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Source: *Dickens Studies Annual*, Vol. 26 (1998), pp. 285-310

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44372511>

Accessed: 06-02-2020 10:16 UTC

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Wilkie Collins, Detection, and Deformity

Teresa Mangum

“ ‘What do you think of that?’ cried the detective, with the air of a showman exhibiting his show.”

—Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*

Encounters with Victorian sensation writers’ obsessive attention to physical deformities embarrass, even shame twentieth-century readers. How, then, must they have affected nineteenth-century readers? Unlike Charles Dickens, who exploited physical eccentricity as a metonym for character, Wilkie Collins, particularly in *The Law and the Lady* (1875), exaggerates deformity into a linguistic, structural, and thematic staging of the differences on which gender and genre depend. Valeria Macallan, who occupies chief place in this early female detective novel—as first person narrator, as chief investigator, and as a potential victim of an unsolved crime—raises questions about the relationship between the categories gender and genre; Miserrimus Dexter, who is born without legs and, the novel coyly suggests, without genitals, and who is variously Valeria’s associate, her antagonist, and her sensational counterpart, raises questions about the relationship between the broader categories, normal and formal.

Given the historical and literary contexts of Collins’s novel, the character Miserrimus Dexter’s flagrant, paradoxical display of all he lacks—legs and possibly his lower torso—poses ethical as well as formal problems for Collins’s readers. By the 1870s, cultural and literary critics were as likely to groan with ennui as to rant of injustice in response to displays of deformity, as evidenced by the 1847 *Punch* sketch, “Deformito-mania.” Walter Maclean of *The Academy*, in fact, dismissed Dexter as a poor parody of Punch, “He was born without legs; and so, at least in his earliest avatars, was Punch. He had a mania for homicide, a passion for disturbing domestic peace, a diabolic cunning, a faithful dumb attendant, and many other signs by which you may know him” (8). Algernon Swinburne similarly lamented that Collins’s “remarkable genius” was limited by his repeated dependence upon “the help

of some physical or moral infirmity in some one of the leading agents or patients of the story'' (589–99). Why, then, Collins's persistent exhibit of what P.T. Barnum called "curiosities"?¹

Despite our own well-intentioned attempts to rewrite social scripts and referential language for marks, limbs, absences, excesses, or other characteristics that code bodies as abnormal, a cultural preoccupation with anomalous bodies persists. Even more explicitly than Collins's novel, twentieth-century texts expose and exploit the scopophilia and the scopophobia which constitute the gaze upon and designation of a body as irregular. Both Tod Browning's film *Freaks* (1932) and Katherine Dunn's novel *Geek Love* (1983) inhabit the liminal worlds of the sideshow where "freaks" and "geeks" exhibit their bodies to paying audiences. Point of view, particularly in *Geek Love*, which is narrated by a bald, female, albino, hunch-backed dwarf who is also a proud member of a family of Geeks generated by the pregnant mother's chemical experiments, returns a cynical gaze at spectators (and readers) whom she and the other Geeks contemptuously label "norms."²

The reversal of point of view in *Freaks* and *Geek Love* and in the photographs of Diane Arbus worries assumptions that forms (and social relations as forms) are inherent, natural, appropriate, or constant. Susan Stewart astutely comments on the spectators' motivation during such an exchange: "while the freak show may seem, at first glance, to be a display of the grotesque, the distance it invokes makes it instead an inverse display of perfection. Through the freak we derive an image of the normal; to know an age's typical freaks is, in fact, to know its points of standardization" (132–33). As Stewart's comments suggest, such reversals also flaunt the inevitable, uncomfortable, and therefore often ignored counterpart to voyeurism, exhibitionism. Repeatedly, *The Law and the Lady* asks who can look at whom (a function of social relations) under what circumstances (a function of plot). Because the detective must be free to look at anyone and anything, the middle-class detective female—like the middle-class emasculated, sexually ambiguous male—provokes anxiety when her behavior reveals how complicated "just looking" can be.

Working from the social and literary contexts which produced *The Law and the Lady*, I examine in this essay the biographical, spectatorial, and generic conditions that situate Misserrimus Dexter's body as well as ways in which representation of his body establishes correspondences between "a poor deformed wretch" (293) and a female detective. I argue that the physically anomalous masculine figure distracts attention from, yet shapes responses to, the formal aberrations produced when a masculinist plot, the emerging genre of detective fiction, re-forms itself around the socially anomalous body of the female detective. More abstractly, the body of the emasculated, yet libidinous male character and the unstable social identity of the

female detective—struggling to learn whether her legal identity is Brinton or Woodville or Macallan and whether she is a woman or a wife or an ambiguously married single person or a mother—engage the formal paradoxes that characterize detective fiction. As critics of the genre are well aware, the detective plot depends upon the flagrant display of absences, secrets, and inexplicable fragments or clues which must be made to call attention to themselves in order to prompt a search for origins or causes.³ The success of the detective plot thus turns on its exhibitionistic evocation of “curiosity,” hardly a plot for a proper lady.

True to its character as a sensational novel about a woman’s death by poisoning, *The Law and the Lady* first appeared in *The Illustrated Graphic Newspaper* between 1874 and March 1875. Collins’s biographer, Catherine Peters, suggests that perhaps unconsciously Collins was borrowing from his brother Charles Allston Collins’s novel *At the Bar* (1866), an earlier study of a woman’s suicide by arsenic. Jenny Bourne Taylor and others cite Collins’s fascination with the infamous 1857 trial in Scotland of Madeleine Smith, who was accused of killing a former lover with arsenic to clear the way for marriage to a more socially acceptable man.⁴ I would argue that George Eliot’s *Mill on the Floss* (1860), with its poignant and disastrous pairing of the physically impaired Philip Wakem and the socially misfit Maggie Tulliver, might also be an antecedent. Like Valeria, both Madeleine Smith and Maggie Tulliver struggle to reconcile “masculine” qualities of strength, intellect, and ambition with acceptable forms of femininity. In fact, Collins’s interest in using a female as a potential detective surfaced two decades before his novel in a short story, “The Diary of Anne Rodway,” published in *Household Words* in 1856, then reprinted in a collection of framed stories, *The Queen of Hearts* (1859). Here, a working-class woman investigates a crime in order to find the murderer of her best friend, another female servant. As in *The Law and the Lady*, Anne Rodway’s detecting is motivated by love, hence justified by duty.

