Introduction

1. Early accounts of detective fictions’ origins by the likes of Dorothy Sayers and Howard Haycraft trace nearly a direct path from Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin tales to Arthur Conan Doyle’s stories in *The Strand*, and credit only a few nineteenth-century authors with contributions to the classical detective novel (e.g., Emile Gaboriau, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, with perhaps a nod to Eugène François Vidocq or James Fenimore Cooper). Recent correctives to this anticipatory, backward-projecting history of detective fiction propose a much vaster set of antecedents for the genre, generally adopting Alastair Fowler’s notion of “polygenesis” to establish a potentially diverse provenance for detective fiction in all manner of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century crime writings, as well as gothic and sensation fictions. This inclusive attitude emphasizes the messiness of genre formation. It is also militantly antiteleological. Furthermore, this approach invites new studies of mass culture (e.g., the role of serialized and dime-novel popular fictions’ contributions to the development of the detective figure) and encourages recognition of the early contributions of women authors. For early accounts of the genre’s origins, see Sayers and also Haycraft; a fine example of more inclusive tendencies is Sussez’s *Women Writers and Detectives in Nineteenth-Century Crime Fiction*.

Unfortunately, an inclusive stance risks granting some manner of membership or generic affiliation to representations of crime and mystery whose formal likeness to detective fiction is almost negligible, yielding an agglutinate genre origins that verges on the conceptually useless. The danger of this inclusive, less discriminating genealogy of crime fiction—and especially its concession to the smallest “family resemblance”—is that it can become too messy, and ceases to produces meaningful literary categories. And, perhaps counterintuitively, it mobilizes the relative “prestige” of detective fiction to confer legitimacy by association on a diverse set of texts whose historical relevance and social uses may be obscured rather than illuminated if scholarly work on detective fiction sup-
plies a critical agenda. This inadvertent colonization of texts under the auspices of the
detective genre paradoxically reinforces the notion that a broad array of popular or mass
fictions cannot be legitimate objects of study in their own right. This book undertakes
what I believe is a more productive approach: to acknowledge the far-reaching signifi-
cance of detective fiction and various devices for U.S. literary production in the nine-
teenth century without indiscriminately insisting that texts that bear some resemblance
to the genre ought to be classified as detective fictions. Nevertheless, we might study
such peripheral or outsider texts to better grasp the origins of detective fiction’s devices.

2. Charles Rzepka designates this activity “analeptic invention”: “Detection demands
that we cast backwards as many different threads as possible, and try to hang all revealed,
as well as all metonymically conceivable, events on each of them, simultaneously” (De-
tective Fiction 28). These “arrays” of possible events are pared to a single “master array,”
which represents the story of the crime.

3. For a detailed inventory and discussion of narrative conventions associated with
detective fiction, see Pyrhönen, Murder from an Academic Angle. Sayers compares differ-
ent approaches to focalization in her introduction to “The Omnibus of Crime.” Donna
Bennett describes distraction, fragmentation, and narrative ambiguity in detective fic-
tion.

4. In The Production of Difference, Roediger and Esch emphasize their indebtedness
to Lisa Lowe’s Immigrant Acts, which “insists both on the centrality of class and on the
necessity of transcending any tendency within Marxism to isolate analyses of work from
the specifically racialized bodies and histories of those performing it” (Roediger and
Esch 8). In this same vein, Dreams for Dead Bodies attempts to avoid representing race
and class as discrete (rather than entangled and, in certain cases, mutually constitutive)
social phenomena.

5. I am not unilaterally differentiating the literary texts examined in this study from
works that participate in what Philip Fisher has called the “freezing into place of a situ-
ation of hard and irrevocable fact” (25). However, if nineteenth-century American lit-
erature had the power to fundamentally alter habits of moral perceptions, to generate
space in which “the unimaginable becomes, finally, the obvious” (8), I do think that the
self-referential quality of these fictions frequently engenders something akin to distan-
tiation, unsettling or even revoking the very ground upon which all facts are anchored.

6. I also use the term “interracial” to modify “detective fiction” because the genre is,
in its unmodified state, implicitly the property of whites, a presumption this study con-
tests. This assumption is evident, for instance, in the frequency with which historians of
the genre interpret the emergence of a variety of “ethnic” detective fictions in the United
States as part of a liberal project: nonwhite authors’ pursuit of the public sphere via the
“appropriation” or revision of an ideologically “white” genre. Not only does this discount
the markers of ethnic and racial difference in which, I argue, the earliest instances of
detective fiction are interested and even invested, but it obscures that the mechanisms
of the genre have long been implemented by black and white authors alike—as well
as authors who were neither black nor white. Moreover, the commonplace that detective fiction is “white” solidifies assumptions about whites’ presumed purview over the rational and the ratiocinative—a less than sensible move that nevertheless leads critics to cry “false consciousness” when discussing those “ethnic” detectives who do not invent alternative methods for solving mysteries (e.g., a “black” style of detection).

7. Sharon Patricia Holland has insightfully critiqued this reflexive shift from “race and racism” to “racisms” in literary criticism, cautioning us that no perfunctory reallocation of critical attention will engender the multiracial literary criticism it is designed to inaugurate (Erotic 7). Rather, Holland points out that, “In calls to abandon the black/white dichotomy for more expansive readings of racism’s spectacular effects, critics often ignore the psychic life of racism” (7). She advises literary critics that “to rethink slavery among us is to take seriously the ways in which its logic of property, belonging, and family reshaped each and every one of those concepts irrevocably, as well as the lives of the subjects—black, white, native, Hispanic—who lived within this discursive logic” (31).

