

DISORDERED GENDER AND DISORDERED GENRE: HOW THE RESTORATION OF
ORDER FAILS IN *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*, *REVELATIONS OF A LADY DETECTIVE*,
THE SIGN OF FOUR, AND *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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Crime and detective fiction is often considered to be a problem-solving genre that serves to reify existing binaries by introducing subversive elements only to solve those elements by the end of the story and restore the normative order. Early and foundational detective fiction has most often been accused of this – Poe’s stories of ratiocination, for example, which are often credited with the creation of the genre. Much Victorian detective fiction has also often been written off in this way, as people argue that any subversive element is resolved and punished by the end of each story or novel and that detective stories serve to reinforce conservative values. This idea is at the heart of much existing scholarship on the Sherlock Holmes stories and at the heart of many of the debates around Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*. Can a subversive character restore or reinforce a conservative order or do they inherently fail? This is the question my thesis thoroughly explores.

In tying together Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* and William Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* in my first chapter and using Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of*

Dorian Gray as a lens to examine Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* in my second chapter, I examine the constructions of gender non-conformity in each text and then examine how those concepts of gender influence a reading of the detective and sensation genre. This non-conformity and its function varies across gender. Holmes, Dorian, and Basil's othering as aesthetes and as effeminate men does not take on precisely the same connotations as Mrs. Paschal and Marian being marked as masculine women in some capacity. However, the basic way that their gender non-conformity in particular informs their detective work or interactions with crime and their access to conservative order can be tied together to gain a more cohesive understanding of the troubled relationship of gender and genre across all of these texts.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance and patience of my director, Dr. Jill Ehnenn. From brainstorming on my initial concepts with me to giving me excellent feedback and revisions on every one of my drafts, she was there through every step and infinitely helpful. I probably would not have attended graduate school at all, let alone survived it, without my committee member and mentor Dr. David Orvis, who has given me both excellent feedback and frequent advice as I haunted his office. I would also like to thank my final committee member Dr. Colin Ramsey, both for agreeing to help me on this project and for being one of the first professors in the Appalachian State English Department to really spark my interest in the program. Again, I doubt I would have made it to writing my thesis if not for his guidance and investment in my work. All three of them have been invaluable to my work and my time at Appalachian State.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Jill Nichols, for her tolerance of my frantic late-night phone calls to ramble about my topic and research. This would not have been possible without her rational influence and support.

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Introduction

Crime and detective fiction is often considered to be a problem-solving genre that serves to reify existing binaries by introducing subversive elements only to solve those elements by the end of the story and restore the normative order. Early and foundational detective fiction has most often been accused of this – Poe’s stories of ratiocination, for example, which are often credited with the creation of the genre. Much Victorian detective fiction has also often been written off in this way, as people argue that any subversive element is resolved and punished by the end of each story or novel and that detective stories serve to reinforce conservative values. However, as some scholars have realized, these arguments and ideas are extremely reductive and overlook a great deal of important textual evidence to be found in a variety of foundational and early crime and detective stories and novels.

Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890) are two such Victorian detective novels which were extremely popular and influential in the time in which they were published. Collins’ novel centers on a crime that must be solved by amateur detectives – a mantle which both Walter Hartright and Marian Holcombe, two of the novel’s protagonists, take up in some capacity. Marian is often seen as an early female detective character, even though she is not a professional detective. Marian is described as masculine and gender non-conforming throughout the book, both in her appearance and her behavior. Her subversion of gender roles is directly related to her work as a detective character in some ways, and certainly allows her to unsettle attempts to assert a conservative order within the world of the novel. Marian’s subversive nature has not gone

unexplored – and she is an oft-studied character in the context of the novel and the genre as a whole. Interrogating Marian’s role in *The Woman in White* and her presentation of sexuality and gender is key to understanding women’s gender non-conformity within the period, how that non-conformity could be coded in women, and how that serves to disturb the conventions and expectations of the detective novel.

Sherlock Holmes made his first appearance as a character in Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), and only reached his full expression in the later short stories published in *The Strand Magazine*, but the now-iconic character was already well-formed even in Doyle’s second Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four*. Nearly all of the academic scholarship done on Holmes ultimately argues that Doyle as an author, and Holmes as a character, were dedicated to this task of the detective genre, to restore and maintain a conservative order in the resolution of each case that Holmes solved. However, in *The Sign of Four*, which was written after Doyle had met Oscar Wilde and personally encountered his particular brand of aestheticism, Sherlock Holmes as a character displays a number of hedonistic and aesthetic qualities. As I will demonstrate, these qualities, including his addiction to cocaine, his idiosyncratic view of crime as a kind of art form, and his own committed engagement with music and art, all are indicators that Holmes in meaningful ways transgresses the Victorian age’s conservative ideals of masculinity. Holmes himself is a subversive force, often set up against the traditional institution of the police, and in many ways functioning as an ultimate “Other,” it becomes clear that he would be an ineffective figure to enforce these conservative and dominant ideas. While *The Sign of Four* is my focus in my second chapter, I also draw on other brief examples of the Holmes stories in order to demonstrate the fact that Holmes tends to serve as a complicating force in many of the cases he takes on, and that his

inadequate masculinity and aesthetic coding are clear throughout all the novels and short stories.

I tie my discussions of these two classic detective narratives to two other texts that are slightly more controversial in this context – William Stephens Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* (1864) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Hayward’s *Revelations* certainly falls within the detective genre, and contains some of the first true female detective stories, as the protagonist Mrs. Paschal is a professional detective working for Scotland Yard in a time before real female detectives were actually hired at the Yard. *Revelations* has received very little academic study, though, leaving many of its more subversive possibilities completely unexplored. As *Revelations* is a collection of stories, some of those stories are more complex and challenging to the conservative order than others. The first story in the collection, for example, “The Mysterious Countess,” contains a widowed woman who becomes a cross-dressing jewel thief, as well as a complex and rather ambivalent solution. As she resorts to unconventional methods in her work and expresses surprisingly sympathetic opinions of her antagonist, Mrs. Paschal may not be the best figure to choose to reinforce any kind of supposed order. These ideas carry into a few of the stories featuring Mrs. Paschal, and I want to devote some time to close readings which have long been neglected, since the collection is generally examined as a whole.

Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the most well-studied and canonized work I will be considering in this thesis, and it is, of course, a beloved example of Victorian fiction. However, it may seem an unlikely choice to include in a thesis largely focused on detective novels. Nevertheless, there are several good reasons to include *Gray* in this thesis. The first is that it has been often been argued that *Dorian Gray* serves the same ultimate purpose as these

detective novels – to restore a kind of order through the punishments it delivers to any transgressors. Dorian, the novel's title character, ultimately dies after committing a number of atrocities that include an ultimate form of hedonism and a number of implied sexually deviant acts. Basil, an artist who uses Dorian as his muse and who ultimately introduces the reader to Dorian, also finds his death in the novel. This idea that the punishments restore order, though, could use some interrogation to see if it truly holds up to scrutiny. Beyond this, the story is the perfect lens through which one can study the connections between aestheticism and crime as well as the connections between gender non-conformity, sexual deviance, and aestheticism, something which is critical to my study of *The Sign of Four*. Basil Hallward could also be read as a sort of detective figure, taking up the mantle of solving Dorian's strange behavior an obsession, and ultimately stumbling upon the answer to some of his crimes, even though he reaches his tragic end in that way.

All four of these texts are ultimately connected through the ways they queer the understanding of the genre of crime and detective fiction. Queering here refers both to the subversion of the normative understandings and conceptions that have perpetuated through conversations on the genre – but I also use the word deliberately to hearken to queer sexualities. Ultimately, an understanding of how many of these characters demonstrate a queer gender or sexuality serves to also queer ideas of the genre itself because so much of the function of the crime and detective novel or story depends upon the restoration of a normative order that these queered characters serve to disturb and complicate. How did this myth of the detective as proponent for the heteropatriarchal order begin? How has it influenced an understanding of these novels and excluded other potential readings? How is

this all tied specifically to Victorian conceptions of gender and sexuality? These are the ideas I want to interrogate.

Historical Context

To fully understand how these characters subvert or complicate gender norms or demonstrate a deviant sexuality, groundwork must be laid to understand Victorian norms and whether or not these characters truly could be subversive. Part of this groundwork is invested in ideas about masculinity and inadequate masculinity in the period. Many works on masculinity and writing in the period, particularly those I am engaging with, tend to devote at least part of their work to the beginnings of aestheticism in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as well as to Walter Pater, who deeply influenced Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. James Eli Adams' *Dandies and Desert Saints* (1995) is the one of the earliest works to posit that presentations and considerations of men as effeminate in the Victorian period began to have connotations for sexual deviancy as early as the 1870s, which was when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood began to do work and reached some level of acclaim. Adams' work is groundbreaking in this way because the previous conception had been that these associations could only be traced to the Wilde trials in 1895. Adams displaces that idea and points to this much earlier shift in discourse which is applicable to readings of texts written before the Wilde Trials, such as *Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four*. Thais Morgan's "Victorian Effeminacies" (1999) builds upon this concept by pointing to a particular instance in which the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were critiqued by Robert Buchanan, who accused them of effeminacy. While the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were known for being sexually involved with women for the most part, the critique of effeminacy was still tied to their non-

normative sexual politics, and it was this later tie to Walter Pater which would continue to shift ideas of effeminacy and sexual deviancy so that they were tied to implications of an attraction to men. Adams' initial claims lay the groundwork for Morgan's more in-depth considerations of the same terminology and the same period of time.

In contrast to these discussions of effeminacy and subversive masculinity within the period, Andrew Dowling's *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature* (2001) establishes some of the standard metaphors of conservative masculinity. Dowling focuses primarily on the dominant discourses around masculinity being demonstrated through control and discipline. These are the ideas that Adams and Morgan are building off of, because even though Dowling's book was published later, these ideas were present within the period. What makes the ideas of excess and decadence that were tied to the aesthetes so effeminate is that they were opposed to the self-control that appropriate, "traditional" masculinity required. As such, juxtaposing Dowling's discussion of these metaphors with Adams' and Morgan's interrogations of effeminacy is what allows for a fuller consideration of Victorian masculinity and its many forms.

These critical studies on the connotations of masculinity also relate to an understanding of how women were gendered and understood within the period, because women were defined regularly in opposition to men. Women who crossed those gender boundaries and began to display traits which were typically expected of men and masculinity are an important focus of my thesis, as Marian Holcombe and Mrs. Paschal exemplify this kind of behavior. One of texts most central to my work on women and gender is Emma Liggins's *Odd Women?: Spinsters, Lesbians, and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s – 1930s* (2014). Liggins's focus in this text is on women and characters who live outside of

the domestic sphere of heterosexual marriage. In particular, her work on how widowhood could be viewed as unfeminine or at least non-standard provocatively explores a category which has often gone under-discussed. Liggins covers important ground in interrogating how the standards of femininity were challenged by these women, but she also includes a nuanced consideration of whether or not these women were truly always considered abnormal or queer. Understanding how Marian and Mrs. Paschal fit amongst these categories of abnormal women is key to being able to argue that they serve to disrupt norms.

To support this discussion of women outside of the domestic and heterosexual sphere, there should also be consideration of more common conceptualizations of women within the period. Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988) and Kimberly Reynolds and Nichola Humble's *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-century Literature and Art* (1993) both engage with the standard metaphors of the fallen woman and the angel in the house, the binary that is often applied to representations of Victorian women. However, Poovey, Reynolds, and Humble are also particularly important to engage with because they acknowledge that this binary has been exaggerated in many cases and was not the simple reality for how women were understood or how they understood themselves. Even when establishing the dominant discourses of femininity within the period, it is critical to acknowledge that generalizations can lead to over-simplification and to a neglect of lived realities. Complicating this binary opens up the space for the women Liggins is focusing on, and for Marian and Mrs. Paschal specifically.

***Bleak House* and the Concept of the Police Detective**

In order to establish some of the standard genre conventions of detective fiction and examine some of the expectations of a conformist detective, I want to briefly examine another foundational detective text. One of the most well-known early detective characters is Inspector Bucket of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*. In his chapter in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, Peter K. Garrett refers to Bucket as "one of the earliest" professional detectives (471). Bucket is notable in part because he is a police detective – unlike other amateur or othered detective characters, Bucket is immediately marked as a part of the institution. This active participation in the appropriate government agency prevents Bucket from truly ever working against or outside of his job as a part of the police. Every act he takes part in reflects on the police in some way, unlike a detective like Sherlock Holmes who at times works actively against the police or takes cases they cannot or will not take. For instance, John Lucas, in "Past and Present: Bleak House and A Child's History of England," refers to Bucket as "the human face of the legal system, the all-seeing, wise, drily compassionate man of law" (151). Institutional order is something that Inspector Bucket has an active engagement in, and this prevents him from occupying any kind of liminal position with regard to that order. Even aside from consulting detectives like Holmes, Marian Holcombe is also an amateur detective with no real obligation to the police, and even as Mrs. Paschal works for the police, her position as a female investigator means she often takes jobs other police detectives could not and uses her own unconventional methods to solve them and still ultimately exists in a subtly liminal position. Bucket is exempt from this type of othering through his direct association with governmental and institutional order, and as Lucas states, by essentially being a human stand-in for the institution itself.