The narrative strategy of *The Law and the Lady* differs from Collins’s better-known novels *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868) in which various narrators offer accounts of the events. Here, the female character who takes on the detective role, Valeria, is the sole narrator; however, she pieces together her retrospective account of her marriage, the mystery that nearly destroys the marriage, her investigation of the mystery, and finally her salvaging of the marriage from fragments of many texts. The first person narrative not only intersperses memory with letters, diaries, court records and testimony, telegrams, and legal and religious contracts, but also reproduces visual texts (in language), including photographs, paintings, sculptures, and “curiosities.” Moreover, the novel itself is accompanied by numerous illustrations, and the drawings of Miserrimus Dexter counteract

characters' claims about his extraordinary appearance, portraying Dexter as a round-shouldered, sad-faced elderly gentleman in a wheelchair who peers intensely and somewhat anxiously at the reader.

To summarize briefly, the novel falls into three parts. The first words conclude the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer on the ill-omened day of Valeria's private marriage to Eustace Woodville. Within days, Valeria begins to stumble upon clues which eventually reveal that Eustace Woodville is not who he seems. When Eustace refuses to explain his duplicity, Valeria turns to his sympathetic but uncooperative mother and to his womanizing elderly friend Major Fitz-David. The Major turns Valeria loose in his library, allowing her to find a published and bound Trial Report which reveals that her husband is, in fact, the infamous Eustace Macallan who three years earlier had been accused of poisoning his first wife, Sara Macallan, in a highly sensationalized trial that dominated the news for weeks. Humiliated, Eustace abandons Valeria.

Valeria's account of the Trial Report constitutes most of Part II. Her summary includes extracts from the Indictment, the prisoner's Declaration of Innocence, medical and police records, personal letters, Eustace's diary, and the testimony of various witnesses. Though the members of the jury cannot find sufficient evidence to declare Eustace guilty, they are so convinced that his plain wife repulsed him and his former lover Mrs. Beaulieu enticed him that, despite the pleas of his mother and his friend Miserrimus Dexter, they deliver the verdict "Not Proven." The legal system in Scotland did and does permit a jury to register suspicion when the evidence is insufficient for a guilty verdict. Exercising social rather than legal censure, the jury condemns Eustace to social purgatory; Valeria, as his legal appendage, is thus unwittingly sentenced to life as a social anomaly. The day after reading the trial proceedings, Valeria "awake[s]—a new woman, with a new mind" (182); the wife is transfigured into the detective. The last third of the novel recounts her desperate struggle to restore her husband's name, a search which brings her into contact with the aberrant, amorous, and increasingly deranged Miserrimus Dexter.

In the last chapters of the novel, Eustace is moved by Valeria's devotion to reunite with her, but only if she abandons her investigation. However, she surreptitiously continues her search through male agents whom she has involved in her "case." Her old family friend Benjamin and Eustace's solicitor Mr. Playmore painstakingly reconstruct fragments of Sara's letter from the Gleninch dust heap, which Jenny Bourne Taylor calls "the forgotten detritus of the household's past" (*In the Secret Theatre of Home*, 223), solving the mystery of Sara's death and thereby clearing Eustace of murder. While the letter is exhibited to the reader, those who have broken with formal conventions—Dexter as the literal and figurative exhibitor of secrets and Valeria as the curious, investigating spectator—are ultimately silenced.

The exhibition rather than repression of eccentricity is a characteristic shared by Wilkie Collins, his novels, and Miserrimus Dexter himself. Like freaks and freak shows, Collins and the sensation genre he helped to popularize occupied peculiar physical and imaginative spaces in Victorian culture. First of all, Collins perceived his own body as deformed. Friends reminisced that Collins commented on his delicate feet and hands (he often wore women's shoes), his small body and large head, and his misshapen forehead. His left temple was partially collapsed and his right temple bulged outward, which probably resulted from the use of forceps during a difficult birth.⁵ Drawings and photographs suggest that these "deformities" may have figured far larger in his imagination than in fact. Nevertheless, Collins's self-image must have been magnified during the 1860s and 1870s when he suffered increasingly from what he called "gout" of the eyes. In *Memories of Charles Dickens*, Percy Fitzgerald quotes Charles Kent's memory of Collins's horrific appearance at times when his eyes "were literally *enormous bags of blood*" (262). Collins "treated" himself with goblet-sized doses of laudanum, inciting fantasies of ominous, green, gargoyle figures far more grotesque than even the most sensational of his characters.⁶

If Collins had inherited his physical anomalies, he himself was responsible for his social anomalousness. From 1859 until his death he lived with Caroline Graves and her daughter; in 1868 he also set up a household with Martha Rudd with whom he had two daughters and a son, a group he called his "morganatic" family. Thereafter, he maintained the two households within walking distance of one another. Letters and memoirs of friends cited by biographers Katherine Peters, William Clarke, and Kenneth Robinson document the uneasiness these irregular domestic arrangements caused Collins's friends.

Most importantly for the purposes of my argument, Collins's deformities participate in a long-established British tradition of exhibiting curiosities and of curiosity about human "exhibits." In *The Shows of London*, Richard Altick provides a sweeping study of the subject, noting that the Great Exhibition of 1851 instituted and legitimized "exhibitions" (507). Both before and after this edifying, nationalistic display of British technology, exhibitions, especially displays of the human body, were marketed as a form of social amusement that addressed innocuous, salacious, and/or scientific curiosity, whether the bodies were labeled monstrous births, freaks, prodigies, or curiosities. Collins was not the only writer to take note. In Book VII of *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth confers mutant nationhood upon exhibits at Bartholomew Fair:

All out-o-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things
All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
Of man; his dullness, madness, and their feats

All jumbled up together to make up
This Parliament of Monsters (1805, 11:690–94)

Similarly, Charles Dickens picks out a dwarf and giant among other “natural curiosities” in his 1835 newspaper article “Greenwich Fair.” Henry Morley’s *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (1859) also recalls similar exhibits in the countryside, and Thomas Frost’s *The Old Showman and the Old London Fairs* (1881) lists a mulatto, fire eaters, Africans, dwarves, Siamese twins (301), giants, dwarves, and albinos (313) among the “living curiosities” (320) he witnessed. These sources suggest that through much of the century, humans with deformities along with other “curiosities” were routinely appearing in public houses, at street fairs, and in precursors to museums such as the Egyptian Hall or Saville House.

One of these “entertainers,” the American Harvey Leach (sometimes spelled Leech), had only vestigial lower limbs and may have been a prototype for Collins’s Miserrimus Dexter. In *The Shows of London* Altick details Leach’s performances as “Man-Tiger,” as the “missing link,” as a boxer, and as an actor in plays such as the Adelphi Theatre’s *The Tale of Enchantment: or, The Gnome Fly* (1938) or the Olympic Theatre’s *The Son of the Desert and the Demon Changeling* (1843) (Altick 265–67). Like Miserrimus Dexter, Leach’s fame depended on his acrobatic feats and unpredictable temper. Leach died in 1846, after being exposed for pretending to be the “Wild Man of the Prairies” by a journalist from *The Illustrated London News* known as “Open-Eye” (September 5, 1846, 154). Another writer for *The Illustrated London News* smugly remonstrates a year later, “in these days, such tricks [imposture] are out of the question, and every wonder-monger must dread the detective police of enlightened public opinion.” Ironically, even after Leach’s death, Martin Howard notes that his skeleton was exhibited in the collection of University College Hospital (78).