8. Leaning upon Foucault’s Discipline and Punish, most historicizing studies of crime and detective fiction in both British and American contexts have linked literary and generic developments as well as the content of detective fictions to developments within the realm of law enforcement, including courtroom reforms in the late eighteenth century, “real time” reports of crime in newspapers, and the professionalization of police and legal professions. D. A. Miller’s The Novel and The Police argues that while a mediocre, ineffectual police force is sequestered at the edges of the plot in the nineteenth-century novel, an omniscient narrative style is its ancillary agent. Assigned to the “place of the police in places where the police cannot be,” this narrative surveillance is accomplished with the utmost “discretion” (Miller 15–16). The detective would eventually become the supreme envoy of this apparatus of surveillance and a representative of the “pure architectural and optical system” that guaranteed the intelligibility of the social order (Foucault 205). This attention to the detective figure culminates in Ronald Thomas’s masterful Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science, which argues that detective fictions materialized as a response to new forensic technologies, and that the detective emerged as the ambassador of “a specialized body of scientific knowledge” that promised to provide narrative order and give meaning and substance to semiotic non-sense and supervise society in its transition from “romantic-autonomous individual” to “the alienated bourgeois agent of the state” (11). More than textual space for the exhibition of new forensic devices, the detective figure it created was independently a device of truth; he introduced a new literacy with forensic approaches that “enable the body to function both as text and as politics” and “often prove to have a political genealogy that becomes inflected into the act of analysis the detective practices and promulgates” (3). See also Haltunnen, Worthington.

An alternate approach to historicizing the detective genre is exemplified by Sean McCarthy’s Gumshoe America, which succinctly links the origins of and decisive renovations to the genre to moments of political crisis, illuminating how the classic detective formula
dramatizes the central tensions related to classical liberalism, rehearsing the “political myth” of classical liberalism: that “spontaneously created order was nothing more than the combined action of every rationally self-interested member of the community” (7).

9. Those summary executions ascribed to La Térrreur began when les enragés—those revolutionaries who found themselves to the left even of the Jacobins—demanded a low fixed price for bread (du pain—a pun revisited in “The Purloined Letter” when Dupin closes a letter of revenge to Minister D. with a seal wrought from a crust). The mythical hoax of Laverna, goddess of thieves, was devised to pocket the grain of two villages. Kopley’s Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries and DeLombard’s In the Shadow of the Gallows track down very different historical sources for Poe’s plentiful beheadings, which I engage in chapter 2.

10. “The Gold Bug” was simultaneously printed in the Philadelphia Saturday Courier on June 24, July 1, and July 8, 1843, very likely with the publishers’ permission, since they had taken out a copyright on Poe’s text. Moreover, this particular text, which appears as the first story in Poe’s collected Tales (1845), would be reprinted repeatedly (regardless of copyright) at home, abroad, and in translation during Poe’s own lifetime. See Tales and Sketches 805–6.


12. Poe’s narrator reports that Wolf’s “uneasiness, in the first instance, had been, evidently, but the result of playfulness or caprice, but he now assumed a bitter and serious tone” (213)—an interpretive shift that strains all credulity. Is this equivocation proof of the narrator’s pure guilelessness or a spectacular deadpan?

13. Rachel Howells receives far less attention in Brooks’s interpretation of “The Musgrave Ritual” than she does in Doyle’s text, though Holmes alone attempts to “reconstruct this midnight drama” that ended Brunton’s life: “Was it a chance that the wood had slipped and that the stone had shut Brunton into what had become his sepulchre? Had she only been guilty of silence as to his fate? Or had some sudden blow from her hand dashed the support away and sent the slab crashing down into its place?” (621). Following Poe, Doyle preserves a certain ambiguity in the final lines, though he softens the blow: “Of the woman nothing was ever heard, and the probability is that she got away out of England and carried herself and the memory of her crime to some land beyond the seas” (623).

14. I am referring here to Slavoj Žižek’s discussion of the objet petit a of Lacanian
discourse: the desire that paradoxically “posits retroactively its own cause,” that non-existent object which “assumes clear and distinctive features only if we look at it ‘at an angle,’ i.e., with an ‘interested’ view, supported, permeated, and ‘distorted’ by desire” (Looking Awry 12). Along these lines, the Poe presented here is Doyle’s most passionate invention.

15. With Brunton disposed of, Rachel Howells (whose biblical equivalent is “the lamb”) disappears entirely—an expurgation that bears out Sean McCann’s contention that though its characters are generally “driven by heedless self-interest or primal urges,” classical detective fiction manages to “reverse that image by banishing a pair of scapegoats (murderer and victim) who embody the worst of those evils” (8).

16. Other ways of imagining this “anomalous” relation: a blood brotherhood procured by pricked palms clasped together and consecrated with spit; Dorian Gray’s likeness (Oscar Wilde’s Portrait and Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Sign of the Four both cognates, of course, commissioned by John Marshall Stoddard for the English Lippincott’s over a luncheon at the Langham Hotel in 1889); a child with a caul; or Lewis Carroll’s looking glass world.

17. Indeed, Peter Thoms contends that in nineteenth-century predecessors to classical detective fiction, “the very form that emphasizes the piecing of narrative pattern also incorporates a contradictory impulse that subverts that story making process” (145). There is an internal engine of self-critique by which the books “register discomfort” with the “pleasures of detective fiction” (145).