Even outside of his direct association with the institution of the police, Inspector Bucket fully embodies the figure of the detective dedicated to restoring and maintaining conservative order. Whether or not this misconception is drawn from Bucket specifically is uncertain, but he is one character who is truly indicative of this standard idea. For example, Caroline Reitz states “The fantasy of benevolent imperial authority is most fully realized in Inspector Bucket” (53). She also cites D.A. Miller’s “Discipline in Different Voices: Bureaucracy, Police, Family, and Bleak House” to emphasize that she is writing within a critical consensus of Bucket’s reinforcing imperial power. She continues, “most critics have read Bucket as an example par excellence of the power of liberal authority” (53). Though Reitz goes on to complicate the understanding of Bucket as a type of panoptic figure by insisting he can be seen, she never attempts to refute that he is a symbol of the state institution and the conservative order that institutional association implies.

Beyond his imperial and state connections, Bucket also serves to reinforce the heteropatriarchal institution of the family. Unlike the other characters I plan to discuss in more detail, Mr. Bucket is married. Holmes is a perpetual bachelor, and Marian is also unmarried at the end of *The Woman in White*. Dorian Gray is fully subversive in his practices of sexuality, and Mrs. Paschal is a widow who does not remarry or have any real romantic interest in the course of *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. They all exist on the outside edges or completely outside of the standard heteropatriarchal order, but Bucket remains an active participant in the kind of order which detectives are so often believed to reinforce. Reinforcing these ideas from without seems highly unlikely, but Bucket does actually feel at home within these conservative values. He and his wife cannot have children, but their marriage is still ultimately a strong element of his character and his work to solve the case

and restore the order of the novel's universe. Miller, in "Discipline in Different Voices," argues that Mr. and Mrs. Bucket's inability to have children helps serve a separation of the domestic and institutional policing spheres, but he also later states that "The police simultaneously produce and permeate (produce as permeable) the space they leave to be 'free'" (71). Mr. Bucket reveals himself at multiple points as specifically a protector of the family, and even as he may represent a separation between the private and public spheres, that separation still serves to reinforce those spheres as the desirable order.

This idea is further reflected in a conversation which Bucket has with two women in one of his earliest scenes. Jenny and Liz are subject to a bout of questioning with Inspector Bucket, which begins in part with the appearance of their drunken husbands, and then when Liz says of Jenny's child who has passed away, "Better so. Much better to think of dead than alive, Jenny! Much better!" (Dickens 360). Liz is referring to the struggles within the community for a child, and especially for a son, but Bucket takes great offense to what he perceives as an affront to the familial and heteropatriarchal order he so supports. He replies by saying: "Why, you an't such an unnatural woman, I hope... as to wish your own child dead?" (Dickens 360). He also refers to Liz's speaking as a "wrong manner," and insists that if raised right, Liz's newborn son will grow up respectable and care for her in her old age (360-61). This brief exchange reveals quite a bit about Bucket's feelings on family and order. His use of "unnatural" and "wrong manner" in reference to the perceived affront on the family as a concept is very telling. Liz's remark is extreme, perhaps, but the conversation winds up in such a way that it becomes clear that part of Inspector's Bucket engagement with these ideas is through the prioritization of the heteropatriarchal family order. Jenny should want her son alive in part because she should want a family with children, and both women

should be appropriately devoted to their children so those male children may grow to become the man of the family and to care for them. Many of Bucket's assumptions about family and what he believes is most appropriate are laid bare by his corrections in this conversation. This tied to his own marriage and his desire for children of his own makes it clear to the audience that Inspector Bucket has a personal involvement in the perpetuating of this kind of order, and it is easy to perceive that he works for the police in part to protect and maintain these spheres.

It is true that the case itself in *Bleak House* resists a perfectly neat solution. Lady Dedlock, for whom Mr. Bucket was searching, is found dead, bringing the case to a premature end. However, this does not invalidate or erase the fact that Bucket does all he can to restore order. As David Trotter persuasively argues regarding both Bucket and Dickens' other detective, Pancks of *Little Dorritt*, "These men do not merely resolve the particular mysteries which at once bind together and isolate the main protagonists. They enact the resolution of the mystery itself. They cleanse and disinfect a landscape fouled by secretiveness..." (211). That enacting of the resolution is the ultimate detecting act of solving the mystery and symbolically restoring order. Bucket is a detective figure is dedicated to the restoration and upholding of the heteropatriarchal order in the way that many have argued detectives are as an archetype. As an early figure of this type, it is likely he had some effect on the development of this idea of the genre; an idea which has bled into the perception of more subversive detective characters who are at complete odds with Bucket's primary values and motivations.

Critical Context

As stated above, *Revelations of a Lady Detective* has rarely been academically studied. What little scholarship there is places its focus almost entirely on ideas of gender and agency, and on establishing *Revelations* as a worthwhile text. Dagni Bredeesen's "Conformist Subversion: Ambivalent Agency in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*" (2006) is one of the only peer-reviewed articles on the collection of stories. Bredeesen acknowledges the agency that Mrs. Paschal, the protagonist of *Revelations*, develops and maintains for herself, but goes on to argue that Paschal successfully solves her cases to return the world of her stories back to a restored, conservative order in the end. The understanding of Mrs. Paschal's agency has room here for nuance, so Bredeesen examines the ways in which Mrs. Paschal's femininity often comes in and out of focus, and how that influences her abilities as a detective and how serious a reader may take her. Some of this is tied to Mrs. Paschal's widowhood and her interactions with men, as well as her lack of a heterosexual romantic relationship in the stories, which is relevant to my own considerations of sexuality and its ambiguities in Hayward's collection. Earlier and briefer explorations of *Revelations* include portions of Kathleen Gregory Klein's *The Woman Detective: Gender & Genre* (1988) and Joseph Kestner's *Sherlock's Sisters: The British Female Detective, 1864-1913* (2003). The discussions of *Revelations* in each of these works remain focused on Mrs. Paschal as a character and how subversive and remarkable she is for her time, but there is still no consideration of how this unsettles the presumed conservative order that Bredeesen insists still exists at the end of each story. Bredeesen builds on both of these briefer discussions, and does not argue against them, but that means that the full implications of sexuality and this gender

ambiguity Bredesen and Kestner have pointed out in Mrs. Paschal's character remain undiscussed – something which I hope to remedy with my thesis.

There are a great many articles on Marian Holcombe in *The Woman in White* and her gender, sexuality, and role as a detective. Those most relevant to my study are D.A. Miller's "Cage Aux Folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*" (1989), Susan Baleé's "Wilkie Collins and Surplus Women: The Case of Marian Halcombe" (1992), and Rachel Ablow's "Good Vibrations: The Sensationalization of Masculinity in *The Woman in White*" (2003). The major issue of contention amongst these scholars is the inability to agree on whether or not Marian is ultimately subversive, or if her particular subversive nature still only serves to reinforce the ultimate domestic and heterosexual ending of the novel. D.A. Miller for example, believes Marian is wholly subversive, and identifies Marian as a sort of male soul trapped in a woman's body, and also explicitly identifies her as a lesbian character. Susan Baleé builds upon Miller's argument to posit that Marian's subversive nature even extends to the novel as a whole, and that her presence and her expression of gender is a part of the novel's larger project to endorse the subversion of "traditional" gender roles. Meanwhile, Rachel Ablow casts doubt upon Miller and Baleé's positions, making a case for the idea that Marian's position at the end of the novel sets her up as a support of Walter and Laura's marriage, and therefore of the heterosexual domestic project in general. Ablow still seems to agree, however, that Marian has an affection for Laura that borders on the homoerotic, which is an idea that unites many of these disparate arguments. Even arguments like Ablow's seem unable to negate Marian's subversive qualities, and these issues introduced by her very presence and being lead to an inability to establish any kind of conservative order. This lack of order means that solving the case cannot lead back to this

order – but even as some of these works do argue that Marian subverts conservative values in the novel, they fail to follow the implications this has for genre and the tie between genre and sexuality and gender, which is where my thesis intervenes.

Again, while there is a substantial amount of scholarship on *Dorian Gray*, there are particular articles that I plan to engage directly because they relate to my argument in key, foundational ways. Two of the most prominent essays on *Dorian Gray* and crime and the links to aestheticism and sexuality are Joseph Bristow's "Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, and gross indecency" (1992) and Paul Sheehan's "'A Malady Of Dreaming': Aesthetics And Criminality In *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*" (2005). Bristow focuses on how the novel's aestheticism and considerations of beauty interact with the law's determination of relationships between men as gross indecency – a term that Bristow states is deeply at odds with *Dorian Gray*'s portrayal of those relationships and desires. However, Bristow also considers how the law's designation of gross indecency could be a source for Dorian's corruption in the novel. In Bristow's conception, Dorian is not at fault for this corruption, and it is not a moral condemnation of his actions – instead, it is a metaphorical representation for the kind of public shame that men being associated with gross indecency could be subjected to. The article is obviously influenced by Wilde's own conviction of gross indecency, but Bristow's focus is on the text and he considers it as it was written rather than projecting this conviction backward. Bristow's discussion of gross indecency allows for nuance in all its attention to the fact that the crime was period-specific, and one that Wilde defended even as he also wrote Dorian as a criminal. Paul Sheehan's "'A Malady Of Dreaming'" is more focused on crime as an art form in the novel, and on how Dorian views crime as a part of his own aesthetic and decadent experience. Crime and criminality in *Dorian Gray* are a variation

on the excess and indulgence that the Victorian aesthetes were often critiqued for – and that would have been viewed as a transgression against masculinity within the period. This method of viewing crime as an art form is also important to my own considerations of the Sherlock Holmes stories, as crime and crime solving are Holmes’ art form, and his work with them is a part of the foundation of his own aesthetic character.

Finally, while there is a substantial amount of work on Sherlock Holmes, most of that work is not academic in nature, but is instead the work of enthusiasts. Magazines like *The Baker Street Journal* have long published articles on Holmes, but it remains difficult to find peer-reviewed and scholarly sources of discussion about the stories. Some of the most important academic works on the Holmes stories that I plan to engage with are Paul Barolsky’s “The Case of the Domesticated Aesthete” (1984), Joseph McLaughlin’s *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot* (2000), Daniel Cottom’s *International Bohemia: Scenes of Nineteenth-Century Life* (2013), and Leslie Haynsworth’s “All The Detective's Men: Binary Coding Of Masculine Identity In The Sherlock Holmes Stories” (2010).

Barolsky and Cottom, in their respective studies, both identify Holmes as an aesthete but fail to consider all the implications of this definition and how it may prevent Holmes from being capable of restoring the kind of conservative order other scholars still insist wins out in all of Holmes’ cases. Both texts acknowledge Holmes’ ennui and indulgence as well as his interest in art and music as aesthetic aspects of his character, but do not explore how these manifestations of excess code Holmes as inadequately masculine. This argument that Barolsky first posited, that Holmes may be read as an aesthete, is becoming more common, but it is still hardly accepted. Still, when people make this argument, they do so without

acknowledging much of the foundational work on aestheticism and gender which I have cited here. The early aesthetes, most markedly Walter Pater, were critiqued and parodied based on their effeminacy, and that effeminacy had implications for Pater's sexuality. This gap in scholarship is critical, and it should not be left unexplored.

McLaughlin and Haynsworth are both invested in some way in Holmes' gender or sexuality, but they have some of the only work on the subject. Holmes' sexuality has long been a taboo subject among enthusiasts, and this taboo seems to be unwittingly replicated in much of the academic scholarship on the stories. Joseph McLaughlin's *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot* is a work that is more about imperialism than gender or sexuality, but the section on Holmes interrogates the questions of how Holmes' connection with Eastern drugs effects a reading of his sexuality and gender. McLaughlin mentions that Watson is present for a scene that reads as masturbatory, but then glazes over any implications this could have for Holmes' sexuality. Haynsworth argues in "All The Detective's Men" that the categories of masculinity in the Holmes stories are troubled by the collisions of English domesticity and the English imperial project. However, she also argues that ultimately neither English conservative values or imperialism are critiqued entirely, as the ultimate faults lies with the fact that the domestic and imperial spheres should not collide in this way. Her focus is not specifically on Holmes as a character, but her arguments, if pressed further, could begin to deconstruct the presumed return to order that she still argues is present in each story.

Chapter Organization and Justification

With this groundwork on the detective genre and Victorian understandings of gender in place, I will move forward with my discussion of how *The Woman in White*, *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *The Sign of Four* all fit into this larger context.

My first chapter will focus on *Revelations of a Lady Detective* and *The Woman in White*. I will argue that in both texts the female detectives serve as subversive forces and that both Marian Holcombe and Mrs. Paschal demonstrate gender non-conformity and a level of active denial of a restoration of order. Both characters also engage in some level of homoeroticism with the women around them, and this is a part of the way in which they deny definition within the domestic, heterosexual sphere. I have chosen to tie these texts together in part to examine *Revelations* alongside a more canonical text, but also because the scholarship on Marian and *The Woman in White* serves as a useful precedent for examining *Revelations* in relation to existing scholarly conversations, due to the common themes I intend to explore.

The next chapter will focus on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four*, which I have chosen to examine together because they were commissioned at the same dinner and written contemporaneously. Part of this chapter is an examination of aesthetic coding and how it functions in both stories through the language and tropes used. In this way, I use *Dorian Gray* as a lens to interrogate how Holmes is set up as an aesthetic and queer-coded character. There will also be a further examination of the conditions and connotations of crime and its aesthetic nature in both works, as well as a discussion of the supposed

restoration of order in each text and how this ultimately fails – and how this failure is caused in part by the characters and the ways they are coded as other and as queer.

