fastidiousness, it is always in the line of duty, and thus the cover belies the professionalism that makes *Revelations of a Lady Detective* an important companion text to *The Female Detective*. Taken together, the cover illustrations of both books suggest that no standardized picture of the professional working woman existed for an artist to draw on, hence the recycling of more *outré* images.

Their respective titles also warrant comment. Although *The Female Detective* specifies G's gender, it conveys nothing else about her, which corresponds to her deliberately evasive introduction. In practice, G avoids

43. *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (June 11, 1864).

44. *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (October 15, 1864).

distinguishing herself according to class. In her various cases, she mingles easily with cabbies, shoemakers, and housemaids; but she also approaches gentry with confidence. G's use of language and intellectual interests suggest her education, but she never pretends to be a gentlewoman. If she needs to don a guise she presents herself as a seamstress. In contrast to G's lack of pretension, the title *Revelations of a Lady Detective* implies a superior status. Mrs. Paschal claims to be "well born and well educated, so that, like an accomplished actress, I could play my part in any drama in which I was instructed to take a part" (*RLD* 2). This well-born status would seem in accord with the genteel title of her casebook. Nevertheless, the parts she plays—a lady's maid, an out of work servant, a post-office letter-sorter, or even a convent novice—seem more consistent, at best, with impoverished respectability rather than the refined gentility suggested by the word "lady." Further, Mrs. Paschal plays the paramour of a French con turned informant with a gusto that belies her claims to class superiority, as does her confession that she worked as a railway station barmaid in her youth. "Lady" may be an unstable signifier of class as far as Mrs. Paschal is concerned, but it carries a cachet that may well have served as a marketing strategy to distinguish her from her merely "female" competitor.

Turning from the casebooks' covers to their contents, one finds points of fruitful comparison. Both casebooks show the literary influence of Edgar Allan Poe. As mentioned earlier, *The Female Detective* borrows from the Dupin stories in the inclusion of two tales of ratiocination; the detective work in "The Unraveled Mystery" and "Child Found Dead" is almost all based on inferences made far from the scenes of the original crimes.⁴⁵ Although ratiocination is not Mrs. Paschal's strong suit, she, too, owes a debt to Poe. The case "Found Drowned" is an anglicized and melodramatic reworking of "The Mystery of Marie Rôget." Both G and Mrs. Paschal have dealings with foreign secret societies (G's "The Unraveled Mystery" and Mrs. Paschal's "The Secret Band"). G's "Tenant for Life" and Mrs. Paschal's "Which is the Heir?" address similar crimes involving inheritance fraud. G actively solves murders in "The Judgment of Conscience" and "The Unknown Weapon," while Mrs. Paschal tracks and apprehends a suspected murderer in "Found Drowned." But Mrs. Paschal's casebook includes more cases—in which she participates fully—and, it deals with a wider variety of crimes: bank robbery ("The Mysterious Countess"), jewel theft ("The Lost Diamonds"), mail theft

45. G also refers to Poe's narrative strategy of hiding something in plain sight, which he used in "The Purloined Letter," as she seeks to solve the mystery of "The Unknown Weapon" (152).

(“Stolen Letters”), identity theft (“Mistaken Identity”), forgery (“Fifty Pounds Reward”), extortion and unlawful restraint (“The Nun, the Will, and the Abbess”) and, finally, attempted bigamy (“Incognita”).

In addition to a greater number and variety of cases, Mrs. Paschal differs significantly from Forrester’s female detective in what she reveals concerning herself and her institutional affiliation. Mrs. Paschal is far more transparent. Though she does not disclose much, by the second page we know her name and, by the third, that she is a widow whose widowhood precipitated her adopting a career in detection.⁴⁶ In addition to more personal details, Mrs. Paschal’s narratives markedly depart from G’s in the extent to which her professional relationship to the police overtly shapes her cases. Although both Mrs. Paschal and G identify with the police in almost identical terms—G, as mentioned, refers to herself as a “police officer in petticoats” (*FD 125*) and Mrs. Paschal speaks of being one of many “petticoated police” (*RLD 1*)—a much more vivid picture of what that business entails emerges in Mrs. Paschal’s cases. For instance, it is not always clear who authorizes G’s investigations; often she acts on her own initiative. While textual evidence exists apart from G’s own claims to be a member of the police force (the police she encounters recognize her as a peer, “headquarters” supplies her with another female detective to assist her in an investigation, and for one of her cases she obtains a warrant for her activities), the details of G’s assignments and how she receives them remain opaque.