18. The merging of “creative and resolvent” in the detective-figure traces back to Poe’s Dupin. Maurizio Ascari rejects any binary opposition between supernatural revelation and scientific detection; instead, Ascari claims, it is “in the interstices of these dimensions that the appeal of much contemporary crime fiction still resides” (13).

19. Perhaps surprisingly, classical detective fiction has existed in uneasy relation to literary modernism. In “The Professor and the Detective” Marjorie Nicholson designated the clue-puzzle a sanctuary from literary modernism, not because it retained the style and social function of an earlier literary culture, but precisely because it transported the reader to a realm free of introspection and psychology, to a cosmos contained by cause and effect. Michael Holquist also positions classical detective fiction in opposition to “the high art of the novel with its bias toward myth and depth psychology” (162–64). By acknowledging its formal concerns (for instance, its tendency to disclose the constructedness of identity), Stephen Knight draws a more nuanced conclusion, situating the clue-puzzle as “modernist to some degree but also inherently humanist” (90). From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, the rift between detective and “literary” fiction is “often predicated on attempts to construct both detective fiction and modernism in opposition to the postmodern and what is often called ‘anti-detective fiction’ and invariably rely on partial, limited definitions of what constitutes literary modernism in the first place” (Marcus 252–53).
Chapter 1

1. The genealogy of these works has been a matter for massive speculation, as Twain biographer Albert Bigelow Paine merged the three texts for publication, leading half a century’s worth of critics to gauge the temperament of Twain’s final years from the happy ending Paine slapped on to the first of the three manuscripts, *The Chronicle of Young Satan*.

2. Hilton Obenzinger observes that No. 44 could easily pass for Satan; he also resembles Jesus, the enfant terrible of the apocryphal “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” which is said to have interested Twain, and he is undeniably a “carnival hybrid of cultural contact, one that absorbs characteristics of the colonized within the colonizer” (178). Furthermore, Obenzinger characterizes No. 44 as an antic “bad-boy” whose typesetter’s joke produces a dizzying effect that comments on new sound and film technologies.

3. The mandate of capitalist rationality, by contrast, demands that literature “must grow, and change form, and never stop,” writes Moretti, and its protagonist “can never stop in space, his adventure can never come to an end in time, as Defoe discovered when writing the last pages of *Robinson Crusoe*. Last, not conclusive: he will immediately have to start writing a second *Robinson*. Yet the problem of how to end the novel is still unsolved: and so a third *Robinson*” (*Way of the World* 26). Defoe only finally extricates himself from this plight by turning to allegory, Moretti notes, “thereby abolishing the problematic of temporality instead of confronting it on its own territory” (26).

4. Houston Baker points to this “entrance examination” to Hampton Institute—as well as other moments in the text when Washington sweeps floors in the company and under the direction of white women as ritual episodes that escape the ordinary configurations of time and space in the South: “Taboos are suspended. We have a form of liminal or transitional instruction as Booker is transfigured from dirty *blackness* into ‘Booker Taliaferro Washington’—a ‘New Negro,’ ahead of his time with respect to 'civilization,' and white womanist intimacy” (48–49).

5. Though industrial democrats essentially argued that the attributes of the political life should apply to market relationships, the practical application of such a theory nevertheless posed distressing implications for some members the middle classes. As Gail Bederman states in her seminal work *Manliness and Civilization*, white middle-class professionals who had in the past characterized themselves as genteel and respectable types were by the last decades of the nineteenth century far removed from the “small-scale, competitive capitalism” of previous generations. Instead, they were saddled with white-collar clerical work and little hope of promotion. These “sons of the middle class” had no guarantee they would ever exercise civic or social authority, and their status as potential “self-made men” was in doubt (Bederman 12). Some middle-class professionals had a genuine fear that political efficacy had migrated to the numerous and visibly muscular members of the working class, whose unionized strength approximated the “consent-as-agency” that middle-class men ought to have possessed. This “challenge to
their manhood” was no figment of the imagination (11); not only did the influx of immigrants and the politics of “New Woman” encroach on their civic authority, nearly seven million members of the working class joined in strikes during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, “an impressive number in a nation whose total work force in 1900 numbered only twenty-nine million” (14). Accordingly, the idea that industrial democracy could be an antidote to social unrest (rather than an exacerbation of it) remained contested. Howell John Harris summarizes: “A synthesis between these two conflicting opinions was possible: that trade unions were a good thing, in theory, and industrial democracy, in the abstract, desirable, though nobody really knew what it meant; but that union power was in practice suspect whenever it showed itself” (54).

6. No. 44’s excessive, ironic performances are instances of signifyin(g), since “everything that must be excluded for meaning to remain coherent and linear comes to bear in the process of Signifyin(g)” (Gates 50). As such, signifyin(g) is the Lacanian Other of discourse; Gates also compares it to Bakhtin’s “double-voiced word,” which contains both the utterance and the speaker’s evaluation of that utterance. To put this somewhat differently, we might interpret No. 44’s entertainments as of an intensity “precisely beyond the limit at which enjoyment still gives pleasure,” such that they exemplify a masochism that can “put in question the Good embodied in the State and common morals” (Žižek, Sublime 117).

Chapter 2

1. These tactics would be especially important for classical detection fictions that adhere to the conventions of “fair play,” which requires “showing the reader everything yet simultaneously obfuscating its meaning.” Pyrhönen, Murder from an Academic Angle 18.

