DETECTIVE AND CRIME DRAMA IN AMERICA 1890 – 1920

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

John G. Cawelti's study of the artistic and cultural dimensions of formula stories, such as westerns, mysteries, and detective stories, sparked a new direction of interest in the academic community of the 1970's. Once scholars viewed culturally popular genres as worthy of analysis, the detective story quickly became an investigative subject of numerous researchers. While the reason for its mass popularity was never wholly established, the history and development of the detective story was not difficult to identify. Principal trends and contributing authors in the evolution of stories of detection became frequent topics in scholarly journals.

Clearly, before there could be a detective story, there had to be such a thing as a detective. Detectives were a by-product of urbanization. As cities grew, crime increased, and the need in these centers of population for systematic and organized methods of deduction spawned the concept of dedicated and specialized investigators. Two types of investigators emerged: the professional police detective employed as a civil servant, and the self-employed private investigator. Although it was naturally expected that the goal of each of these branches should be the triumph of justice, it sometimes appeared to onlookers that they were seeking justice with different motivations, and as rivals rather than cohorts.

Movement to the cities began in the early 1800's in America, but urban population vastly increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By the late 1900's and early twentieth century, urban growth was expanding quickly due to immigration and the boom in industrial manufacturing. For example, New York City's population jumped from 942,292 in 1870 to 3,437,202 in 1900, and the city of Chicago's from 298,977 to 1,698,575 in those same years. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," written in 1841, was considered the first detective story, and he wrote two others, "The Mystery of Marie Roget" and "The Purloined Letter." But as streets became more crowded and violence escalated, the detective was in the public eye more frequently because newspapers assiduously reported the incidents of crime. The stereotype of the detective character became familiar to an audience, the repeated patterns of the detective formula became popular, and the number of detective stories increased. At the same time, a parallel trend was occurring in American theatre. Crime and detective dramas were being produced regularly, a fact often lost sight of by current scholars.

Some of the same newspaper reporters, such as Augustus Thomas, Susan Glaspell, Bayard Veiller and A.C. Wheeler, who were bringing crime and detectives to the public's attention through newspaper stories, began writing plays about what they had witnessed. In writing newspaper stories they had often uncovered corruption and other social problems. Now they turned from the medium of newspaper to the medium of drama to expose their findings. This trend contributed to the transformation of the happy-go-lucky melodramas of the

1900's into dramas containing realistic social themes, such as women's rights, labor law revision, and political reform.

This present thesis will examine in depth six American plays from the period of 1890-1920. The common denominator of the six plays is that they are all detective or crime dramas that contain investigative characters or crime plots. The plays chronologically considered are Augustus Thomas' In Mizzoura (1893), A.C. Wheeler and Edward M. Alfriend's The Great Diamond Robbery (1895), Arthur Conan Doyle and William Gillette's Sherlock Holmes (1899), Charles Klein's The Third Degree (1908), Bayard Veiller's Within the Law (1912), and Susan Glaspell's Trifles (1916).

Perhaps it is fitting to begin with a melodrama set in the West, since the concepts of adventure and escapism as seen in melodrama are often associated with Western characters. Augustus Thomas' In Mizzoura is a melodrama centered on the rural investigative character Sheriff Jim Radburn. In the play, Sheriff Radburn rids his town of a recently arrived train robber who has won the heart of a woman Radburn loves. By purposely letting the criminal escape, he risks his stellar law enforcement reputation for the sake of unrequited love.

A.C. Wheeler and Edward Alfriend's The Great Diamond Robbery is also a melodrama, but it is more violent than either In Mizzoura and Sherlock Holmes are. The play depicts a suicide and homicide on stage, while also containing other crimes of kidnapping, threats with a knife, embezzlement, and theft. The investigative character in this play is Dick Brummage, a New York City Police Inspector who manages to right the wrongs in the play while eluding the hold of

corrupt political officials. He assists a character who is unjustly accused of murdering an individual and stealing his diamonds. Brummage unveils the true killer.

Arthur Conan Doyle and William Gillette's play Sherlock Holmes is based on the brilliant private investigator whom Doyle made famous in stories published in The Strand between 1891 and 1905. In the play, Sherlock Holmes, played by William Gillette himself, employs the tricks and disguises that the readers of the stories recognize as Sherlock Holmes' trademark. Sherlock Holmes is more sophisticated than both In Mizzoura and The Great Diamond Robbery.

Sherlock Holmes is a melodramatic comedy in which Holmes is hired by an anonymous person of royal birth to regain a bundle of letters and photographs he has sent to a former lover who died during an illegitimate childbirth. The items are in the possession of the dead woman's sister, who wishes to gain revenge on the person of nobility through blackmail. She enlists the help of others, who then involve the criminal network of Holmes' arch rival, the evil Professor Moriarty. In vain, Moriarty makes attempts on Holmes' life. Ultimately, Holmes completes his assignment by slyly convincing the sister to return the sentimental package to its original author herself.

Charles Klein moves away from pure melodrama in The Third Degree. Captain Clinton, the purported investigator in this play, is summoned to the scene of an apartment containing a dead body. He exercises poor investigative judgement and elicits a false confession using a hypnotic interview tactic. Luckily, a tenacious wife and a conscientious attorney prove Captain Clinton

wrong and rescue the suspect from his legal fate. Klein's use of realism plants seeds of distrust against detective characters.

Unlike Dick Brummage in The Great Diamond Robbery, Bayard Veiller's official investigative character in Within the Law, New York City Police Inspector Burke, does not choose to avoid the corrupt politicians, and even engages in his own corrupt acts. In an effort to win favor with an influential retailer, Burke concocts a plot to entrap Veiller's protagonist, Mary Turner, and her friends in a criminal act. Burke is familiar with Mary and thinks that she has been making a mockery of the police department with her schemes that are just "within the law." Mary has learned to use the legal system while she was serving four years in prison. She was convicted of shoplifting after being falsely accused by the influential storeowner who decides to use her as an example for his other salesgirls. Mary gains revenge by marrying the storeowner's unwitting son. Although clearly a melodrama, Within the Law leans toward becoming a social problem play that focuses on poor working conditions, police corruption, and the need for women's rights.

Susan Glaspell also examines women's issues in Trifles. The wives of the county Sheriff and a neighboring farmer go with their husbands to the farmhouse where John Wright has been murdered by his wife, Minnie. While their husbands are upstairs at the crime scene with the County Attorney searching for evidence, the women are downstairs looking around. They find clues indicating that Minnie was oppressed by her husband, convincing them that she may have been justified in murdering him. These clues are domestic in nature, and therefore overlooked

and dismissed as insignificant "trifles" by the men. The investigating women decide to keep silent about the clues they find so as not to alert the men to additional evidence to convict Minnie.

The goal of this thesis is to examine each of the six plays while unpacking the agendas of the playwrights. Why and how do the playwrights use the investigative characters within the play to arrive at their literary purpose? Just as all individuals are different, so the goals and the agendas of each playwright turn out to vary. In light of this, the thesis concentrates on the differences within the plays rather than the similarities. A study of these contrasts is also relevant when looking at the investigative characters, not only the playwrights. For example, Doyle's private investigator character, the instinctive Sherlock Holmes, differs vastly from Veiller's methodical New York City Police Inspector Burke in motivation, temperament, and method.

Another aspect of this thesis is the tracing of melodramatic elements within the chosen plays. The earlier plays exhibit traits of pure melodrama, but as the years progress, the plays move toward a blend of melodrama and realism. The later plays of this period have fewer melodramatic elements and strongly resemble realism, hinting at the upcoming era of realism in American theatre.

Although there has been exhaustive research in the area of detective stories and novels, crime and detective dramas have remained virtually ignored. Likewise, the era of the melodrama has received little scholarly attention. Previously, experts in the field have dismissed it as an unworthy form of period-specific drama and did not regard it as important in the development of theatre.

This thesis attempts to add to our knowledge about these two sparsely studied fields.

CHAPTER II

THE DETECTIVE MOVES WEST: IN MIZZOURA

In Mizzoura was written by Augustus Thomas and premiered in Chicago in 1893. Thomas revised the play in 1916. Many of his plays were set in what was then called the West. Thomas was familiar with this part of the country, having grown up and worked in St. Louis. Producers considered his frontier dramas "wholesome" (Thomas 430). He continued his patented trend when he wrote In Mizzoura, a play designed to feature a popular star of the day, Nat Goodwin, in a suitable hero role (Thomas 430).

Like many playwrights, Thomas drew on his own background for material to use in his plays. Thomas had been both a reporter and a railroad employee (Thomas, Preface, 4). Once he had decided that Goodwin's character would be a Sheriff and have a love interest, he needed a "drama criminal" to be the main "rival" (Thomas 311). He remembered Jim Cummings, an express robber whom he had interviewed as a reporter with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Cummings had forged an order convincing the messenger to allow him aboard the train. He worked with the train messenger in sorting packages until he became comfortable, then tied up the messenger at gunpoint and stole $125,000 from the train's packages (Thomas 213). With these three character sketches in mind, Thomas traveled to Bowling Green, Missouri to secure the rest of the ideas for his play on-site (Thomas 311).

The plot of the play is very similar to that of Belasco's The Girl of the Golden West, differing only in setting. The Girl of the Golden West takes place in a California mining camp, and was written fifteen years after In Mizzoura. Thomas notes "these identical situations in that perfect sequence" in his autobiography and credits his "friends on the press" for pointing out to him that Belasco's play "was manifestly a reproduction" of In Mizzoura (Thomas 425-426).

In Mizzoura is the story of Jim Radburn, a Sheriff in the West who is in love with a girl named Kate Vernon who is younger than him. She is the daughter of his friend, Joe Vernon, who is running for the same legislative seat as Jim. Kate has been to school and believes she belongs to a higher social rank than Jim. She is attracted to and fascinated by a more worldly man, Travers, who is new to the area and is in actuality a criminal responsible for a train robbery. Sam Fowler, the fiancée of Jim's sister and the railroad employee who was victimized by Travers, is incorrectly suspected of being involved in the robbery. Jim does not believe that Fowler is responsible for it and stands up for the man's character. Once it becomes known that Travers is the robber, it is the Sheriff's job as the enforcer of the law to arrest him. Travers takes refuge in Kate's house, and when Jim comes to look for him Kate hides him and denies that he is there. Jim starts to leave but notices something that leads him to discover the criminal and Travers comes forth. Because of his feelings for Kate, Jim permits him to escape, even though it is contrary to his duty as Sheriff.

Sheriff Radburn is of course the investigative character in In Mizzoura. He embodies the rural West that metropolitan playgoers idealized, personifying a western hero who is a combination of strength and romance. He is tested as the town's hero by his nemesis, Travers, and falters, but ultimately he prevails and maintains a steadfastness that pays tribute to the persevering pioneer spirit.

Not only is Radburn strong but he is enterprising, another ideal associated with the settling of the West. He is politically aspiring, running for the Legislature and wanting to win, but he is humble when referring to his campaign: "I went in it to win--my friends kind a put it that way--an' it seems I ought to do my best for *them*"(33). Radburn is also financially ambitious. He discovers a free raw material that can be heated into a strong substance called gumbo and used as a ballast under railroad tracks normally washed out after heavy rains. During a trip to St. Louis he sells the idea to the Wabash railroad: "There's a memorandum agreement-- they'll take all I can give 'em at thirty dollars a car load" (53). Generously, Jim shares his good fortune and offers his friend Dave a job supervising his new venture. He knows that Dave wants to marry Lizbeth and a job is required before her father, Joe Vernon, will give his approval. Jim is correct and helps Dave even more by advancing all of Dave's merits, eventually convincing Joe Vernon to grant permission for marriage.

Radburn is also compassionate. Although it pervades his entire character, Thomas' most heartwarming example is the tenderness Radburn shows to a lame dog when he rescues and keeps him. At the same time, Thomas shows the

compassion and restraint that Jim uses in his position as Sheriff by not killing someone even when he is justified to do so:

> JIM. No--but I'll square it with him. He's up for coroner. *(Starts for shop-stops)* I told him that a man what'd see a little dumb animal suffer ought to be drummed out of town. Is Dave there?
> JOE. Yes.
> JIM. Well, we'll splinter this leg ourselves. *(Going L.)*
> TRAVERS. Why don't you kill him, and put him out of misery?
> JIM. *(Pause in door L.)* Kill this little dog that took a fancy to me and followed the stage when I got in it!
> TRAVERS. Yes—why not?
> JIM. *(After appealing look to others; then back to TRAVERS)* Why, I never killed a man.
> *(Exit into shop;* JOE, MRS. VERNON, LIZBETH, *follow laughing*—BOLLINGER *exit R.H.)*
> TRAVERS. *(Going to table)* What did he say?
> KATE. That he never killed a man.
> TRAVERS. Well, neither have I. Is that an unusual reputation in Pike County?
> KATE: It is for one who like Mr. Radburn carries seven bullets in his own body, fired there by men he was arresting (24-25).

Travers seems to look upon Jim's compassion with disdain, showing himself to be Jim's opposite. Travers' expressed surprise at Jim having never killed a man leads the viewer to believe that if he were in the Sheriff's position he would not pause to exercise merciful judgment on a criminal. Travers' boasting that he too has never killed a man is a foreshadowing of how easily he later attempts to kill the Pinkerton while trying to escape after Sam identifies him as the man who robbed him on the train.

Besides being responsible for keeping the peace, Jim is a formidable investigator. He realizes quickly that Travers is the one responsible for the train

robbery, recognizing his handwriting as the same as that on the money wrapper sent to the railroad by the real robber who attempted to clear Sam Fowler of the crime. His skills of observation are sharp. He knows that only someone who is not acquainted with the habits of the Vernon family would sit the water dipper back in the bucket, rather than on the bench. By combining this clue along with his interrogation of Kate, Radburn deduces that Travers must be hiding in the closet:

> JIM. *(After looking slowly about)* Where is he?
> KATE. I—I—where is who?
> JIM. *(In a matter of course way)* Travers.
> KATE. Why how should I know?
> JIM. Then why don't you jes' say you don't know?
> KATE. *(Behind chair* L.*)* Well, then I don't know.
> JIM. Too late now (63).

Jim is doing his job, even though Kate believes that the reason Jim is hunting for Travers is because he is jealous of her feelings for Travers. She is convinced that because of his desire to separate them Jim has been able to persuade the whole town to accuse Travers of crimes for which he is not responsible. She announces this conclusion to the audience in an aside, a melodramatic convention used by Thomas in more than one instance in In Mizzoura. She does not realize the truth until Travers has left her alone, thinking only of himself during his escape to Louisiana.

Thomas highlights Jim's solitary life by emphasizing the pairing of all the other main characters in the play. The parallel characters of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Vernon, Emily and Sam, Dave and Lizbeth, and Kate and Travers surround him. He even facilitates the permanent matching of the two young couples. For most

of the play, Jim unsuccessfully pursues Kate for the purpose of marriage. At the end of the play he realizes that he is meant to be alone. He is the opposite of Sherlock Holmes, the investigative character in Gillette's play, who denies his desire for romance until the very last scene.

A contributing factor to the difference in the way these two detective characters view marriage is in the contrast of their environments. Holmes, a city dweller, can easily hire an assistant to perform household tasks. Sheriff Radburn, however, is living in a country setting where there are continuous chores to be done. The women often do these menial tasks, as seen in the opening scene of the play where Mrs. Vernon and Lizbeth are discussing the ironing while they burn "dog fannel" to chase away "the skeeters"(13). The wife holds the household together and as Mrs. Vernon says: "Plague take it! Woman's work's never done" (26). Jim desires Kate as a helpmate, along with the companionship she offers. Ironically, Kate is never seen helping with any work in the play and probably considers herself to be above working because of her education.

Jim, on the other hand, is not educated. This characteristic fits the stereotypical law enforcement character who has the common sense that is essential in an investigative position, but little or no formal education. Jim admits: "I don't know any more'n the law allows" (49). The audience sees an example of Jim's writing difficulties when he tries to write his second resignation: "I wonder whether it's U.G. or E.G. *(Writes)* I'll jus' kinder round off the top an' play it both ways. 'Resignation,' and after that, why they kin see me personally" (66). Although Jim's education level does not matter to the general population of

the town since many of them have the same amount or less, Kate holds his lack of schooling against him and dreams of someone who can take her out into the world:

> KATE. That's all there is to it—I just like you.
> JIM. Well, I didn't know—you used to let me kiss you—
> KATE. Yes, when I was coming home from school—I did. I thought I was going to love you then. But there was the school. *(Pause)* If I hadn't gone to Lindenwood I might have thought so still. But we could never be happy together, Jim—you haven't had proper advantages I know, and it isn't your fault. My *education* has put the barrier between us. Those four years at the Seminary—(49).