In contrast, Mrs. Paschal’s professional relations seem quite straightforward. Mrs. Paschal receives most of her assignments from a man she regards as her superior, Colonel Warner, “head of the Detective Department of the Metropolitan Police.” Mrs. Paschal tells us

It was through his instigation that women were first of all employed as detectives. It must be confessed that the idea was not original, but it showed him to be a clever adapter, and not above imitating those whose talent led them to take the initiative in works of progress. Fouché, the great Frenchman, was constantly in the habit of employing women to assist him in discovering the various political intrigues which disturbed the peace of the first empire (*RLD 1*).

In this characterization of Colonel Warner, Mrs. Paschal accomplishes two things: she introduces her employer and she connects her own position to

46. For a discussion of ways in which Mrs. Paschal’s detection is facilitated by her widowhood see Bredesen (2006).

historical antecedents. The progressive Colonel Warner appears in nine of her ten “revelations,” either authorizing directly or advising her behind the scenes. Even when Mrs. Paschal takes on a private case—that is, when she is hired to do detective work by a private citizen—she invariably consults with the Colonel at crucial junctures. His presence in these cases suggests an institutional affiliation, whether contractual or salaried.

Importantly, Colonel Warner does not order Mrs. Paschal to take on assignments; instead, he offers cases to her, which implies that she could forego any she found objectionable. In fact, in the first case, after asking if spying on a spendthrift countess would appeal to her, Colonel Warner adds, “If not, pray decline it at once. It is always bad to undertake a commission when it involves a duty which is repugnant to you” (*RLD* 3). Similarly, her second case, “The Secret Band,” opens with Mrs. Paschal looking forward to a return to active service after a two-week break. Her desire is gratified when she receives a letter from Colonel Warner: “My dear Madam—I have a little affair to propose to you which I think will be congenial to your feelings” (*RLD* 19). In a later case, “Mistaken Identity,” he asks “if [she] would like the handling of these rogues?” (*RLD* 85). The provisional manner in which Colonel Warner offers these assignments suggests a professional relationship consistent with the evidence we find in contemporary papers of real-life female detectives operating in Britain in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.⁴⁷

While Colonel Warner does not exert overtly his authority over Mrs. Paschal when presenting assignments, he does use monetary gain to motivate her. In her first case, Colonel Warner assures Mrs. Paschal, “Your services, if successful, will be handsomely rewarded, and you shall have no reason to complain of my parsimony in the matter of your daily expenses” (*RLD* 2). Similarly, when encouraging her to take on a private case that requires extricating the son of a wealthy widow from an undesirable romantic entanglement (“Incognita”), Colonel Warner

47. In two examples cited earlier, women who are identified as female detectives in court or in newspapers had police affiliations. Prior to her work for the Eastern Counties Railway as a female detective, Elizabeth Joyes worked at a local police station as a searcher of female prisoners. The female detectives who are mentioned in the news account of the criminal conversation case *Evans v Evans*, were under orders of Mr. Field, former chief-Inspector of the Detective Branch. Frequently, women identified as female detectives in newspaper accounts, are married to policeman or detectives. *Reynolds's Newspaper* (January 22, 1860), in an article, “A Female Detective,” reported the apprehension of two men observed by a Mrs Sarah Dunaway trading in stolen sugar. Mrs. Dunaway (described as “a very intelligent woman”) was married to a police-constable. As she testified in court, she was “acting under [the] directions” of her husband.

remarks, “[Mrs. Wareham] will be pleased beyond measure if you succeed. She told me she was rich and would reward you liberally. You are like a gold-digger at Ballarat who is in luck; you have an auriferous claim, and it only requires work and perseverance to bring out the nuggets” (*RLD* 128). Elsewhere, he incites her to succeed by appealing to her professional pride, “Upon my word, Mrs. Paschal, we shall have you at the top of the tree soon . . . All our fellows have been at fault, and I shall think more than ever of the Lady Detectives if you accomplish what you lead me to suppose you can” (*RLD* 49). As it turns out, Mrs. Paschal never refuses work. The incentives in the way of salary, rewards, and enhanced reputation, not to mention her own commitment to this career, makes turning down such opportunities unthinkable.

Yet another important distinction between these two representations of Victorian women detectives concerns the results each achieves. *Revelations of a Lady Detective* follows a more conventional, less abstract course than *The Female Detective*. Unlike G’s endeavors, Mrs. Paschal’s detective activities may actually lead to arrest: in “The Stolen Letters,” two mail thieves are arrested, and in “Found Drowned,” a murderer is caught and hanged. Although on occasion she may cut deals with shady characters, overall, the social or judicial order that has been disturbed is restored by the conclusion of each case Mrs. Paschal undertakes.