2. David Roediger points out that white laborers had already distanced themselves from the perceived degradation associated with black slaves in the early nineteenth century, demanding that designations like “hired hand” or “help” replace servant (an occupation associated with both enslaved and free black workers), thereby making the case that their white labor, unlike that of black workers, was a product or service that could be detached from its owner and put on the market (50). In short, white laborers advanced a linguistic politics with a racialized subtext: “They were becoming white workers who identified their freedom and their dignity in work as being suited to those who were ‘not slaves’ or ‘not negurs’” (49).

3. This line of argument, by which free labor is cleanly divested of the slave’s attributes, is an anticipatory repudiation of slavery in concert with Kristeva’s concept of the “pre-object” or “fallen object”: the cause of that “radical revulsion (or expulsion) which serves to situate the ‘I’, or more accurately to create a first, fragile sense of ‘I’ where before there was only emptiness” (Moi in Kristeva 238). Hawthorne’s “Truth-teller” censures those who would see utility in comparing themselves to slaves, thereby ranking them-
4. For a discussion of backward construction and the narrative closure it imposes as a form of erasure, see Sweeney, Hühn.

5. Pompey’s operations anticipate the work of the fictional detective, particularly the two dominant modes of detection that Marjorie Nicholson identifies as the “Baconian method of Scotland Yard” and the strategy derived from Descartes (126). The “Baconian method” involves the use of material evidence (papers and artifacts) as metonymic traces or clues to reconstruct the story of the crime and to challenge the testimony of witnesses and interested parties (126). Charles Rzepka has linked this mode to the work of the early historians Johann Gustav Droysen and Leopold von Ranke, “the latter of whom once stated that his aim was to describe the past ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen’—‘as it really was’” (Detective Fiction 43). By contrast, a Cartesian approach to detection depends on imaginative identification with “the mind of the criminal” (44). In the person of Pompey, who pieces together the general’s remains and essentially impersonates the Bugaboo and Kickapoo Indians, however, these two facets of detection are mobilized to unseat white hegemonic discourse.

6. For instance, on August 29, the senior editor of the Constitutional Whig in Richmond depicted the event as an outburst of irrational violence, juxtaposing the heinous murders perpetrated by Turner’s “drunk and desperate” crew with the temperament of their victims, slaveholders “distinguished for [their] lenity and humanity” (Tragle 53). The Whig concluded that the murderers “acted under the influence of their leader Nat,” and even Turner himself “had no ulterior purpose, but was stimulated exclusively by fanatical revenge, and perhaps misled by some hallucination of his imagined spirit of prophecy” (53). A day later, in Edenton, North Carolina, the Edenton Gazette reported that the revolt “is said to have been started by a white man, for some design unknown,” and hastened to assure its readers that “we have detected no signs nor symptoms of an insurrectionary spirit; the slaves appear quiet, peaceable and unoffending and while we recommend vigilance to our citizens, we would likewise respectfully suggest they should not suffer the present excitement, to cause them to deviate from their accustomed mild and moderate treatment to the slaves” (56).

7. Critically, whatever begins to intimate itself as knowledge enters our perception only as a kind of knowledge that is hidden or has entered into hiding since, as Malcolm Bull explains, “hidden-ness” signals that the determination to be known “was not merely unsuccessful but frustrated in the sense that its defeat is inextricably linked to the proximity of achievement” (19). Thus, the specter of the Kickapoo Indians and white...
industrial laborers can be described as “coming into hiding”—made more knowable as the extruded tensions that underlie the tale, and not quite covered over by its superficial content—since being hidden “simply means that when something becomes partially or selectively known the process of becoming accessible to knowledge is simultaneously a coming into hiding” (26).

8. Hawthorne’s newspaperman does approximate the sensationalism with which the Salem Gazette treated this “Atrocious Assassination,” but the storyteller’s account only narrowly squares with these events in Salem, and not only because the victim of this “malicious deliberation unparalleled” was bludgeoned in the head and stabbed no less than thirteen times (Joseph White qtd. in Booth 209, Booth 202–3). In fact, the press was perplexed because it could not easily attribute any motive, business or otherwise, to the grisly crime, given that, as the Salem Gazette reported, the eighty-two-year-old White “had for years been almost secluded from the world, having long since retired from the active cares of his commercial pursuits.” And while it is certainly plausible that the question of each conspirator’s accountability (a subject to which the attorney Daniel Webster devoted no little time when he prosecuted the case) intrigued Hawthorne, it is nevertheless the case that Hawthorne differentiates the assassin in each iteration of Mr. Higginbotham’s “catastrophe,” which is twice told to Pike, then staged before his eyes. See “Atrocious Assassination,” Salem Gazette, April 6, 1830.

9. Terence Whalen (112) describes Poe’s “average racism” as a “strategic construction designed to overcome political dissension in an emerging mass audience,” regardless of the author’s much-debated perspectives on race. Along similar lines, I strongly doubt we can either exonerate the author or locate definitive proof of Hawthorne’s racism in Dominicus Pike’s casual use of a racist epitaph or the representations of black and Irish criminality “Mr. Higginbotham’s Catastrophe.”

10. This interpretation benefits from the insights of whiteness studies; see Ignatiev, Jacobson, Roediger.

Chapter 3

1. I take the notion of the “hidden transcript” from James C. Scott, whose Domination and the Arts of Resistance describes a realm of discourse that undercuts the “hegemonic aspirations” of the public transcript while evading the risks incurred by open modes of resistance: a “hidden transcript” or clandestine form of dissent cultivated by the subordinated in order to critique relations of domination. Apparitions of this otherwise undetected speech emerge in what Scott contends is a third realm, a hidden “contrapuntal” discourse (25), a “politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning” (19), even if they stop shy of any concrete or symbolic declaration that would overtly disrupt the smooth, homogenized workings of power (8).