Though city councilors and journalists alike presumed lower-class audiences funded the display of “freaks,” the exhibitions also captivated the same kinds of well-educated, middle-class consumers who would have formed the readership for sensation fiction. In 1884 a surgeon, John Bland-Sutton, writes, “I often visited the Mile End Road, especially on Saturday nights, to see dwarfs, giants, fat-women, and monstrosities” at “freak-shows” and “freak-museum at a public house—The Bell and Mackerel” (139). Frederick Treves, the doctor who discovered and cared for John Merrick, known as the Elephant Man, first encountered his patient August 3, 1884 in an East End exhibition that was about to be closed by the city. Merrick’s case suggests how easily human bodies could be rendered textual and thus begin circulating in discourses of the abnormal far beyond the venue in which they were physically seen. To earn a livelihood, Merrick exhibited his ravaged body first to pleasure-seekers and then to the medical community. In the first instance, his

manager, Tom Norman, who had fourteen exhibition sites in London, supplemented their incomes by selling a pamphlet with a photographic frontispiece that purported to be *The Autobiography of Joseph Carey Merrick*. As Leslie Fiedler has pointed out, these pamphlets were a common feature of such exhibitions, rendering the body of the freak into language then into a sort of sensation fiction sub-genre.⁷ In the second instance, Merrick was further translated into photographic and scientific texts as a medical exhibit. Even after the East End was incorporated into London in 1888 and the shows forbidden by city law, exhibits continued, then as now, to travel the countryside.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of popular fascination with deformity and the most blatant assimilation of the sensational and the scientific, even twenty years after the publication of Collins's novel, was the sale of an alleged medical text that was in fact a compendium of disfigurements, George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle's *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine: Being an Encyclopedia Collection of Rare and Extraordinary Cases, and of the Most Striking Instances of Abnormality in all Branches of Medicine and Surgery. Derived from an Exhaustive Research of Medical Literature from Its Origin to the Present Day, Abstracted, Classified, Annotated, and Indexed* (1896). Gould and Pyle explained their object (and probably thereby assuaged the consciences of their readers) when they wrote: "it is often through the extraordinary that the philosopher gets the most searching glimpses into the heart of the mystery of the ordinary" (1). As Marie-Helene Huet has recently argued, science thus becomes "the normalization of the monster by the scientific gaze: its submission to rules, norms, and variations" (109). It seems no accident that Gould and Pyle called theirs a work of "medical jurisprudence," linking physical deformity to yet another system of rules, the endless legal perversities that so fascinated Collins. This medical text, like earlier studies of teratology, suggests that while side shows continued to exhibit freaks (and novels like *The Law and the Lady* continued to exploit characters like Miserrimus Dexter for sensational effect), medical studies had taken control of the forms of representation, the categorizations by which "monsters" could be known. Despite the medical community's claims to be objective, teratologists simply established a kind of "distance" that justified looking, comparable to the physical distance between spectator and "freak" in the context of the freak show that Susan Stewart calls "the pornography of distance" (110). The doctors' ethical tenuousness manifests itself in their fumbling attempts to name the subjects of their investigation. Medical journals like *The Lancet* continued to use terms like "monstrosity" throughout the period, words difficult to divest of their sensational connotations.⁸

The repetition and variation of similar terms associated with Miserrimus Dexter—curiosity, exhibit, exhibition, and eccentricity—constitute almost a

meta-commentary on the problems of form posed in *The Law and the Lady*. Peter Caracciolo notes that Charles Dickens, along with “his young men,” Collins and other writers for *All the Year Round*, took a “keen interest” in the etymology of words, as suggested by the interplay of these terms in his novel (400). Curiosity permeates boundaries between settings and among characters throughout the novel. During Eustace’s trial, for example, the courtroom awaits evidence with “curiosity and interest” (141); Eustace’s gardener, a witness, eavesdropped on his employer because his “curiosity was excited” (166); Miserrimus Dexter’s court appearance is met with “suppressed exclamations of curiosity and surprise” (172). Despite Dexter’s infirmities and ill temper, Valeria is riveted to him because “Curiosity made me as completely the obedient servant of his caprices as [his servant] herself” (234), and Dexter is enthralled by Valeria’s investigation because he suffers from the “curse” of “insatiable curiosity” (293).

Provocatively, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that though “curiosity” originally meant carefulness, careful attention to detail, or a desire to learn, the term came to suggest a desire to know too much about matters best left alone. Such pejorative associations are often implicitly gendered; *scientific* curiosity (read masculine in Victorian terms) is admirable while curiosity about human affairs is faulted as a feminine weakness, an issue raised by both Valeria and her husband. Positioning Valeria with gossips and busybodies, Eustace uses emotional blackmail to forestall her investigation: “‘If you could control your curiosity . . . we might live happily enough. I thought I had married a woman who was superior to the vulgar failings of her sex’” (54). Though Valeria coolly replies, “It is hard, Eustace, to accuse me of curiosity, because I cannot accept the unendurable position in which you have placed me” (54), soon after she confesses to Eustace’s friend Major Fitz-David, “You know—everybody knows—that one of a woman’s many weaknesses is curiosity” (72). She recognizes that curiosity stigmatizes her with immodesty, impurity, impropriety, and assertiveness.

By the 1870s “curiosities” are also defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as objects displayed in private collections, in street fairs, public houses, traveling shows, and in “museums,” which were, in effect, indoor sideshows. As Valeria’s investigation leads her from the Major’s house to Miserrimus Dexter’s house to Eustace’s country house in Scotland where Sara Macallan died, she finds herself the spectator of one such display after another. The Major’s library abounds with “costly curiosities” (86). Dexter’s house, itself quite a curiosity (320), showcases his bizarre collection. After a quick look at “my host’s taste in curiosities,” explains Valeria, “I pursued my investigation [of the house] no farther” (248). Finally, at Gleninch, Valeria nervously examines Sara Macallan’s “Indian cabinet, in which the crumpled paper with the grains of arsenic had been found” discovering it “still held its little

collection of curiosities" (287). The sensational character of Victorian so-called museums informs Valeria's nervous voyeurism and suggests why "curiosities" also served as slang for erotic or pornographic materials.