Finally, my conclusion links my discussions of the four major texts together in order to address how even across genders, all these texts subvert the expectations of the detective genre through the ways they subvert some of the period's discourses on gender and sexuality. Each of these detectives or potential detectives are so ultimately othered that they disrupt order themselves, and this results in a shaky restoration at best, and at times even a surprising subversion.

The gap in the scholarship that I have located and am attempting to address in this thesis is comprised both of the fact that the works I have chosen are not commonly studied together, and also that the intersections of gender, sexuality, and genre convention that I am most invested in are not typically followed through to the furthest extent of their implications. While scholarship on these subversive characters can occasionally attest that they themselves are in some way non-normative, it is not often remarked upon that a detective, even a non-normative one, is deliberately *not* going to reinforce order. These non-normative detective characters and the other figures in these stories, as well as some of the stories themselves, are not as easily solved and tidied as people often argue. Arguments that crime fiction restores traditional moral order in the solution of a case or crime are pervasive in scholarship, but even in these well-known pieces like the Sherlock Holmes stories or *The Woman in White*, or formative early works like *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, to claim that a conservative moral order is reinstated in the end of each story is to ignore a substantial amount of evidence to the contrary. Deviance often remains outside the normalized in the end of each case, and the circumstances are not neat enough to be a full endorsement of the

heteropatriarchal values that the solution was meant to reinforce. This is the issue I am most invested in solving.

Chapter 1: “The Much-Dreaded but Little-Known People”: Gender Non-Conformity and Subversion in the Female Detective Figure

Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* predates both of the works widely considered to be the first texts focused on a female detective. Those two texts, Andrew Forrester’s *The Female Detective* and William Stephens Hayward’s *Revelations of a Lady Detective* were published in 1864, four years after Collins’ novel was completed in serial publication. Still, Marian Holcombe of *The Woman in White* has not been excluded from discussion of female detectives – she has merely been defined as an amateur detective, where *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* feature professional woman detectives. Marian is also remarkable as a character because of her embodiment of female masculinity – she is described as “masculine” three separate times in just her first description. Her female masculinity actually connects Marian to one of the two professional female detectives, in that while Forrester’s *Female Detective* has often been described as more feminine detective, Mrs. Paschal of Hayward’s *Revelations* has been noted for her appropriation of certain masculine traits, including the fact that she can be seen smoking on the collection’s cover. Marian as a character and *The Woman in White* as a text have both been thoroughly explored in existing scholarship, but due to *Revelations*’ fairly recent rediscovery and republication, few of the implications of Mrs. Paschal’s masculine traits have been explored. In analyzing Marian Holcombe and the lesser-known Mrs. Paschal together, I hope to interrogate the subversive possibilities and implications of female masculinity in the portrayals of these female detectives and how that interacts with the expectations of the detective genre in both of their source texts.

In order to establish an understanding of female masculinity within the Victorian period, it is critical to first define what qualifies as femininity or masculinity and to examine what happens ideologically when those categories overlap. Portrayals of femininity in the Victorian period have long been classified within a standard dichotomy. Kimberly Reynolds and Nicola Humble have defined this dichotomy as “Angel or fallen woman?” (1), Jenni Calder as “supporting pillars” versus “helpless parasites” (13), Mary Poovey as “The contradiction between a sexless, moralized angel and an aggressive, carnal Magdalen” (11). Despite the many varied descriptions of the binary, all of these literary critics are addressing the same basic concept in scholarship and in our understanding of the dominant discourses of the period: representations of Victorian women have been classified as either an idealized domestic angel (a successful wife and mother), or the sexualized fallen woman, who can also qualify as a victim of her circumstances in more sympathetic portrayals. This binary understanding is far from conclusive, and most Victorian women would not have conceptualized themselves this way, as Reynolds and Humble, Calder, and Poovey all acknowledge in their respective texts. Still, this dichotomy regarding femininity did important ideological work within the period, particularly in that the female ideal in a variety of texts was acknowledged to be that domestic angel, widely sourced to Coventry Patmore’s “The Angel in the House,” first published in 1854 and expanded until 1862.

Appropriate and inappropriate masculinity can also be observed as a dichotomy, in the sense that men were held to certain expectations of masculinity within the period and in the sense that women could be considered admirable for demonstrating certain masculine characteristics and unfeminine for demonstrating others. Andrew Dowling, in *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature*, writes “The hegemonic truth about manliness in

the nineteenth century was established through metaphors of control, reserve, and discipline, that were placed in opposition to images of chaos, excess, and disorder” (13). As in the case of femininity, Dowling is quick to acknowledge that this dichotomy was not a clear reality, but instead a hegemonic truth. Dominant discourse constructed these binaries as a part of the period’s tendency for order and classification. Men were expected to embody these ideals of discipline and reserve in order to maintain an image of themselves as gentlemen. In some ways, this reflects the ideals of femininity, but the difference lies in emotional demonstration and emotional intelligence or sensitivity. Even other women were likely to critique women based on these issues, as Fanny Kemble once wrote that female doctors had “‘something hard and dry in their manner’ which made her wonder whether ‘something especially and essentially womanly – tenderness, softness, refinement – must either be non-existent or sacrificed in the acquirement of a manly profession and the studies it demands’” (qtd. in Sanders 104). Too much emotional control and a woman could be seen to be losing her femininity – that kind of self-discipline was masculine in nature. However, it is clear that the angel in the house and the refined and controlled Victorian gentleman, though permitted very different freedoms, embody what dominant Victorian culture valued in all of its citizens: self-control, and a dedication to their assigned roles as they were socially constructed, whether that be men’s participation in public life or women’s upholding the house and participation in religion or charitable activities. It is the intersection of this binary of expectations for women and the possibilities presented by masculine self-control which houses the unique position of female masculinity.

Jack Halberstam begins to construct a history of female masculinity in *Female Masculinity* (1998). Though both of the case studies used in Halberstam’s first chapter are

earlier than *Woman in White* and *Revelations*, Halberstam makes observations that can allow for an understanding of Victorian female masculinities as they may have been established within the period. In beginning to define and set up terms, Halberstam writes:

The connection between prostitute and masculine woman seems quite common in the nineteenth century, and we might read this synonymous connection as a function of the nineteenth-century tendency to categorize women in relation to marriageability. The prostitute and the masculine and possibly predatory woman both exhibit extramarital desires and have aggressive sexual tendencies. (51)

Outside of the subtle distinction between masculine and feminine self-control and emotional control, then, aggression also becomes coded as masculine. Halberstam specifically refers to sexual aggression here, but the issue is clearly the idea that a woman could be an aggressor, so taking on that kind of position becomes marked as masculinity. Femininity is often marked purely as the inverse or absence of masculinity, but Halberstam is deliberately pushing back against this and attempting to seek out qualities of female masculinity and how women have also contributed to masculinity across time. Sexual aggression and blatant sexual desire, emotional self-control, anything too forward or too unemotional can be tied into this image of behaviors which were marked as masculine even in women.

In the case of Marian Holcombe, Collins's text tells the reader that her behavior and appearance qualify as masculine, and the reader must decide how this positions her character. The first time Walter encounters Marian she is described in the following way: "The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw... Her expression – bright, frank, and intelligent – appeared, while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine

attractions of gentleness and pliability” (35). Walter also refers to her “masculine form” and the “masculine look of [her] features” (35). In just this first appearance, Walter repeats “masculine” three times to truly emphasize this aspect of her description. He also uses this to talk about the contradiction between her masculine appearance and expression and her womanhood. This masculinity also carries into her demeanor and personality, as her wit and mannerisms are also often considered to be unfeminine. For example, when Marian says goodbye to Walter, he says that she “caught me by both hands – she pressed them with the strong, steady grasp of a man” (122). It is not just her appearance then, but also her frank way of speaking and even her handshake – every part of Marian’s demeanor and looks is described by Walter as masculine in some way. D.A. Miller, in “Cage Aux Folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*” (1989), discusses this scene by arguing that Marian is a “conspicuously curious case of a woman's body that gives all the signs of containing a man's soul” (125). He is tying this to Karl Ulrich’s well-known idea of homosexuality as a man with a “woman’s soul” (112), using it instead for Marian’s blatantly queer gender and sexuality, but this entire idea, even beyond modern complications of Ulrich’s conflation of sexuality and gender, is rather thwarted by Marian’s own strong identification with womanhood. Marian does speak poorly of her own gender, stating “You see I don’t think much of my own sex, Mr. Hartright... no woman does think much of her own sex, although few of them confess it as freely as I do” (Collins 36). This statement sets the standard for how Marian tends to critique her own sex, though, both clearly identifying with womanhood and yet still disparaging it. Even in the context of her sexuality, falling back on Ulrich’s description to conflate her gender and masculinity with her homoerotic relationship with Laura does not seem to suit. Instead, her masculinity seems to be something

she has embraced, separate from her close relationship with her half-sister Laura. Both of these aspects code her as queer within the narrative in that they mark her as unusual and they mark her as somehow othered in gender and in sexuality, but they do so separately, not only together. Perhaps it is possible that this was Collins's intention, to demonstrate Marian as a female version of Ulrich's classic description, but there is no reason to rely on that idea of his intention as the only way to interpret Marian's characteristics.

Mrs. Paschal, from *Revelations of a Female Detective*, is generally more subtly masculine-coded. In place of Collins's technique of having other characters, and particularly Walter, refer to Marian as masculine, Mrs. Paschal tends to only recognize that her behaviors and actions are not typical for a woman. One of the most telling examples of this takes place at the end of "The Secret Band," when Mrs. Paschal states, "When I found myself amongst friends and freed from the great danger which lately menaced me, I showed that I was a woman and swooned away" (90). This statement is a clear indication that Mrs. Paschal recognizes the composure she shows during cases and in the face of danger to be something not feminine. In the case of "The Secret Band," she aligns her ability to move past an emotional moment and focus back on the case with that same ability in the circle of men she is observing – marking her emotional self-control as something masculine. Mrs. Paschal's career, since it is invented, is also marked as something unconventional for a woman – not work in general as much as her specific work. Still, the way Mrs. Paschal acknowledges her widowhood being the distinct cause of her need for work to support herself means that she recognizes, beyond her own unfeminine behaviors, her position outside the more traditional domestic sphere for women.

In part, women were believed to be at their best in the home because in spite of their ideal position as “sexless,” it was posited that women could not exhibit the same kind of self-control as men. Instead, if a woman was placed in a dangerous situation or fell, her sexless nature could fail her, and so could her self-control. Men were considered to lack this same kind of sexual control, but it was as a result of this that the moral man or gentleman was praised for upholding that control whereas a woman was expected to simply embody it or be seen as fallen or a failure. Mary Poovey, in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, addresses this concept in her analysis of W.R. Greg’s 1862 essay “Why Are Women Redundant?” She writes, “Greg always imagines removing or sequestering the women, not regulating the male sexual appetite. The reason he imagines controlling women and not men is that, according to Greg, women are not dominated by the irrepressible drive that governs the sexual lives of men. Women’s sexual desire is not a problem, in other words; men’s sexual desire is...” (5). This is why a woman exhibiting masculine-coded self-control over her desires and emotions contributes to the destabilization of this binary. Within the dominant discourse of the period, self-control meant different things for a man or a woman. A woman was simply expected to not have sexual desires, yet to be unable to control herself in other aspects of life.

In the case of Marian and Mrs. Paschal, both women express some level of attraction or fascination with a man with whom they do not become romantically involved. *The Woman in White*’s Count Fosco and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*’s Zini are also surprisingly similar characters - both being Italian nationals with ties to secret organizations who are married when Marian and Mrs. Paschal meet them. Italian secret organizations made for a common enemy in the detective story throughout the Victorian period, but it is no

coincidence that these women outside of conservative English standards of femininity receive foreign love interests, even if those love interests ultimately fail. For both women, attraction to these men is tied inextricably to danger, as both women experience some kind of violence at the hands of the man they were drawn to and both men are generally involved in dangerous circumstances. Attraction is acknowledged, as Marian writes “The man has interested me, has attracted me, has forced me to like him” (Collins 213), in reference to Count Fosco, and Mrs. Paschal similarly says of Zini that she “had begun to take an interest in [him]” (Hayward 55). In spite of these budding hints at attraction, both as a demonstration of discipline and perhaps as a result of gender transgression, this attraction must also be resisted. Marian and Mrs. Paschal eschew men entirely. However, men are not the only opportunity either of them have for erotic attraction or engagement. Their resistance of heterosexual desire is complicated by their erotic engagement with other women – they are not sexless and do not fully deny desire, but instead have the self-control to avoid entanglements with dangerous men.

The other key construction of femininity and the angel in the house is that being a successful participant in the domestic sphere, women had to be married and be an effective wife. Coventry Patmore’s poem was particularly a description of the ideal wife and mother – and there is inherently no domestic sphere to be had without a woman having her own household with a husband and children to complete the role of their “supportive pillar.” In *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, for example, Jenni Calder writes “Denied for the most part opportunities for an identity other than that of wife and mother, women’s attempts to find their own level in the fiction of Victorian life provide endless fascination” (15). At least within fiction, Calder’s claim rings true. The exceptions to this rule are notable because

they are exceptions, and even works like *The Woman in White* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* contain examples of female characters who remain trapped within these roles.