Kate does not realize that Jim is such an advocate of learning that he has insisted she receive an education, even paying for it because her father could not afford it.

A second investigative character in the play is the Pinkerton, who can be categorized as an absent character. The Pinkerton never enters on-stage in the play, is never given a name, and is referred to by the other characters four times only as "the Pinkerton." His lack of defined identity causes the audience to be wary of him and to join in Jim's distrust. He has been dispatched by the railroad's management to watch Sam due to their suspicion that he was an accomplice in the robbery. As the highest law enforcement officer in the county, Jim received a letter asking for his cooperation and offering to pay him to help the Pinkerton. Emily happily tells of his response: "Why, Jim kicked him off-of our stoop" (44).

Jim's hostile reaction is foreseeable for a number of reasons. First and most obvious, the Pinkerton is conducting an investigation regarding Sam, whom Jim believes is innocent. Second, the Pinkerton is an outsider, and by excluding

and ignoring him Jim demonstrates the close-knit nature of a small Western community where he is in charge. Lastly, the Pinkerton has been hired by management and represents the oppression of the working men, the men who built the West, men like Jim.

Allan Pinkerton founded the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in 1850 "at the urging of railroad presidents" to specialize in security (Spies 1). He became famous for capturing train robbers, and even investigated the Cummings robbery that Thomas covered as a reporter (Thomas, Preface, 5). However, unions generally detested the "Pinkerton Men" because management hired them as strikebreakers. In light of Thomas' job as a railroad employee himself, and his confidential relationship with railroad labor forces who gave him inside information on strike events before they happened, allowing him to reveal the stories before any other reporter, the third reason Jim dislikes the Pinkerton seems to be an undercurrent interjected from Thomas' personal sentiments.

The melodramatic spectacle of the play occurs at the end when Radburn returns to his true calling after being lulled away by female temptation. He is the picture of the old West as he "adjusts the two guns under his coat-tails--takes a chew of tobacco and fatefully waits....and leans against porch" (73-74). As was typical of melodrama, the excitement and emotional tension are increased by music, in this case played in the background by the black minstrel, Esrom, on a Jew's harp. An angry crowd has come to arrest and punish Jim for giving his own horse to Travers to help him escape after committing attempted murder and a train robbery. It is a type of old west showdown, since only a fence separates Jim from

the mob. Jim's voice controls and calms the crowd "Hold on, boys—. . .I claim everything this side of the fence. Now I know it ain't sociable but I don't want you to come in"(76). His instincts place him in the position of command and authority, even though he reminds them that he has already submitted his resignation from his position as Sheriff. The crisis is mediated after everyone hears the full truth from Kate and Joe Vernon makes a proclamation of Jim's character and explains the purpose behind his intentions to the entire political convention floor. Radburn is again well-liked and returned to his rightful station:

> BOLLINGER. I'm a comin' inside if he pulls both guns. *(Comes over the stile.)*
> JIM. Why, Tom.
> *(They shake hands.)*
> JOE. An' they're up there now like a pack of howlin' idiots unanimously re-electing you sheriff by acclamation and "Vivy Vochy", over and over agin (80).

Jim, however, has learned from this near fall from grace. When Mrs. Vernon asks Jim to talk to Kate because "she's comin' to her senses," Jim ends the play by cautiously, yet politely, answering "some other time"(80). These ending words lead the audience to believe that Jim is now purely devoted to his law enforcement profession, and most likely resigned to the loneliness it holds. He is the melodramatic hero who has sinned, repented, been forgiven, and uplifted to his hero status once more.

The end of the play is not as rewarding for Kate, who is also taught a moral lesson. She too is left alone, but not by her own choice. Unlike Jim, she considers this predicament to be a perilous fate. The worldly man whom she believed could take her away has left her and turned out to be a crook. She

regrets her mistake and now wants Jim, but he also has turned away from her. However, he has shown his love for her throughout the play in many ways: paying for her schooling without embarrassing her father; dropping out of the political race so that he would not win the nomination over her father, thereby giving her the chance of moving to a larger city; not drinking because she is an advocate of the temperance movement; and risking his reputation to help the criminal she loves. But when she understands Jim's nobleness and realizes all the sacrifices that he has made for her, it is too late. Jim's heart has returned to his work. Although a heroine victimized by a villain, Kate is undeserving of Jim's goodness and will suffer from her snobbery, an unusual trait for a Western girl.

In the tradition of melodrama, loose ends are neatly packaged for all of the characters at the end of the play. Travers meets with a fate that a villain justly deserves, being killed after his discovery in Louisiana. Sam receives an apology from the railroad and is invited to return to work and receive back pay. Dave and Lizbeth are on their way to the preacher to get married, with Sam and Emily only two months behind them. Joe Vernon wins the nomination and gets the opportunity to help restore Jim Radburn's good name.

In Mizzoura is a simplistic play that follows the blueprint of a classic melodrama. Thomas has constructed a frontier melodrama based on three characters; a hero, a heroine and a villain. He infuses an investigative element into this melodrama for his own purposes and chooses a Sheriff role for the hero played by Nat Goodwin. Thomas instills positive attributes into this likable Sheriff character such as compassion, strength, humility, and wisdom. In

Mizzoura is a prime example of how the familiar formula of crime and detection can be combined with a romantic story line, even amid a Western setting, as a device to capture the interest of a nineteenth-century audience.

CHAPTER III

IN THE NICK OF TIME: THE GREAT DIAMOND ROBBERY

The Great Diamond Robbery, written by Andrew Carpenter Wheeler and Edward M. Alfriend, first opened at the American Theater in New York City on September 4, 1895. Ten years later the play was still being produced and was "listed by theatrical journals as one of the most popular plays from coast to coast" (Leverton xiii). Wheeler and Alfriend's crime play was meant for entertaining vast audiences and is a classic example of the "Ten-Twenty-Thirty" theater.

In Garrett H. Leverton's Introduction to The Great Diamond Robbery and Other Recent Melodramas, he termed Ten-Twenty-Thirty theater as a sub-genre of melodrama that in effect caused the decline of this dramatic form around the turn of the twentieth century. He claimed that these playwrights "carried emotion, characterization, sentiment and dialogue to such lush extremes that violent revolt arose" from the insulting of the patrons' intelligence. He further claimed that the consequent "revolt against artificiality and sentimentality" was so complete that the word "melodramatic" thereby gained its "popular usage of ridicule and contempt"(Leverton vii).

Leverton classified the melodramas in his collection as Ten-Twenty-Thirty plays because they had their most popularity in the Ten-Twenty-Thirty theaters in towns and small cities. Standardized melodrama left Broadway and toured a "circuit" across the United States (Rahill 275). The theaters in these towns were

low budget operations that kept five sets of scenery on-hand: "the cottage interior, the palace set, the prison, the center-door-fancy, and an exterior" (Leverton viii-ix). Travelling drama companies came to these theaters, used the scenery provided, and filled the theaters every night, charging "admission prices of ten cents for the gallery, twenty cents for the balcony, and thirty cents for seats on the main floor" (Leverton ix). Vaudeville was also part of the entertainment and provided a diversion while the curtain came down between acts. As an added bonus on Saturday night a set of dishes was given to a winning ticket holder (Leverton ix).

Edward Alfriend was probably familiar with Ten-Twenty-Thirty theaters from his hometown of Richmond, Virginia. After serving as a colonel of a company that he formed himself in the Civil War, Alfriend returned to his hometown insurance business but he was always fascinated by the theater (Leverton xiii). In 1889, he went to New York to become a dramatist and shared an apartment with playwright Augustus Thomas. In Thomas' autobiography, The Print of My Remembrance, Thomas labels Alfriend as "a typical Southerner in speech and appearance" and describes "the old gentleman's punctilious manner, his pomposity, and a mediocrity that warranted prediction"(Thomas 284). Being an outsider, it was logical for Alfriend to seek an individual familiar with the writing circles of New York to collaborate with him to produce a successful play. A.C. Wheeler was a seasoned New Yorker with an array of newspaper experience as a reporter, drama critic, columnist, and editor, often using the pseudonym "Nym Crinkle" (Leverton xii).

Wheeler and Alfriend employed a number of melodramatic conventions in their Ten-Twenty-Thirty play. These conventions include sensational spectacles and "aside" remarks. The aside, a convention where a character speaks aloud to the audience as if the other characters cannot hear him or her, is certainly overused in The Great Diamond Robbery. Most of the characters deliver an aside in the play. The overheard conversation convention is also used, as well as coincidence and the convergence of important events at exact moments in time.

Another traditional element of melodrama in The Great Diamond Robbery is the presence of shallow, one-dimensional characters. The characters that were applauded by the Ten-Twenty-Thirty audience would be dismissed as ridiculous stereotypes in modern theater. In his autobiography, I'd Like To Do It Again, Owen Davis lists the eight essential character types he used time and time again in repetitive relationship within his successful melodramas featured in the Ten-Twenty-Thirty theatres. The first character type was "the hero" who "was either poor or else very young and very drunk"(Davis 101). The hero must be "brave," "strong and kind," "but it was unfortunately difficult for him to be wise, as the burden of troubles it was necessary to load upon this poor man's shoulders, by way of dramatic suspense, would never have been carried by any one but a terrible sap" (Davis 101-102). In conjunction with the hero there was "the heroine," a working girl who "must be pure at any cost" and "always marry the hero"(Davis 102). The next pair of characters was "the heavy man" who was "always wealthy," and "the heavy woman" who was "the haughty lady of wealth and social position"(Davis 103-104). "The heavy man" plotted evils so great

"that even the most innocent of audiences must have frequently wondered why he was not poisoned at an early age by his own unfortunate disposition"(Davis 103). "The soubrette" was the "working girl with bad manners and a good heart"(Davis 104). "The comedian" was a character type that was played as "Jew, Irish or German" and was "the most important member of the company" (Davis 104). Along with "the comedian" was the "light comedy boy" who "was always in love with the soubrette"(Davis 105). The last character that Davis mentions is "the second heavy" who "was just a bum" and "a tool of the villain"(Davis 105). Although Wheeler and Alfriend do not religiously adhere to Davis' formula, the characters in The Great Diamond Robbery match the character types in some ways.

Early in the play Mrs. Bulford is established as the villainess. Her character serves as a combination of Davis' heavy woman and heavy man. The audience's suspicions are immediately alerted to her villainy in the beginning of the first act because of her open admiration of the disreputable Senator McSorker, her comment that she "can play at respectability, but the play must not be too long or too tedious" (52), the way she listens to the conversation between Frank Kennett and her husband but pretends not to be listening by standing with her back turned, and her brother Mario Marino's comment that she has "been scheming for six months" (53) . The play even opens with Mrs. Bulford eavesdropping at a doorway. The most conspicuous clue to Mrs. Bulford's nature is her lamenting that she should not have gone to St. Petersburg and married "a respectable old gentleman" but that she and her brother "should have come direct

to New York; for here every politician is a gold mine and every clever woman can defy the law"(52-53).

Mrs. Bulford's debauchery is made extremely obvious for the benefit of a less sophisticated audience. By maintaining a common and familiar melodramatic formula for the villainess, the playwrights allow the audience a feeling of superiority because they already know the character even before the play fully unfolds. By the time Mrs. Bulford poisons her husband at the end of the first act the audience has already placed itself into the position of investigator, perhaps deducing that she would kill her husband sooner or later. Although a shocking spectacle, the murder is not completely unexpected, and is simple for a Ten-Twenty-Thirty audience to predict.

Likewise, it is elementary to label Mr. Bulford as the "easy mark," the unsuspecting husband. Although the audience is privy to the suspicious behavior of Mrs. Bulford that Mr. Bulford is not aware of, he should be able to sense the danger if he were not so easily duped. Many of the same cues that lead the audience to realize Mrs. Bulford's calculating nature are also cues to Mr. Bulford's oblivion. Ironically, when Frank Kennett comes to Mr. Bulford to beg for time to vindicate his name against the charge of embezzlement so as not to tarnish his engagement, Mr. Bulford deduces: "Oh, there's a woman at the bottom of it, is there? I thought as much"(55). Mr. Bulford accuses an innocent man of letting a woman lead him astray, whereas he has unknowingly fallen as prey to the schemes of his own new bride.

Mr. Bulford is eventually enlightened about the true identity of his wife (as the partner of Don Plon in the theft of the Garbiadoff diamonds) when he receives a letter from Count Garbiadoff. He realizes that she has orchestrated a plot to have the diamonds brought to him for safe-keeping so that she may regain them. The playwrights' method of revealing the truth by a letter that no one else reads is a sentimental remnant from an earlier era in American plays. It still blends effectively with Mr. Bulford's melodramatic death spectacle that is a combination of the poison and the realization of his wife's trickery: "Oh! My God, my God, the shame of it! The shame of it! It will kill me! It will kill me! Oh—Oh!—[*Falls, struggles in chair, dies. . .*]"(58). Mrs. Bulford is able to conceal her violent deed -- since she was the only one present -- by saying that Mr. Bulford made a deathbed accusation that Frank Kennett had poisoned him.

In Davis' character formula for melodrama, Frank Kennett would be the hero of the play. He bears tremendous troubles in the play, lacks wisdom, and is brave in the way that he confronts Mr. Bulford and bears his burdens. But because Kennett does not solve his problems himself and ultimately relies on the assistance of Detective Dick Brummage and Mary Lavelot to lift his problems from his shoulders, it seems more appropriate to label Kennett as a victim. He is not directly a victim of the crimes committed in the play, but he is an incidental victim of Mrs. Bulford. Because of her schemes he is unjustly accused of embezzlement, robbery, and the murder of Mr. Bulford. As the victim, Frank has the most artificial-sounding lines of the play, especially when he is in the throes

of danger, "You dastardly wretches—you are making a big mistake"(93) or when he is despairing over his predicament:

> FRANK. "Mary, I can fight adversity, and poverty and keep my spirit but I cannot fight fate. What cursed luck was it that sent me to that house that night and put me in these toils? I'll tell you what it was. I was thinking of your happiness"(64).

Mary Lavelot is Frank's love interest in the play. She is the heroine in the play because of her efforts to save Frank from going to jail. Even though the romantic lines between Frank and Mary demonstrate Mary's motivation to risk perilous dangers for Frank, the playwrights make her sacrificial nature even more obvious for the Ten-Twenty-Thirty audience by emphasizing her emotions with a name, Lavelot. As her name implies, she is motivated to help him because she "loves him a lot."

Although Owen Davis would presumably name Frank Kennett as the melodramatic hero, there is a character within the play who exhibits the hero-like wisdom that Kennett lacks. The investigative character, Detective Dick Brummage, acts as a savior in the play by figuring out the nuisances of Mrs. Bulford's plot and how to defeat her by publicly exposing the truth. In this sense, Brummage becomes a sort of hero for Kennett. Detective Dick Brummage pledges to help Frank and Mary just when they are on the brink of giving up hope that anyone can help them:

> BRUM. I'll be responsible for you. If they lock you up now, you can't help me. I've the superintendent with me, but the people we are going to fight have only the commissioners and the politicians.
> FRANK. And I, God help me, have nobody. [*Brummage is between Mary and Frank*]

> BRUM. Nonsense! You've got two of the best friends that any man ever had on this earth and they are going to help you.
> MARY. Yes, we are going to help you.
> FRANK. *You?*
> BRUM. Yes, she! [*Puts their hands together*] We've got a big fight, but if you'll be steered by Dick Brummage, we will run the real culprit to earth (68).

It appears that the playwrights want to make Detective Brummage possess the hero-like trait of selflessness. Nothing in the play indicates that a police supervisor has assigned this case to Brummage, nor is he a private investigator who is being compensated for his time and services. Brummage volunteers to help Frank because he is altruistically motivated to pay back a debt he feels he owes; however, he is pompous in his presentation: "I am Detective Brummage of the Central Office, the one friend that the newspapers haven't convinced. When I was a poor man and a friendless boy, Frank Kennett's father befriended me and helped me"(66). Detective Brummage's limited description of his childhood places him in the category of the "poor" and "young" hero whom Owen Davis discussed as a staple of the Ten-Twenty-Thirty melodrama.

Ironically, Detective Brummage's pompousness is reminiscent of the way that Augustus Thomas described the playwright Alfriend. Dick Brummage has other personality characteristics that cause one to wonder if Alfriend based this character on himself. For example, Brummage is brave in his willingness to challenge the corrupt political forces in New York at the turn of the nineteenth century. Brummage is also a brilliant strategist who is able to take control and command. All of these traits could be equated to a Civil War leader.