The term "exhibition" provides one link between the staged display of the curiosity and the discursive domains of the psychologically and sexually perverse. Foucault claims that in France "exhibitionism," which he defines as "indecent exposure," becomes "a new category in the field of legal psychiatry" in 1876, just a year after the publication of *The Law and the Lady* (12). Exhibitionism is today defined as a disorder which depends on self-display and which is heightened when the viewer, usually either a woman or a child, expresses fear or shock at the visible. The same connections among gender, madness, and law that bind the deformed Dexter to the de-forming female detective tether the multiple connotations of the word "exhibit" since an exhibit can also be a law or a legal document. Moreover, like both a human "curiosity" and detection itself, an exhibit can be the producing of evidence or a submitting or exposing to view, a definition that draws attention to the shared characteristics of the sideshow and the courtroom (as the current example of the O. J. Simpson "show" makes painfully obvious).

Unlike such actual human beings as the Elephant Man, who was driven by terror and hunger to turn his disabilities into a meager livelihood, Collins's character Miserrimus Dexter possesses the wealth and status to buy sanctuary from callous, cruel, or even sympathetic voyeurs. Instead, the character repeatedly exhibits himself, in the courtroom, in his visit to Valeria's lodgings, and (most ostentatiously) in the gallery of his own home. He adorns his private mansion, itself described as one of his "freaks of fancy" (202), as a garish stage upon which he flagrantly displays his deformities so that even the compassionate Valeria frets during a visit, "What new piece of eccentricity was he about to exhibit?" (233). The house mirrors "museums" like the Egyptian Hall or the Saville House. The walls are lined with paintings of popular sensations dramatizing the "diseased and riotous delight of the painter in representing Horrors," the "Episodes in the Life of the Wandering Jew," the Flying Dutchman, and "Passion-pictures" portraying "Cruelty" and "Revenge" (229–30). Upstairs, Valeria finds the "same insatiable relish for horrors" (247). Her description smacks of another popular Victorian entertainment, a tour of Madame Tussaud's wax museum: photographs "represented the various forms of madness taken from the life. The plaster casts ranged on the shelf opposite, were casts (after death) of the heads of famous murderers. A frightful little skeleton of a woman hung in a cupboard, behind a glazed door" along with a leather shirt labeled "Skin of a French Marquis" (247). Most frightening of all, there is Dexter himself, "The fantastic and frightful apparition, man and machinery blended in one—the new Centaur, half man, half chair" (206):

the man in the chair sprang out of it with a shrill cry of horror. . . . For one moment we saw a head and body in the air, absolutely deprived to the lower limbs. The moment after, the terrible creature touched the floor as lightly as a monkey, on his hands. The grotesque horror of the scene culminated in his hopping away, on his hands, at a prodigious speed . . . (207)

Dexter's exhibitionistic challenge to conventional categories and dichotomies is perhaps his only fixed characteristic. Valeria and others call him a centaur (critics today might substitute cyborg) because he uses his chair so dexterously and intimately. The court record reveals that at the murder scene when a policeman tries to push his chair aside, Dexter rages, "My chair is Me . . . how dare you lay hands on Me?" (145). Later, more cruelly, Valeria's usually unimaginative family friend, Benjamin, calls Dexter "half monkey, half man" (347) in pseudo-scientific reference to popularizations of Darwin. This same public fascination with the evolutionary chain's missing link prompted a host of faked human exhibits, including one of Harvey Leach's more notorious performances (Altick, 266). The bestiality attributed to Dexter because he is literally less than a "normal" man and the tendency to characterize him as half one thing and half another suggest the fascination and fearfulness of the freakish, boundary defying body, a connection Sue Lonoff develops in *Wilkie Collins and His Readers*.

As these examples suggest, characters who attempt to categorize Dexter implicitly judge him. Authority figures like nurses and lawyers as well as humanitarian sympathizers describe him as a "cripple." When he throws off his lap rug and confronts characters with his body, we hear language that enacts what we would now call othering: he degenerates into the animal (a monkey [328, 347], a monstrous frog [260]), mutates into the grotesque ("horrible deformity" [292]), is exoticized into foreignness (a "Portent" or an "Indian idol" [292]), or fragments into madness. Perversely exhibitionistic, Dexter himself heightens confusion about who and what he is. In manic episodes, he speaks in the voices of great heroes—Napoleon, Nelson, Shakespeare, Shelley. Promethean, he revels in the lines of *Prometheus Unbound*. As Lonoff points out, he satirizes himself and his woman servant, calling the heavy-set, mindless, masculine near-slave "delicate Ariel" while alternating between the venomous plotting of a Caliban and story-telling wizardry of Prospero.

Most threateningly, Miserrimus Dexter transgresses the boundaries of gender though denied the biological markings of sex. From Valeria's first textual encounter with Miserrimus Dexter, when she reads about him in the Trial report, his unclear sexual status and complex gendering are presented as his greatest deformities, motivating the spectator's guilty gaze. According to Valeria's account of the trial, he glides into court in his chair "a strange and startling creature—literally the half of a man." His fallen coverlid "exposed

to the public curiosity” that he was “absolutely deprived of the lower limbs. To make this deformity all the more striking and all the more terrible, the victim of it was—as to his face and his body—an unusually handsome . . . man. . . . His large, clear blue eyes, and his long, delicate white hands, were like the eyes and hands of a beautiful woman. He would have looked effeminate, but for the manly proportions of his throat and chest.” “Never” concludes Valeria “had Nature committed a more careless or a more cruel mistake than in the making of this man” (173). Valeria later realizes that her powerfully empathetic responses to Dexter have biased her supposedly objective summary of the trial. It is unclear whether her erotic characterization of Dexter depends most strongly on her attraction to the traits she herself marks as masculine and feminine or to his irregular union of the two.

Even after Valeria meets Dexter in person, his identity, in particular his gender identity, becomes more rather than less blurred, in no small measure because she is bent on straining gender codes. When she visits him to question him about her husband’s trial, he nervously counters her investigation with performances that might be read as perverse, exaggerated displays of excessive femininity. Dexter takes on an oddly domestic persona, extravagantly proud of his bizarre interior decorating, his paintings, and curiosities. He embroiders to calm himself when Valeria’s questions press upon him (236); he flaunts his skills as a gourmet to distract the detective from her quest (244–46). He delights in elegant, effete dress insisting that “men have always worn precious stuffs and beautiful colours as well as women” and bemoaning “the brutish contempt for beauty and the mean dread of expense which degrade a gentleman’s costume to black cloth and limit a gentleman’s ornaments to a finger ring, in the age I live in” calling instead for “brightness and beauty” (232). His unnerving, sudden performance of song, poetry, and recitation are his personal rebellion against rigid “will” of Victorian masculinity and an assertion of the mutable “visionary” (202). He even claims he can imaginatively shape-shift and slip “into Mrs. Beauly’s skin” to help Valeria with her investigation (297). Readers, like Dexter’s fellow characters, fear him because his changeability and formlessness defy categorization. Taylor argues that he “overturns all rational and coherent ways of making sense of him, and thus acts out the investigation of the boundaries of consciousness at work in the novel in his continual transformations” (Introduction xxii). I would argue that his behavior also intensifies readers’ anxious preoccupation with the reconciliation of gender with sex and of sex with artificial, but implacable norms. Dexter’s transgression of boundaries—between pleasure and guilt, “normal” and monstrous, sanity and madness, wholeness and fragmentation—becomes simultaneously a constant reminder of and distraction from the failure of those crucial boundaries between male and female, masculine and feminine.