It is notable that both Marian Holcombe and Mrs. Paschal begin and end their respective works unmarried. Marian does end the novel in a domestic arrangement, but it is a non-standard arrangement. Laura asks Marian specifically to remain single for her sake while she is still married to Percival Glyde, saying, "Oh, Marian! ...promise you will never marry, and leave me. It is selfish to say so, but you are so much better off as a single woman—unless—unless you are very fond of your husband—but you won't be very fond of anybody but me, will you?" (209). Marian does as Laura asks, as she lives, single and unmarried, with Walter and Laura at the end of the novel. She never marries, and never leaves. The closest Marian comes is an expression of some level of interest and attraction to Count Fosco upon meeting him, but he is married and deeply involved in the plot against Laura, so Marian loses her interest and never would have been able to marry him regardless. Mrs. Paschal is a widow, but her husband died before the text begins, and she only speaks of him once to say, "my husband died suddenly" (18). She does not spend the text missing or discussing him, and the reader never even learns his name. The one man she could be argued to express interest in, Zini of "The Secret Band," is married when Mrs. Paschal meets him and dies in the course of the case. As such, she has no male suitors and no reciprocal male love interest in any of her cases, and she ends her final case single. She never expresses any desire to remarry.

Within the reality of Victorian life, these ideas of women and the domestic sphere were becoming troubled even within the 1850s and 1860s, in fact, this is the main subject of W.R. Greg's essay on "redundant women." This term found its real origin with Greg's piece,

particularly in the way it was used to identify the problem he was addressing. Mary Poovey writes, “Greg identified unmarried working women as a ‘problem’ because he assumed that women normally ‘complet[ed], sweeten[ed], and embellish[ed] the existence of others’ as wives and mothers” (1). The topic had arisen because of “The 1851 Census, which calculated that 42 percent of the women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried and that two million out of Britain’s six million women were self-supporting” (Poovey 4). Being widowed or unmarried or self-supporting was not rare in the reality of Victorian culture, but it was, as Calder said, in the “fiction of Victorian life.” The created ideological systems constructed for women anticipated marriage and motherhood, which is why Greg and his contemporaries viewed the shift in the number of single or self-supporting women to be so troubling. One of these contemporaries was Margaret Oliphant, who addressed the subject of England’s large number of unmarried women in her essay “The Condition of Women,” published in 1858. Although Oliphant stresses that “the maiden lady is not an invention of these times” (147), setting her apart from Greg’s panic over the increasing numbers, she still spends much of her piece referring to love and marriage as “natural” (146, 147). She also argues that there are ways to “teach unmarried women how, in spite of their unfortunate circumstances, it is still possible for them to keep themselves respected and respectable” (148). In this way, although Oliphant’s discussion of married women is slightly more nuanced, she still presents being unmarried as a situation that women can make the best of rather than a genuinely preferable or resistant position. Her idea that women can remain unmarried is still based in the same ideas that marriage is natural or preferable for many women and does not deconstruct or complicate the dominant narrative in any real way. Both *The Woman in White* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective* were released after the initial

census which troubled Greg, and after Oliphant's essay, although *Revelations* was published after Greg's essay. It is clear then that even if real possibilities are being represented in these novels, they are still doing important deconstructive work against persisting ideological discourses about women and their best lives.

In *Odd Women?: Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s-1930s*, Emma Liggins is predominately invested in how Greg's concept of the redundant woman and the single woman as problem was something that female authors were using and pushing back against in the mid-1800s. While she is intentionally not engaging with texts by male authors like Collins or Hayward, her considerations are still relevant in considering how fictional construction and that grand Victorian fiction was creating or reinforcing the ideology of Greg's beliefs, of separate spheres and the woman's duty to the domestic. As Liggins writes, "Single and widowed women, rather than always being marginal, eccentric characters in Victorian fiction, could be used to signal alternative female subjectivities through being positioned centre stage" (30). This is a key portion of her argument overall, that single and widowed characters are not inherently outcasts or outsiders but instead can be framed as important and possible alternatives for women. At first, to engage with this idea that these so-called "odd women" and these categories may not inherently qualify as subversive may seem to defeat the larger argument that Marian and Mrs. Paschal do subversive work for both gender and genre. Yet, Liggins also writes at the end of her chapter:

Adopting the role of widow emerges as a key motif in texts which equate widowhood... with both respectability and an enabling disruption of gender norms. Autobiographies, particularly of pioneering single women, go further in their rejection of heteronormativity, articulating alternative configurations of the family

through validating tantular identities and cross-generational ties, and mobilizing a reconceptualization of the supposedly isolated lives of spinsters and widows as 'brave,' complete, finished, rather than lacking. (68-9)

Liggins is still emphasizing the important and subversive work done by these reconceptualizations of singlehood and widowhood within the period. Even though her focus on single women is in autobiography, the point is that there are existing negative concepts of the widow and the single woman, and that less effective representations might reinforce this existing discourse. While the category of widow or single woman is not inherently subversive or queer, it does often put a character or a fictionalized version of a real woman in a better position to resist heteronormativity and the standard expectations of the domestic sphere.

Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* has become a canonical literary text in the respect that it has been the subject of texts and classes all its own. Many of these articles interrogate questions of gender, and it is nearly impossible to do so without considering Marian Holcombe. Marian is the focal point of an entire subset of these academic studies, and even in articles like Rachel Ablow's "Good Vibrations: The Sensationalization of Masculinity in *The Woman in White*" (2003), which focuses primarily on Walter, the male protagonist, Marian becomes a part of the discussion due to the ways she helps construct the complex gender dynamics of the novel. Some of the texts that focus more deliberately on Marian and her role include D.A. Miller's "Cage Aux Folles," Susan Baleé's "Wilkie Collins and Surplus Women: The Case of Marian Halcombe" (1992), Laurel Erickson's "'In Short, She Is an Angel; and I Am -': Odd Women and Same-Sex Desire in Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White*" (1999), and Lauren Hoffer and Sarah Kersh's "The Victorian Family in Queer

Time: Secrets, Sisters, and Lovers in *The Woman in White* and *Fingersmith*” (2015). These projects on Marian all center on her gender and sexuality, and it is difficult to find a study of Marian that does not grapple with at least one or the other. The major issue of contention amongst these pieces and these scholars instead seems to be the inability to agree on whether or not Marian functions as a subversive character, or if her particular subversive nature still only serves to reinforce the ultimate domestic and heterosexual ending of the novel.

Assertions about Marian being a male soul aside, Miller’s “Cage Aux Folles” is one of the more radical interpretations of Marian. It is clear that Miller believes Marian is wholly subversive, and he also explicitly identifies her as a lesbian character, a step that not all scholars are willing to take. Miller’s essay was foundational for further understandings of Marian as a character with this kind of potential. Susan Baleé, for example, builds upon Miller’s argument in her “Wilkie Collins and Surplus Women” to posit that Marian’s subversive nature extends to the novel as a whole, and that her presence and her expression of gender is a part of the novel’s larger project to endorse the subversion of “traditional” gender roles. Laurel Erickson’s discussion of Marian and her moustache in “In Short, She is an Angel” also aligns with these ideas that Miller and Baleé have begun to posit, as Erickson argues that Marian’s desire for Laura and their relationship is inherently queer, even if to refer to it as lesbian desire is anachronistic. She ties this in with Marian’s androgynous appearance, and the fact that her gender, in both action and appearance, avoids easy categorization. This is truly at the heart of the fact that Marian goes beyond being just a single woman or a woman detective or a lesbian character – she defies easy characterization in every aspect of her character and her life, and this makes her ideal for a queer reading.

In “Good Vibrations,” Rachel Ablow expresses skepticism towards the idea that Marian’s position can be fully subversive, and she takes issue with Miller and Baleé specifically. She makes a case for the idea that Marian’s position at the end of the novel sets her up as a support of Walter and Laura’s marriage, and therefore of the heterosexual domestic project in general. Even Ablow seems to agree, however, that Marian has an affection for Laura that borders on the homoerotic, which is an idea that unites many of the disparate arguments on Marian and her sexuality and gender. Arguments like Ablow’s still seem unable to negate Marian’s subversive qualities, and these issues introduced by her very presence and being lead to an inability to establish any kind of conservative order. This lack of order means that solving the case cannot lead back to this order – but even as some of these critics do argue that Marian subverts conservative values in the novel, they fail to follow the implications this has for genre and the tie between genre and sexuality and gender.

Marian, even as a technically amateur detective, is deeply involved in solving the case of *The Woman in White* and makes steps of active progress in the case in a way that clearly makes her as much of a detective as Walter Hartright – perhaps even more so. She is, for example, the one who makes the first major break in the case by using her mother’s letters to discover the identity of The Woman in White. Still, the discovery of information and knowledge does not have to lead directly and inextricably to the restoration of order, and particularly not to the kind of conservative heteropatriarchal order that Rachel Ablow insists is reinforced by the novel’s end. Instead, a deeply embedded part of Marian’s investment in the case is her love for Laura and the fact that she tells Walter in the beginning of the novel, “I won't live without her, and she can't live without me” (37). In the resolution of the mystery at the novel’s end, Laura has married Walter, a man who owes Marian a debt and who

considers her close enough that she will clearly be allowed to remain close to her sister. The arrangement amongst the three of them is clearly an unusual one. This is the key argument of Lauren Hoffer and Sarah Kersh's "The Victorian Family in Queer Time." An arrangement where Laura and Marian's relationship and Laura and Walter's are able to coexist functions as a queer family space and a queer arrangement. Laura's marriage as arranged by her father and patriarchal society is broken up in the progress of *The Woman in White*, with Marian's help. Even though Laura does marry by the end of the novel, the way that marriage comes about and to whom gives her more agency in choice as well as the access to her home, as she now has a son who will inherit Limmeridge House, allowing her some right to the property in a way that circumvents the unjust property inheritance system which was in place. As Hoffer and Kersh also observe, "Walter... offers a version of heteronormativity that accommodates the sisters' bond" (200). Just because a marriage is ultimately in place between Laura and Walter does not mean that Laura and Marian have not ultimately forced the existing heteropatriarchal order to suit their needs rather than simply reinforcing it in their solution of the case.

This situation in the end of the novel would not have been possible without Marian doing as Laura asked and remaining single. It is unlikely that Marian and a husband could have fit into this arrangement – instead it is dependent on Marian remaining outside the standard domestic sphere, remaining unmarried, and remaining dedicated to her relationship with Laura. Marian's refusal of marriage and her decision to remain single puts her outside of the anticipated timeline of heterosexual domesticity, as she does not marry or have children, and instead enters an entirely separate domestic arrangement. This places her living situation in the context of queer time, that she has created an alternative life for herself with none of

the milestones of heterosexual development. However, it is also important that a part of her life is comprised in helping to care for Laura, who remains changed by her experiences even as Walter claims that she most often resembles “the Laura of old times” (547). Even the Laura of the beginning of the novel still required Marian’s care and assistance and often fell victim to headaches (36). Laura’s condition is never diagnosed or relayed to the reader specifically, but it is clear that she would struggle with the necessity to be able to leave bed or exert herself every day, and that is before the mistreatment she suffers over the course of the novel. Marian stays to be caretaker to Laura.

In *Romance’s Rivals*, and particularly on the chapter on “Disability Marriage,” Talia Schaffer keeps her focus predominately on legal marriage, and therefore heterosexual marriage. There is one example of a same-sex couple, but most of the examples of women as caretakers involve the unique situation in which a wife gains agency by caring for a disabled husband. This is not the case with Marian and Laura, but it is true that Marian and Laura’s familial relationship and closeness is the basis for their relationship, as is the case in the familiar marriages Schaffer discusses, and the arrangement that Walter, Laura, and Marian end the novel in could certainly be described as a “communit[y] of care” (197). The fact that Marian has placed herself in this queer domestic position both as a lover and a caretaker connects her not just with queer time but also with Alison Kafer’s concept of crip time. Laura and Walter have a child and Marian is that child’s godmother, so effectively the three of them are able to have a child who will inherit Limmeridge House and therefore allow them to experience a particular kind of reproductive futurity, but this never would have been possible without the involvement of all three of them, and without the community of care they have established. Marian’s inability to have children while single is a marker of queer time, but

her ability to have a child through caring for Laura and assisting in this domestic community opens up a queer, crip futurity for herself, Laura and Walter. One of the key points of difference between queer time and crip time that Kafer points out is that those who are sick and disabled have often been denied a future through violent means, including sterilization, so refusing that future only reinforces those same ideas (31-32). Instead, here it is clear that within the type of timeline created in Laura's illness and experiences and Marian's choice to remain unmarried is a new type of futurity and a new type of domestic arrangement that within heteropatriarchal order would have been denied to both of them. This means that instead of restoring order, Marian, Laura and Walter have effectively created their own kind of order that resists the expectations of heteronormativity and the Victorian domestic sphere, causing an upheaval in the solution of the case they have worked on together.

Since there is little peer-reviewed scholarship on Hayward's *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, the kinds of conversations that have long persisted in relation to Marian have only just begun regarding Mrs. Paschal. For example, Dagni Bredesen's "Conformist Subversion: Ambivalent Agency in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*" (2006) is one of the only peer-reviewed articles on the collection of stories. Bredesen stands by the idea that Paschal successfully solves her cases to return the world of her stories back to a restored, conservative order in the end. Though she recognizes some ambivalence in Mrs. Paschal's character, Bredesen writes "She undercuts hegemonic gendered ideologies and expectations for women and yet consolidates them in her performances and aims" (30). Bredesen seems to find satisfaction and order in the endings of *Revelation's* cases – something which I plan to call into question. She also writes "Disruptions in family relations and the legal order are shown to be inseparable in the new police state in which the widowed detective serves as an

enforcer” (30). Bredeesen truly sees Mrs. Paschal as a complex figure, but still as an enforcer of the hegemonic order. While she spends time looking at Mrs. Paschal’s status as a widow and her freedoms, this declaration of enforcement is a simplification.