As a strategist, Detective Brummage uses a variety of investigative techniques. One such technique, made popular by the character Sherlock Holmes, is the use of disguises. Brummage is using a disguise when he first comes to the stage. He is dressed as a longshoreman and has done so to have Peggy Daly, a streetwise dancing girl, unknowingly lead him to Mrs. O'Geogan's store where Mary Lavelot is working so he can discuss Frank's dilemma with her. Once there, Brummage employs another investigative technique. He recruits an informant within a criminal element by confronting Peggy as to why she was there. Peggy confirms what the omniscient Brummage already knows. She has been sent by old lady Rosenbaum to watch for Kennett. Brummage rewards this informant with a payment of clothing from Mrs. O'Geogan's store.

Brummage also disguises himself as an Irishman delivering flowers to Mrs. Bulford. He uses this disguise to check on Mary who is posing as Mrs. Bulford's maid. Brummage convinces Mary to perform this undercover role to help him gain intelligence information regarding Mrs. Bulford. Brummage uses the flower bouquet as an undercover safeguard technique for Mary. He tells her that he will return, acting as if the first bouquet was the wrong delivery, and to leave a note in the flowers if she needs to communicate with him.

Wisely, Mary leaves a note in the bouquet telling Brummage that Mrs. Bulford and Rosenbaum have sent her to Rosenbaum's to pick up the diamonds, and that she knows "all about the glass"(85). Mrs. Bulford has realized that Mary has overheard the conversation with the recently deceased doctor regarding an evidentiary sherry glass that contained poison. In order to get rid of Mary, she

deceivingly convinces Madam Rosenbaum that Mary is a spy in cahoots with Don Plon, who Rosenbaum seeks revenge on. Rosenbaum, however, has figured out that Mary knows something that Mrs. Bulford wishes to hide. She demands that Mrs. Bulford give her the "Heart of Fire" diamond in exchange for concealing Mary until Mrs. Bulford has had an opportunity to become engaged to marry Senator McSorkel at his big party the next night and ensure protection for her crimes. Soon after, Brummage reads Mary's note and correctly determines that Mary has been trapped and kidnapped. He implements another investigative technique and conducts a surveillance of Rosenbaum while she is meeting Senator McSorkel in a bar.

Brummage utilizes yet another disguise in the play during a spectacle scene that is similar to the scene in Sherlock Holmes in which Holmes and the heroine seem to be trapped without the hope of escape. Brummage disguises himself in a patrolman's uniform in order to save Mary from Rosenbaum's lair. He had given Frank instructions to look for a policeman who would guide him to Rosenbaum's, but one of Rosenbaum's gang, Jimmy McCune, overheard this plan and shares it with Rosenbaum. She captures Frank by disguising McCune as the patrolman he is looking for, and puts him in the basement as well. The audience does not realize it until the end of the scene, but Detective Brummage slips inside dressed as a patrolman, instead of McCune, and settles down in front of the door as if he is drunk, all the while listening to Rosenbaum's admissions. At the height of the action, when Rosenbaum is threatening to kill Frank and Mary and their

escape route is blocked, Brummage steps forth in timely fashion and saves the day with his pistol (94).

Although admirable, Detective Brummage is not a likeable detective character. He does not endear himself to the audience in the way that Gillette's Sherlock Holmes or Thomas' Sheriff Jim Radburn does. Brummage's personal accolades proclaimed confidently in the third person make him seem egotistical: "But what are you going to do with the old man? How are you going to get away with Dick Brummage?"(94). He also seems condescending regarding gender: "Well keep your ears open tonight. A girl's instinct is better than a man's reason when she's got a man to save"(69).

Madam Rosenbaum, "a desperate character protected by the politicians and rolling in ill-gotten wealth,"(85) represents the "the second heavy" who is weaving her own schemes but who is also being used by Mrs. Bulford for her purposes.

Besides assisting Dick Brummage in the final scene without realizing it, the minor character, Mrs. O'Geogan, serves two important functions in the play. First, she is the Irish comedian character type whom Owen Davis refers to as an integral part of melodrama. Her comic relief bridged the play to the vaudeville performed while the curtain was down between acts. The jokes center on Mrs. O'Geogan's ignorance of language. Her ignorance comes as a result of being an Irish immigrant and from a lack of formal education due to being in a lower socio-economic class:

> Sen. . . . And you, Mrs. O'Geogan, are a queen of beauty and the jewel among women. The Kohinoor ain't in it with you.
> Mrs. O'G. [*R.C.*] Oh, thank you. I don't know Mrs. Kohinoor. But, senator, I'm wid you every toime (97).

Mrs. O'G's mistakes are not as funny to modern audiences and may even lead to confusion. Topicality has always been a problem with comedy over the decades. Colloquialisms and slang change over the years and lose meaning and importance to society.

Secondly, Mrs. O'Geogan's character sets up the class conflict that is necessary in true melodrama. Her conflict is with Senator McSorkel, or better said, Senator McSorkel's conflict is with Mrs. O'Geogan. Unlike the adversarial class conflict between Frank and Mr. Bulford, their class conflict conforms to Mrs. O'Geogan's humorous character. The Senator has purposefully forgotten his humble beginnings, but Mrs. O'Geogan has not: "I knew him when he tended bar in Tim O'Shaughnessy's and had to mix drinks in a buttoned up coat while I washed his shirt" (96). She regards the Senator very highly, so much so that she has decided that she would like to become Mrs. McSorkel. In the last act, she invites herself to attend the Senator's party and gets drunk, another simplistic form of humor for the Ten-Twenty-Thirty audience. She tells him of her romantic inclinations:

> Mrs. O'G. Wid the supper—wid the supper. Ah! Senator, you keep iligant liquors.
> Sen. How d'ye know?
> Mrs. O'G. Sure I imbibed—
> Sen. What? [*Goes up L.*}
> Mrs. O'G. I man, I inhaled—inhaled the aroma, and I intend to marry you.

> Sen. [*Aside*] The devil you do.
> Mrs. O'G. With your consent. You are—[*Business of patting him on the face*] my love's young dream. [*Business*] You are so beautiful, so fresh, so innocent. [*Putting her finger on his chin*] You're a daisy (98).

Unfortunately for Mrs. O'Geogan, the Senator considers Mrs. Bulford his social equal, not Mrs. O'Geogan. But Mrs O'Geogan has managed to distract him and causes him to miss Mrs. Bulford's grand entrance that he has waited for so anxiously all night. Without realizing it, Mrs. O'Geogan has aided Mary Lavelot and Dick Brummage by keeping the Senator out of the room while they confront Mrs. Bulford.

Mrs. Bulford's grand entrance is the finale' and the greatest spectacle of the play. The sensationalism of this melodramatic device is increased because of the calamity it contains, the suicide of Mrs. Bulford. It is the climax of the play and the dependence upon exact timing is crucial. The anticipation of the climax is built by the Senator's excitement as he checks his watch and instructs his guests to be ready when Mrs. Bulford comes down the stairs at midnight. The audience realizes that a resolution is coming, but the playwrights tease their expectations. Brummage, the ever-vigilant strategist, has orchestrated Count Garbiadoff's attendance through Mme. Mervaine, yet Brummage and Mary are noticeably absent as Mme. Mervaine tells the Count: "They are cautious, count. He probably did not want to witness this woman's triumph. Be careful, she is coming. If the earth does not open and swallow her before she gets to the bottom of the stairs, you will see the most magnificent victory of audacity" (99).

With that, Mrs. Bulford enters. She is fantastically dressed and bedecked in the stolen jewels. She descends the stairs and is unexpectedly confronted by Mary Lavelot at the bottom, still in her maid's costume: "I have come out of a living grave to confront you in your triumph and to tell you that the God of Justice reigns even in New York. I cannot stand aside even if I would" (99). Brummage steps onto the stage. When Brummage announces that the police are present and she recognizes the Count, Mrs. Bulford realizes that her scheme has unraveled and that the corrupt Senator is not present and cannot protect her. She consumes a vial of poison, falls, and dies. The detective ties up the loose ends of the mystery by announcing that the vial contains "Para poison," the same rare poison that killed Mr. Bulford, thus sealing her guilt as a murderer. Detective Brummage is awarded the final and timely triumph when he "holds his hand up authoritatively" and declares "Stand back! The lady belongs to the law—her diamonds to the Count Garbiadoff! Senator, it is twelve o'clock!"(100).

The audience embraces and shares in a victorious ending since the playwrights have made the audience a part of the winning team all through the play. They accomplished this by allowing them to know secrets of the play as characters speak their thoughts and plan aloud during asides, and by using familiar character types that facilitate easy predictions. The audience identifies with the investigator, who seemed to have superior knowledge, while other characters have to discover the facts for themselves. The audience knows all along that Mrs. Bulford is the murderer who stole the diamonds, not Frank Kennett, thus removing the play from the category of murder-mystery. Instead, it

is a successful and long-running crime melodrama in which the audience watches a detective unravel a villainess' schemes and become the hero's savior.

CHAPTER IV

CASTING AN ORIGINAL: SHERLOCK HOLMES

Edward Dithman's November 25, 1899 review of William Gillette's play Sherlock Holmes in Harper's Weekly declared that "a reader of the book would recognise many of Dr. Doyle's choicest inventions, yet, except in its principal personage, who is clearly Doyle's own detective, the latest development of the species, the play is more surely Gillette's than Doyle's" (1183). Dithman may not have realized how correct he was or how well he was predicting the future of both William Gillette and Sherlock Holmes when he made this comment just a little over two weeks after the play opened. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave literary birth to Sherlock Holmes, but as a writer, producer, and actor, William Gillette adopted and adapted Sherlock Holmes as his own creation.

Sherlock Holmes opened at the Garrick Theatre in New York City on November 6, 1899. Naturally the history of the play does not begin on that date, but rather in the mid 1890's. Having written fifty-six short stories and four novels about his ace English detective, the master of deductive reasoning, Sherlock Holmes, Doyle became bored with the character in 1893 and had him fall to his death at the Reichenbach Falls after a struggle with his archrival, Professor Moriarity. In 1897, Doyle, like many other authors of this time period, felt the urge to write a successful play. Aware of the immense popularity and continuing demand for Sherlock Holmes, Doyle attempted to revive him in a five-act play.

The British actor-manager Herbert Beerbohm Tree read the script and wanted to act in the play by doubling in the roles of Moriarty and Holmes; however, Doyle did not favor this idea (Kinsey 249). The script subsequently found its way to America and into the hands of Charles Frohman in New York.

Frohman requested that Doyle allow Gillette to revise the play and recommended that Gillette star in the play as Sherlock Holmes. Doyle agreed because he had seen and enjoyed Gillette's performance in Secret Service, a Civil War spy play written by Gillette. After reading all the Holmes stories that Doyle had written, Gillette took four weeks off from performing in Secret Service to write Sherlock Holmes (Tracy 56). Gillette completed a "first draft" and left it with his secretary who was staying at the Baldwin hotel in San Francisco (Cook 51). This draft was destroyed in the November 23, 1898 Baldwin Hotel fire, where Secret Service was appearing (Tracy 56). As Doyle's original manuscript of the play has never been found, it is probable that it may have burned in the same fire (Tracy 56).

Gillette rewrote the play and made arrangements to meet Doyle in England to gain his final approval. Being an actor, Gillette knew the effect of a dramatic entry, so when Doyle met Gillette as he got off the train Doyle was shocked to see a striking composition of the Sherlock Holmes that he had envisioned in age, appearance and manner. Gillette had arrived in costume complete with deerstalker cap, ulster, walking stick, and magnifying glass (Tracy 57). This was the beginning of an amiable relationship between Doyle and

Gillette, and Gillette was easily able to convince Doyle through his enthusiasm and charm that the play would be well received in the United States.

Even though Gillette wrote the play himself without collaborating with Doyle, Gillette gave Doyle his due credit as the creator of Sherlock Holmes. Doyle also received royalties from every production of the play. Because no copies of Doyle's manuscript have ever been found, a comparison of the two versions of the play by Doyle and Gillette is not possible; however, it has been said that Gillette's second version "got itself so thoroughly re-written into another play that nobody knows what the original play was about" (Carr 117). Gillette did stay within the framework of the ace detective character created by Doyle and gave the crowds a Sherlock Holmes who repeated familiar lines to Doctor Watson: "Elementary, my dear fellow! Elementary! The child's play of deduction! I'm only doing it for your amusement. . ."(Gillette 36).

Gillette based the plot of Sherlock Holmes on a fusion of Doyle's A Scandal in Bohemia, A Study in Scarlet, and The Final Problem (Starrett ix). In summary, Sherlock Holmes is hired by an anonymous person of royalty to regain a bundle of letters and photographs he has sent to a former lover who died during an illegitimate childbirth. Holmes' client wishes to keep the prior relationship secret from the woman he is engaged to marry. The items are in the possession of the dead woman's sister, Miss Alice Faulkner, who wishes to gain revenge on this person of royalty. Miss Faulkner begins to scheme with a dishonest married couple, the Larrabees, but she realizes that they are taking advantage of her to

satisfy their own greed. Miss Faulkner then refuses to provide them with the package for their purposes of blackmail. To obtain the package the Larrabees request the assistance of a friend of theirs, Sidney Prince, who happens to be a part of the criminal network headed by Professor Moriarity. Prince refers the Larrabees to Professor Moriarity. When they outline their scheme to him, Professor Moriarity envisions a golden opportunity to bring about Sherlock Holmes' demise in order to maintain Moriarity's criminal empire, while assisting them in retrieving the blackmail package. Utilizing his gang of thugs, Professor Moriarty makes three attempts on Sherlock Holmes' life, but all are in vain. Ultimately, Holmes completes his assignment by slyly convincing Miss Faulkner to return the sentimental package to its solicitous author.

The play was considered a melodramatic comedy and contains many of the typical elements of melodrama such as fortuitous coincidences, compulsory intersections of exact moments in time, spectacle scenes, and a neatly packaged ending that accounts for all the plots within the play. It is a coincidence that Mrs. Larrabee met Alice Faulkner just after her sister died. It is also a coincidence that Moriarity and his right-hand man, Bassick, are discussing Moriarity's scheme to apprehend Holmes' at nine o'clock that evening, when Prince calls to request help against Sherlock Holmes for the Larrabees. Proper execution of Moriarity's scheme is dependent upon exact times. The plan becomes more complicated when he adds the dimension of assisting the Larrabees. Moriarity orders Bassick to "Send Leuftner to Mrs. Larrabee at eleven. . . A quarter past ten- that gives you

three quarters of an hour to reach home. I shall want that counterfeit package at eleven tonight-twelve hours to make it" (Gillette 32). Precise timing is also essential to Holmes as seen in the spectacle scene in the play in which Holmes uses one of his tricks to save Miss Faulkner and himself. They escape from a secure gas chamber trap by darkening the room at the same Holmes leaves his lit cigar in a crevice on the other side of the room. The escape launches the neatly wrapped ending. Moriarity's gang is turned into the police along with Mr. Larrabee, Mrs. Larrabee is apprehended in Watson's office, Holmes handcuffs Moriarity and turns him over to the Inspector, Alice Faulkner willingly hands over the precious blackmail package to the famous lover, and Holmes and Alice are united.

The melodrama is increased in the play by the mystery surrounding the identity of Sherlock Holmes' client, which is never completely revealed. The characters write the name or whisper it in each other's ear. Representatives of the client, rather than the client himself, arrive in the last scene to obtain the package. The name of Alice Faulkner's sister also remains a mystery. The dead sister is an entirely absent character in the play, a rather modern technique for 1899. Following the pattern of shallow character development in classic melodrama, Gillette only mentions Alice's dead sister but does not maturate her character or even cite her name. The character's existence is essential to the play, but she is not the central character. Susan Glaspell later perfects the use of the absent character in her 1916 crime play, Trifles. Glaspell's absent character is the

central character in the play and of necessity Glaspell develops her in a manner more fitting to realism than melodrama.

Gillette also builds the momentum of the melodrama by leading the audience to believe that Holmes is hinting toward his own tragedy throughout the play: "Quite right, my dear fellow-quite right! But you see my time has come!" (Gillette 36). At first Holmes may have been referring to his own death, but as the play continues the focus of the impending tragedy changes. He is referring to the end of his life career as a cunning and lonely detective: ". . . *I've had enough!*- This one thing-that I shall do here, in a few moments-is the finish!" (Gillette 71). Holmes is facing a melodramatic dilemna. In order to solve the case he must fool the woman he loves. Personal feelings are making it difficult to remain loyal to the work that he is driven to as an expert:

> WATSON: (*going to him)* My dear Holmes-I'm afraid
> that plan of-gaining her confidence and regard-went
> a little further than you intended? *(* Holmes *nods assent.)*
> But-if you both love each other—
> HOLMES: *(quickly-his hand on* WATSON's *shoulder).*
> No,no! Don't say it, Watson! Don't tempt me with such
> a thought!. . .(71).