Though most characters find Dexter repellent, Valeria's responses are mixed. At least twice she describes his physical features with erotic attention, his "lustrous waving hair . . . ; the long delicate white hands, and the magnificent throat and chest" (213); she also lingers over and exoticizes the "deformity which degraded and destroyed the manly beauty of his head and breast . . . hidden from view by an Oriental robe of many colours" (213). Moreover, she projects her own attraction to Dexter onto a fantasized other woman: "a young girl, ignorant of what the Oriental robe hid from view, would have said to herself the instant she looked at him, 'Here is the hero of my dreams!'" (214). Valeria's chief sentiment, however, is compassion, and compassion that argues for some level of identification. Even after Dexter covers her hand with burning kisses and clutches her waist in a scene *The Graphic* editor considered so lascivious, calling it an "attempted violation," that he infuriated Collins by expurgating it, Valeria continues her relationship with him against everyone's advice (a contretemps Taylor details in her introduction, [xi–xii]). Valeria alone recognizes and sympathizes with his hopeless love for the former Mrs. Macallan. She, like both his servants, at times sees him as a child who needs love and comfort. She empathizes with his behavior most, however, when she finds it feminine. When Dexter self-pityingly pleads that he is only a "poor solitary creature, cursed with a frightful deformity" (232), Valeria humorously recognizes a version of her own repeated complaint deployed as strategy and turns it back upon him: "I am only a friendless woman . . . who has lost all that she loved and prized" (241). After he has insulted her, demonstrating the depths of cruelty to which his mental instability can carry him, she marvels at her sympathy:

Is there a common fund of wickedness in us all? Is the suppression or the development of that wickedness a mere question of training and temptation? And is there something in our deeper sympathies which mutely acknowledges this, when we feel for the wicked; when we crowd to a criminal trial; when we shake hands at parting (if we happen to be present officially) with the vilest monster that ever swung on a gallows? It is not for me to decide. (329–30)

Valeria alone makes these connections between the monster and the criminal, the exhibit and the voyeur because once she defies her husband and embarks upon detection, challenging the norms of gender and genre, she, like Dexter, faces the prospect of being positioned as an exhibition of criminality, madness, or monstrosity.

If readers fear Dexter lacks a penis, the novel's transformation also insinuates that the character Valeria may possess the phallus, a psychological, cultural, and in the detective plot, fictional deformity. Because attention is focused upon the sensational display of Miserrimus Dexter's freakishness, readers are diverted from the social and fictional freak of the novel's title—the

female detective. While beauty, breasts, even a uterus might be the unstated but accepted constituents of Victorian femininity, they are decidedly alien to the figure of the Victorian detective, whose plotted course lies down darkened alleys that would quickly become dead ends in the feminized marriage plot of middle-class female protagonists.

Mary Russo's poignant childhood memory in her recent book *The Female Grotesque* evokes the always already present gender differences that contextualize how we look at others and how we act in response to the ways we assume they are looking at us:

There is a phrase that still resonates from childhood. Who says it? The mother's voice—not my own mother's, perhaps, but the voice of an aunt, an older sister, or the mother of a friend. It is a harsh, matronizing phrase, directed towards the behavior of other women:

"She [the other woman] is making a spectacle out of herself." (53)

Whereas a man in a similar position would be "exposing himself," Russo realizes that "anyone, any *woman*, could make a spectacle out of herself if she was not careful" (53). The moment Valeria's curiosity beguiles her to pry into her husband's secrets and then to investigate the evidence that secured the "Scotch verdict," she threatens to make a spectacle of herself.

The connections between the deformed man and the deforming female character reside in the same social and etymological history of exhibitions and curiosities that I have been discussing. Tracing changes in cultural interpretations of the monster and the monstrous body, Marie-Hélène Huet cites Aristotle's claims that "The monster and the woman thus find themselves on the same side, the side of *dissimilarity*" from the "normal" man (3). Huet then outlines the continuing attention to the monstrous generative powers of the mother, over centuries, from folk tales that attribute a baby's appearance to things its mother sees during pregnancy to the nineteenth-century French and English teratologists' experiments with embryos. The body of the woman and the monster remain inextricably entangled. Huet also notes that the degree of deviation from the "norm" mattered less than the fact of difference. An 1877 treatise by a leading French teratogenist Camille Dareste (who manufactured thousands of deformed embryos in his laboratory) argues that "The most extreme form of monstrosity and the slightest anomaly are essentially phenomena of the same order" (Huet 118). While Dexter's body makes his difference visible, Valeria's differences from conventional femininity and from the body belonging to the detective function as similarly disruptive phenomena. The fascination with transgressions against the "normal" sexed body and its correlative "normal" gendered behavior may explain why teratologists and showmen alike keenly sought human bodies that literally fused the freakish and the feminine. In effect, the hermaphrodite could be seen as

the physical embodiment of the textual relations between Miserrimus Dexter and Valeria Macallan.

Though Kathleen Klein traces a fictional female detective back to the 1864 narrative *The Female Detective* and to W. Stephen Hayward's *The Experiences of a Lady Detective* (either 1861 or 1864), the emerging genre was heavily influenced by "police procedurals." Consequently, like London's police detectives, first appointed in 1842, "the detective" as a type was generally figured male. Charles Dickens' Mr. Bucket in *Bleak House* (1852–53) and Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* (1868), early male detectives, were professionals, policemen, lower to lower-middle class, and oddly marginal to the secrets of middle-class citizens they were called upon to investigate.⁹ Sherlock Holmes's appearance in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), a decade after *The Law and the Lady*, substantially altered the class and character of the fictional detective. Nevertheless, the gender remains unchanged, and I would argue that despite the substantial number of female detectives who appeared in Victorian short stories and novels, as documented by historians of the genre, then (and even now) the word detective would most likely summon a masculine figure, an ancestor of the "gumshoe," "the flatfoot," "the nose," and most tellingly, the "private dick," before the popular mind.¹⁰

The first problem Valeria faces, then, when she undertakes detective work, is how to "look," the chief method of the detective, when by merely looking, in both senses of the word, she, like the woman of Russo's memory, makes a spectacle of herself. Her attempts, failures, and successes reveal the obstruction the female detective faces: problems of identity, of method, of the irreconcilability of gender and role characteristics, and, most importantly but most amorphously, of pre-existing assumptions about social spaces which determine how the female will be looked at when she enters spaces like the street, the court room, or even a profession.