Texts like Kathleen Gregory Klein’s *The Woman Detective: Gender & Genre* (1988) and Joseph Kestner’s *Sherlock’s Sisters: The British Female Detective, 1864-1913* (2003) also devote some of their time to *Revelations* as a formative text for the female detective figure. The discussions in each of these works remain focused on Mrs. Paschal as a subversive and proto-feminist character. Still, simply looking at Mrs. Paschal as a female detective fails to interrogate how her gender non-conformity can serve to destabilize the expectation of hegemonic order that Bredeesen establishes. None of these sources are at odds with each other, all only beginning to build a selection of academic work on Hayward and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. This means there is still little in-depth discussion of Mrs. Paschal’s gender ambiguity and sexuality, and little in-depth discussion by any of these critics of any particular stories – Bredeesen chooses a few to discuss, but she leaves aspects of each story undiscussed in order to give a more comprehensive sense of Mrs. Paschal’s character and of the full collection in general.

Even before interrogating the particular stories and cases in individual depth, it is important to note that in the ten stories in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, in only one of those cases do the culprits involved face official, institutional punishment. The ultimate signification of good prevailing over evil and concretely restoring order is denied to the reader in nine out of Mrs. Paschal’s ten cases. A few of the culprits escape in death, a few of the cases are simply settled out of court through various means, but as Mrs. Paschal is often solving cases that more officially employed male detectives could not, her methods of

solution tend to be equally unusual or unofficial. This does have some relevance to the concrete reality of female police officers, as Scotland Yard would not actually employ women until 1915 – as Kathleen Klein writes, *Revelations* and Mrs. Paschal “predate the official acceptance of women in Britain’s police force by over fifty years” (18). In this way, Mrs. Paschal’s semi-unofficial capacity serves as a kind of possibility for how women might be helping with cases even as they were not publicly and officially employed. Mrs. Paschal writes of how she came into her own unconventional position: “An offer was made me through a peculiar channel. I accepted it without hesitation, and became one of the much-dreaded, but little-known people called Female Detectives” (Hayward 18). Hayward’s stories position female detectives as a kind of secret resource at the police force’s disposal in particular and sensitive cases. Colonel Warner, Mrs. Paschal’s superior officer and her contact within the force, will often contact her on matters where the police may not infiltrate a situation as effectively as Mrs. Paschal will be able to. Where a police officer would have to be more direct, Mrs. Paschal is often in a more effective position to enter a house by playing at being a servant or a friend of some other woman. This position aligns her with the official force to some extent, but also leaves her available to critique it or to solve cases by less official means.

The first story in Hayward’s collection is “The Mysterious Countess.” This case sees Mrs. Paschal investigating another widow, a countess, who is suspected of using some dishonest means to obtain her fortune. Mrs. Paschal disguises herself as a maid and ingratiates herself to the Countess and her household in order to investigate the case. The Countess herself, Lady Vervaine, beyond being a widow, is also worth deconstructing in terms of her relationship with gender and gender presentation. Lady Vervaine’s position as a

widow makes her an effective foil to Mrs. Paschal – both of them have, upon their husband’s passing, chosen not to remarry and have instead found independence and a way to provide for themselves. As Emma Liggins argues in *Odd Women*, being a widow is not an inherently subversive position, but widowhood combined with the refusal to remarry and the refusal to reenter the domestic sphere does mark itself as a lifestyle opposed to heteropatriarchal order. Lady Vervaine and Mrs. Paschal’s actions within this case also reinforce this concept.

In one key scene, Mrs. Paschal decides to pursue a thief dressed in men’s clothing, but it is then revealed that this thief in men’s clothing is the Countess, Lady Vervaine, cross-dressing in order to complete the theft. Mrs. Paschal describes her as having “assumed male attire for purposes of her own,” as Lady Vervaine wears a suit with trousers and a mask. However, Mrs. Paschal also breaks the conventions of feminine attire in this scene as she, upon attempting to descend a ladder, “with as much rapidity as possible took off the small crinoline [she] wore, for [she] considered that it would very much impede [her] movements” (33). She also refers to its removal as having “divested [her]self of the obnoxious garment” (33). While this move is not necessarily as bold as wearing a man’s suit, this removal of a feminine undergarment because it is simply getting in the way marks a disregard for the expectations of feminine behavior. In this way, both Mrs. Paschal and Lady Vervaine are eschewing appropriate femininity and feminine attire in order to take the action they need to take, either stealing or solving the case. The fact that even Mrs. Paschal assumes the cross-dressing thief is a man at first and that lady detectives are remarked to be rare even in the world of the story means that Mrs. Paschal and Lady Vervaine are also both aware that their methods of supporting themselves are also marked as masculine. Their ambivalence toward feminine clothing goes hand in hand with their gendered masculine interests or careers.

This scene and its implications within the larger case would be enough to mark Mrs. Paschal as a gender non-conforming character with subversive potential, but how she proceeds within the case itself and how she interacts with Lady Vervaine also serves to queer the expectations of the detective genre. Mrs. Paschal does not make a secret of her admiration of Lady Vervaine at any point throughout the story. Near the beginning of the case she writes that the Countess “was a rare combination of loveliness and accomplishments. Even the women admitted she was beautiful, and the men raved about her” (22). This is followed up later as Mrs. Paschal writes “Lady Vervaine was one of those fascinating little women who charm you by their simple, winning ways, and you do not dream for a moment that they are not terrestrial angels” (27). Even as Mrs. Paschal knows going into the case that the Countess is under suspicion, she always admires her and finds her beautiful. These ubiquitous descriptions of the Lady Vervaine’s beauty and the close relationship that Mrs. Paschal develops with her while posing as her trusted maid could be paralleled with the very close and often erotic relationship that Marian and Laura have in *The Woman in White*. Mrs. Paschal has an obvious appreciation for the Lady Vervaine’s physical appearance, and even refers to her as an “angel,” the same way that Marian at one point refers to Laura. This case is much shorter than *The Woman in White*, and the Countess and Mrs. Paschal do not have the time to fully develop their relationship, but there are certainly hints of what critics have widely understood as homoerotic in *The Woman in White*. Mrs. Paschal’s appreciation of Lady Vervaine also notably extends beyond the physical, as her comments on her “accomplishments” and “winning ways” reveal. The Lady Vervaine is a woman worth admiring even beyond her looks, and this is what allows Mrs. Paschal to have such a strong appreciation for her – their relationship is more than physical.

Mrs. Paschal's admiration for Lady Vervaine also reaches its climax of sorts at the end of the case, when she has passed away. Paschal writes: "Fanny, the accomplished, lovely, and versatile Countess of Vervaine was no more. I did not regret that so young and fair a creature had escaped the felons' dock, and the burglar's doom" (48). Mrs. Paschal openly admits here to being glad that the fact that the Lady Vervaine has successfully escaped institutional punishment through death, even as she continues to heap praise upon her. As the Countess commits suicide by poison and just before she dies is described as having "a smile which seemed to say, the battle is over, and I soon shall be at rest, sat upon her lips" (48), it is undeniable that she escapes punishment for her actions. Her death does not seem like a punishment, and she is spared institutional punishment, and Mrs. Paschal takes pleasure in that escape. This is an ultimate failure of the restoration of order. The detective is excessively, even erotically fond of the thief, the thief escapes punishment and receives only admiration in death. The failure of the restoration of order here is also reinforced by the fact that Mrs. Paschal has also lied and disguised herself and pushed the boundaries of feminine dress in this case, just as the Countess did. It is true she did not directly steal anything the way the Countess did, but many of the same societal bounds have been pushed by both women in this case, and neither of them are effectively punished for those transgressions. Mrs. Paschal does not even attempt to restore any kind of domestic or heteropatriarchal order, and the Countess' subversive legacy is left to stand.

The second case in *Revelations* is "The Secret Band." Though this case features a male antagonist and is not quite as directly subversive to gender expectations as "The Mysterious Countess," there are still several key aspects worth a deeper discussion. The case opens as Mrs. Paschal is set upon the trail of a secret Italian society to discover what they

may be planning, but as soon as she begins observing the leader, Zini, she critiques his choice of wife and ultimately critiques the entire concept of the Angel in the House and the wife of the domestic sphere. Mrs. Paschal writes of her:

She was a thin, pale, fragile-looking little thing. A toy – a child – a baby. He must have loved her for her very emptiness. I could see at a glance that she had no mind, and was frivolous to a degree; but then she was pretty and engaging in her manner, which will in the eyes of some men cover a multitude of sins... there was nothing to love about her except her personal appearance... the doll-like creature he had made his wife. (55-56)

While this could be read as some kind of interest in Zini or jealousy, and a part of Mrs. Paschal's critique is clearly that Zini has chosen this woman as his wife, the critique is still ultimately more widely directed than that. She makes it clear that this kind of mismatch or poor selection is a common occurrence, and that many men select based on appearance and an engaging manner rather than seeking a wife for an intellectual match. A wife limited to the domestic sphere or expected to only be the Angel in the House would not need to be a strong-minded intellectual match for her husband, so it is obvious that Mrs. Paschal has some personal dissatisfaction with the effects and implications of the expectations of the heteropatriarchy. Marriage is further destabilized in this case because Zini's wife also passes away, leaving Zini a widower and breaking up any potential for a settled domestic sphere. This is far from the final broken or unhappy or unsettled marriage in *Revelations*, but this is also far from the final subversive aspect of this case.

In this case, as in "The Mysterious Countess," and as in many of her cases, Mrs. Paschal uses her femininity as an advantageous tool as she solves the case. Upon figuring out

where the Secret Band actually meets, she discovers that there is an old, lonely woman who keeps their meeting place clean and secret and well-kept, and she is able to befriend her and grow close to her in order to get into the meeting place during the time of one of their meetings. A male detective may not have been able to do this, but Mrs. Paschal uses her gender to seem less suspicious and to play into the old woman's expectations. Beyond this use of her gender and the questionable nature of her false friendship, Mrs. Paschal further exposes herself as a somewhat questionable heroine in this case as Dorothy, the old woman, falls down the stairs and to her death in involvement with the case. As this occurs, Mrs. Paschal writes: "a tear unbidden started to my eyes. I could not help feeling grieved that the old woman had met her fate through her efforts to befriend me; but I, too, was somewhat callous, through experience and contact with a hard world, so I dashed away the tear which was the apotheosis of the deceased woman, and applied myself with renewed ardour to the task before me" (75). In this moment, Mrs. Paschal compares herself and her callous reaction to Dorothy's death directly with that of the members of the Secret Band, who also dismiss any emotional reaction they may have had to better focus on their own tasks. This emotional control, then, is marked as masculine and Mrs. Paschal's ability to participate in it marks her as exceptional and subversive yet again. This apparent dismissal of Dorothy's death also leads into the resolution of the case, in which Zini is killed and the rest of the Secret Band escapes punishment through lack of evidence. The criminals or culprits all escape either through death or just sheer evasion, so Mrs. Paschal has again resorted to unconventional and frowned upon methods to lay out a case but without being able to punish the criminals. The reader is provided sordid or exciting details of the case and the knowledge that the criminals escape and is only left with Mrs. Paschal's subversive presence.

These two cases are particularly rich with examples of critiques and Mrs. Paschal's subversive behaviors, but there are trends across all ten short stories that make it clear that there is no real return to a standard order in the cases Mrs. Paschal solves. As aforementioned, in only one of the ten cases is any kind of institutional punishment served to the criminals. Beyond this, there is a very common trend of issues in marriage or between a husband and wife being at the center of any case Mrs. Paschal takes, and these issues are rarely fully resolved. "The Stolen Diamonds" includes a wife with a gambling issue who causes trouble for her husband and for their marriage. "Fifty Pounds Reward" includes two married couples, one pair of a newlyweds with a discontented wife and the other an older married couple with a wife who explicitly states that women should have a better position in marriage and be able to expect more of their husbands. This story has some of the strongest critiques of marriage outside of Mrs. Paschal's displeasure with Zini's domestic angel of a wife. Louisa Eskill, under the influence of Mrs. Wilkinson, the older woman of the story, begins to disagree with her husband and pick arguments with him, insisting on better treatment. It is true that Mrs. Wilkinson is dismissed as a bad influence by everyone in the story, and Louisa later regrets the extent of her actions, but this ending does not eliminate the power behind interactions like the one where Mrs. Eskill's husband tells her "If you are disobedient to me, Louisa... your folly will raise a gulf between us which you will never by future submission be able to bridge over" (199). This is one of several harsh remarks that Mr. Eskill makes to his wife, and these moments have a potential to stand out as cruel or excessive even in the larger context of the story. These troubles make visible the struggles and abuses of heterosexual marriage and serve as a plea for a recognition that wives are often mistreated even as the case tries to write all this off as the bad influence of Mrs. Wilkinson.

Mrs. Paschal herself also stands in as a symbol of disrupted marriage throughout every case, as she is widow without a context. We know her husband has died but rarely, if ever, do we receive insight into this past or any happy memories – it is merely a reassurance, that yes, she was married at some point. This is in opposition to Marian Holcombe's life as a spinster or lesbian figure, but ultimately both positions serve to place both women outside of and opposed to a woman's traditional position in the domestic sphere.