Gillette's most controversial facet of the plot was the romantic overtones he added to the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Miss Faulkner. Gillette asked Doyle's permission before writing this aspect into the play by sending a comically punning telegram: "MAY I MARRY HOLMES?" Doyle replied: "YOU MAY MARRY HOLMES OR MURDER OR DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE WITH HIM" (Starrett x). This change in Sherlock Holmes was a vast

shift from the original bachelor character fanatically devoted to his solitary profession. Gillette's reasoning for adding romance to the play was not given, but it can be surmised that Gillette was aware that economically he needed to please an audience that expected romance in melodrama. Gillette hints of romantic interests between Holmes and Miss Faulkner throughout the text and culminates them in the last lines of the play:

> HOLMES:*(looks down into her face before speaking).* Do you remember that you asked me a question just now? *(*ALICE *nods just a little.)* Well, this is the answer-I do care for you-I do!-But I'm not telling you anything-you knew it perfectly well before.
> ALICE: But I think it's just as well for you to say it.
> HOLMES: I *do* say it-but, dearest one, that must be the end of it! Do you fancy for one second that I'd allow your young life to be tangled up with a life like mine?-You at the very beginning-I only a few years from the end at the very most.-Why, it would be simply a—
> ALICE: *(interrrupting).* But, listen, please!-I want you to-oh, I want to tell you!-All that is nothing-*nothing*-because whatever life you have left is my life too-all my life-all the life I want! *(*HOLMES *looks down in her eyes for an instant-then puts his arms around her and draws her close to him, her head against his breast and her face turned to front or near it, for final spotlight which holds the two faces for a moment, then slowly fades out.)* (77)

Holmes internal struggle is obvious in these last lines. Reluctantly he gives in to the sentimental pleas of Alice, or at least it appears to be so. By not actually "marrying" Holmes, Gillette leaves the faithful Sherlock Holmes fans with a trace of hope that perhaps this softening of Holmes' feelings is only temporary and the stoic detective will return in his next episode.

Gillette confines the sentimental language in the play to the conversations between Holmes and Miss Faulkner. The manner of Holmes using a calling card to first meet Alice is also reminiscent of sentiment. Another bit of sentiment is the bundle of letters, photographs and inscribed jewelry Alice secures while waiting for a chance to gain revenge in memory of her sister.

Because the play was a melodrama, it provided Gillette with ample opportunities to exhibit his "modern" ideas as a producer. The play was full of action scenes that were conducive to Gillette's technical feats of light and sound. The lighting effects helped to Americanize the play. The effects required electricity controlled by a board designed especially for the set. One favorite technical feat in the play was the "dark change" between the first and second scenes of Act II, where the curtain never fell but Professor Moriarity's office became the completely different apartment of Sherlock Holmes in thirty-five seconds (Tracy 58).

Another way that Gillette increased the action in the play was by avoiding the stage convention of the "aside" and the long monologue popular in plays during this time period. Gillette was a proponent of realism, and the removal of these two items encouraged the realistic motion of the play. The text is full of stage directions in parenthesis that even indicate where the actor should be standing on stage and where he should enter and exit. Gillette's original manuscripts of the play include even more handwritten stage directions to himself

as to how he should perform various actions and speak lines when in the role of Sherlock Holmes (Gillette manuscripts).

Gillette did not remove the stage convention of the overheard conversation, however; his use of the convention is not as trite as its use in British and American plays of the mid eighteenth century. Gillette uses the convention three times in Sherlock Holmes: when Terese, the Larrabee's maid, listens at the keyhole of a room Holmes has asked her to wait in and she overhears Holmes discuss purchasing the false packet of letters the Larrabee's created (Gillette 39), when Alice is tied up with rope and placed inside the only cupboard in the gas chamber and overhears Holmes and Mr. Larrabee negotiating over the false packet of letters (Gillette 57), and when Alice is waiting for Holmes in Watson's dispensary and overhears Holmes talking to the client's representatives (Gillette 74,75).

Disguises, a favorite surveillance technique and undercover method of Sherlock Holmes in the original stories, also appear in Gillette's play. For example, Holmes disguises himself so well as an old man that his friend Doctor Watson does not recognize him: "Good Lord! Is that *you* Holmes?" (Gillette 66). The use of disguises is not limited to Holmes. Holmes' enemy, Moriarity, has copied this technique from Holmes. Moriarity disguises himself as a cab driver and Holmes says that Moriarity is "in the open streets-under some clever disguise-watching at a chance to get at me" (Gillette 67). Nor are disguises limited to the major characters. Forman, an assistant to Holmes, is directed by Holmes to

disguise himself as a butler in the Larrabees' home, then as a cab driver, and Holmes' even orders him to "change to your beggar disguise No. 14" (Gillette 41). Referring to "No. 14" implies that disguises are frequently used in Holmes' investigations and that there are at least 13 other variations of costume. Marge Larrabee uses multiple disguises by disguising herself as Alice Faulkner in order to try to fool Holmes, as Mrs. Smeedley to attempt to gain information from Holmes, and as a society lady to trap Holmes. The Larrabees even disguise their name: their real name is Chetwood.

Gillette found ingenious ways to distinguish the major characters from the minor characters. Sherlock Holmes, Moriarity, and Alice Faulkner are the main characters in Sherlock Holmes. Gillette managed to introduce the main characters into the play before they actually appeared on the stage. A few of the minor characters, mainly the Larrabees and Sidney Prince, discuss them at the beginning of Act I Scene 1. Holmes appears in the middle of the scene and then Faulkner appears toward the end of the scene. Moriarity does not appear until Scene 2. This introduction sequence added to the melodrama by increasing the audience's anticipation of the characters' appearances.

Not only did Gillette give the main characters different initial appearances, but their language was different as well. As mentioned earlier, only Faulkner and Holmes use sentimental language and almost all the comedic lines of the play are spoken by Holmes:

HOLMES: Read it for me Watson, there's a good fellow. My eyes,you know-cocaine, and all those things you like so much. *(*WATSON *takes letter and goes to lamp as* HOLMES *drops onto the ottoman among the cushions.)*
WATSON: "Dear Sir."
HOLMES: Who-thus-addresses me?
WATSON: *(glances at signature).*"James Larrabee."
HOLMES: *(whimsically).* And what has James to say this evening?
WATSON: *(repeats).*"Dear Sir."
HOLMES: I hope he won't say that again. (40)

The language of the play was very Americanized, most notably in Holmes' speech. A few of the very minor characters have foreign accents; such as Terese, "*I do not like eet*, madame – *eet – here - zis place* - what you do-ze young lady you have up zere! Eet eez not well! I cannot remain to see!" (Gillette 8). Craigin, one of Moriarity's gang says, "An' we comes in for it w'en we 'ears that whistle, eh?" (Gillette 51).

Besides adding a romantic dimension to Holmes' personality, Gillette created other changes in Holmes' world as well. Since Gillette was starring in the role, many of the changes he made in Holmes' language and habits were customized to his own convenience. The language was presumably Americanized to allow an easier portrayal of the character by Gillette or perhaps to ease the middle class American's understanding of the lines. Because Gillette enjoyed smoking so much, he increased the frequency that Holmes smoked cigarettes, cigars and his pipe in the script (Tracy 58). Gillette also changed the shape of Holmes' pipe from a straight pipe to the calabash or meerschaum pipe. He altered it because the curved pipe made it easier to speak (Kinsey 248). While these traits

were blended into the traditional Sherlock Holmes image, there was one trait from the play that was not: Gillette's custom of lounging in front of the fireplace on cushions in a brocade dressing gown (Tracy 58).

No matter what changes Gillette made in the script over the thirty years of his 1300 performances, the public associated him with the character of Sherlock Holmes so completely that he had trouble escaping the role. Theaters would only engage his other plays if he promised to stage at least one performance of Sherlock Holmes while he was there. As events proved, Gillette was well suited for the role of Sherlock Holmes in personality and temperament. Charles Higham noted of Gillette in The Adventures of Conan Doyle, "He did not have to pretend to be taciturn, cold, reserved and sardonically logical. His humour was acrid and mocking. The opposite sex was no longer of interest to him [since] the death of his wife...He was eccentric as Holmes. He was a night owl."

William Gillette became Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes became William Gillette. Gillette's contributions to the legacy of Sherlock Holmes were monumental. Frederic Dorr Steele said he used photographs of Gillette and made models to look like him when illustrating The Return of Sherlock Holmes in Collier's Weekly (1903) because "everyone agreed that Mr. Gillette was the ideal Sherlock Holmes" and copying him was "inevitable" (Steele xxvii). Even Basil Rathbone's cinematic portrayals during the 1940's owe something to Gillette's legacy. By breathing life into the character and creating spectacular stage performances he successfully brought exciting theater to the middle class.

Gillette was able to prove a part of Dithman's prophecy to be incorrect: "But I ...do not believe it will ever thrive except with reasonably sophisticated audiences" (1183).

CHAPTER V

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE: THE THIRD DEGREE

Charles Klein's The Third Degree (1908) is a crime play that advances into the type of problems explored by realism while still maintaining elements of melodrama. Klein combines these dramatic tendencies into a treatment of social, economic, and political reform. As a nineteenth-century playwright, Klein was well-known for these impulses as seen in his other plays such as The District Attorney (1895), The Lion and the Mouse (1905), and The Money Makers (1914). A 1913 article in Current Opinion, for instance, criticized Klein and other reform playwrights for their affinity for realism: "Our playwrights attempt to reveal life as it is, but, instead of seeing it steadily and whole, they concentrate their attention upon its most unpleasant aspects"(250). In The Third Degree Klein focuses on the negativity of slanted journalism, selective legal representation in the justice system, and societal materialism. All three of these issues coalesce into one particular institution that Klein also aims to expose, police work and investigation.

One example of realism in The Third Degree is the atmosphere of verisimilitude that Charles Klein builds in Act I, Scene One. Like Glaspell's later play, Trifles, the set is very detailed: "... *a light Louis XVI chair in dark upholstery R. of this table. Below fireplace against wall, a Colonial grandfather's clock. Between fireplace and clock a small stand, on which are several bronze*

figures, or ivory carvings; up C. a large archway and Bay-window, in which is a window seat"(5). The extraordinary detail of the set is unlike earlier melodramas produced in the Ten-Twenty-Thirty theatre that survived on generic scenery used repeatedly from play to play.

The Third Degree opens in Robert Underwood's apartment. Underwood is an antique dealer who has overstepped the limitations of his debt. Because he has sold items that were merely loaned to him, he is about to face prosecution. He is pondering his predicament when he is visited by Howard Jeffries, Jr., a friend who loaned him money while they were in college together at Yale.

Jeffries is the son of an extremely wealthy man, Howard Jeffries, Sr. The young Jeffries has been cut off from the family wealth because his father did not approve of his marriage to a girl who worked as a waitress in her father's saloon. At one time Jeffries was like Dick Gilder in Within the Law, who received any financial assistance from his wealthy father that he desired, but now Howard Jeffries, Jr.'s father has terminated his large monetary allowance. He explains to Underwood that he has not been able to maintain a job and asks Underwood to loan him a few thousand dollars so that he can prevent his wife from going to work. Underwood explains that he does not have any money to give him. Jeffries is obviously drunk and passes out on the couch.

At that point, Jeffries' stepmother, Mrs. Alicia Jeffries, Sr., comes to Underwood's apartment. Unable to rouse Jeffries, Underwood puts a screen around the couch to hide him. Although this action seems like it will lead to the

standard melodramatic convention of the overheard conversation, oddly it does not. The screen is merely used to conceal Jeffries from his stepmother.

Mrs. Jeffries Sr. has come in response to a suicide letter that Underwood has sent her. Again, Klein hints at the melodramatic by using the device of a sentimental letter as the root of the impending conflict in the play. At one time, Mrs. Jeffries was engaged to Underwood, and she has remained a friend to him by encouraging her social acquaintances to make their purchases from him, until she recently discovered his dishonesty. Although he begs her, she refuses to help him any further and leaves without believing his threat to kill himself even though he melodramatically tells her: "If you desert me now, you'll be sorry till the day of your death"(16). After she leaves, Underwood turns out the lights and exits the apartment. A pistol shot is heard off-stage.

The next scene shows Jeffries inside the apartment being interrogated by Captain Clinton in the presence of Detective Sergeant Maloney and another police officer. Captain Clinton accuses Jeffries of killing Underwood and refuses to accept any other possible explanation. During the course of the questioning, Captain Clinton holds up the pistol he believes Jeffries used to shoot Underwood. Light catches the silver barrel and the glint causes Jeffries to fall into a trance, during which he repeats everything the Captain says. Jeffries' parroting results in a false confession to the murder after seven hours of interrogation, after which he falls asleep.

This scene is the most highly acclaimed scene in The Third Degree, and was considered at the time to be "one of the cleverest and most startling

experiments in melodramatics"(Current Literature 427). The concept of "the influence of the law of suggestion" was a new topic that was emerging in psychological research and experimentation (Flower 141). Jeffries' interrogation and resulting hypnotism can be considered a melodramatic spectacle.

The interrogation scene is also Klein's first attack in the play on police procedures of investigation. Essentially, the detectives responding to the scene do not conduct any valid inquiry. There is no indication in the play that any of the three make a bonafide attempt to locate clues at the scene. Of the three agents of the police present, the highest-ranking investigator, Captain Clinton, delegates himself as the interrogator. The interview is completely accusatory, rather than an open-minded effort to obtain the facts: "You did it, and you know you did"(17), Clinton says at one point.

Rather than view the case as a questionable death investigation, Captain Clinton immediately concludes that it is a matter of homicide. Because the police found Jeffries trying to leave the locked apartment, Clinton relies on this fact as the basis for his faulty inductive reasoning that Jeffries therefore murdered Underwood. As a result of Clinton's badgering insistence about Jeffries' guilt, Jeffries becomes a victim rather than a suspect. Clinton is only interested in obtaining the desired result confession, and does not particularly care how he obtains it. Now that he has it, he can consider the case cleared, allowing him to improve his statistics in the department and move on to another case. He is not willing to address the possibility of a false confession, and even ignores contrary evidence presented to him by Dr. Bernstein:

> DR. BERNSTEIN. Some smoke and a great many powder marks; must have been pretty close range, Captain.
> CAPT. CLINTON. It's all right, we've got him to rights. By Gum! It's daylight. It's taken seven hours to get it out of him. Is his wife downstairs? . . .
> DR. BERNSTEIN. I'm not so sure, Captain, that Underwood didn't do this himself.
> CAPT. CLINTON. Well, I am; this man has just confessed. (20-21)

Another example of Captain Clinton's refusal to accept the facts of an authentic investigation, rather than creating his own account of the killing, occurs when Jeffries' wife, Annie Jeffries, arrives at the scene. Captain Clinton accuses her of being the Mrs. Jeffries whom the elevator attendant remembers announcing to Mr. Underwood, even though the boy did not identify her as the woman he saw the previous night. Captain Clinton recalls the background investigation he conducted on behalf of Mr. Jeffries, Sr.:

> CAPT. CLINTON. Up at college, eh? Yes, I remember the affair—I sent a man to New Haven to look up your record for his father.
> ANNIE. Well, you found nothing against *me*—did you?
> CAPT. CLINTON. No, but your father's record wasn't over-clean.
> ANNIE. Can I help that?

Again, Captain Clinton jumps to a baseless conclusion regarding reputation and character. He infers that she must be a criminal because of her father's criminal history. He does not believe her denials about being a visitor to Underwood's apartment that night.

Despite the confession, Annie is confident of her husband's innocence and hopes that his father will be supportive of him despite the bitter resentment he

harbors toward her. She is disappointed when Jeffries Sr. arrives and takes the confession at face value. Annie pleads with the father to help Howard and provide him with legal representation. Mr. Jeffries asks if she would be willing to get a divorce if he did so, and Annie agrees until Mr. Jeffries clarifies the fact that he will not publicly admit to supporting his son. Annie then declares that they do not need his help.