The differences in the outcomes may be related to the ways each book was marketed. Both Forrester’s private detective and his female detective present their cases as professional memoirs. Forrester’s casebooks may contain sensational elements here and there, but the emphasis is upon rational, even intellectual, and realistic approaches to the urban challenges and mysteries the protagonists encounter. In contrast, Mrs. Paschal’s revelations provide adventures, rather than armchair detection, that can be presented and resolved in the space of a round-trip ride on the train. Fans of the *Anonyma* series would have had their interests gratified by the extremes of London’s high life and low life depicted in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*; but, instead of the flashy if imperiled member of the demimonde as heroine, they would have found the plucky Mrs. Paschal solving problems and saving the day.

Much scholarly writing on G and Mrs. Paschal has concerned either their transgression of or support for gender norms.⁴⁸ Of the two, Mrs. Paschal (ironically, given her origins as part of the “*Anonyma*” series), seems most committed to patrolling the precincts of respectability. Yet, even at their most

48. See, for example, Kestner (2003) and Klein (1995).

conservative, these two heroines participate in the development of a new professional identity. While they may be concerned with salvaging the home-lives of others, they nevertheless avoid being identified with homes of their own. In the course of her cases, G takes up temporary lodgings as each situation demands. And although Mrs. Paschal seems to have a permanent residence, home for her is where she waits for her next assignment. Without work, she feels herself “becoming rusty and inert, not to say obese and stupid” (*RLD* 19). G evades any scrutiny of her private or emotional life; Mrs. Paschal’s only known relative—her husband—lies in his grave. For both of them, their profession as detectives provides the substance of their narratives and, we are meant to understand, their lives.

* * *

In the Victorian period the separation of spheres was more ideological than fully operative. But women were rarely represented as having associations with white collar professions apart from governesses, teachers, or companions. On this basis alone, these two women detectives are important imaginative constructs. Literary scholars have found these two heroines interesting in their use of early forms of forensics (Bleiler 1978; Thomas 1999) and their work as agents of the state (Kayman 1992; Dever 2002). Mrs. Paschal, the lady detective, has been studied in terms of class (Young 2008) and, as mentioned, the gender of both women detectives has been examined. The varied readings these texts have generated thus far indicate a range of interpretive possibilities as well as the cultural and narrative riches they contain. Work remains to be done that considers more fully the formal characteristics of their narratives and the relation of these popular yellowbacks to the more recognizably canonical works of detective fiction. The yellowback, as a publishing format and popular entertainment, has been garnering critical attention as evidenced in Burma’s study on the “Anonyma series” and Guest’s work on the male protagonists in the yellowback detective casebooks by Waters and Forrester.⁴⁹ This new availability of the texts of *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* opens up fields of study for social historians, book historians, literary scholars and detective aficionados. And, besides, the stories

49. Kristen Guest’s current study considers issues of class in detective fiction by Dickens, Waters, and Forrester.

themselves are fun. Taken together, with recourse to the digital archives of Victorian popular print, these two casebooks prove to be not merely interesting anomalies, but important signifiers of a world in which nineteenth-century women detectives were beginning to take their place.

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A Note on this Edition

The text of this edition comes from transcribed copies made of the two yellowbacks. The text of *The Female Detective* comes from an 1864 first edition, published by Ward & Lock; it is part of the Ellery Queen collection held by the Harry Ransom Humanities Center at the University of Texas, Austin. *The Female Detective* was first published in “small format” (i.e., small crown octavo); its height was approximately 17cm., its length 316 pages. The copy of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* from which this edition’s text was drawn was published by E. Griffiths; it is held by the Lilly Library, Indiana University. Copies of two missing pages in that volume were supplied from an edition in the Sadleir Collection at the University of California, Los Angeles. Collector Michael Sadleir claims that the E. Griffiths imprint is a first edition. While it may be a first edition that Griffiths published, it should be kept in mind that the first publication of *Revelations of a Lady Detective* was produced by George Vickers in 1864 and the E. Griffiths imprint did not appear until 1867. Like *The Female Detective*, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* was published in “small format”; its length ran 308 pages. Digital copies of these two yellowbacks were made with the aim of producing a facsimile reprint edition. However, because pages of the originals had been degraded by foxing and “bleed-throughs,” making it impossible to obtain clean copies for reproduction, it was decided to produce an entirely new, conflated edition of both books. In the transcription, typographical errors that inhibit meaning have been silently changed. Punctuation errors that do not inhibit meaning such as irregular use of contractions and comma splices have been allowed to stand.

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