Mrs. Paschal, though not as outwardly masculine as Marian Holcombe, may actually be more subversive because in all of her cases she upends the traditional order and does not restore it; in contrast to the as the supposed restoration of order at the end of *The Woman in White*, it difficult to read the anti-normative endings of Mrs. Pascal's cases any other way. While the arrangement Marian, Laura, and Walter have does not reinforce the standard heteropatriarchy, scholars have successfully argued, with textual evidence, that Marian plays a part in a restoration of order as much as possible. Nevertheless, my thesis takes the position that Marian is subversive and that *The Woman in White* does not reinforce a traditional order; yet Mrs. Paschal has more room and more cases to continuously critique social institutions and to leave cases unresolved beyond the earning of her reward. Complex and nuanced considerations of the criminals and the cases often reign strong in *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, and several of those cases resist a neat and orderly solution even more than the case of *The Woman in White*. In both cases, though, order remains ultimately subverted, with there being seemingly no way to fully restore it, and most importantly if it could be restored, it would not be done by the subversive women who have an investment in the solutions of the cases but who stand too far outside the heteropatriarchal order themselves to enforce any kind of traditional order.

Chapter 2: Masculinity in Moderation: The Troubled Gender and Sexuality of *Dorian Gray* and Sherlock Holmes

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) is in many ways the ultimate work of Victorian aestheticism. The novel's vividly synesthetic descriptions, portrayals of art and artistry, and portrayals of the pursuit of sensation all have direct ties to the movement's other works and its doctrine. As such, studying *Dorian Gray* becomes the perfect opportunity to study the language of the aesthetic movement and how it functions. Through this study, this novel can also be used as a lens to view the ways in which other texts or characters may be described in the language and ideologies of British aestheticism. One character and particular work which benefit from such a study are Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*. Like the characters of *Dorian Gray*, Holmes is described as often languid and dreamy, subject to fits of ennui, an appreciator of music and the arts - and is also arguably in constant pursuit of sensation. As I will demonstrate, within both Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* and other Sherlock Holmes stories, similar styles of language and narrative treatment are used to encode characters as aesthetes or otherwise influenced by Victorian aestheticism, and this aesthetic language also serves to code those characters as othered and as queer.

Though it may seem a reach, initially, to compare the logical detective with the language and contexts of *Dorian Gray*, the two were created within the very same cultural context. In 1889, Joseph Marshall Stoddard of *Lippincott's* invited Doyle and Wilde to dinner in order to commission them both to write something for the magazine (Kerr 14), and *The Sign of Four* and the 1890 edition of *Dorian Gray* were the results of that dinner,

meaning the two works were written almost perfectly contemporaneously, being published only months apart. This places the stories within a unique connection to each other, and makes it entirely reasonable to examine the two works together. Both novels do similar work against the period's metaphors and portrayals of appropriate Victorian masculinity, as both portray characters who exhibit a type of effeminacy or inadequate masculinity. Failures of appropriate masculinity were also becoming tied to sexual deviance at this time, as I will demonstrate, and the implicit sexual deviance or desire within the 1890 version of *Dorian Gray* can help to articulate that clearly, though it is also blatantly present in *The Sign of Four*.

In order to establish how aestheticism was coded within the period as a form of inadequate masculinity, it must first be clear how masculinity was understood and encoded within the period. In *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature*, Andrew Dowling argues that "The hegemonic truth about manliness in the nineteenth century was established through metaphors of control, reserve, and discipline, that were placed in opposition to images of chaos, excess, and disorder" (13). Dowling also engages with other critical studies of Victorian masculinity to reinforce the idea that discipline was the particularly critical metaphor here. These ideas of control versus chaos, of reserve versus excess, of discipline versus disorder, all of these dichotomies serve to succinctly sum up what was so troubling about the masculinity often portrayed or enacted within the aesthetic movement, at least within the eyes of the dominant discourses of Victorian society. Decadence and excess would become explicitly tied to queerness and effeminacy during Wilde's 1895 trial for gross indecency due to Wilde's association with these ideals. However, *Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four* were written well before the trials. To consider the transgressive masculinity within the text itself and within the already existing

associations of the aesthetic movement before the trials is to consider how an effeminacy and transgressive sexuality are at play as a core part of the criticisms of aestheticism even before that association was cemented in 1895. These early criticisms may have even served to help construct these ideas that would later become so reinforced by the trials. This is key in examining what many readers at the time might have considered the associations of the characteristics attributed both to the characters within *Dorian Gray* and to Holmes.

Some of the central figures of the Victorian aesthetic movement were specifically critiqued for their apparent transgressions of gender norms. In “Victorian Effeminacies,” Thais Morgan examines Robert Buchanan’s *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, which critiques the poetry produced by Pre-Raphaelite aesthetes, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Charles Algernon Swinburne, as “effeminacy” (qtd. in Morgan 109). Morgan acknowledges that, in part, “effeminacy” is read as a sexually dissident term because of modern connotations of homosexuality attached to it, and that this particular explicit connotation began to form only after the Wilde trials - but Morgan also argues that the so-called effeminacy of the aesthetic movement did in fact lend itself to a sexually dissident association, even in this use from the 1870s (109). As she states in her essay, concepts of gender and masculinity and gender transgression were at that time undergoing a critical shift - in part due to such circumstances as the Boulton and Park scandal in 1870 and 1871. Boulton and Park, better known as Fanny and Stella, were two female impersonators (identified as men by those trying them) who were arrested on the charge of conspiracy to commit sodomy after they were seen entering a private box at the theater with two men. It was through incidents like this scandal that cross-dressing and other deliberate appropriations or uses of effeminacy by those considered to be men were becoming associated with sodomy. These circumstances would have been fresh on

Buchanan's mind when writing his criticisms around the same time, so it is clear that charges of effeminacy were becoming dangerous. Morgan writes "when [Buchanan] accuses the Fleshly poets... of effeminacy, he means that they blur boundaries of gender crucial to the maintenance of things as they have been for a long time" (117). As demonstrated by the particular charges leveled against Boulton and Park, gender transgressions were already becoming linked in the minds of many in the Victorian public with sexual transgressions, particularly with regards to men and male homoeroticism. Therefore, the ideas that were being circulated about aesthetic poetry and aesthetes being transgressive within gender could easily translate to ideas of sexual deviance as well.

Walter Pater was another member of the aesthetic movement who became tied to these shifting categories of gender and sexual deviance and effeminacy. He was prominent in part because he coined the idea of the end product of art was not as important as "experience itself" as an end (Adams 212). The idea that what mattered was not any moral to be found but merely the experience to be had in viewing or creating art was at the heart of this idea - art for its own sake, and the sake of sensation. Pater also discussed in his "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* the effect of sensations and impressions and how one could lose oneself in such a sensual impression (qtd. in Adams 196). These ideas were a foundation part of the aesthetic movement, and would also go on to influence Wilde and *Dorian Gray*. Morgan discusses Pater's method of appropriating the criticisms of effeminacy in representations of men in painting, specifically used against Simeon Solomon's *Bacchus* (1867), and instead viewing those qualities criticized as effeminate as his own definition of "perfect masculinity" (118). In spite of Pater's restructuring of these ideas of effeminacy, though, and in spite of how that may have shifted ideas of effeminacy within certain circles, it becomes clear that

Pater was associated with a professed appreciation for male beauty within painting. Pater is also characterized as a troubling figure of gender and sexuality due to his being parodied as an effeminate aesthetic character in W.H. Mallock's *New Republic*, as discussed by Linda Dowling. In *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, Dowling examines Mr. Rose, the character she argues is based on Pater, as one in a line of well-known effeminate parodies of aesthetic men, and discusses the character's effeminacy, as well as his connections with pederasty and an interest in younger men (108). In this way, though the 1877 publication of *New Republic*, Pater becomes another early link between gender deviance and homoeroticism or sexual deviance through this parody character. People could have recognized this character as an embodiment of Pater at the time, as Dowling argues in pointing out their similarities in appearance, knowledge, and demeanor (107).

The Picture Dorian Gray could not have influenced *The Sign of Four* in the way the aesthetes would have influenced both novels because they were so contemporaneous. However, *Dorian Gray*'s links between aestheticism and sexual deviance can demonstrate aestheticism's implications for gender and sexual deviance in the context of sensational fiction. *Dorian Gray* begins as a novel of an artist, Basil Hallward, and his friend and muse Dorian Gray. The novel opens as Basil is painting Dorian and Lord Henry Wotton pays Basil a visit and meets Dorian while he is there. This scene is also notable because it is an immediate indication of the novel's aesthetic nature. It begins:

The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn. From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was

his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. (1)

This passage is a clear example of the lavish description that marks the novel, but it is also a clear indication of the Orientalism that marked aestheticism both in the “Persian saddle-bags” and Lord Henry’s thoughts of Japanese art. Once Dorian is introduced to Basil’s friend Lord Henry, Lord Henry decides to exercise his power of influence over Dorian and Dorian begins a journey of aesthetic sensation which spirals out of control when he realizes the portrait Basil has painted of him allows him to live as roughly as he wants without any visible consequences on his body. Basil Hallward’s clear aesthetic nature as an artist is linked to his appreciation for male beauty and his attraction to Dorian, and Dorian’s unspeakable crimes are implicitly sexually deviant and homoerotic. Dorian’s crimes are also tied to his pursuit of sensuality and sensation above all else. The fact that both of them find death to be their ultimate fate also speaks to the transgressive nature of their actions and how such transgressions had to be punished within a novel of the period.

Before delving into Basil’s explicit transgression, it is significant to note that he is the most clearly designated aesthete within the novel. His career as a painter contributes to this aesthetic nature. All of the aesthetes who were most commonly named and known within the

Victorian period were artists themselves, whether painters, or writers, or both in some fashion – Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Pater, and Swinburne, for example. Basil becomes a particularly fascinating figure because Dorian becomes his muse for his paintings and improves the very state of his work, infiltrating his every painting, in a way that women often did for painters like Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Basil sets Dorian up as a male art object, and paints him as a variety of different figures from different time periods, even telling Sir Henry of a landscape he painted, “It is one of the best things I have ever done. And why is it so? Because, while I was painting it, Dorian Gray sat beside me” (Wilde 84). He does finally paint Dorian as himself, but in many ways, this is a part of what leads to his own horrible fate, and is a part of his own excessive adoration for Dorian which moves well beyond artistic appreciation.

It is this excessive appreciation for Dorian which becomes embodied as sexually transgressive but is still inherently tied to Basil’s artistry and aestheticism. While Basil’s speeches on his magnetic attraction to Dorian remain fairly similar in both the 1890 edition published in Lippincott’s and the significant revision which was published one year later, the transgressive nature of his desires are much clearer in the original 1890 version. In lines that were cut from the revised version of the story, Basil says of his attraction to Dorian, “It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend. Somehow, I had never loved a woman. I suppose I never had time... I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly... It was all wrong and foolish. It is all wrong and foolish still” (Wilde 172). Basil acknowledges in these lines that his own interest in Dorian is not purely friendly, connects it explicitly to love of a woman, and also recognizes that there is something wrong and troubling about these feelings. He is aware that

they are excessive, and therefore opposed to masculinity as it is meant to be enacted, and opposed to every idea of moderation that circulated within the Victorian period. This excess was also commonly associated with the aesthetic period at large, through an excess of sensual information and description and appreciation of art and sensation. As a result, these concepts all become inextricably intertwined as Basil's adoration for Dorian stems from an artistic appreciation and becomes this transgressive desire that is at once both opposed to Victorian masculinity's discipline and explicitly deviant and queer in terms of sexuality.

Dorian becomes marked as an aesthete through characteristics and ideologies very different from the ones that mark Basil's aestheticism. He does not participate in making art himself, but instead cultivates a fine appreciation of art and of anything that can provide him with sensations. As the narrator writes of Dorian at the beginning of this journey of his, "He sought to elaborate some new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles and find in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization" (Wilde 192). He plans to dedicate himself to "the worship of the senses" (Wilde 192) and hoped to find in it something that other men had avoided in denial. This is clearly related to Walter Pater's concepts of sensation, as earlier discussed, but it seems to be taking such an idea to its furthest possible depths. Instead of simply judging art based on its impressions, Dorian makes life into one impression followed by another - posturing him as one of the most feared effects of Pater's ideas. This type of Paterian aestheticism was already coded as gender transgressive and worryingly interested in masculine beauty. As such, to have Dorian become so clearly influenced by its ideas and then to go on to clearly become involved with men in clearly homoerotic ways speaks to, at least within the world of *Dorian Gray* and the cultural

context of its creation, the potential for all this to become explicitly sexually transgressive beyond just the implications of gender transgression within the period.