Annie visits Mr. Jeffries' personal attorney's office daily for a month, even though he refuses to see her. She happens to be in the waiting room when Mr. and Mrs. Jeffries go to see Attorney Richard Brewster. Mr. Jeffries reiterates his position of refusing to defend his son because it will "set the seal of approval on crime"(38). He opines that the whole business is "disagreeable" but in the spirit of realism Attorney Brewster explains to him: "Yes, sir, it is disagreeable—but—unfortunately—it is life"(62). After he leaves, Mrs. Jeffries secretly asks Brewster if she can meet Annie. He agrees to allow her to do so, but decides he should speak to her first.

At this point, Attorney Brewster becomes the investigating fact-finder in the play. He acts as a facilitator who brings all the pieces of the puzzle together. Annie knows the facts, and is the strategist who lays them out for him. Although she is the driving force in saving Howard, she cannot accomplish the feat of freeing Howard herself because she does not carry the weight of authority that Brewster does. Annie realizes that she needs Brewster because of his civic standing, and that he must be persuaded to take up Howard's defense. She

accomplishes this by forcing Brewster to undergo self-examination. Klein uses Brewster's self-discoveries to critique the role of lawyers in the legal system:

> BREWSTER: Right or wrong—my country, that is, my client—'tis of thee—that's the painful part of the lawyer's profession, Mrs. Jeffries—the—client's weakness is the lawyer's strength—when men hate each other, and rob each other, we lawyers don't pacify them—we dare not—we encourage them—we pit them against each other for profit—if we didn't—they'd go to some lawyer who did. When a man wants to do the wrong thing—he's always willing to pay a good price—to the lawyer who advises him to do it. (38-39)

Brewster agrees to talk to Annie after he makes a revealing comment to the elder Mrs. Jeffries:

> MRS. JEFFRIES: Thank you, Mr. Brewster—you're so kind— it needs a great deal of patience to be a lawyer, doesn't it?
> BREWSTER: It needs almost everything, except conscience. (40)

Witnessing Annie's confidence in Howard's innocence, Brewster is willing to listen to Annie's explanation of Howard's confession. When he hears that a doctor believes that Howard was a subject of "hypnotic influence," Brewster sees a chance to change the tide of the legal work he has been engaged in and for once participate in a worthwhile case where he will represent an innocent person (47). He is even willing to go against the will of Mr. Jeffries, knowing full well that it may produce a financial risk for himself if he loses him as a client.

Finally, Annie gets an opportunity to meet with the rich Mrs. Jeffries, but she does not intimidate her. This is the scene that shows Annie's great strength.

In a melodramatic speech to Mrs. Jeffries she boldly defends herself against the character assassination she received in the newspaper:

> ANNIE. It's all talk—scandal—lies—not a word of truth in it—Howard never had a jealous thought of me—and as for me—why I worship the ground he walks on—didn't he sacrifice everything for me? Didn't he give you and his father up? Didn't he marry me? Didn't he try to make a lady of me?—do you suppose I'd give a man like that cause of jealousy? My God, what do they think I am? *(Pause—turns goes up L. a bit)* What do the papers care—they print things that cut into a woman's heart without giving it a second thought—without knowing or caring whether it's true or not—as long as it interests and amuses their readers. (53)

Annie's speech is also an instance in the play of Klein's commentary against the media's behavior during a high-profile investigation.

Annie's determination likens her to Mary, a character in Bayard Veiller's Within the Law. Both are willing to work to achieve their goals: "Well, what are we to do—stop every effort to save him because things look a bit black for him? No ma'am—I wasn't brought up that way—I'm going to make a fight"(52). Another similarity is that both have seen the justice system punish the wrongly accused. Mary herself served prison time for a crime she did not commit. In Annie's case it is her father:

> MR. JEFFRIES. The daughter of a convict---
> ANNIE. He was a good man at that. But he refused to pay police blackmail and he was railroaded to prison for hiding a friend who'd committed a crime. But that's forgotten now—
> MR. JEFFRIES. Forgotten!
> ANNIE. But he was unfortunate—won't you believe that, Mr. Jeffries—why, Billy Sands' hand was always in his pocket. . . . (29)

In a sense, both are victims of the justice system. The difference between the two is that Mary seeks revenge on her accusers and holds bitterness toward the past, whereas Annie simply wishes to see a positive outcome in the future. Mary only works "within the law" technically, but Annie works fully "within the law" through an attorney to obtain results: "But there's only one Mr. Brewster—and he's the greatest lawyer in the world—and he's going to help us—he's going to save Howard's life---"(43). Annie remains "within the law" until, later on, even she is forced to step outside it to make sure justice is achieved.

After Annie's speech and her speculation about Howard's false confession, a thought suddenly strikes Mrs. Jeffries: "Underwood must have kept his word and shot himself--"(54). She admits to Annie that she was at Underwood's apartment that night because she had received a letter wherein he threatened to kill himself. She agrees to bring it to Brewster's house later that evening. Although she could have prevented her stepson from undergoing the accusation of being a murderer, she had not done because she was afraid of how she would be treated by the media and the appearance of the situation to those in her social circle.

Acting on Annie's information, Brewster has set up a meeting with Captain Clinton and Dr. Bernstein for that evening. This meeting constitutes Charles Klein's second point-blank attack on the police detective's tactics, including the use of the newspapers to unfairly sway public opinion. Captain Clinton's demeanor as he comes onto the stage sets the tone for the rest of the scene: "*He lumbers in, in an aggressive, half-amused manner, indicating his*

supreme confidence in his own infallibility—"(62). He is still closed-minded and unwilling to hear the facts:

> CAPT. CLINTON. Now, Mr. Brewster, explode your bomb but I warn you I've made up my mind.
> BREWSTER. Well, I've made up my mind—so at least we can start even.
> CAPT. CLINTON Yes.
> BREWSTER. As I stated in my letters, Captain Clinton,-- I don't want to use your methods in this matter—I don't want to spread reports about you—or accuse you in the papers—that's why I asked you to come over and discuss the matter informally with me—I want to give you a chance to change your attitude.
> CAPT. CLINTON. Don't want any chance.
> BREWSTER. You mean you don't want to change your attitude.
> CAPT. CLINTON. Well—that's what I mean, I suppose.
> BREWSTER. In other words, you have found this—this boy guilty and you refuse to consider evidence which may tend to prove otherwise---
> CAPT. CLINTON. 'Tain't my business to consider evidence--it's up to the Prosecuting Attorney.
> BREWSTER. It will be—but at present it's up to you. (63-64)

Brewster continues to point out Clinton's manipulation of the newspapers to harm Mrs. Jeffries. He also hints that Clinton is guilty of bribery: "They might add that you are also the richest man in the department--a millionaire on a salary of $3,000 a year—but I won't go into that--"(66).

Brewster then confronts Captain Clinton with numerous other situations where he received confessions from individuals who were later found to be innocent, including one from a man who died in prison before another man confessed to the same crime. Dr. Bernstein and Attorney Brewster explain their theory of how the hypnotism happened and accuse him of using "visual

captivation of Howard Jeffries attention" (69). But Clinton still does not acknowledge that he used a "third degree" or "mental torture" (69). Klein never makes it quite clear in the play as to whether Clinton knew he was obtaining the confessions by purposefully hypnotizing individuals. It is as though the hypnotisms were a result of his negligent treatment of the suspects, which makes the investigator less conniving but even more unobservant.

Mr. Jeffries, Sr. has also attended this meeting and Brewster explains the implications of the new information and promises that Annie will deliver the woman who was actually at Underwood's apartment that evening. After witnessing Captain Clinton's confrontation, Mr. Jeffries finally sees that his son may be innocent and expresses his gratitude to the attorney.

Annie refuses to expose the name of the woman at Underwood's and wants the woman to be allowed to do so herself. While Brewster is speaking to Captain Clinton, Mrs. Jeffries arrives at Brewster's and Annie takes her into the next room. She breaks the news to Mrs. Jeffries that Captain Clinton will want to arrest her as a material witness. Still afraid of destroying her social reputation and losing the luxurious life she leads, Mrs. Jeffries becomes hysterical and tries to get the letter she has shown Annie back from her. When she and Annie enter the room where Captain Clinton and Brewster are, Annie presents the suicide letter, which is read aloud. They both assume that the "Mrs. Jeffries" referred to in the letter is Annie. Always putting others in front of her own interests, Annie shows sympathy for Mrs. Jeffries, Sr.and does not allow her to step forward. When Captain Clinton leaves, Brewster realizes by the address on the envelope who the

letter was really intended for, but Annie has already decided that her reputation has been ruined by the media so she will still pretend to be the recipient. She leaves to meet Clinton to be taken to police headquarters and to swear to this untruth.

In the final act, the audience realizes that Annie's perjured affidavit and the production of the letter caused Howard Jeffries to be released. Although Jeffries appears to be cleared in the final scene, the process of the dismissal of his charges is notably absent. The audience thus does not experience the satisfaction of seeing everything put right. Klein does not include any other city officials in the play, and allows an incompetent or purposefully corrupt Captain Clinton and other inept police officers to represent the justice system. By doing so, Klein taints the entire system in the viewer's mind.

The play is quickly and melodramatically wrapped up in the final act where all the loose ends are tied into a neat package. The fact that Mrs. Jeffries was the real visitor to Underwood's apartment is never revealed, so Mr. Jeffries still views Annie as unsuitable for his son. He hatches a plan to take his son abroad for a rest and to initiate divorce proceedings based on Annie's false admissions. Selflessly, Annie encourages Howard to go. The play ends with Brewster revealing to Howard what Annie has done for him in order to convince him to stay. Brewster suggests that Howard study law so that he can work for him.

The so-called "crime" this play is based on never occurs. The audience of course knows there is no homicide. They know that Underwood has shot himself,

because they have been privileged to hear his threat of suicide. The suicide is not committed on stage before their eyes, like Mrs. Bulford's melodramatic suicide spectacle in The Great Diamond Robbery, but the audience does hear the shot. They are convinced from the beginning. It is the supposedly "respectable" characters who must be convinced that it is a suicide and that Howard Jeffries is innocent. The only crime committed in the play is perjury. Ironically, Annie, the most idealistic character in the play, commits it in an effort to lend credence to the suicide letter and thereby help prove that the allegation of homicide is unfounded.

In The Third Degree Klein instills a fear of investigators into the audience's minds. By seeing an innocent person who was in the wrong place at the wrong time accused of murder, viewers receive the news that virtually anyone could become a victim of a bungling or corrupt detective if they fell into unfortunate circumstances. Charles Klein does not place the detective in the familiar and comfortable melodramatic formula role of the brilliant detective who saves the day, such as Sherlock Holmes, Sheriff Jim Radburn, or Detective Dick Brummage. The detective is now of questionable character. In The Third Degree, Klein cultivates a society's seed of distrust in urbanized institutions in 1908 by discrediting the detective and making him the villain, rather than the hero.

CHAPTER VI

CLOSE TO THE EDGE: WITHIN THE LAW

Relying on advice from Dion Boucicault about formulas for a melodramatic play, general playwriting advice from Henry Cecille DeMille, and extensive personal experiences as a newspaper reporter and magazine writer, Bayard Veiller launched his playwriting career in 1912 with a crime melodrama, Within the Law. Veiller, known as "Bydey" to his friends, had begun working on magazines and newspapers such as The World, Star, Mail and Express, and New York Evening Journal in both New York City and Chicago by the time he was sixteen. During his various jobs with newspapers he was assigned to the Jefferson Market Police Court and to the Police Headquarters in New York City. The events he was exposed to, the contacts he made, and the real-life drama he saw were invaluable to him. In his autobiography Veiller recalled that he had "a speaking acquaintance with four or five hundred policemen," and that the "speeches of great lawyers, the heavy somber ruling of moderately good judges," and "even the tricky shysters in the police courts" proved useful to him when it came to playwriting. Quite straightforwardly, Veiller admitted: "My contacts with the police made Within the Law possible"(Veiller 55).

A particularly inspiring contact was a conversation that he and other reporters had with Theodore Roosevelt shortly after Roosevelt had been appointed Police Commissioner. Veiller was working as a court reporter at Jefferson Market

at the time. Roosevelt, the Police Commissioner of the New York City Police Department from May 6, 1895 through April 19,1897, wanted to confront the corruption within the department, which was so rampant it was considered routine. In addition to brutal treatment of suspects, officers received bribes from prostitution rings and gamblers, and the sale of the position of police captain within the department was not unusual. Commissioner Roosevelt set about achieving the task with new disciplinary rules and the support of the Lexow Committee. Becoming known as the "reform police commissioner" (Andrews), Roosevelt arranged a meeting with the reporters to complain about the way the police were being portrayed in the newspapers (Veiller 58). The reporters replied that the police were getting exactly what they deserved: "We don't like lying cops and we don't like cops who bring in beaten-up prisoners, and we don't like cops who live on streetwalkers"(Veiller 59). Roosevelt responded in kind, saying that it was now his job to make sure that the police got what they deserved. His next statement gave Veiller free reign for Within the Law: "The cops have nothing to conceal. They've got no favors to ask. I have no favors to ask. If you see a brutal cop, tell the people about it. Tell me about it. . . Now then. . . it's your turn!" (Veiller 60).

Veiller assuredly announced what he saw, not only to Roosevelt, but to the playgoing public as well. He did not limit himself to an exposure of police tactics, but also included problems with the courts and legal system. The stage would become the vehicle for his worldly, cynical opinions. He has a prosecutor in Within the Law ironically and matter-of-factly remark: "Nowadays we don't

call them courts of justice, we call them courts of law"(87). As a court reporter and police reporter in the 1900's, Veiller had witnessed injustice, graft, and unequal political treatment of the rich over the poor for so long that his craving for justice wove itself into a condemnatory play. In Within the Law, an innocent person returns, like Dumas' Count of Monte Cristo, and ultimately triumphs by learning to manipulate the legal system, gaining revenge and justice by frustrating the powerful people who have been routinely corrupting the system to their own advantage. Veiller's protagonist, Mary Turner, says:

> Agnes, the richest men in the country have made their fortunes not because of the law, but in spite of it. They made up their minds what they wanted to do and engaged lawyers clever enough to show them how they could do it and still stay inside the law. Anyone with brains can get rich in this country if he'll engage the right lawyer. I have the brains, and my attorney, Harris, is showing me the law—the wonderful twisted law that was made for the rich. As long as we keep inside the law we're safe. (98-99)

One later commentator, John Chapman, said of Within the Law: "Life is really satisfying in plays like this"(xi).

In Veiller's play, salesgirl Mary Turner is falsely accused of shoplifting in the store where she works. The owner decides to make an example of her and recommends a stiff punishment to the judge. Mary is sentenced to three years in prison. She insists that she is innocent and explains the plight of the store's salesgirls to the owner. She tells him how the overworked salesgirls would not steal if they were given adequate wages to buy the necessities of life. Her pleas are lost on the greedy storeowner. Mary pledges that she will make him pay.

Four years later Mary leaves prison and lives with Agnes, whom she met while incarcerated. She is also a friend of other characters who have broken the law. She gives them guidance about making a living by engaging in schemes that are not quite illegal. Meanwhile, she has met Dick Gilder, the son of the storeowner who sent her to prison. She feigns interest in him to gain revenge on his father; soon he falls in love with her and they marry. When Mary reveals the marriage to Dick's father -- and her reason -- Dick refuses to believe it and reasserts his love for her.

Police Inspector Burke, well acquainted with the Gilders, dislikes Mary and thinks that her schemes make a mockery of the police department. Inspector Burke concocts a scheme to entrap Mary and her friends, and has one of his informants propose the plan to Joe Garson, a friend of Mary's. Garson accepts the offer of the informant to be involved in a house burglary, against Mary's advice. Garson does not know that the house is Dick Gilder's, but Mary figures it out.

When Mary goes to try to stop the theft, Garson discovers the theft is a set-up and shoots the informant with a revolver with a silencer attached to it. The police hiding in the next room do not hear the shot. Coincidentally, Inspector Burke bursts into the room just after the shot, and Dick Gilder protects Mary by acting as if the only reason she is there is to talk to him. When Inspector Burke discovers the body of his prize informant on the floor, he accuses Mary of the crime. Mary says that the shooter was Dick, and that he did it because he was protecting his home against a burglar. Dick is arrested and Mary and others are

brought in for questioning. Inspector Burke stages a confession scenario, wherein Garson confesses and Mary and Dick are set free. Burke produces a letter containing the real shoplifter's confession and sends it to the storeowner to clear Mary's reputation. Mary belatedly realizes her love for Dick after Garson is taken away to prison, and the play ends with their embrace.