2. Until recently, Poe scholars have generally grounded the author’s proslavery stance
in the now infamous Drayton-Paulding review, which appeared in the April 1836 *Southern Literary Messenger*. An alarmist reply to slave revolt in the West Indies and to the burgeoning abolitionist movement, the Drayton-Paulding review bemoans antislavery advocates’ assault on southern property. Moreover, the review applauds Mr. Paulding, a northerner, for his picture of the South in *Slavery in the United States*, lauding its saccharine romantic racialism and its “accurate” representation of the sentimental attachment between master and slave. In *Poe and the Masses*, Terence Whalen persuasively argues that the review is best ascribed to Beverly Tucker, a professor at the University of William and Mary, though, as John Carlos Rowe has pointed out, this authorship is less a litmus test for Poe’s racism than is his “guilt by association.” The sheer fact that Poe’s writings for the *Southern Literary Messenger* were printed facing articles by well-known proslavery advocates, and that Poe stressed a unique identification with the “Editorial” capacities of the magazine, underscore his complicity in the review’s publication. Moreover, the compatibility of Poe’s racism with those views expressed in the Drayton-Paulding review is entirely substantiated by articles definitively accredited to Poe, such as his January 1836 review of Ingraham’s *The South-West. By a Yankee*, which praises Professor Ingraham’s vindication of southern slavery.

3. We might also note that an earlier issue of the *London and Paris Observer* includes an implausible account of “The Monkey Gentleman,” an orangutan captured in Borneo who was sold to a French merchant in Chandernague, where he received the “rudiments of a modern polite education”—though he did not entirely cast off his “fashionable accomplishment of swearing” (No. 256 [April 25, 1830], 271). According to the *Observer*, the monkey “would waltz, and dance a quadrille;” “was rather partial to riding,” and “would spend hours in oiling and curling his moustachios, and trimming his side-locks and whiskers!” (271).

4. In essence, Kopley’s approach to interpreting “Rue Morgue” differentiates detective fiction from “serious” literature, treating its textual fragments as links in a chain that bring forth narrative coherence. By contrast, “serious” literature requires its readers discover “symbolic depth” in the signifying activities of the text (Pyrhönen, *Murder* 38). Though plainly all narratives can be read superficially or symbolically, Martin Priestman argues that readers of detective fiction cannot make use of both strategies at the same time. Indeed, given the prestige of symbolic depth, he suggests that surface reading supplies a “down-market” explanation scholars use to account for mass readership (39).

5. Curiously enough, Kopley’s strategy perfectly encapsulates an alternative definition of “morgue”: a reference file of old clippings or “miscellaneous material” in a newspaper office, typically used to compose obituaries (OED).

6. This seems to be the interpretive route Arthur Conan Doyle adopted in *The Sign of the Four*, where the “primitive” Tonga, who hails from the Andaman Islands, cheerfully scales a building for his companion Jonatham Small to assassinate Bartholomew Sholto with a poison dart.

7. By contrast, Shawn Rosenheim argues that the “obsessive instances of mutilated
language” in Poe’s detective tales (e.g. the “unequal voice” of the orangutan in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”) indicate that “for Poe the disjunction between linguistic and physical identity is always traumatic” (70).

8. In an 1845 unsigned review of his Tales, Poe applauds the accuracy of his depiction of Jupiter, remarking, “The negro is a perfect picture. He is drawn accurately—no feature overshaded, or distorted. Most of such delineations are caricatures” (“Edgar Allan Poe” 869). There is little doubt that the depiction of Jupiter subscribes to a humiliating breed of racial stereotypes, since the story implies he cannot function without Legrand, even as he adopts airs of superiority like Zip Coon. Such characterizations observe “the perverse logic of minstrelsy” that instantiates white supremacy (Peeples 41), and indicate Poe’s allegiance to antebellum racism and black subordination.

9. Hegel’s theory emerged, in all probability, as a reaction to slavery as an actual and not a metaphorical social arrangement erected and reinforced in tandem with racial categories. To be sure, Hegel’s The Phenomenology of Mind, which was written between 1805 and 1806, remains silent on the question of the transatlantic slave trade and on recent events in Haiti. Susan Buck-Morss points out, however, that Hegel brought “into his text the present, historical realities that surrounded it,” albeit “in invisible ink”: he situated the slave opposite the master—in contrast to his French and British contemporaries, who regarded slavery as the product of a tyrannical state or some other violation of the rights of nature (846). Accordingly, “The actual and successful revolution of Caribbean slaves against their masters is the moment when the dialectical logic of recognition becomes visible as the thematics of world history, the story of the universal realization of freedom” (852).

10. Orlando Patterson’s Slavery and Social Death disputes this insight, pointing out that the category of “worker qua worker has no intrinsic relation to slave qua slave”—that, in fact, even when the master class did not profit from the labor of its slaves, or experienced slaves as economic deadweight, slaveholders were amply rewarded in esteem from other slave owners as well as free nonslaveholding persons, all of whom could share in the timocratic values that depended on the social death of the slave (99). Accordingly, “The poorest free person took pride in the fact that he was not a slave” and the master class was recognized as “those most adorned with honor and glory” (99). Even if slave owners conceded the mutually degrading consequences of slavery for master and slave alike, Patterson argues, masters either “dropped all pretension to culture and civilization and simply indulged their appetites,” resorting to a regime of brutal physical and sexual assault, or they abandoned the source of sullied wealth for some metropolis where their profits would confer honor and recognition (100).