Aside from the tenets of Paterian aestheticism, Dorian's life is also modeled on the "poisonous book" he is given by Lord Henry, a book which many have argued may be J.K. Huysmans' *A Rebours* (Waldrep 108). Shelton Waldrep summarizes Huysmans' book by writing, "In *A Rebours*, Huysmans' decadent hero, the in-bred bi-sexual Des Esseintes... systemically samples 'perversions' in an effort to overcome one of the biggest cases of ennui ever produced by literature" (106). This summary could just as easily apply to Dorian's own system of experiencing whatever he pleasures and sensations he can find. The experiences he chooses to engage with vary widely, from his specially made liquor cabinet which he refers to as his mouth organ because he has compared all of the liquors with instruments and can stop or start their flow with the press of a button (Huysmans 67), to the incident where he has a tortoise encrusted with jewels so it may be more beautiful and the weight of the jewels result in the tortoise's death (Huysmans 61, 74). Des Esseintes embodies this same kind of Paterian possibility that Dorian does, and that people feared so deeply. Des Esseintes, also like Dorian, is ultimately unconcerned with any unpleasant effects his experiences may have upon others. It is easy to see the influence of this novel upon Dorian, and it is also easy to see how Huysmans' novel embodies and vividly and explicitly describes decadence even beyond the heights of *Dorian Gray*.

Many of these same basic codifiers of aestheticism also apply to Sherlock Holmes as a character. Much like Basil, Holmes is an artist, but his preferred medium is music instead of painting. From *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes story, Watson makes much of Holmes' skills with the violin: "These were very remarkable... That he could play pieces, and difficult

pieces, I knew well, because at my request he has played me some of Mendelssohn's Lieder, and other favourites" (Doyle 3: 35). Holmes also demonstrates a deep appreciation for music. His attendances at concerts through the novels and stories are well-recorded, but it is Watson's description in "The Red-Headed League" which makes it clear precisely how deeply involved in listening to music Holmes becomes. He writes:

All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long, thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid, dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. (Doyle 1: 61-2)

These descriptions of Holmes' languid posture and appearance demonstrate the contrasting aspects of Holmes' personality, as well as what he has in common with the aesthetes of *Dorian Gray*. While Holmes' ability as a musician allies him with artisanship and therefore with Basil, this basking in the sensuality provided by music is very reminiscent of Dorian. Dorian's devotion to music manifests itself in part through the collection of rare and unusual instruments, but also in part through the fact that he "would sit in his box at the Opera, either alone, or with Lord Henry, listening in rapt pleasure to 'Tannhäuser'" (Wilde 196). The music holds one who can appreciate it properly in full attention, and Dorian and Holmes both demonstrate a sort of sensual abandonment to the arts that they develop an appreciation for.

There are a variety of other types of art appreciation that Holmes participates in as well, from fashion to the fascination with the East to painting and literature. Paul Barolsky discusses many of these facets of Holmes' identifiable aestheticism in "The Case of the Domesticated Aesthete." He refers to Holmes' fine dress, his possession and display of fine

objects, his interests in art exhibits throughout the stories, and his ability to reference literature from Shakespeare to Meredith and Flaubert (Barolsky, “The Domesticated Aesthete”). Even aside from the examples of music and the examples provided by Barolsky, there are other subtle references that could be seen to tie Holmes to aestheticism. His common wearing of dressing gowns of at least three different colors (Klinger 1: 184), for example, as though he has one to suit each mood, just as Dorian had multiple copies of his yellow book, most likely *A Reboours*, upholstered in different colors, so he could read each one depending upon his state of mind (Wilde 187). There is also the matter of Holmes keeping his tobacco in a Persian slipper (Doyle 1: 528). This demonstrates a clear sense of Holmes’ keeping of artifacts of the East, and using them in ways he will be sure to display them to any visitors as he offers them tobacco. As Barolsky notes and as Dorian Gray demonstrates throughout its text, an admiration for all things Eastern was common among the aesthetes.

Though these identifiers of Holmes’ aestheticism are spread throughout the four novels and fifty-six short stories, Holmes is particularly and unapologetically aesthetic and transgressive in *The Sign of Four*. When Doyle was commissioned to write the novel for *Lippincott’s*, he was not planning to write another Holmes story, but instead decided to write the more popular Holmes short stories for the Strand only upon realizing that a serial story would make him more money than a single volume (Kerr 13). The novel, *The Sign of Four*, would at the time be the continuation of *A Study in Scarlet*, and the end of Holmes’s story. One aspect of Holmes’ personality that was completely absent from *A Study in Scarlet* but is a very prominent feature in *The Sign of Four* is his use of cocaine while he is not working a case. Holmes himself argues that it is only upon proper mental stimulation that he can

“dispense... with artificial stimulants,” and he goes on to say “I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation” (Doyle 3: 217). As Barolsky notes:

Watson often pictures for us the ‘languid, lounging figure’ of Holmes, ensconced in his ‘snug’ quarters, seeking like all the distinguished aesthetes of his century—like Des Esseintes and Dorian Gray, like Poe, Baudelaire, Swinburne, and Pater—to escape from the ‘commonplace,’ to free himself from what Baudelaire denominates ‘les noirs ennuis’” (“The Case of the Domesticated Aesthete”)

This is a common thread in *The Sign of Four* in the representations of drug use - it is an escape from Holmes’ experience of ennui. He pursues the sensual pleasures and stimulation of cocaine just as Dorian seems to pursue all sensual pleasure: to escape any sense of dullness. His cases are also a sort of stimulation to avoid this sensation, but in the absence of his work, he must settle for the chemical equivalent.

Beyond this aesthetic use of drugs to escape ennui, there are other coded and implicit non-normative complexities within Holmes’ cocaine use. Eve Sedgwick notes in her *Epistemology of the Closet* that “The ‘decadence’ of drug addiction, in these late nineteenth-century texts, intersects with two kinds of bodily definition, each itself suffused with the homo/heterosexual problematic. The first of these is the national economic body; the second is the medical body” (173). While her discussion focuses more on opium, Holmes’ use of cocaine still reads as self-indulgence or decadence in a way that completely opposes the self-control of traditional Victorian masculinity. His use is also at the axis of these two situations, as Joseph McLaughlin examines more closely in *Writing the Urban Jungle*. McLaughlin analyzes the first scene of drug use in *The Sign of Four* in the context of the colonial implications of cocaine as “South American cocaine” and the medical implications of having

Watson, as a physician, there to object to Holmes' use (54). He writes that "Watson's recollection of his doubled presence at this ritual, as doctor and chronicler, reflects an intense confusion about the erotics surrounding the growing intercourse between Britain and its colonial others" (54). Much as the association with the East and an interest in Eastern objects serves as a part of the othering of the aesthete, for McLaughlin, Holmes' use of foreign and indulgent drugs work both to align him with aesthetic decadence and with the colonial other at the same time. Even though his indulgence is arguably harmful to his physical health, it serves his mental state and therefore he sees it as justified. McLaughlin's discussion of erotics remains intriguing, however, as he writes that the description of Holmes' injection of cocaine is "clear masturbatory imagery," (54) but also reminds the reader that Watson is present. Though Watson protests to the scene and refuses the use of cocaine, the inclusion of Watson in Holmes' closest alignment with the erotic seems to speak to Holmes' sexual deviance, to tie it through his indulgence to his inappropriate masculinity, and to signal the aestheticism already present in the drug use as a method of escaping ennui. Again, all of the categories are only further interwoven by the literature they appear in, becoming more and more difficult to untangle as individual categories of othering or queerness.

Holmes participates in another more explicit troubling of sexuality through his professed disinterest in romance, and specifically romance with women. There are two specific moments in which these manifests. One is near the beginning of *The Sign of Four*, when Watson is observing how attractive their female visitor, Mary Morstan, was, and Watson records Holmes' response in saying "He had lit his pipe again and was leaning back with drooping eyelids. 'Is she?' he said languidly; 'I did not observe'" (Doyle 3: 235). The obligation to note women's appearances seems to be a part of the commonplace existence

that Holmes finds boring and longs to escape, as the signifiers of his ennui set in as Watson expects him to agree that Mary was attractive. These ideas are further cemented later on when Watson becomes engaged to Mary Morstan and Holmes states that he cannot congratulate Watson - which he explains further by saying “But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgement” (378). Though at first Holmes seems to be refusing all romance on principle, his statement becomes clearly gendered when he associates the love he speaks of with marriage. As he states it, he has no interest in marriage, and therefore no interest in love of women.

Both of these key moments of Holmes’ clear refusal to participate in romantic expectations are moments in which he declares a clear transgression of sexual expectation, but also moments in which he seems almost above sexuality, as though he has taken a vow of celibacy in respect to his work instead of in respect to God. As Herbert Sussman writes in *Victorian Masculinities*, Pater’s work on monastic Christianity opens a discussion on celibacy as a repression of male homoerotic desire that also thus intensifies it (176). This type of all-male circle reminiscent of monastic groups can also be seen and demonstrated in the circle of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a key aesthetic organization. The brotherhood was not only a fraternity in name. The all-male nature of the circle did not make it inherently homoerotic, it does mean that it is by definition homosocial. The brotherhood deliberately excluded women to pursue their art. There were women associated with the circle, and some of the men of the brotherhood married or otherwise associated with those women, but again the reference to brotherhood speaks of this implied removal from women that Holmes openly professes and Pater analyzes as a key link between the homosocial and the repressed

homoerotic. For Holmes and for Pater, this repression demonstrates a clear sense of control, which could be coded as masculine. However, when linked with Pater's other associations, this one category in which Holmes could be seen as staunchly masculine also becomes troubled by the potential repression of homoerotic desires. Holmes' words in his refusal of romance with women also seem to hearken back to Basil Hallward's claim that somehow he had never loved a woman - particularly Holmes' bored insistence he did not notice Mary Morstan's attractiveness. This casual denial of romance with women ties the two characters together again, even further beyond their similar titles as artist.

Holmes is not merely an artist in music, as he also considers his investigations of crime and crime itself as an art. He denies love out of respect to his art, then, and becomes even more clear as an artist of crime and crime investigation than he is of music or other forms. It is in "The Greek Interpreter" specifically that Holmes argues that his aptitude for deduction is not due to any kind of scientific or scholarly training, but instead due to the fact that his grandmother was related to an artist, and that the explanation for his abilities is simply that "Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest of forms" (Doyle 1: 638). In *International Bohemia*, Daniel Cottom addresses this idea of Holmes as an aesthete with crime and crime-solving as his preferred method of artistic expression. He references in particular one occasion from "The Adventure of the Red Circle" in which Watson questions Holmes as to why they should continue on a case in which there may be nothing to gain, and Holmes replies that "It is Art for Art's sake" (Doyle 2: 1284). Cottom also discusses an example from *The Sign of Four*, in which Holmes critiques Watson's recording of their first case in *A Study in Scarlet*, arguing that Watson's portrayal of the case was overly romantic and should have focused more upon the facts of the cases (Doyle 3: 217). Cottom argues that

“The obvious irony here is that Holmes, in identifying himself with science, still shows himself to be more of an artist than does Watson, the writer” (254). Holmes’ art is his science, and his science is his art, as the two become intertwined due to his aesthetic sensibilities in everything he does. His close attention to the sensory details of every aspect of his environment allow him to demonstrate an aesthetic appreciation for the beauty of nature, such as when he pauses in *The Sign of Four* to declare to Watson, “See how that one little cloud floats like a pink feather from some gigantic flamingo” (Doyle 3: 293). These very same sensory skills are also what give him his skills as a detective, making him able to spot every detail of the beautiful or of the grotesque.

This tie between crime and the aesthetic is not only present in the Holmes stories, though, as Dorian Gray becomes involved in blackmail and even in murder. Paul Sheehan opens his discussion of the links between aestheticism and crime in “A Malady Of Dreaming” by referring to a quote from Dorian Gray: “Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful” (Wilde 210). This quote demonstrates how, for Dorian, his criminality becomes a continuing pursuit of sensation and the artistic. Sheehan argues that in many ways the artist and the criminal are linked in their anti-normativity, meaning that societal policing to enforce normativity limits both groups. He also argues that Wilde is interested in crime, but particularly the artistic forms of crime, saying in relation to Wilde’s views that:

Crime, as a social reality, is so evident that it disappears into the folds of everyday life, becomes a nondescript part of the scenery. But at the same time, criminal activity connotes a departure from the everyday, and to understand the real nature

of this break, and its role in the cultural imaginary, requires an artist's insight and sensitivity. (Sheehan 338)

This idea that crime requires an artist's understanding is relevant to Dorian's ability in crime to commit murder so perfectly that no one can suspect him, but also is clearly relevant to Holmes' ability as a detective. It would take a detective with an ability to recognize and appreciate the artistic nature of a crime in order to fully unravel the thread of the act and its purpose.

Sheehan's idea of crime as non-normative, particularly when related to ideas of laws put in place to police the non-normative, seems particularly important to apply to Holmes and his pursuit of crime. Even in *The Sign of Four*, where there are clear perpetrators of the crime of murder, there is a story behind the crime in which colonialism and imperialism played into a long-ago theft. A group of four men, with three of those men being Indian, told British soldiers of a treasure and one of the soldiers took the opportunity to steal the treasure and escape from the others without giving them their shares. The murder perpetrated was, in part, a revenge for this initial crime, and as such the waters of the supposedly clear-cut justice are made murky. Leslie Haynsworth argues in her essay "All the Detective's Men" that these abstract or morally complex crimes serve to break down binaries all throughout the canon, and she perhaps puts it best when she states:

Behaviors that resonate as deviant or dangerous according to one code of conduct are discovered to be normative according to--if not positively encouraged by--another, with the result that, even when a suspect is found to have committed a crime, Holmes will sometimes deem his behavior excusable and determine that remanding him over for punishment would be unjust. In this respect, the Holmes

stories evince a kind of fluid moral relativism that, far from encouraging readerly complicity with the disciplinary mechanisms of the dominant social order, invites interrogation of these mechanisms and calls attention to troubling inconsistencies in the codes of conduct different kinds of English men (and women) are encouraged to follow. (“All the Detective’s Men”)

Holmes’ approach to crime, then, as well as his interest in it as an art form, serve to tie him to the anti-normative and to continue to align him with the troubling of traditional masculinity, and in this case even the troubling of femininity. Just as Dorian’s crimes are linked to his sexual transgressions through his murder of Basil and his blackmail of Alan Campbell with evidence of a past homoerotic relationship, Holmes’ involvement in the world of criminality becomes an undeniable part of his othering. This allows him to stand against the policing of non-normativity in a way that suggests his own sympathies lie with the non-normative.