Though clearly a melodrama in every sense, Within the Law also leans toward being a social problem play, like those of the teens and early 1920's, and contains elements in common with the victory of realism. In subject matter it resembles the "wave of melodrama which dramatized current events" that Arthur Hobson Quinn describes as occurring around 1910. Quinn observes that these playwrights usually surfaced from newspaper offices (Quinn 109). The September 12, 1912 New York Times review of Within the Law hints that the play might be considered a "problem melodrama," but goes on to say that the "audiences will not seen (sic) anything in it but an exciting entertainment of the most vivid kind." Quinn also mentions "crook plays" revolving around investigative methods that succeeded the social commentary plays, though he dismisses them as scarcely noteworthy (Quinn 110). Within the Law certainly bears traces of the "crook play," such as its reliance on interrogation procedures, but Veiller surpasses the simplicity of the "crook play" by adding his social views.

Veiller was writing in a time when melodrama was still popular, as it had been in England and the United States since the mid 1800's. The nineteenth century trappings of melodrama were wearing thin, however, and a "new

melodrama" demanded "probability" rather than "possibility," while still requiring an ending that would bring satisfaction to the audience, along with "situations that are knit together" and continuous action (Quinn 101). These elements of the "new melodrama" can also be seen in John Cawelti's concept of formula stories, including the detective story formula. Formula stories derive from the audience's familiarity with a repetitive pattern, but the audience requires exciting variations of the pattern that still meet its expectations, much like the idea of "probability." Veiller provides melodramatic suspense in the play, yet one senses early on that Mary will be vindicated in some way. The ending is pleasant and neatly packaged: the proper person is arrested, Mary's reputation is rescued, and she marries the rich boy who obviously loves her. The play also contains Quinn's other two stipulated elements. Credible coincidences, or "probability," lead one scene into the next. For example, the beginning of Act Two is linked to Act One by the mention that Mary met Dick Gilder after she got out of jail. Moreover, short lines of dialogue and very little soliloquy spur on the continuous action:

> BURKE. . . . So now it's murder? Where's the gun? Hand it over. Search him.
> CASSIDY. Yes sir.
> DICK. *(as he takes revolver from his pocket and offers it to Burke).* Here it is.
> GILDER. What's this?
> BURKE. You wait. So you did it, eh? Cassidy, you and Thompson take 'em both downtown.
> DICK. Not her, you don't want her. It's all wrong.
> MARY. Don't talk, Dick—don't talk.
> BURKE. What did you expect? Either you killed Griggs or she did. Did she kill him?
> DICK. Good God, no!

> BURKE. Then it's you.
> MARY. It isn't. It isn't.
> BURKE. Now one of you killed Griggs. Did she do it?
> DICK. I told you no.
> BURKE. Did he kill him? *(Stepping to C. and indicating Mary with the revolver which is in his right hand.)* You, I'm talking to you. Did he kill him?
> MARY. Yes. (143-144)

Action and melodramatic spectacle are also evident in the startling use of the revolver to actually shoot one of the characters onstage. It was Veiller who introduced a relatively new device, a revolver with a Maxim silencer on it (Quinn 110).

Another traditional element of the melodrama is the shallow one-dimensional character. In Quinn's "new melodrama," however, melodrama "is no longer satisfied with mere situations; it attempts character drawing and even concerns itself with the social problem of the day"(Quinn 101). Formula stories are unlike the "new melodrama" in that they do not come equipped with a moral and the characters remain within the audience's character stereotype, with some allowance for alteration. In Within the Law Veiller expands the main characters and thereby follows the pattern of the new melodrama. Veiller uses other characterizations as opportunities to subtly introduce the social ideologies and vibrant personalities he had encountered as a reporter.

To take an example, Edward Gilder, owner of the Emporium where Mary worked and the father of Dick Gilder, is a big business man interested in profits of his store primarily in order to maintain his social status. His influential involvement with the structure of justice in the city is seen within the first few

minutes of the play. At the beginning of Act One, Gilder's secretary mentions that Gilder went to see the judge, whom Gilder refers to as "Old Cushing" (85), at the judge's request, to recommend what punishment Gilder's employee Mary should receive. Immediately after that, the assisting prosecutor in Mary's case, Demarest (who becomes the District Attorney later in the play) personally stops by Gilder's office to let him know the results of the sentencing hearing. Dick Gilder comes in while Demarest is there and easily recognizes and greets him. Dick Gilder also comments to the secretary regarding his father: "Remember the time that fresh cop arrested him [Edward Gilder] for speeding? I thought he'd have the whole police force discharged" (84). In Act Two, Gilder shows the audience that he has a prior relationship with Police Inspector Burke, saying that he found out from Burke about Mary's plan to marry his son. At the same time, Gilder reveals his dominating hold over the police force when he controls Burke's move against Mary with a slight movement of his arm, while never shifting his attention from the conversation he is having with her. In Act Three, Scene I, Police Inspector Burke shares his entrapment plan with Gilder, as if to impress him:

> GILDER. Where did she go then?
> BURKE. Nowhere—yet. But just about the time he's starting for the west, I'll have her down to police headquarters, Demarest will have her indicted before noon, she'll get on trial in the afternoon, and tomorrow night she'll be sleeping up the river. That's where she's going.
> GILDER. But how can you do that?
> BURKE. Maybe I can't---but I will. (131)

Gilder's character represents Veiller's personification of the network of big business moguls who were swimming in wealth and power. Magazine writer Lincoln Steffens had caustically described them as "self-righteous frauds" and "the chief source of corruption" around the turn of the century (Nannes 29). From 1902 through 1908 the press concentrated on magazine and newspaper articles designed to expose American business practices. President Roosevelt referred to these writers as "muckrakers," and the period became known as the "muckraking era." The writers took pride in this label, which he coined for a dinner of Washington newspapermen on March 17, 1906. It is worth noting that Veiller's father was himself a successful businessman, whose job promotions had caused Veiller's family to relocate between New York and Chicago on more than one occasion.

Edward Gilder's son, Richard Gilder, is referred to as "Dick" in the text. Dick is not involved in the world of business like his father, yet he doesn't have any qualms about living off his father's profits, and doesn't appear to have an occupation or any philosophy about earning money. In Act One, he has returned from his travels two months early because he ran out of money, and borrows five dollars from his father's secretary while reminiscing about borrowing nickels from her for candy when he was a child. He is unaccustomed to the trickery practiced in the world of business and is shielded from such unsavory tactics by his father. Because of his naivete, he can't understand and refuses to believe that Mary has used him as a pawn in the scheme to gain revenge on his father. He insists that she truly has feelings for him, and simply waits until she finally acknowledges this at the end of the play.

Dick Gilder could be the spoiled child of a rich parent of any era. While covering the court as a reporter, Veiller must have seen a number of these over-protected children saved from various criminal charges through their parents' interventions with the court. It is Dick's generation that would mature in the roaring twenties, skirt the rules of Prohibition through political connections, and live a happy-go-lucky life unaware of the impending financial crash of 1929. Veiller may possibly have seen a bit of himself in Dick Gilder, to judge from his autobiography suggestively entitled The Fun I've Had. His father never denied him anything financially, at least not until he announced that he wanted to be a journalist, an employment that his father did not equate with the proper status for a gentleman (Veiller 30).

Portraying Mary Turner as the heroine of the play was a somewhat daring ploy. George Cohan told Veiller not to "do a play where the heroine is a crook," but Veiller did so nevertheless (Veiller 201). In standard melodramatic fashion, Mary "is the old standby, the poor working girl--a girl who has been railroaded to prison by a heartless upper crust society"(Chapman xi). Actress Jane Cowl was cast in the role of Mary Turner, and "scored a tremendous hit" that played a part in "elevating her to stardom"(Mantle 119,viii). Indeed, Mary's character was so successful with audiences that Veiller used a variation of the character again in his 1917 play, The Thirteenth Chair, and added the girl's mother, a fortune teller, who saves her daughter from an accusation that her daughter has committed murder.

Unable to escape the newspaperman inside of him, Veiller makes use of Mary's character to criticize the working conditions for young women and children in that era. These unwholesome conditions were on the minds of Americans during the beginning

years of the twentieth century, when magazine journalists were exposing employers' practices in an effort to foster labor legislation (Nannes 74). Veiller describes true-to-life situations in Mary's conversation with Gilder in Act One:

> MARY. We work nine hours a day for six dollars a week. That's a fact, isn't it? and an honest girl can't live decently on six dollars a week—and buy food and clothes and pay room rent and carfare, that's another fact, isn't it?
> GILDER. I don't care to discuss these things...
> MARY. *(pleadingly)* Do you know how we girls live? Of course you don't. Three of us in one room doing our own cooking over a two burner gas stove, and our own washing and ironing evenings—after being on our feet for nine hours.
> GILDER. I have provided chairs behind the counters.
> MARY. But have you ever seen a girl sit on one of them? *(Gilder turns away)* Well, have you? Of course not, because she knows the manager of the department would think he could get along without her, and she'd be discharged. And so, after being on her feet for nine hours, the girl walks home, to save carfare—walks whether she's sick or whether she's well—and you're generally so tired that it don't make much difference which you are. (95)

President Theodore Roosevelt himself discussed this portion of the play with Veiller on a street corner in New York City and "pleaded for more plays of social import"(Veiller 65). Whether consciously or not, Veiller honored this request in writing Back Home (1915) which portrayed conditions in the textile mills, and was based on magazine articles by Irvin S. Cobb. Veiller became known as the "Billy Sunday of the theatre" for these "preaching" tendencies (Nannes 77).

In Within the Law, Mary Turner becomes deviously knowledgeable about the nuances of the written law. She gains this knowledge during her prison term, and begins turning it to the benefit of herself and the reformed criminals who are now her friends in Act Two, which takes place four years after she leaves the Emporium and has

completed her sentence. She convinces her friend Agnes not to blackmail a highly reputed former lover over some letters, but rather to obtain a formal settlement negotiated by lawyers outside of court. She removes her half of the funds in a partnership after a swindler tries to con her in a land deal she discovers to be fraudulent. In this way she outwits those who are trying to take advantage of former convicts, while still remaining "safely within the law"(108). Additionally, she becomes keenly sensitive to constitutional rights and invokes them whenever dealing with the police: "I suppose it's no use for me to stand on my constitutional rights and demand to see a lawyer?"(156). She also encourages others to rely on their legal rights. For instance, she encourages Dick to remain silent when questioned by the police about his claim that he shot a burglar in his home.

Veiller's treatment of Mary as a legal expert was novel and ground breaking in 1912, especially since she is female. The play was produced amid a national crusade to win the right for women to vote. Certain states had already ratified women's suffrage, but many had not. The Nineteenth Amendment would not officially take effect until August 20, 1920, when the necessary thirty-six states had ratified it. Veiller elaborated on his belief that women should have the opportunity to be involved in politics by writing The Fight in 1913. The Fight is about a woman who runs for mayor and the attempts by male politicians to force her out of the race. The play was not successful, receiving only four performances, but it was one of only two plays of the time that concentrated on women in politics and still managed to reach Broadway. The other was Her Honor, the Mayor (1918) by Arline Van Ness (Nannes 79). Veiller chose to assign women important roles in his plays, contravening the police court judges' and police

detectives' lack of confidence in women's abilities and reliability that Veiller had witnessed while covering police courts (Veiller 73).

The pitting of Mary Turner against Police Inspector Burke creates a nice irony within the play: an honest convict versus a crooked policeman. Even though Mary's revenge is directed toward Gilder, her antagonist in Act One, Inspector Burke insists that the police department has become her target and says: "Think I'm going to let this girl make a joke of the Police Department? Listen—this is where I'll get her"(131). Defending his department and the supposed honor of the peace officers' profession, Burke gradually becomes the antagonist after the first act of the play, rather than Gilder. Although Gilder is hardly happy that his son is associated with Mary, later on in the play he takes no direct action against her.

Veiller's detective character, Police Inspector Burke, functions as the epitome of the corrupt New York police detective that the public was becoming disgusted with at the time the play was performed. He only faintly approaches the virtue of honesty when he orders the delivery of Helen's letter to Gilder, which will explain that Mary was not responsible for the shoplifting she was convicted of in Act One. Burke formed the ugly opposite of the immensely popular detective character of William Gillette's 1899 play, Sherlock Holmes, based on Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. Sherlock Holmes often employed tricks to solve the case, but he worked as a private detective, rather than a public servant, and his deceit would not be viewed as an abuse of power.

Veiller sums up Burke's attitude when Burke says: "Remember when you deal with crooks you have to use crooked ways"(155). Burke denies both Mary's and Joe's request for a lawyer during questioning and snaps at Mary: "The Constitution don't go here"(156). Burke routinely tries to coerce information from his suspects through intimidation by hitting them:

> BURKE. Who shot Griggs?
> DACEY. *(as he advances to Burke).* I don't know, honest I don't. *(Burke suddenly hits Dacey alongside the jaw and Dacey goes to the floor. Dacey scrambles to his feet and backs away from Burke as far as the door R.)*
> BURKE. *(as Dacey goes down)* Now get up and talk. (145)

or by pointing a weapon at them:

> BURKE. *(quietly but hard and sharp).* You did—you killed him last night with this *(points revolver at Garson).* Why, come on now, why?
> GARSON. I didn't, I tell you.
> BURKE. You did, I tell you—you did.
> GARSON. *(as he rushes over to Burke and stares him straight in the eye, and as Burke has not moved the revolver is against Garson's chest. Strong).* I tell you, I didn't. *(There is a pause without a move, then Burke sees his trick has failed, with his eye on Garson drops the revolver back on the R. end of desk and sits in his chair and speaks quietly.)*
> BURKE. Well, I didn't think you did. (160)

Burke's most egregious act is to use an informant to entrap Mary and her friends in a burglary. When Burke's informant is killed during the caper, he applies extra pressure to find the killer. He gives Gilder the following reason: "The very foundation of the work done by this department rests on the use of crooks who are willing to betray their pals for coin. If the murderer of Griggs goes unpunished, it will put the fear of God into the hearts of every stool pigeon we

employ" (154). In reality, Burke has a guilty conscience for sending Griggs to his death, and a fear that someone might find out the truth about his devious methods.

Inspector Burke uses a technique to obtain a confession from Garson that Veiller knew was actually favored by a real New York City Police Inspector, Thomas Byrnes (Veiller 79). Burke sits at a desk writing and not saying anything while the other members of Garson's gang are marched by within his view and placed into a cell. After this, Burke stops writing and has Mary and Dick brought into the room. The detective who escorted the individuals past Garson looks into the office and Burke makes the comment, "Squealed, eh? (161), and signifies to Dick that all present told the same story. As Burke announces that Mary is under arrest for murder, Garson interrupts with his confession of the murder, in order to save Mary from going to prison for yet another crime of which she is innocent. In his autobiography, Veiller comments on the confession scene, saying he received credit for alleged "inventiveness in devising a scene which could not possibly have happened" (Veiller 80).

It seems a little surprising that Veiller would allow corrupt Inspector Burke to use one of Thomas Byrnes' interrogation techniques, since Veiller had a great deal of respect for the officer's ability. Byrnes had been appointed the first chief of detectives in 1882 when the Detective Bureau was founded and was later named superintendent of police in 1892 (Spring 3100). Unfortunately, the amount of his personal wealth came into question during the Lexow Committee examinations and his integrity fell under suspicion. Veiller excused Byrnes' funds as the fortuitous result of investment advice from brokers on Wall Street

who were thanking Byrnes for the crimes he solved there and others that he prevented (Veiller 69). At one point, Byrnes solved a three million-dollar burglary of the Manhattan Bank (Spring 3100). Later he created a "frozen zone" by setting a boundary at John's Street to establish a one-mile square around the financial district where known crooks would be arrested on sight (Andrews). Veiller refers to this territory in the play with Mary's veiled comment regarding Agnes' pickpocket brother's success: "How can it be? With the deadline at John Street--"(98).

One talent of a newspaperman is of course proper timing, knowing when to break a story to create the largest sensation. Veiller had been a reporter for a long time, and astutely timed the staging of his play. Within the Law opened at the Eltinge Theater in New York on September 11, 1912, the first night the theater opened to the public for any performance. Prior to that, the play had been running in Chicago since April of 1912. The play arrived "just as New York was embroiled in its latest scandal about police and bought justice" (Bordman 709). Although the review in the New York Times the next day was very favorable, it made the comment: "How he dared have the play performed during the present demoralized condition of the police force is a matter which he must settle with his own conscience." The corruption scandal of 1912 was squarely in the public eye, and the theatre critic did not need to name the incident in his review. He referred to the infamous Rosenthal murder.