The reason why the female body draws such attention to itself when it takes on the character of the detective in 1875 is that, in a sense, it appears on the wrong stage in the wrong show. Even in the sensation novels of the 1860s and 1870s, the lurid sideshow to the respectable feature exhibit of femininity, the marriage plot, the only "normal" role available to a middle-class Victorian heroine was that of wife. Valeria attempts to de-form that role by constantly struggling to justify her investigative impulses and her detective work as a wifely "duty."

Repeatedly, Valeria is berated by her husband, her mother-in-law, her family friend Benjamin, and her own conscience for her curiosity, which is labeled a perversely "feminine" flaw, even an "eccentricity"—a label often applied to Miserrimus Dexter's vagaries of body and behavior. Eustace makes this

clear in the passage I mention earlier: "If you could control your curiosity . . . we might live happily enough" (54). Similarly, Valeria's mother-in-law argues, "If you value your peace of mind, and the happiness of your life to come, abstain from attempting to know more than you know now" (43). Major Fitz-David, Benjamin, and Mr. Playmore all urge her to be satisfied with ignorance and her husband's affection. Marriage, apparently, rests upon a wife's blind obedience and willing ignorance, both antithetical to the mindset of the detective. However, Valeria answers other characters by asking "what was my duty to my husband and my duty to myself" and deciding that "My tranquility as a woman—perhaps my dearest interests as a wife—depended absolutely on penetrating the mystery of my mother-in-law's conduct, and on discovering the true meaning of the wild words of penitence and self-reproach which my husband had addressed to me" (37). As Valeria assimilates detection into the role of "wife," curiosity turns Valeria into a curiosity.

In the context of the 1870s, as both Klein and Andrea Trodd's work on the connection between the fictional detective and the police force would suggest, Valeria's more abstract social and legal identities trouble the functions permitted and forbidden to the police detective for reasons relative to her gender. To begin with, her detective activity is motivated by her realization that she has no legal identity. As Jenny Bourne Taylor points out, Valeria must prove her "position as [Eustace's] legitimate wife—to provide herself with a full selfhood within a given set of symbolic meanings and social conventions—in other words, within the Law" (Introduction xiv). Valeria's "case" reveals that under Victorian law, a female is defined and positioned not as a distinct entity, but rather as a deformed male.

This problem determines the consequences when Valeria learns of her husband's former marriage and alleged murder: her humiliated husband abandons her, motivating her to clear his name. Most simply, the detective is motivated by a desire to solve an unresolved crime. However, given Valeria's legal status as the property of her husband, the female detective is in a certain sense both detective and client; she is the very property she seeks to recover when she investigates her husband's crime.¹¹ As her malicious landlady points out, "You are neither maid, wife, nor widow. You are worse than nothing madam" (40). Necessarily, therefore, Valeria's first act of detection is to investigate her own legal identity: she seeks a lawyer to be sure she is married according to the law because without Eustace Macallan's true rather than assumed name, she has no legal identity. She soon realizes, however, that without his innocence, she has no social identity.

Valeria's precarious social position intrudes at the first suspicion that the marriage may be irregular. Her landlady threatens to evict Valeria at the mere hint of her husband's impropriety: "'I receive only the most respectable persons into my house. There must be no mystery about the positions of *my*

lodgers. Mystery in the position of a lodger carries with it—what shall I say? I don't wish to offend you—I will say, a certain Taint'' (38). Punitive possibilities grow when the female detective discovers she is pregnant. Unless she can produce evidence of her husband's innocence, she will herself become a visible freak—as the wife of a murderer, as the carrier of a murderer's blood line, as another potential murder victim of her husband, and, certainly, as a detective.

The male detective is defined as a professional in part because he has a place within the myriad institutions of law. By contrast, middle-class female identity depends, in part, on women's exclusion from public institutions. In particular, the middle-class woman must be free from labor; leisure is her labor. Tamar Heller argues in *Dead Secrets* that in novels by Collins female figures often threaten the profession of the male artist, hence writer, by taking on his professional role. The dismissive charges of male characters such as Valeria's uncle, who rants against "lawyers in petticoats" (121), suggest Valeria similarly teeters upon impropriety when she encroaches on the professional property of the policeman, the lawyer, the detective.

Deprived of the conventional methods as well as identity of the detective, Valeria alters the conventions, often exploiting her female/feminine difference from the detective to accomplish her ends. Well aware of the vulnerability of male vanity, she contemplates her investigative strategy: "Good or bad, compassionate or cruel, the Major was a man" (50). Before interviewing him, she allows a chambermaid to disguise her: "She came back with a box of paints and powders; and I said nothing to check her. I saw, in the glass, my skin take a false fairness, my cheeks a false colour, my eyes a false brightness—and I never shrank from it. No! I let the odious deceit go on" (57). Masked by "beauty" and armed by what her sidekick Mr. Playmore calls "rash" behavior and "extraordinary imprudence," Valeria tricks men into confession inaccessible to "the whole machinery of the Law" (277). Unfortunately, triumph as a detective spells disaster as a decorous woman. Whereas male detective figures, Sherlock Holmes preeminently among them, win praise for their clever disguises, the woman who manipulates disguise opens herself to charges of deceit, dishonesty, and fraudulent femininity.

Despite Michel Foucault's argument for the diffusive, inescapable permeations of criminality into nineteenth-century lives and institutions, police detectives and even the male private detectives can behave criminally, deceitfully disguising themselves and consorting with criminals, without suffering final, irrevocable social expulsion.¹² Certainly, male detectives negotiate within an arena of crime and an aura of criminality in excess of the particular crime they investigate as vividly argued in D. A. Miller's Foucauldian analysis of the relation of the police detective to the literal and ideological surveillance systems of the nineteenth century and Ron Thomas's positioning of detection

as a correlative to the work of Cesare Lombroso and other self-styled criminal anthropologists. Still, the middle-class private male detective seems oddly protected from the world he infiltrates.