Dorian’s murder of Basil is not just part of his pursuit of sensation, though, and neither is Dorian’s own fate simply a punishment he suffers as a criminal, as both of them become punished within the narrative for all of their transgressive actions and behaviors. It is in part an interpretation of these fates as punishments that becomes evidence of Dorian and Basil’s transgressions. Both Dorian and Basil, the most clearly designated aesthetes in the novel, are dead by the end of even the original 1890 version. Lord Henry, though often argued to be an aesthetic character as well, remains mostly unpunished by the end of the novel. He seems to be protected by never having particularly believed in all the doctrines he espoused, even as he used them to influence Dorian and befriend Basil. It is also noteworthy that even though Dorian and Basil were actually punished within the novel, as according to the narrative scripts of the time, this did not satisfy all readers. The sexually transgressive

material of the novel was still noted by many within the period and presumably they did not find Basil and Dorian's deaths to be punishment enough. In "Dorian Gray and gross indecency," Joseph Bristow engages with a review of *Dorian Gray* from the period, published in response to the 1890 version, which made reference to the Cleveland Street Scandal, a prominent and well-known scandal of the period that took place at a brothel for men and male prostitutes (52). *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was also famously used as evidence at Wilde's 1895 trial for gross indecency, somehow being considered proof of his own sexual transgressions. In spite of these who did not find the ending satisfying, it is still likely that Basil and Dorian were given these punishments in an attempt to avoid scandal, even though the book still suffered this backlash.

Though it may not seem as such to modern perception, there were still subversive potentials in Dorian and Basil's fates within the time period. Kevin Kopelson's argument in *Love's Litany* hinges upon this very idea. His discussion of *Dorian Gray* examines a few potential readings of the deaths of Basil and Dorian, but the ones he finds most subversive are looking at the common conflation in the story of suicide and murder, as when Dorian tells Alan Campbell that Basil killed himself, and also the suicides of both Dorian and characters like Alan Campbell, to look at how masculine suicide was constructed in the time period (26, 41). Kopelson presents the idea that before *Dorian Gray*, suicide was seen as strictly feminine, and that the male suicides in *Dorian Gray* reclaim a sentimentality that men had not been allowed for some time due to the strict, traditional constructions of masculinity as control, opposed to the utter loss of control that suicide represents (41). In this way, although their deaths are a punishment for transgressions, Dorian's death and Basil's death become linked to and viewed as suicides in a way that still links even their deaths to transgressive

masculinity and effeminacy.

The ending of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* puts the stories of Dorian and Basil to rest permanently and sadly, *The Sign of Four* could be said to do the same with Holmes. If Doyle had not chosen to focus on Holmes again for his serialized stories in *The Strand*, the last glimpse of Sherlock Holmes could have been this novel, in which the ending situation makes rather clear the stakes of Holmes' troubled masculinity and its othering and queering implications. The final conversation between Watson and Holmes seems to summarize the situation rather succinctly:

“The division seems rather unfair,” I remarked. “You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit; pray what remains for you?”

“For me,” said Sherlock Holmes, “there still remains the cocaine-bottle.” And he stretched his long, white hand up for it. (Doyle 3: 379)

Though Holmes is not punished by death just yet, his punishment is apparent in his lack of reward. The less eccentric police inspector Jones receives the credit for solving the case, and Watson receives the very masculine and heterosexual reward of a wife, while Holmes is left to himself and his decadent indulgences, remarkable again for their estrangement from appropriate masculinity.

Holmes' story did not end there, of course, and neither did his transgressions against appropriate masculinity. As Dorian and Basil's fates were perhaps more complex than they may now seem, Holmes' potential fate at the end of *The Sign of Four* becomes complicated by all that comes after it. One fascinating perspective on this is Tom Bragg's, in “Becoming a ‘Mere Appendix.’” He argues that Doyle, after as early as *A Study in Scarlet*, began

attempting to salvage Holmes' masculinity, simplifying his character to make him less complex and transgressive, and ultimately ended up attempting to kill Holmes off in part because he was so complex to navigate (79). Of course, this attempt also failed as fan outrage and monetary motivations prompted Doyle to bring Holmes back to life until finally Holmes was allowed to retire peacefully in old age, to become a beekeeper. Holmes is still arguably ultimately alone and rather eccentric, but in spite of Doyle's many attempts, Holmes never received a punishment for his transgressions with any sort of finality. Also, in spite of Bragg's argument, many seem to perceive that Holmes' masculinity remains troubling throughout the Holmes stories, although there are a variety of methods for grappling with that concept. One strange example of a Sherlockian attempt to deal with this is C.A. Bradley and William A. S. Sarjeant's *Ms. Holmes of Baker Street*. In their book, Bradley and Sarjeant argue that because Holmes is so coded in opposition to traditional masculinity, he must have been a woman in actuality. While this is an extensive leap in logic, and much of their evidence is tenuous at best, what lies at the heart of their piece is the struggle to understand Holmes' non-normative masculinity, and to understand why Holmes' troubled masculinity has so often gone undiscussed. Unlike in the case of *Dorian Gray*, where Wilde's biography has led to a full examination of the non-normative possibilities of gender and sexuality in the novel, many have focused only on Holmes' rationality for years, leaving his aestheticism, artistry, and particularly the non-normative implications of that largely unexplored.

This contested nature of the aestheticism and othering within Holmes also allows in many ways for a closer examination of precisely what it is within the text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that makes the text so subversive in its gender roles and desires. By this comparison, studied together, *Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four* help to illuminate each

other and the complex nature of othering and queerness within the culture that surrounded their creation, revealing precisely how entangled sexual deviance and gender deviance already were within the period, and how all of this was tied closely to aestheticism and its many connections to non-Western and non-masculine behaviors. As aestheticism was coded as other, so did these types of othering help serve to construct the perceptions of aestheticism at the time, and how readers viewed both the aesthetes and any aesthetic characters they came across. Holmes' existence as an aesthete is also inextricably linked to his work as a detective, and when paired with the murky justice of *The Sign of Four*, this combination reveals that Holmes' position as queer and othered aligns him with the queer and the other in such a way that, although he is a brilliant detective, he cannot serve to maintain any kind of heteropatriarchal order.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have united four disparate texts on the basis that they may all be connected through a consideration of gender non-conformity and the effect this has on their genre as detective novels and novels of sensation. With an understanding of the genre conventions of crime and detective fiction in a work like *Bleak House*, it becomes clear just how gender non-conformity and its functions with *The Woman in White*, *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *The Sign of Four* can serve to destabilize order. The debate about the restoration of a conservative order as the triumph of “good” in detective novels may continue indefinitely, but considerations of gender and the othered nature of many key detective figures must serve to complicate that discussion. The unconventional arrangement at the ending of *The Woman in White*, Mrs. Paschal’s many unsettled cases, Holmes’ existence beyond *The Sign of Four* where he continues to push boundaries, and even the still subversive possibilities of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* all present caveats to the understanding that crime or sensation fictions placated their audiences with nice, orderly endings. With so many glaring exceptions, the standard which has often been considered a rule of the genre begins to fall apart. Time and again, the detectives, the figures who are meant to restore some semblance of order, have no place in that order or even a sense of that order, which makes it difficult for them to find a way to restore it. They may solve the case or some aspect of it, uncover knowledge or secrets, but they cannot reinforce systems of heterosexuality, domesticity, and patriarchy when aspects of their character force them to remain outsiders to those spheres.

It is true that these troubling characteristics and how they function to destabilize the common understanding of genre conventions varies across gender. Holmes, Dorian, and Basil's othering as aesthetes and as effeminate men does not take on precisely the same connotations as Mrs. Paschal and Marian being marked as masculine women in some capacity. However, the basic way that their gender non-conformity in particular informs their detective work or interactions with crime and their access to conservative order can be tied together to gain a more cohesive understanding of the troubled relationship of gender and genre across all of these texts. If these texts and these characters were reinforcing the conservative order of the Victorian period, as they are so often accused of doing, they would need to participate effectively in upholding the critical concepts of gender. Women would need to remain in the domestic sphere, men would need to maintain strict self-control and masculinity, clients and detectives alike would need to return to these fundamental roles. Instead, all four texts often trouble or critique some aspect of these roles, marriage itself, or other enabling institutions such as the church or the English government.

Mrs. Paschal and Marian as female detectives inherently exist outside of the domestic sphere in order to do their work, and their cases further complicate these basic distinctions. Mrs. Paschal often actively critiques marriage or looks into cases of failed or disrupted marriages, and Marian works to help free her half-sister Laura from her scheming husband Percival Glyde, even if she is not ultimately able to do so and their marriage ends through other means. Both women also have a close, homoerotic relationship with another woman and that relationship becomes an important part of the newly created or unsettled order in the end of their respective works. Holmes, Basil, and Dorian all fail to perform appropriate masculinity because they are marked as aesthetes, and the implications of their aestheticism

prevent any of them from being able to stand within the conservative order of Victorian gender and sexuality or from being able to force anyone else to participate in it. They also participate in queer-coded behaviors, explicit homoeroticism, or a denial of interest in women, all of which also allow them to stand in opposition to marriage and the dominant heteropatriarchal order. All of these characters, as outsiders, become completely aligned with the non-normative, and that sets them apart from institutions and their appropriate gendered roles in such a way that often leaves even the solutions of their cases unsettled in some way.

My project here has been a broad overview of some of these major figures and the implications of these ideas, but this detailed dissection of only these examples calls for more detailed work on the detective genre as a whole. Much of the current work, often written by enthusiasts of the genre rather than scholars, details the history of the genre's creation and some of its formative works while still leaving these foundational ideas about the basic values and themes of the genre unquestioned. Genre work, and detective fiction in particular, has a variety of aspects worth more intensive academic study, and it should not merely be looked on as the domain of enthusiasts or somehow less than serious academic texts. More work must be done on other non-conforming detectives and on the detectives who helped to set up this understanding of the detective as restorer-of-order alike. More work could also be done about detectives who solve the case to restore order and restrict chaos, and this work can serve the ongoing debate about the purpose of the detective. This work could also help interrogate how Marian, Mrs. Paschal, and Holmes do or do not serve that purpose by setting up and studying their obvious foils. Works done on other detective figures and how they may continue to thwart that image will expand the work I have only begun here in troubling the current understanding of the conventions of the genre.

I have also focused this project particularly on Victorian sensation and detective fiction because many of these texts are considered foundational to the genre in some way – Dickens’ *Bleak House*, as established, set up the police detective, and Stephen Knight writes in *Crime Fiction Since 1800*, “there is only one great detective,” referring to Holmes (55). Ian Ousby also once argued that Sherlock Holmes was “the most famous character in English literature” (3). Even *Dorian Gray*, although it is not a detective novel, is a sensation novel which could be seen to restore a kind of order through Dorian’s death – although that one moment and his comeuppance does not seem to counteract the entire text of the novel and everything else Dorian does and makes the reader aware of. These early works like *Revelations*, *The Woman in White*, *Dorian Gray*, *The Sign of Four*, or *Bleak House* could be the source for the ideas of the purpose of the detective story and novel, and I do think they have made their contributions, but there is also room to expand considerations of othered detectives and genre by looking forward to later works in detective and sensation fiction. The hypermasculine detectives of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett and their film portrayals by hypermasculine Hollywood stars like Humphrey Bogart may also be partly responsible for these ideas of the staunchly heteropatriarchal detective.¹ Tracing these ideas through a longer timeline of the detective story and novel could also be an extremely illuminating project, as it could even extend to touch on more modern lesbian detective fiction, such as the works of Val McDermid, Joan Drury, and Katherine V. Forrest, a topic scholars like Stephen Knight and Elizabeth English have already begun to engage with.

1. For more scholarship on Chandler, Hammett, and their respective film adaptations, see Marty Roth’s *Foul & Fair Play*, Philippa Gates’ *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film*, or Stephen Knight’s *Crime Fiction Since 1800*.

In spite of my own project's wide scope of four separate texts, there is clearly still no shortage of work that remains to be done and could be done to continue to grapple with these ideas. Within Victorian studies and without, detective fiction is often studied within a set of limited parameters which deserves to be brought into question. My own work opens some of these doors and begins to ask those questions, studying works which have often been neglected or taking stances which may be seen as unconventional. I hope that more scholars will begin to push at these same boundaries, and to push them further, because this question of detective fiction as the restoration of order and the disruption of that order has implications beyond the conventions of the detective genre. Instead, the idea that detective fiction works to restore order is often posited with the assumption that the audience desires that order. In bringing into question what the audience may enjoy of a non-conforming order, these questions of genre also allow for a discussion of what we perceive as order and what, therefore, qualifies as disorder. If detective fiction does often end in disorder and audiences have found satisfaction in that disorder, the assumptions of genre are troubled, but so are concepts of the dominant order and their ability to qualify for "normal."

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