A gambler named Herman Rosenthal was killed, shot in the face, after being called out from a hotel dining room on July 16, 1912. The significance of

the event was that in the last few days before he was killed, he had informed the District Attorney that Police Lieutenant Charles Becker, head of the police department's "Strong Arm Squad," was a silent partner in Rosenthal's gambling operation. Rosenthal claimed that Becker had paid off the mortgage to his house and was providing police protection. Becker publicly denied the accusations, but Police Commissioner Waldo called for an investigation of the matter, casting blame on the District Attorney's office (New York Times, 12 July 1912 and 21 July 1912).

The immediate investigation of the murder revealed that a man nicknamed "Billiard Ball Jack" Rose had hired the getaway vehicle. Rose had been named in Rosenthal's testimony to the District Attorney as a collector of graft money for Becker in the underworld, an operative later on referred to as a "bag man." At first it was believed that other gamblers who did not welcome the District Attorney's spotlight had committed the murder, but Becker's name continued to surface during the investigation.

Ultimately, Rose gave a full confession that was corroborated by two others who were involved, admitting that Becker was behind the plot to kill Rosenthal. He identified Becker as " the man who had promised immunity to the men who actually committed the deed," and "the man who, after the murder, had tried hard to prevent any of his hirelings from confessing by renewing his assurance that his was a power great enough to save not only himself, but every man connected with the crime." Rose also said that the plan had begun when Rosenthal first began threatening to expose Becker, and that Becker had

threatened to jail Rose if he did not perform the murder: "If you don't kill this man, I'll put guns in your pockets and send you up for seven years" (New York Times, 30 July 1912). Becker was arrested and indicted on July 30, 1912, approximately six weeks before Within the Law opened at the Eltinge Theater. He was convicted after a nineteen-day jury trial on October 25, 1912.

Whether due principally to the timing of its opening night in New York, or to the general mood of the theater crowd in 1912, Within the Law was decidedly a hit in its day. The play, however, did not leave any truly lasting impressions on the world of drama. Arthur Hobson Quinn glossed over Within the Law with one line in A History of the American Drama. For The Best Plays of 1909-1919, Burns Mantle had to decide between Within the Law with its 541 performances or Edward Sheldon's Romance, with its highly successful London revival, for the best play of 1912 in Mantle's compilation (Mantle 475, viii). Mantle decided on Romance. Nevertheless, Within the Law's popularity was evidenced by its subsequent runs in Chicago, New York and London, and even more so by the fact that a popular book was written by Marvin Dana called Within the Law, copyrighted in 1913, based solely on the play. Veiller had been able to employ his personal experiences to create a compelling play with the requisite mix of melodrama, crooks, cops, and social problems to gratify a fickle and still fastidious public.

CHAPTER VII

ATTENTION TO DETAILS: TRIFLES

Susan Glaspell, like Bayard Veiller and A.C. Wheeler, was a reporter before becoming a playwright. After graduating from Drake University in June 1899, she took a job as a legislative and statehouse reporter for the Des Moines Daily News, where she remained for two years (Noe 16). During that time she reported on a murder case and its subsequent trial that provided her with the framework for her well known play Trifles, written in 1916.

As a reporter, Glaspell covered the December 2, 1900 murder of John Hossack, a farmer and public figure in Indianola, Iowa. Mr. Hossack was killed with two blows to his head by an ax while he was sleeping in bed. His wife stated that she was sleeping in the bed next to him, but was awoken by the sound of "two pieces of wood striking." She further stated that upon hearing the sounds she left her bedroom and noticed a light in another room and heard the front porch door closing. At that point she heard her husband's moans and brought her children into the bloody bedroom where Mr. Hossack was still lying in bed with a crushed skull (Ben-Zvi 22-23). Glaspell filed twenty-six stories on the case between December 3, 1900 and April 11, 1901 (Ben-Zvi 23). The story on April 11, 1901 reported the jury's guilty verdict and sentencing of life imprisonment at hard labor for Margaret Hossack; this was Glaspell's last story about the case and as a journalist (Ben-Zvi 32-33).

Glaspell's reporting position on Hossack altered during the course of the judicial process. At first she mixed "fact, rumor, and commentary" in her articles by using statements received from secret sources, such as: "Friends are beginning to suggest that she is insane, and that she has been in this condition for a year and a half, under the constant surveillance of members of the family" (Ben Zvi 24). Glaspell's early descriptions of Mrs. Hossack depicted her as "cold, calm, and menacing"(Ben Zvi 25). Subsequent descriptions of Mrs. Hossack softened, most likely following a personal visit by Glaspell to the farm after the woman was released on bail and Glaspell viewed the isolation, neglect, and abuse the wife had received at the hands of her husband. In a December 12, 1900 article, Glaspell quoted her same sources as saying that the farmer's wife saw "that he lacked for nothing" and that she was "quick tempered, high strung, like all Scotch women, but of a deeply religious turn of mind" (Ben-Zvi 28). By the end of the trial, Glaspell does not voice her personal feelings through commentary on Mrs. Hossack but reports how others viewed her, possibly because Glaspell's views were contrary to public opinion. In an April 10, 1901 article Glaspell reported the prosecution's revelation that Mrs. Hossack had given birth to a child before marriage. The District Attorney alleged that this indiscretion was the cause of unhappiness in the Hossacks' domestic life. Glaspell suggested that this "provided the jury with the impression that she was a woman who could not be trusted" (Ben-Zvi 31). In Glaspell's final article she reported the guilty verdict without a comment on the outcome (Ben-Zvi 32).

In view of the change in Glaspell's opinion of Mrs. Hossack from the initial incident until the end of the trial, it appears that learning the circumstances surrounding the murder and witnessing firsthand the scrutiny Mrs. Hossack underwent as a female defendant awakened an awareness in Glaspell of the lack of women's rights in society. Writing Trifles in Provincetown, Massachusetts fifteen years after the trial may have been a cathartic process enabling Glaspell to free herself from the guilt she may have had in not doing more to sway public opinion on behalf of Margaret Hossack in Iowa in 1901. Mrs. Hale, a character in Trifles, laments not reaching out to provide support for Minnie Wright, the play's character based on Mrs. Hossack, before she resorted to killing her husband: "I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be – for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things – it's all just a different kind of the same thing" (360). This passage was rich with meaning for Glaspell, who by 1916 had experienced Midwest societal rejection, like Mrs. Hossack, that had caused her to leave Davenport. Unlike Hossack, Glaspell had not been accused of murder, but had committed the cultural crime of having an affair with a married man with unconventional political beliefs who had already been divorced once. This man, George Cram Cook, known to his friends as "Jig," became Glaspell's husband in 1913, although she retained her maiden name as was popular in feminist circles of that time. Additionally, there may have been hidden meanings in this same passage concerning Glaspell's own unexpressed loneliness due to multiple

extramarital affairs Jig was having with other playwrights, poets, and artists, in a libertine Provincetown during the summer of 1916.

Glaspell credits Cook, whether positively or negatively, as her driving force for writing Trifles, her first play. She stated, "I began writing plays because my husband forced me to" (Noe 33). (She amended this from "made me" in her manuscripts.) Cook was the leader and organizer of the Provincetown Players, a group of playwrights living on the tip of Cape Cod and enjoying theatric expression in new realms such as realism that were not appreciated in New York City. The group was at its height in 1916 when Cook insisted that Glaspell write a play for the summer season. Glaspell had an ideal circumstance that many modern playwrights do not: she conceived the play while looking at the exact stage on which it would be performed:

> So I went out on the wharf, sat alone on one of our wooden benches without a back, and looked a long time at the bare little stage. After a time the stage became a kitchen. . . then the door at the back opened, and people all bundled up came in – two or three men, I wasn't sure which, but sure enough about the two women, who hung back, reluctant to enter that kitchen. When I was a newspaper reporter out in Iowa, I was sent down-state to do a murder trial, and I never forgot going into the kitchen of a woman locked up in town. I had meant to do it as a short story, but the stage took it for its own. . .(Glaspell 255-256)

Meanwhile in New York, theatre-goers were supporting light-hearted fare, very unlike the realism of Trifles, such as George M. Cohan's Seven Keys to Baldpate or melodramas only slightly hinting at social realism such as Veiller's The Thirteenth Chair. Trifles' far-reaching removal from the mainstream theatre

of this era in style and geography was the primary reason it was not acclaimed in theater reviews in the year it was performed. The play only received its well-deserved popularity in the 1970's when Glaspell's works were rediscovered at the outset of the woman's liberation movement. Trifles is appreciated even more today for its role in the metamorphosis of the American theatre and the light it sheds on differences between male and female perceptions.

In Trifles, the County Attorney, the Sheriff, and a neighboring farmer visit the farmhouse where John Wright was murdered by his wife, Minnie. The men are going over the crime scene with the sole intention of finding evidence to convict Minnie Wright of the murder. The Sheriff's wife, Mrs. Peters, and the neighboring farmwife, Mrs. Hale, by contrast, accompany their husbands to the farmhouse to retrieve items that Mrs. Wright has requested while in jail. While the men are looking around upstairs and outside, the women are looking around downstairs. They find clues indicating that Minnie was living an unhappy life, oppressed by her husband, convincing them that she may have been at least partially justified in striking back against him. The clues are domestic in nature, and are accordingly overlooked and dismissed as insignificant "trifles" by the men. By reviewing personal experiences and realizing the need for female unity they come to an understanding of the power that can lie in their hands if they exert it. The women decide to keep silent about the clues they find so as not to alert the men to evidence that would surely convict Minnie.

Although Trifles is a crime play, it is not just about murder. Again, Glaspell is like Veiller because they both examine women's issues, but Glaspell

tackles the problem differently. In Within in the Law Veiller uses his character Mary Turner as an outspoken woman of action who fights the system for what she wants, representing a woman obtaining her rights. Glaspell might see this approach by a female character in 1912 as masculine and unrealistic, and Turner's schemes more likely to be successful in the real world for a man but not for a woman. Glaspell's approach to women's rights begins on a deeper and more basic level; first there must be a change in the way of thinking. In order for women to have an equal standing in the world, society must understand that male views and methods are not the norm. It is not a matter of being right or wrong, it is simply a matter of perceiving things differently. Glaspell's Trifles portrays the idea that the "female mode of perception has a validity of its own"(Noe 33).

One way that Glaspell attacks the audience's normative way of thinking is by depicting the women in the play as the true investigators, even though the men are the investigators in name. Society in 1916 had grown accustomed to a literary formula where the men are the detectives. Rather than deviating overtly from this expectation, Glaspell includes the male investigative characters, but presents them as ineffective. The County Attorney (George Henderson) and Sheriff Henry Peters are at the farmhouse to find evidence of Minnie Wright's motive, but they fail to do so. It is the women who discover a canary with its neck wrung inside a decorative box hidden in Minnie Wright's sewing basket along with the patches of an unfinished quilt.

The men have approached the investigation at the farmhouse differently than the women. The County Attorney arrives with a preconceived notion that

Minnie is the murderer, even though there is no confession and there are no witnesses. He sets out to retrieve proof that Minnie is the murderer and that the act was performed because she appears aberrant: "No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show -- something to make a story about -- a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it--"(361). Historically, it was believed around the time when Trifles was written that "only a depraved woman could murder" (Alkalay-Gut 81). This belief made it "neccesary for the county attorney to understand Minnie as deviant as a housewife" (Alkalay-Gut 81). At the farmhouse, the County Attorney points out what he sees as poorly performed domestic chores, which he equates with "inevitable character flaws as a woman" (Alkalay-Gut 76), while the other men berate Minnie's concerns, all furthering the notion that Minnie is irrational:

> SHERIFF: Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin' about her preserves.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.
> HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles. *(The two women move a little closer together.)*
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: *(with the gallantry of a young politician)* And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies?
> *(The women do not unbend. He goes to the sink and takes a dipperful of water from the pail and, pouring it into a basin, washes his hands. Starts to wipe them on the roller towel, turns it for a cleaner place)* Dirty towels! *(Kicks his foot against the pans under the sink)* Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?
> MRS HALE: *(stiffly)* There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: To be sure. And yet *(with a little*

> *bow to her)* I know there are some Dickson county farmhouses which do not have such roller towels. *(He gives it a pull to expose its full length again.)* (356)

These accusations infuriate Mrs. Hale, who knows how demanding it is to maintain a household as a farmwife in the lonely and desolate Midwest, and knows that it would be even more difficult without any encouragement or praise from a supportive husband. The County Attorney is persistent in trying to discredit Minnie and unwilling to listen to anything indicating that John Wright may have been at fault:

> MRS HALE: *(shaking her head)* I've not seen much of her in late years. I've not been in this house—it's more than a year.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: And why was that? You didn't like her?
> MRS HALE: I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then—
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes--?
> MRS HALE: *(looking about)* It never seemed a very cheerful place.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: No—it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.
> MRS HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: You mean they didn't get on very well?
> MRS HALE: No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'd like to talk more of that a little later. I want to get the lay of things upstairs now. (356)

The County Attorney brushes off Mrs. Hale's comment about Wright by pretending as if he will listen to it later, when in fact he has no intention of ever considering it or placing any blame on the male victim. He used the same delay tactic earlier in the play when Mr. Hale started to broach the subject by saying

that the reason he had stopped by to see Wright was to try to talk him into subscribing to telephone service:

> HALE: . . . I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—I guess you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John---
> COUNTY ATTORNEY: Let's talk about that later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house. (354)

Conversely, the women enter the farmhouse without any investigative intentions, but end up being the better sleuths by practicing the skill of observation. They are able to perceive the nuances of things being out of kilter in a kitchen, because of their familiarity with a Midwest farmwife's limited world. Unlike the men, they are unbiased investigators who do not dismiss anything as trivial. They exhibit another astute detective trait in that they have not made any definite determinations about the guilty party before being presented with all the facts:

> MRS HALE: *(abruptly moving toward her)* Mrs Peters?
> MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?
> MRS HALE: Do you think she did it?
> MRS PETERS: *(in a frightened voice)* Oh, I don't know.
> MRS HALE: Well, I don't think she did. Asking for her apron and her little shawl. Worrying about her fruit. ....
> MRS PETERS: Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or --sudden feeling. (357)

As they look around the household they inadvertently gather the clues and as a team they use both inductive and deductive reasoning to reach their conclusions about Minnie's miserable life and John Wright's sudden death.

Mrs. Hale forms her conclusions through deductive reasoning. She arrives at the farmhouse with a base of general knowledge about Minnie that Mrs. Peters does not have. Mrs. Hale knew Minnie before she married John Wright, when "she used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir"(357). Although a neighbor, Mrs. Hale has not been to the Wright farmhouse for over a year, because "it weren't cheerful" (359). She also knew John Wright and shivers as she tells Mrs. Peters about him: "But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him—Like a raw wind that gets to the bone"(359).

Mrs. Hale builds on her prior knowledge to deduce the meaning of the clues that she locates in the farmhouse. In addition to the unwashed pans under the sink, and the dirty towels, she notices a loaf of bread outside the breadbox and a dishtowel lying on a half-wiped table. These items ignite her suspicions of disharmony in the home, but she does not share them with Mrs. Peters.

Mrs. Hale then finds the latest block of a log-cabin pattern quilt that Minnie had been working on and notices that the stitching is crooked: "Mrs. Peters, look at this one. Here, this is the one she was working on, and look at that sewing! All the rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It's all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!"(358). Mrs. Hale immediately detects this as a sign that something had gone very wrong and

as a clue the men might be looking for. Small and exact stitching had been taught by nineteenth-century women to their daughters "as a way of instilling habits of patience, neatness and diligence" and "became a badge. . . a source of self-esteem and of status, through the recognition and admiration of other women"(Hedges 62). Both Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters deduce that the unusual stitching could "show anger--or sudden feeling." Mrs. Hale quickly destroys the evidence by pulling the stitches out and replacing them with her own.