The Baudelairean figure of the late nineteenth-century flaneur has emerged in criticism of detective fiction as one antecedent for the middle- or upper-class male detective that helps to explain this figure's gender and class inoculations against the criminal world to which he exposes himself, as in the work of Dana Brand. Idling in the crush of Paris streets, Baudelaire's flaneur almost invisibly spies all before him, including urban crime. Feminist critics like Janet Wolff and Anne Friedberg have debated whether he could have had a female counterpart, the flaneuse. Wolff argues that the separation of space into gendered public and private spheres negates the possibility while Friedberg counters that late nineteenth-century activities, "Shopping, like other itinerancies of the late nineteenth century—museum- and exhibition-going, packaged tourism and, of course, the cinema—" (37), rendered public spaces accessible to women. Indeed, Valeria describes herself as "not at all the sort of person who attracts attention in the street" (10) when she is merely a wife. Things change when she proposes to pursue her quarry "openly, through the streets" (108) in proper detective fashion: the Major and Benjamin "opposed this hasty resolution," appealing to Valeria's "own sense of self-respect" (108). Thus, despite the persuasiveness of Friedberg's argument, the phrase "a woman of the streets" implicitly charges any woman in the streets with sexual misconduct, even with actual prostitution. To enter "the streets" with her own version of criminal intent, that is to find a criminal, further taints the social identity of the female detective.

In *The Law and the Lady* this problem surfaces in the hostility of friends and family to Valeria's intent and actions as a detective; more obliquely, the tainting effect of criminality is represented through the intertextual omnipresence of the infamous Madeleine Smith, a far more potent and monstrous feminine freak than the character Valeria. As Jeanne Fahnestock points out, the pseudo-science of physiognomy powerfully affected literary characterization. Duncan Smith's 1905 account of Smith's trial includes a phrenologist's report and selections from newspaper accounts of the trial. Smith, whose guilt seems patent despite the peculiar verdict "Not Proven," reads like a prototype for Valeria, who is supposed to be the detective rather than the criminal. Smith has a "prominent straight nose and a strong under-jaw, indicating strength of character and strong will" (9) while Valeria is described as having a nose with an "aquiline bent" (10). Smith's spectators are taken aback by the fixed, penetrating glance of her large black eye" (14): Valeria's eyes are "of so dark a blue that they are generally mistaken for black. Her eyebrows are well enough in form, but they are too dark, and too strongly marked" (10). Presenting Smith as having more in common with the fearfulness of the hermaphrodite than the promise of the androgyne, the phrenologist concludes that

Smith “possesses both the masculine and feminine qualities, more especially the former” but that her “drawback” is her “warm, sanguine temperament” and her tendency to “flirt” (292). Valeria’s gender-crossing behavior coupled with her “curiosity” position her with Smith while her jealousy of, yet parallel position with the flirtatious Mrs. Beaulieu structurally “taints” her as well as her husband’s former lover, an analogy Valeria acknowledges: “Were we, by any chance, the least in the world like one another?” (183). The novel also disperses Madeleine Smith’s story among its characters, for it is Eustace Macallan who, like Smith before him, is publicly humiliated by the reading in court of his scandalous letters to his lover. Because Valeria is Eustace’s property in a legalistic if unjust extension of the marriage contract, his guilt is her guilt. The immeasurable reach of Victorian domestic ideology is perhaps suggested best by the conclusion to the phrenologist’s report. Despite his concerns that Smith acts too aggressively and would be best suited to be an “architect” or “engineer,” he closes: “she will make a treasure of a wife to a worthy husband” (292), the same prescription offered to Valeria as a cure for what a character in Collins’s earlier novel, *The Moonstone*, called “detective fever.”

By the end of the novel, anomalies are repressed and the aberrant, deformed, monstrous bodies and desires of Dexter and Valeria are “managed” as Taylor would say, “disciplined” as Miller and other Foucauldians would say, “iced” as over-identified detective fans would say. Dexter is silenced and literally buried; Valeria succumbs to her body in pregnancy and to her domestic duties to husband and child in a partial restoration of her social identity. However, the novel once again uses repetition via analogous plotting to intensify the ambivalence of this seemingly conventional ending. When Valeria offers her husband the choice between reading his first wife’s letter and thus learning the truth or allowing her to suppress the truth and thereby living in happy ignorance, he damns himself yet again from most readers’ point of view by choosing the weaker path, the path Valeria had rejected when she refused to accept the mystery of his true identity and therefore hers. Such a conclusion exposes the deforming constraints of domesticity. Valeria’s closing plea on Eustace’s behalf chillingly identifies her with the most pathetic female character in the novel, Dexter’s cousin and servant, the masculine, leaden Ariel. Just as Ariel had doggedly begged Valeria to beat and abuse her rather than punish Miserrimus Dexter, Valeria now appeals to her readers:

Must I shut up the paper? Yes. There is nothing more for you to read, or for me to say.

Except this—as a postscript. Don’t bear hardly, good people, on the follies and the errors of my husband’s life. Abuse *me* as much as you please. But pray think kindly of Eustace, for my sake. (413)

Given that Valeria herself had imperiously forbidden Dexter to beat Ariel for his idle amusement, this echo sounds a dire prophecy for the future Valeria has accepted.

It is also significant that Valeria agrees to suppress the letter as much as a consequence of her newfound compassion for her predecessor, Sara Macallan, as of her love for Eustace. Sara's letter explicitly links "abnormal" womanhood with monstrosity. Denying Eustace's charge of prejudice against Dexter "on account of his deformity," Sara writes, "No other feeling than compassion for deformed persons has ever entered my mind. I have, indeed, almost a fellow-feeling-for them; being that next worst thing myself to a deformity—a plain woman" (387–88). If the conclusion conforms to gender conventions, it also reiterates the arbitrariness and cruelty of "norms."

Finally, Valeria, like Sara, commits suicide, if only social suicide, when she sets aside the letter now owned by both Mrs. Macallans. "English" law tolerates no ambiguity. However the Scotch verdict presumes a complicated world ridden with doubt, and not just "reasonable doubt." The Scottish jury judges against the defendant's reputation rather than his legal status. In this sense, the verdict is vindicated, not because the characters admit its justice but because the novel constructs a universe of anomalies and ambiguities which render the normalizing dichotomies of English law null and void.¹³ While critics often judge the novel's conclusion inadequate, Valeria's suppression of the evidence she has collected plays out the structural logic of incompleteness that governs both the story and plot from the ambiguous Scotch verdict to the repeated disruptions of her marriage to Miserrimus Dexter's fragmented body and mind to Valeria's retreat from detection. The judge in Eustace's trial pronounces a verdict that refuses closure to a marriage plot; the detective-wife, Valeria Macallan, carries out the sentence.

NOTES

Thanks to Catherine Peters, Corey Creekmur, Tamar Heller, Martha Stoddart Holmes, Margaret Loose, and especially Kathleen Diffley.

