CHAPTER 3

Dossier Novels: The Reader as Detective

Detective fiction, it has been argued, engages readers in a special way and assigns them a more active role than other genre fiction does. The genre, Carl Lovitt remarks, "involve[s] two levels of detection: that of the detective, who investigates the murder, and that of the reader, who attempts to identify the criminal before the detective's revelation" (1990, 70). Read as a noun, the "detective" in the genre designation refers to the character who investigates the crime, but read as an adjective, it emphasizes the process of detection, the steps of logical reasoning to be taken to solve a puzzle or crime. This latter interpretation of the genre label does not specify who is to draw these conclusions and take the steps of reasoning, and thus potentially includes the reader in this process.[1] In different ways, the texts I will discuss in this chapter directly address the reader as detective and thus aim to merge the roles of attentive follower of the plot and proactive investigator. Both Charles Warren Adam's *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1865) and Dennis Wheatley and Joe Links's[2] *Murder Dossiers* (1936–1939) are presented to the reader in the form of a dossier, which provides the reader with the opportunity to track the course of the investigation and compile a variety of pieces of evidence from different sources. This formal setup contributes immensely to portraying the act of detection as a process and casting the reader as detective. The often fragmented and partial documents and files invite the reader to perform acts of comparing and cross-referencing in order to reconstruct the plot and extract meaning from them.

S. J. Link, *A Narratological Approach to Lists in Detective Fiction*,
Crime Files, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33227-2_3

The form and functions of the list play a central role in negotiating how readers engage with these texts. Scholars such as George Dove have already argued that it is in "the reading process itself, the interaction between text and reader, that the special quality of the tale of detection becomes evident" (1990, 37). I would like to take this statement as a starting point to explore how the use of lists and list-like forms such as footnotes or tables influences the reading experience. List formats encourage reading strategies that deviate from conventional reading practices, such as reading a text in the order of presentation from beginning to end. They both tease the reader to guess along and become involved in the act of detection and set up a structure that aids readers to do so if they choose to.

I will first discuss how Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery* uses lists and list-like forms to emphasize the processual nature of detective work and portrays detection as an exact science. The high value this text places on reproducing "real" documents contributes to its semblance of objectivity and feeds into a positivist ideal of the objectivity of science that was common in the Victorian era.

Wheatley's *Murder Dossiers*, initially, place an equally high value on authenticity. By imitating the appearance of actual police files, they try to set themselves apart from other fiction of their age, which they consider artificial and purposefully misleading. Across volumes, however, they progressively expand on their playful and interactive elements to increase reader involvement. In both the representation of objectivity in *The Notting Hill Mystery* and in the *Murder Dossiers*' playful reader engagement, lists play a crucial role in negotiating between text and reader.

Detection as a Scientific Process: Charles Warren Adams's *The Notting Hill Mystery*

The Notting Hill Mystery is one of the first full-length detective novels written in Great Britain. It was serialized between 1862 and 1863 in the magazine *Once a Week* under the pseudonym Charles Felix and first appeared as a bound novel in 1865. The novel is presented as a collection of documents compiled by Ralph Henderson, an insurance investigator who works for a life insurance association and also serves as the first-person narrator for the frame narrative. The individual documents and witness statements contained in the dossier, however, are each narrated by the original witness. Wherever Henderson comments on or adds explanations

to these statements, his additions are clearly marked as such, often in the form of footnotes.

Henderson is tasked with investigating a suspicious life insurance claim. From the beginning, his suspect is a certain Baron R., a famous mesmerist, who supposedly poisoned his wife; Madame R. Henderson's investigation uncovers that Madame R.'s twin sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Anderton, also died under mysterious circumstances and that their deaths considerably increase the sum the Baron stands to gain from his wife's death. The temporal succession of events suggests the Baron may have been involved in those deaths as well. Henderson's collected evidence against the Baron hinges on the question whether mesmerism is scientifically possible.

His findings are presented in a variety of reports, witness statements, and 'authentic' documents that offer readers the opportunity to examine all the clues and ensure themselves of the meticulousness and exactitude Henderson prides himself with. In terms of content, the novel presents a convoluted and sensational Victorian story that revolves around topics such as inexplicable mental bonds between twins or the power of rationality and science pitted against the preternatural forces of mesmerism. In terms of form, however, the novel is highly unusual and rather innovative. The multitude of documents and witness statements in the novel allows for a great number of different perspectives, and Henderson's role as narrator remains perfunctory. Furthermore, the emphasis on authentic documents and the multitude of referencing tools at the reader's disposal—such as the footnotes or a table of contents that is part of the story world rather than the paratext—draw attention to form as a category relevant for analysis.