The final step in Mrs. Hale's reasoning that Wright drove Minnie to the murder is the discovery of the canary. Mrs. Peters finds a birdcage with a broken door hinge in a cabinet while looking for some string to tie up the personal items she is planning to take back to the jail. Neither woman knows what happened to the bird, but both think the empty birdcage is odd. Mrs. Hale then suggests that Mrs. Peters take Minnie's sewing to her in the jail, and attempts to find the patches in the sewing basket. Mrs. Hale pulls out a "fancy box" containing something wrapped in silk:

> MRS HALE: *(lifting the silk)* Oh, Mrs Peters—it's—*(*Mrs Peters *bends closer.)*
> MRS PETERS: It's the bird.
> MRS HALE: *(jumping up)* But, Mrs Peters—look at it! It's neck! Look at its neck! It's all—other side *too.*
> MRS PETERS: Somebody—wrung—its—neck. *(Their eyes meet. A look of growing comprehension, of horror. Steps are heard outside.* Mrs. Hale *slips box under quilt pieces, and sinks into her chair. Enter* Sheriff *and* County Attorney. Mrs Peters *rises.)* (359-360)

At this point, Mrs. Hale takes into account all she has observed and known beforehand to deduce the motive of revenge and recognize why Minnie chose the

method of murder that she did, rather than using the gun found in the house. Mrs. Hale thinks about everything that Wright has taken away from Minnie to maintain his "peace and quiet" and force her into complete isolation; not allowing her a telephone for communication, keeping her from participating in socialization with other women of the Ladies Aid and the church choir, not producing children, discouraging visitors with a gruff nature, and finally, wringing the neck of a singing bird who kept her company:

> MRS HALE: *(with a slow look around her)* I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around. *(Pause)* No. Wright wouldn't like the bird—a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too.
> MRS PETERS: *(moving uneasily)* We don't know who killed the bird.
> MRS HALE: I knew John Wright.
> MRS PETERS: It was an awful thing was done in this house that night,
> Mrs Hale. Killing a man while he slept, slipping a rope around his neck that choked the life out of him.
> MRS HALE: His neck. Choked the life out of him. *(Her hand goes out and rests on the birdcage.)*
> MRS PETERS: *(with rising voice)* We don't know who killed him. We don't know. (360)

Mrs. Peters' rising voice and denials are evidence that she realizes the basis of Minnie's motive, and the fear that her thoughts are contrary to those of her husband, the Sheriff. Even though "a sheriff's wife is married to the law"(361), Mrs. Peters cannot ignore her own inductive reasoning that Minnie was justified in her actions. Unlike Mrs. Hale who works from the general to the specific, Mrs. Peters draws her conclusions by relating the specific clues she sees to the general circumstances of women. She likens the loss of Minnie's canary to something Mrs. Peters herself experienced when she was younger:

> MRS PETERS: *(in a whisper)* When I was a girl—my kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—and before I could get there—*(Covers her face for an instant)* If they hadn't held me back I would have—*(Catches herself, looks upstairs where steps are heard, falters weakly)*—hurt him (360).

She also considers a time she felt extreme loneliness, but still fights against breaking the boundaries of a law-abiding wife's duties:

> MRS PETERS: *(something within her speaking)* I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old, and me with no other then—
> MRS HALE: *(moving)* How soon do you suppose they'll be through, looking for the evidence?
> MRS PETERS: I know what stillness is. *(Pulling herself back)* The law has got to punish crime Mrs Hale. (360)

Ultimately, Mrs. Peters chooses to ignore the earlier command that Henderson gave her: "Keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us"(356), and betrays her husband's rules. She does not verbalize her final conclusions, but instead acts on them by being the first to grab for the box containing the canary and trying to hide the damning evidence from her husband and the County Attorney. She fumbles unsuccessfully. But Mrs. Hale, having heard Mrs. Peters confirm the story that a cat got the canary and confirming through eye contact that they have the same understanding of Minnie's predicament, she aids Mrs. Peters and conceals the canary herself, trusting that she can now conspire safely with Mrs. Peters.

The decision to hide the evidence made by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale is a way of taking justice into their own hands. The women are like Sherlock Holmes, who chooses to mete out justice as he sees fit, without the official

interference of the authorities, as well as Mary Turner who also seeks to dole out her version of what she sees as justice on those who have wronged her. Because of the County Attorney's previous dismissal of negative comments regarding Mr. Wright, and knowing that Henderson is "awful sarcastic in a speech and he'll make fun of her sayin' she didn't wake up" (357), they anticipate an unfair trial for Minnie. Implicit in the condescending manner the men have used in speaking to them during the investigation, they realize that the male-dominated society they live in will not perceive the circumstances of the murder the same way as they do. The women designate themselves as "a jury of her peers" (a title that Glaspell uses when she converts the play into a short story the next year) and choose to acquit Minnie.

The ending of a melodrama is satisfying in a warm and comforting sense. Trifles' ending is just one example of how realism differs from melodrama. The play's ending seems gratifying, but there is no finite satisfaction because Minnie's fate is still precarious. The County Attorney has remained at the farmhouse, saying, "I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better"(361) leaving the audience doubting if additional evidence exists which can still be found by a dozing investigator. The resolution is that of the women and not the judicial system. Unlike Elmer Rice's On Trial, there is no courtroom scene in Trifles to render a legal decision. In a broader sense, the ending is unsettling since the males still maintain power and control of authoritative positions over the women, whereas the strength of the women to

exercise their newly found empowerment in independent decision making remains unsure.

Not only is there no courtroom scene in the play, there is not actually a crime scene in the play either. Herein lies another difference between realism and melodrama. In Trifles the crime has already been committed. The audience does not view the act of the crime, or even the aftermath of the crime, but only the remnants of the motive. The tendency in melodrama is to portray the criminal violation on stage to create spectacle, such as the homicide in The Great Diamond Robbery. Like modern detectives, the investigators in Trifles act in a reactionary capacity, examining the physical location of the crime upstairs and unseen by the audience, and discovering the psychological genesis of the crime downstairs. This is unlike the melodramatic Sherlock Holmes, a proactive participant who designs his own outcome by interactively steering unfolding events.

In Trifles not only are the crime scene and the courtroom absent, but so too is the central character. Minnie Wright never comes on stage. She has already been arrested and taken to jail before the investigators arrive to comb the scene. The audience hears her side of the story secondhand, through the lips of the neighboring farmer.

Glaspell may be the first playwright to use the absent character as the main character in a play. Many theories exist as to what Glaspell's purpose was in doing so, but all seem to point to it as a form of symbolism, another characteristic common to a realism that moves beyond melodrama. By not giving Minnie a voice and having her version of the incident told by a man instead,

Glaspell may have been symbolically emphasizing that women had no voice in society and that everything was perceived from a male viewpoint. Alkalay-Gut theorizes that Glaspell may have been illustrating how women were considered inferior to men: "As the emblematic woman, Mrs. Wright's own life becomes, of necessity, trivial" (Alkalay-Gut 72). Another likely reason that Glaspell removed Minnie from the audience's sight was to "focus on issues that move beyond guilt or innocence of one person" and present "a condition shared by other women who can be imagined in the empty subject position"(Ben-Zvi 35). Minnie thus becomes an Expressionist symbol to express universal women's conditions, rather than an individualized case study. Minnie as a symbolic female should not be confused with Mary Turner, a representative female. The difference is that Turner's situation is very case specific and she is allowed an opportunity to speak out as the poor working girl on the conditions of her own class, whereas Minnie or any other woman in her situation cannot do so.

Even the name Minnie Foster Wright is symbolic, "the pun on her surname marking her lack of 'rights'"(BenZvi 34). Glaspell may have chosen her name while trying to "foster" or advance the awareness of a need for women's rights through Minnie's character and the play, emphasizng the name Minnie had as a single woman rather than a married woman. The surname also reminds one of "mini" or small trivial things, perhaps even something that could be considered a "trifle." John Wright, however, does not turn out to be "Mr. Right," as his name ironically implied. He is undeserving of the love (Minnie is derived from the German word for "love") that Minnie "nurtured and cherished" in her maiden

years and then "transferred" into her married life (Alkalay-Gut 72). Unfortunately, John (noticeably a common name in American society) was considered commonly "right" in the way he ran his household, especially by the official prosecuting the case, who did not wish to be told differently.

Another strong symbol throughout the brief play is the quilt. Even more meaningful is the log cabin pattern of the quilt, which "came to symbolize both the hardships and the heroisms of pioneer life" and the "celebrations of women's civilizing role in the pioneering process"(Hedges 64). The crooked stitches of the most recent patch explains Minnie's state of mind to the women. They stumble upon the ultimate clue to Mr. Wright's demise when they are looking in the sewing basket to find the quilting for Minnie to work on in jail because "it might take up her mind" (359). The Sheriff demeans the women when they ponder how Minnie was working on the quilt: "They wonder if she was going to quilt it or knot it!"(358). Glaspell's varied and frequent reference to the quilt represent the domestic confines of Minnie's life and the limits of her expression.

The significance of the quilt eludes the men in the same way that they were unable to perceive and gather clues in the farmhouse. The log pattern quilt, comprised of leftover scraps of fabric built outwardly upon each other repetitively to form a pattern, becomes a symbol for deductive investigation by the women. The "quilting method parallels the only way clues could form the truth; the joining together of scraps of details allow the women to comprehend the. . . development from housewife to criminal" (Alkalay-Gut 73). Knowing that the meaning will be lost on the Sheriff because of his inability to accept the feminine

meaning will be lost on the Sheriff because of his inability to accept the feminine view as valid, Mrs. Hale empowers herself and Mrs. Peters with the language of the quilt in the last line of the play. She reveals the true motive of the murderess, yet protects her, while she defies the County Attorney with a language incomprehensible to him when she speaks the words: "We call it—knot it, Mr. Henderson"(361).

CHAPTER VIII

AFTERWORD

In 1911, while discussing the concept of melodrama, Montrose Moses commented on the difference in the treatment of the criminal in drama versus that in fiction:

> Let us get clearly in mind the characteristics marking melodrama. The dominant feature is situation; the broadest results of the very broadest and most elemental emotions. Mr. Walkley has expressed it by saying that there are two sides of a criminal, the outside and the inside, melodrama usually dealing with the former, whereas the novelist would search for the conditions resulting in the existence of the criminal. These two sides are in substance the distinctive difference between present-day melodrama and present-day fiction. (Moses 189)

Moses' comments can be expanded to include the detective as well as the criminal. Due to the nature and length of the medium, the criminal and detective in fiction are more thoroughly developed than those in drama necessarily are. The story centers on the character and the novelist is able to place the detective into various circumstances to employ and test his abilities. Conversely, the playwright's use of crime, criminals, and detectives is situational and singular; therefore their purpose in drama is fundamentally different than fiction. They cannot be viewed in the same way or measured with the same methods.

During the years 1890 – 1920 the theatre was shifting from melodrama toward realism. As the theatre evolved, so did the detective and crime dramas. In

the early portion of this period the plays were primarily melodrama, as represented by In Mizzoura (1893), The Great Diamond Robbery (1895) and Sherlock Holmes (1899). The turn of the twentieth century seems to be the demarcation, with the remaining three plays progressively employing more elements of realism-- The Third Degree (1908), Within The Law (1912) and Trifles (1916).

Although all six of the plays are different and were written for the individual purposes of the playwright, the three crime and detective melodramas should be grouped together because they contain similarities not seen in the other three. Not only do these three plays exhibit the categorical melodramatic attributes and conventions; their detective characters are formulaic. The plays studied in this thesis point to the conclusion that the classic detective formula, as described by John Cawelti in fiction, is not seen outside of the melodrama. Additionally, to expand on Cawelti's assertion regarding detective stories that essentially states that "all formulaic stories are melodramatic," it seems to follow that all detective melodramas are formulaic.

The common denominator in the formula of these three melodramas is that the detective character is the hero. After examining the purpose of melodrama, the concept of a detective character as the hero in a melodrama seems very appropriate. "For its audiences melodrama was both an escape from real life and a dramatization of it as it ought to be; uncomplicated, easy to understand, sufficiently exciting to sweep away petty cares. . . Although melodrama is full of violence. . . these are all signposts along the road to ultimate happiness, the

triumph of virtue, and defeat of evil" (Booth 9). Who could be a better choice as the hero in a melodrama than a detective whose very job it is to ferret out injustice and crime? In a perfect world, he is the epitome of good versus evil. True to the detective's profession, the detective himself is usually not the target of the villain in the melodrama, but instead he is battling on behalf of another person who is often a helpless innocent. Additionally, the detective's job is perceived as exciting and somewhat dangerous to most people. That glamour adds to the escapism melodrama provides. The expectation of danger adds to the audience's emotional response of fear for the hero, until he is victorious in the end.

Even with the similarity of being heroes, detective characters in melodramas may be different types of detectives. The three hero characters in In Mizzoura, The Great Diamond Robbery, and Sherlock Holmes are all intelligent and independent thinkers who are well-liked within the plays, but they are by no means identical.

Jim Radburn, the hero in In Mizzoura, is a Sheriff in the West. As a Sheriff in a small town he is the overall caretaker of the town and the chief law enforcement officer. He performs investigation in the play, but his duties are not limited to investigative functions. The forces that Radburn combats are the villain Travers and the interfering Pinkerton man, both of whom are outsiders intruding on Radburn's territory. Like Radburn, Dick Brummage, the hero in The Great Diamond Robbery, is also a public servant. However, he is of lower rank and not the head of the police department, nor is he as likable as Radburn. He also fights evil influences, namely Mrs. Bulford, her cohorts, and the corrupt politicians of

New York City. His foes contrast with those of Radburn because they are a common part of the city where Brummage lives and works. Sherlock Holmes differs markedly from both of these detective characters. He is a private detective who chooses the cases he wishes to pursue and is paid for each individual investigation. Holmes faces his adversary, Moriarity, who, like Holmes, crosses over from the fictional short stories. Without a doubt Holmes is the most famous and respected detective character in crime dramas.

Interestingly, as the drama progressed into social reform melodrama and realism, the detective character lost his hero status. The villain also changed. The villain was transformed from an identifiable person into an abstract perception. Since the abstract villain of this period was often perceived as an urban institution or a social concern, the detective character would be chosen to represent this villain in a crime play. The audience would be able to relate to this because a street-level detective, particularly a police detective, would be a likely personage for them to encounter during the normal course of their daily business. Playwrights capitalized on this familiarity of a police detective as a representative of the bureaucratic system as a means of reaching their audience.

A perfect example is Captain Clinton in The Third Degree. He is an arrogant, stubborn, emotionally uninvolved, inept police detective in New York City who decides that Howard Jeffries is guilty of a crime that never even happened. All of Clinton's attributes would be likely descriptors of an unfavorable bureaucracy, Charles Klein's real target in the play. Klein chose to let Captain Clinton represent the villain and ensured this by never introducing

another figure in the justice system. He further impersonalized the detective by not giving him a first name.

Likewise, Police Inspector Burke, also without a first name, personifies an inequitable system in Bayard Veiller's Within the Law. An innocent and downtrodden salesgirl, Mary Turner, has already been unjustly convicted when Burke becomes her antagonist. Burke abuses the power of his position and uses tricks of entrapment and coercion as a means to an end. In both Within the Law and The Third Degree, the good "victim" triumphs over the evil police detective and the system he represents in a melodramatically packaged ending.

In Trifles, however, the abstract villain is the social inequality that a woman faced in 1916, especially in the American Midwest. Again, this villain is personified by a detective, Sheriff Henry Peters, along with the County Attorney, George Henderson. These two men are determined to seal Minnie Wright's fate as the accused murderer of her husband, regardless of the extenuating circumstances. As one aspect of realism, the end of this crime play does not clearly settle the question of the outcome of Minnie's situation.

Susan Glaspell's Trifles also exhibits another phenomenon of the detective character in plays after 1900. Unlike the brilliant detective in pure melodrama who can always figure out a complicated scheme, the detectives in these plays are careless or poor investigators. The abilities of the detective character decrease, but another character who does not hold an investigative title functions as the true fact-finder in the play. In Trifles, the only investigators who examined the crime scene with open eyes and found clues of a motive were the Sheriff's wife and the

neighboring farmwife. Similarly, in The Third Degree, Jeffries' attorney and his wife were the two characters who put the pieces of a puzzling circumstance together. Even Mary Turner in Within the Law conducted some investigations of her own.

Surprisingly, given the era when these six plays were written, five of the six plays have strong positive female characters that either were the true investigative character within the play or assisted the detective in the play. In Mizzoura presented the only stereotypically selfish female who was a detriment to the detective instead of a helper. In addition to the aforementioned female characters acting as detectives of sort, Detective Brummage was assisted by Mary Lavelot, and Sherlock Holmes received help from Alice Faulkner, who should be considered a strong character due to the romantic interest she stirs in a stoic Holmes.

The theatre has always been a reflector of society, much more directly than a work of fiction. Perhaps this explains the variance in the treatment of the detective character in a crime play as the years passed. As America moved from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century, the centers of urban population increased and so did the cumbersome machinery of city government. Society's view of public service turned to the negative as instances of graft and corruption gave cause to become increasingly distrustful. The detective, once a symbol of good in an uncomplicated society that enjoyed simple melodrama, became a representative of a sinister and undependable governmental body and, later, a representative of social inequity as realism began to take the stage.

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