1. Critics kept complaining. Nuel Pharr Davis says that to appreciate Dexter, the reader "must have sympathies that can extend to a legless, lustful lunatic in a wheelchair" (282), and Kenneth Robinson refers to a "half-human monster" and "this legless maniac" (277). Lonoff surmises that "He seems designed to evoke a mixed reaction in the reader, a sub-conscious aversion to the freak or the monster, mingled with fascination" (164). To the contrary, Jenny Bourne Taylor sensibly points out in her 1992 Introduction: "He is weird but never monstrous, never completely 'other,' even if he is made so by others' ignorance and fear" (xxii). She characterizes Dexter as "a figure who works on different registers

directly analogous to both the dreaming and the creative process'' (xxiii). Her book *In the Secret Theatre of Home* locates Collins's novels in nineteenth-century theories of psychology and sensation.

Collins's fiction does circle back repeatedly to physical disfigurements or disabilities. For example, Catherine Peters notes that while Collins had gout "in both eyes" in 1876, he was writing *The Two Destinies* in which a veiled woman who suffers from a disfiguring disease is one of the characters (Peters, 380). Martha Stoddart Holmes has written a dissertation on characters who have less sensation-alized conditions such as blindness and deafness, as in *The Dead Secret*.

2. The problem of naming those who professionally exhibit their bodies has its own history. In *Very Special People*, Frederick Drimmer claims that when one of P.T. Barnum's employers, the Bearded Lady, Annie Jones, led a protest against the label "freaks," it may have been a deliberate publicity stunt. He says that by the 1970s carnivals were using the terms "prodigies" or "strange people" and recommends using "special people." Robert Bogdan interrupts his social history, *Freak Show*, to meditate on a related ethical problem. After years of watching "freak shows" and interviewing people who exhibited themselves or their employees, he was startled into re-examining his relationship to his project when his young daughter asked if she could accompany him to the sideshows at a carnival. I willingly share Bogdan's self-questioning. Writing about this topic is one way I am trying to understand how Victorians used representations of people whose bodies do not conform to prevailing norms and to call to account my own feelings about body differences. I welcome correction and further discussion.
3. The most famous demonstration of this claim is Lacan's reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter." As Lacan reminds us, the letter is visible throughout the entire story. The detective provides meaning to the clue rather than "discovering" it. Dennis Porter characterizes this visible absence as a function of time wherein detection becomes the recovery and interpretation of a story in the past based on the presence of a secret and/or an effect (such as theft or death) in the present.
4. Taylor also suggests other less well-known cases involving female poisoners as potential influences in her introduction. See also D. MacEachen's essay "Wilkie Collins and British Law" and Virginia Morris's study of literary adaptations of the female poisoner in *Double Jeopardy: Women Who Kill in Victorian Fiction*.
5. Several biographers and writers have commented on Collins's sense of himself as deformed. Davis speculates about Collins's self-description (52), explaining that Collins's right temple projected due to congenital swelling that probably resulted from a forceps delivery at birth. Lonoff speculates that due to Collins's appearance, Dexter "may thus project or symbolize Collins's anxieties about his waning health or his failing powers as a man and as a writer" (166).
6. Most biographies of Collins discuss his laudanum addiction. See Peters (she discusses the green phantom on p. 336) and Robinson (330). Althea Hayter places Collins's drug use in a larger historical and literary context in *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (68-70).
7. I draw my information about Merrick from several sources, including Frederick Treves's *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences*, Bland-Sutton's *The Story of a Surgeon*, and Graham and Oehlschlaeger's *Articulating the Elephant Man*:

- Joseph Merrick and His Interpreters*. In *The Illustrated True History of the Elephant Man*, Howell and Ford reprint Merrick's two-page "Autobiography," an article about Merrick from *The British Medical Journal*, medical and "show" drawings and photographs, and pictures of casts and of Merrick's skeleton. They also reproduce several fascinating photographs of the spaces of exhibition, including a throng of people at the Stratford-Upon-Avon Mop Fair in the early 1900s. Fiedler, too, discusses the use of this and other pamphlets in *Freaks* (262).
8. Examples are easy to find, such as the report of a child with no limbs in *The Lancet* on April 25, 1857 under the heading "A Monstrosity" or Dr. John S. Beale's "Monstrosity and Maternal Impressions" in *The Lancet* on Nov. 3, 1860, or Dr. Meadow's "Case of Monstrosity" in *The Lancet* on January 10, 1863.
 9. Though several of the major studies of the detective form that include an historical emphasis mention nineteenth-century fictional female detectives, most presume and base their arguments on novels by men and about male detectives, including Ian Ousby's *Bloodhounds of Heaven*, Audrey Peterson's *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, Dennis Porter's *The Pursuit of Crime*, Ernest Mandel's *Delightful Murder*, John Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, and D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police*.
 10. My essay has certainly been enriched by the growing body of criticism counteracting the assumption that all nineteenth-century fictional detectives were male. Nevertheless, I still assume that the perception that "detection" is male (despite building evidence to the contrary) prevailed in the 1870s. The female sleuth is detected in Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan's *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, Michelle Slung's introduction to *Crime on Her Mind*, Maureen Reddy's *Sisters and Crime: Feminism and the Crime Novel*, Kathleen Gregory Klein's *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*, and Fay Blake's essay "Lady Sleuths and Women Detectives." Studies of women criminals and the criminalization of women also helpfully contextualize the female detective. See, for example, Mary Hartman's *Victorian Murderesses*, Virginia Morris's *Double Jeopardy: Women Who Kill in Victorian Fiction*, and Anthea Trodd's study of sensation fiction, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (as well as her article "The Police-man and the Lady: Significant Encounters in Mid-Victorian Fiction").
 11. In his study of Collins's representations of women, Philip O'Neill sees Valeria as discovering "herself" as a subject when she considers her reflection in a mirror just after her marriage. His characterization of self-possession informs my own: "I want to extend the notion of propriety here to include our own most intimate sense of 'ownness' of owning ourselves, our own proper names and our own identity" (202).
 12. Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and D. A. Miller's extension of the logic of surveillance to Victorian fiction, especially the detective novel, have dramatically shaped most recent discussions of the genre. Foucault's all-encompassing, constantly circulating discourses of crime, surveillance, and containment would leave no one untouched. I would argue, however, that various gradations must be factored in when we compare how middle-class men and women were

disciplined and punished. The social spaces, behaviors, acquaintances, entertainments, education, opinions, etc. allowed were, of course, far more limited for middle-class women than for men so that transgression was far easier and the consequences more severe. In part this is because when women were assumed to be less governed by reason and self-command than men, it would also be assumed that contact with undesirable others could have far more devastating consequences. Amanda Anderson explores this issue in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*.

13. Both Taylor and Lonoff come to this same conclusion that some kind of justice is served though each of us is following a different line of argument. The question of how to read Valeria's identification with a female suicide is helpfully complicated by Barbara Gates's work on attitudes toward suicide in *Victorian Suicide* and her article "Wilkie Collins' Suicides: 'Truth as It Is in Nature.'" "

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