Henderson's profession of insurance investigator is a further curiosity. He stands in contrast to many private amateur investigators with a personal interest in their cases (such as Wilkie Collins's Walter Hartright) that populate the plots of sensation fiction, and he also lacks the connections to the police that other private investigators of the era, such as Sherlock Holmes, claim for themselves. This purely professional interest and lack of connections has a profound influence on his methods of investigation: Henderson cannot rely on his knowledge of human nature or a particular person's character to judge statements by witnesses he never met in person. Moreover, he cannot draw on any kind of expert knowledge of scientific disciplines as detectives such as R. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke often do to solve their cases. Instead, in order to succeed in his

investigation, Henderson has to first collect and compile and then methodically analyze, assess, and compare witness statements and expert opinions. In this compilation of documents, Henderson's notes and personal conclusions are placed among the witness statements he collected and constitute a frame narrative from his first-person perspective.

The Notting Hill Mystery's "documentary foundation" is a "constitutive component of the text" (Codebò 2007, n.p.) and shares a number of further features with texts that Marco Codebò considers as constitutive for so-called dossier novels. By presenting the case through a multiplicity of witness reports, *The Notting Hill Mystery* loosens plot connections, and through large parts of the novel silences Henderson's voice as a narrator. Furthermore, the records aim to create the illusion of being a collection of independent sources rather than a work of single-authored fiction.

The multiplicity of short forms of recorded documentation used to convey information in Henderson's dossier not only helps to assemble information efficiently but also, to a degree, depersonalizes the information.[3] It may seem a curious strategy that a genre such as detective fiction, which, on top of being fundamentally narrative, frequently relies on gathering personal information on suspects, makes such ample use of writing techniques that rely on forms that depersonalize, condense, and listify information. This circumstance, however, becomes less surprising when considering detective fiction's long-standing and tight entanglement with positivist beliefs about verifiable data, which, processed through logic and reason, are expected to yield unambiguous results. The numerous overlapping, yet not entirely congruous files seemingly authored by a variety of independent sources create the impression that the dossier presents documents that are both authentic and, at least when taken together, capable of conveying objective facts.

The Notting Hill Mystery uses the dossier format and its relation to short and concise forms such as lists and tables to engage the reader in the act of detection. Formal devices such as footnotes and summaries encourage readers to engage in non-linear reading strategies: the dossier format invites to skip back and forth between sections, to extract data, and to cross-reference dates and events from the separate witness statements with one another. Furthermore, the emphasis on authenticity and a (supposedly) neutral way of presentation encourage the reader to pursue positivist methods of investigation, and in the end challenge them to evaluate their conclusions. The reader not only acts as a second-order detective but also shares the position of the addressee of the dossier—the insurance

company's board of directors—who are to judge the conclusions Henderson presents. The way the list form is used in this dossier is crucial to both how the process of the investigation is conducted and how the outcome is assessed.

The Role of the Reader

In his opening note, in which he presents his case file to his superiors, Henderson guarantees for the "accuracy and completeness" (2) of his source material and speaks of his investigation as "minute and laborious" (1). Already from the beginning, he hints at the kind of investigative role he is going to take and at the methods that will feature prominently in his investigation. Like many detectives to come after him, Henderson relies on his observation skills to draw connections between seemingly unrelated incidents; however, contrary to many later detectives, Henderson expounds right in his opening statement that his method of investigation is based on hard work, diligence, and accuracy rather than intuitive leaps, his ability to outwit or manipulate others, or physical prowess.

His choice of words from the word field of "exactitude" has a double function: it delineates the role the detective will take in this story, and it gives the reader hints as to which strategy of reading will most likely lead them to a successful reconstruction of the events depicted in his case file. As happens frequently in detective fiction, the detective's observational skills are not only closely related to their power of *seeing* but also related to their power of *reading*, both literally and metaphorically. Deciphering textual cues and reading people becomes part of the same activity. In fact, seeing and reading are frequently equated, and the notion of "seeing as reading" gains popularity in the context of both detective fiction and philosophies of seeing in the nineteenth century as "[t]he visible world [becomes] a text, the detective its astute observer and expert reader" (Smajić 2010, 71).[4] The dossier format in particular caters to this notion of seeing as reading. Made up of documents to be read and perused in order to be able to gain insight, the dossier arrangement places clues in sight of the reader and offers them the opportunity to take part in the act of detection themselves.