11. C. B. Macpherson distinguishes “possessive individualism” as integral to nineteenth-century liberal democratic ideals; “possessive individualism” is what “regards the individual as human in his capacity as proprietor of his own person” and protects that individual “from any but self-interested contractual relations with others” in a market-based economy (151).
12. For this reason, Malcolm Bull argues that the dual articulation of consciousness inherent to mesmerism influenced Hegel’s interpersonal and intrapersonal conception of the master-slave dialectic (233). Hegel’s challenge to the unity of the soul, and his adoption of the bi-part soul (at once self-less and universal), relied on a theory of mesmeric relations. The upshot of this influence, Bull suggests, is Hegel’s argument that “the potentially dominant pole of the subordinated individual remains, not of course fulfilling a dominant role, but as an unfulfilled potential or ineffectual residuum,” which is activated through the bondsman’s work (237). Moreover, the nascent potential Hegel attributes to the bondsman indicates “how being enslaved, like being magnetised, might paradoxically be a step towards universality and freedom” (Bull 239).

13. In his review of the novel, Poe reasons that a text like Sheppard Lee must contrive to present a multiplicity of narrators, yielding a sort of crazy-quilt version of the picaresque. Or, better yet, it must dramatize an assortment of events, but anchor them in a common denominator: the perspective of a single narrator. In this way, “The chief source of interest in each narrative is, or should be, the contrasting of these varied events, in their influence upon a character unchanging—except as changed by the events themselves” (“Sheppard Lee” 137).

14. Mesmer’s ideas made their way across the Atlantic in the person of hydrographer Count Antoine-Hyacinthe Anne de Chastenet de Puysegur (a younger brother to Mesmer’s prominent disciple the Marquis de Puysegur), who introduced animal magnetism to Haiti in June 1874 (Regourd 313). Incredibly, colonists soon entertained the possibility that Haitian slaves had appropriated magnetism to put its powers to malevolent purpose; slaves that participated in nocturnal ceremonies in the mountainous Marmala de district were brought to trial in 1786 for wielding mesmeric powers. The words “magnetised” and “mesmerize” appear in the trial records, yet Francois Regourd argues that this terminology “never appeared in judiciaries sources of that time in Saint Domingue as anything other than European words used by white judges for describing various parts of Vodou rites,” which had been already independently documented in other sources (324). The very idea of a “black mesmerism,” Regourd explains, was at the time merely a “smokescreen set between the traditionality of French judges, and the frightening manifestations of black Vodou nocturnal ceremonies,” as well as an effort to delegitimize the idea of an autonomous “black occult knowledge” (324). There is little evidence that a hybrid, religio-scientific mix of mesmerism and voodoo ever existed. Nevertheless, the superimposition of de Puysegur’s vocabulary on black voodoo practices had the effect of forever linking Mesmer’s science with black slave religion and revolt (324).

15. Curiously, Bird’s sequence on “negro insurrection” does not end with “the hanging of Nigger Tom,” as Poe suggests in his review. After they are hanged and buried, Tom and his associates are exhumed by a group of young anatomists who propose to perform galvanic experiments on the corpses with a battery, hypothesizing that the dead slaves, when stimulated with electrical energy, will immediately perform those tasks they were most accustomed to in life. The musician Zip, or Scipio, when charged with that “ex-
traordinary fluid,” presented “the lively spectacle of a man playing the fiddle in death” (2:212); Sam, “notorious for nothing so much as a great passion he had for butting with his head against brick walls, or even stone ones, provided they were smooth enough” (2:212), responds with “a jerk of propulsion equal in force to the butt of a battering-ram” (2:213), while Tom, in life habituated to playing the horse with young Tommy, does not go ‘galloping about the table’ as expected but is instead entirely revived and runs from the room, seeking escape (2:213)!

16. Poe dismisses this dream denouement, however, asking, “What difficulty, or inconvenience, or danger can there be in leaving us uninformed of the important facts that a certain hero did not actually discover the elixir vitae, could not really make himself invisible, and was not either a ghost in good earnest, or a bona fide Wandering Jew?” (“Sheppard Lee” 139).

Chapter 4

1. According to Stephen Kern’s The Culture of Time and Space, the great benefits of Edison’s invention were to “to exercise greater control over what would become the historical past,” and “to speak ‘forward’ in time to the unborn and listen ‘backwards’ to the dead” (38–39). In the decade before Hopkins’s novel appeared, philosophers such as William James, Henri Bergson, and Edmund Husserl asserted the absolute necessity of introducing time and memory into each act of perception, without which, Kern explains, “melody would appear as a series of discrete sounds unrelated to what had gone before, understanding of ourselves would be chopped into unconnected fragments, and it would be impossible to learn a language or follow an argument” (43). Bergson went so far as to conceptualize the present as the “invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future,” while he characterized duration as a rapacious beast that “gnaws on things and leaves on them the mark of its tooth” (qtd. in Kern 43).

2. Stephen Soitos also emphasizes Johnson’s use of intuition and guesswork to solve the case; he argues that these talents fall outside the realm of Detective Henson’s empirical skills and “seem directly related to Aunt Henny’s hoodoo second sight, which may have been passed down to Venus” (66). Whereas Henson “functions much like an FBI director and seems to be modeled on a Pinkerton agent,” Johnson’s undercover success classifies her as a “double-conscious detective” (65). She demonstrates mastery of a “liberating manipulation of masks and a revolutionary renaming,” an achievement Houston Baker calls “a primary move in Afro-American discursive modernism” (qtd. in Soitos 36), and one that she uses constructively, “to move in and out of the white world with safety and profit” (Nathan Huggins qtd. in Soitos 36).

3. Ronald Thomas convincingly shows that nineteenth-century forensic technologies had a “political genealogy.” That is, the function of these “devices of truth” was to regard the body “as text and as politics,” and forensic innovation was generally put in service of establishing and policing racial and national differences (3). The advent of fingerprint-
ing in particular was a remarkable addition to police science. Not only did Sir Francis Galton’s 1892 work on the subject suggest an economical substitute for “anthropometry” or “signaletics,” Alphonse Bertillon’s elaborate set of physical measurements that was widely used at the time, but fingerprinting also had distinct implications for policing the body politic (201–3). The photographer Isaiah West Tauber, for example, had advocated the use of fingerprinting to monitor Chinese immigrants in San Francisco as early as the 1880s (204). The best-known literary illustration of this scientific novelty is, of course, Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1899). Twain had enthusiastically perused Galton’s *Finger Prints*, which publicized the usefulness and permanence of these “physiological autographs” (Gillman 451). When Twain’s protagonist David Wilson avails himself of the newfangled technology, he ends by distinguishing a free white man from a Negro slave—thereby fulfilling Galton’s unrealized dream of implementing the fingerprint as a gauge of racial difference only a few years after *Plessy v. Ferguson* had chiseled that difference into law and public policy (Thomas 242).

4. Charles Sumner was notorious for his abolitionist convictions. The senator’s 1856 speech “The Crime Against Kansas,” a strongly worded indictment of proslavery forces, so affronted South Carolina representative Preston Brooks the latter responded by accosting Sumner with a cane on the Senate floor and beating him severely. Brooks’s infamous assault was nothing less than “a plantation ritual in the highest halls of Congress,” argues historian Manisha Sinha; the scandal brought home the South’s brutal policies and “crystallized the black critique of racial slavery as an affront to American freedom and republican government” (236, 235).

5. For instance, the prominent northern businessman Arthur G. Sedgwick argued that “every deposit in a savings-bank is worth ten votes to him. His color will be forgotten as soon as he is ‘respectable,’ and to be ‘respectable’ in modern times means to exhibit the faculty of acquiring independent wealth” (qtd. in Cohen 74). During and after Reconstruction, the economic character of the freedman was to be assessed against these precepts. “Political Economy,” the proslavery social theorist George Fitzhugh argued in 1866, “stands perplexed and baffled in the presence of the negro,” to whom Fitzhugh attributed indolence and parasitism (qtd. in Fabian 127–28).

6. In *Petroleum V. Nasby*, David Locke also associates the exploitation of black bodies to fiscal speculation. The extremely limited curriculum of Nasby’s Classikle, Theologikle, and Military Institoot demanded students devote their attention to “considerin the various texts wich go to show that Afrikin slavery is not only permitted by the skripters, but especially enjoined”—a scriptural account of slavery that banked on a traditional defense (“the cuss uv Noer”), and also adopted an evolutionary-biblical method of inquiry that would prove “the Afrikin nigger wuz reely the descendents uv Ham” (Locke 365). But the second duty of the institution was to train its students in the talents of the “troo Southern gentlemen”: to “draw poker,” “pitchin dollars,” and so forth (366).

7. Mikhail Bakhtin presents the carnivalesque as antagonistic toward that which
“seeks to absolutize a given condition of existence or a given social order” (Dostoevsky 160); this razing of hierarchies is directly opposed to “consecration of inequality” Bakhtin associates with the despotism of official rites (Rabelais 10).

8. I will, of course, concede the very legitimate protest that readers of Colored American Magazine could not possibly have been and were not expected to make this association, while pointing out that in Hagar’s Daughter, as in many detective narratives, signs reveal their proper meaning and sense only when they are revisited.

Chapter 5

1. In his autobiography The Big Sea, Langston Hughes confesses that he eschewed his doctor’s advice to go to Rudolph Fisher for X-ray photographs of his ailing stomach and “went to another Harlem specialist I did not know,” simply because he was intimidated by Fisher’s brilliant sense of humor (245). Hughes was certain that the X-ray specialist and physician “would be full of clever witticisms of a sort that I could never find repartee for when I was in a normal state of mind, let alone now—with my mind in the far-off spaces and my stomach doing flops” (245).


3. Miriam Thaggert contends that arguments about the aesthetic mediocrity of black writing by the late 1920s have become “another paradigmatic cliché” in critical conversations surrounding the Harlem Renaissance (17). By the end of that decade, she argues, critiques of an “earlier tepid, predictable writing” of novels calculated to “proclaim the worthiness of the Negro” at the expense of groundbreaking artistic expression (e.g., Walter White’s Fire in the Flint [1924] and Jessie Fauset’s There Is Confusion [1924]) indicate precisely “a growing awareness, a growing maturity” and not an end to the Renaissance, while short-lived journals such as Wallace Thurman’s Harlem and Fire!!! endeavored to create space for ambitious artistic expressions, revealing a broad “desire for more nuanced depictions of black life and dissatisfaction with simplistic characters and tropes” (17–18).


7. As an appendix to The Walls of Jericho (1928), Fisher included “An Introduction to Contemporary Harlemese, Expurgated and Abridged,” which supplies translations of
many of the figures of speech and slang that appear in the novel—no doubt a rejoinder to the more ostentatious and formal “Glossary of Negro Words and Phrases” at the end of Carl Van Vechten’s Nigger Heaven (1926). Significantly, Fisher’s lexicon attaches idioms to place (“Harlemese”) rather than race, as Van Vechten’s does (“Negro Words”). Fisher includes a definition and etymology for “ofay”: “A person who, so far as is known, is white. Fay is said to be the original term and ofay a contraction of “old” and “fay” (299); a dickty is both an adjective (“Swell”) and a noun (“High-toned person”) (298), while a rat is the “Antithesis of dickty” (298–99).

8. Ronald Thomas compares Murder on the Orient Express with Dashiell Hammett’s The Maltese Falcon, arguing that Agatha Christie’s detective Hercules Poirot is repeatedly aligned with the ideals of “European collective nationalism” and the League of Nations in the interwar period, in contrast to the “American isolationist policies” embodied by Hammett’s Sam Spade (271). Thomas contends that the Europeans aboard the Calais Coach perceive America as “at once a savage and a progressive place,” a site of “violence, irrationality, and crass materialism beneath whatever façade of civility it might present to the world” (272). Along these lines, Christie takes an “infamous event in American criminal history”—the kidnapping of Daisy Armstrong, which indisputably evokes the Lindbergh kidnapping—as “the originary crime that led to the narrative’s complicated murder on a train” (269–70). While this view of America as “a frightening post-nationalist world of social and moral dislocation” captures the attitudes of the various passengers, it is worth pointing out that those suspects attached to the Armstrong household deliberate distance themselves from the United States to conceal their affiliation with the Armstrongs, and so ward off suspicion, while in reality they are a well-oiled machine that collaborates in a collective administration of vigilante justice. In other words, their colonization of the Calais Coach for the purposes of justice suggests less a “post-nationalist world of social and moral dislocation” as a portable nation-state, and a population whose communal bonds (cemented in the wake of crime) far transcend their superficial differences (272). In this light, the murder of Ratchett (alias Casetti) presumes a nation-state and a collectivity—unanticipated, perhaps, because of its internal diversity but nevertheless foreign to most European nations—that longs to expunge him. Their anti-American attitudes are a masquerade, as are the American stereotypes cultivated by the private detective (heavy-handedly named Cyrus Hardman) and by Mrs. Hubbard (Linda Arden, the famous actress and the Mother Goose who orchestrates the affair). The substance of America—and the household that is the metaphor for the relations between Americans—is a passionate, collective desire to administer justice albeit by disregarding the laws of other nations.


11. While challenging the pervasive and insidious representations of the Chinese American detective Charlie Chan—whom Frank Chin has called an “Asian Uncle Tom”—in the white popular imagination, Charles Rzepka argues that Earl Derr Biggers’s first Chan novel, *The House without a Key* (1925) uses the detective genre to disrupt racist representational convention, enlisting the genre’s “very tendencies toward racism to question racial stereotyping, even as he [Biggers] played the game of detection according to the genre’s own rules” (“Race, Region, Rule” 1464). Moreover, while Rzepka discounts white writers’ authority to depict “Asian humanity,” he points out that Biggers’s book avails itself of “a radically counterintuitive regionalist prototype,” using urban Honolulu as a racially heterogeneous and inclusive “cultural grid” that dramatically undermines the sensationalized caricatures of sinister, all-male Chinatowns, ethnic enclaves that were themselves the effect of U.S. immigration policies and other discriminatory laws that systematically exploited the Chinese (1463–64, 1469).


14. In his introduction to *City of Refuge: The Collected Stories of Rudolph Fisher*, John McCluskey Jr. contends that Fisher anticipated writing at least two sequels to *The Conjure-Man Dies*. At the time of his death, Fisher had already embarked upon the second novel in this series, provisionally titled “Thus Spake the Prophet” (McCluskey 28).

15. Though Fisher’s depiction of the airshaft is decidedly dismal, the airshaft itself is an acoustic emblem of black urban experience, typified, for instance, in Duke Ellington’s observation that “so much goes on in a Harlem air shaft. You get the full essence of Harlem in an air shaft. You hear fights, you smell dinner, you hear people making love. You hear intimate gossip floating down. You hear the radio. An air shaft is one great big loud-speaker” (qtd. in Thompson 131). In his unpublished story “Across the Airshaft,” Fisher again characterizes the desolation of the airshaft: it is “deep, utter blackness, soft, impenetrable, measureless,” though in this case it doubles as a space of fantasy and fairy tale (*City of Refuge* 277). After peering into this “abysmal emptiness,” Fisher’s fleeced, broke, and desperate rent-collector Rip Halliday discovers a vision across the airshaft: the beautiful, down-and-out Betty Green, whom he rescues (with the help of a clothesline) from the thug Buck Martin, whose business is “high-jackin’ rent-collectors” (277, 283).

Conclusion

1. Pepper concedes, however, that the genre’s “codes and conventions have, largely, been shaped by a set of white, male discourses” that potentially holds heavy sway over an exercise in the genre (210); this study rejects Pepper’s conventional understanding of detective fiction’s origins.
2. The least valuable of these fictions, Gina and Andrew Macdonald argue, are those whose exploitative engagement with ethnic and racial difference consists of forays into the exoticized terrain of the “Other.” Nevertheless, they contend that meaningful “ethnic” detective fictions must also do more than textualize cultural difference.

3. *The Big Gold Dream* also incorporates what George Grella calls “the motif of the magical quack” in the person of Sweet Prophet, a street preacher whose “pseudoreligious fakery” and profession of “fleecing the credulous” place him among the cultish charlatans of hard-boiled fiction (114).

4. For a thorough discussion of the whiteness of hard-boiled detective fiction, see Reddy.