Henderson's opening implicitly promises that readers will be able to find all clues needed for solving his case within the texts he compiled. Furthermore, he frequently uses the second-person pronoun in statements that prompt both the reader and the addressee to take some kind of action,

such as "[…] to which I beg to direct your most particular attention" (6) or "[…] to submit for your consideration the facts of the case" (7). He furthermore ends his letter with the words "[a]waiting the honour of your further commands" (10). This merges the roles of the real world reader and the fictional jury Henderson addresses and therefore encourages the reader to adopt the position of a member of the jury committee.[5] The reader is thus to take on the roles of detective and judge at the same time. Henderson's own failure to come to a clear conclusion ("I am constrained to confess my own inability, after long and careful study, to decide" (7)) further encourages readers to try their own hand at solving the case because it suggests that the text may not provide a satisfactory solution if readers do not arrive at one on their own. Already in his opening statement, Henderson thus defines the ideal reader for his dossier: the reader is expected to exercise the same kind of diligence and accuracy with which Henderson claims to have compiled the document, but is to go beyond this and eventually pass their verdict on the circumstances laid out before them. Henderson's dossier asks the reader to become actively involved in recreating the circumstances of the case. All it allegedly takes to come to the correct solution is exactitude and diligence.

Detection as a Process

The *Notting Hill Mystery* not only prompts the reader to act as a detective and investigate the clues; it also, through its formal setup, supplies strategies and devices that are designed to help readers to fulfill the role assigned to them. Interestingly, all these devices share an affinity to the form of the list. First and foremost, *The Notting Hill Mystery* displays detection as a process. In both *The Notting Hill Mystery* and the *Murder Dossiers* that will be discussed later in this chapter, the alternation of different document formats (reports followed by photographs followed by telegrams etc.) and especially the immediate recognizability that the document labels stipulate evoke the impression that the files are displayed according to the proceedings of the actual investigation and thus stress the aspect of processuality.

Wolfgang Iser describes reading as an event that happens in time and that is based on sequentiality. With every bit of new information that a text presents, readers may have to revise their previous assumptions in order to be able to integrate the new piece of information (see 1978, 128–129). The relation between text and reader is thus imagined as an ongoing process of meaning creation and modification. The event-like character of a

fictional text allots each situation in a text concrete meaning but at the same time leaves it susceptible to later revision (see ibid., 67). A document that contains additional information can thus shine new light on a fact already known to the reader or highlight the importance of a detail that previously appeared meaningless.

In the context of *The Notting Hill Mystery*, this means that each additional document Henderson collects illustrates a step in his reasoning process that either corroborates previous findings or casts a different light on former statements. The processual character of Henderson's dossier as a whole is essential in rendering the individual steps in his reasoning transparent to the reader and one document becomes the basis upon which another can fully unfold its meaning. This process of creating meaning is not necessarily linear and often involves going back to different places in the dossier to compare statements before the investigation can proceed.

In lists, the processual character of meaning creation becomes especially apparent. Lists are capable of "arrang[ing] space and time by positioning selected components in a particular order in which sequence creates meaning" (Belknap 2004, 108), and because of the loose syntactical connections between their individual items, lists make particularly apparent how a change in the sequence of presentation or supplementing an additional item may result in an altered meaning:

> Because speech and writing are sequential, units heard or read in a list are comprehended first as having individual, discrete meaning, and then as having significance determined by relations to the preceding units. Furthermore, the dynamics and balance of lists adjust and shift as subsequent units are added. (Belknap 2004, 16)

The serial publication format of *The Notting Hill Mystery* can itself be considered list-like. With time passing between the publication of individual installments of the text, readers have no choice but to process each unit of the story sequentially. The text's separation into individual components thus not only takes place on the conceptual level but is also anchored in the material reality of physically distinct volumes.

Within individual sections, list-like devices such as Henderson's footnotes highlight places where new information impacts circumstances that have been previously mentioned, and they serve as a finding aid that helps to draw such connections. Henderson's use of footnotes emphasizes specific connecting points between (scattered) bits of information and

accentuates the importance of exactitude in the process of compiling evidence; furthermore, his notes frequently comment on the process of the dossier's creation.

Only an exact reconstruction of events that misses none of the connections between statements can create an unassailable chain of evidence, and for such a reconstruction to be exact, it is necessary that many fragments of evidence be compared and placed in relation to one another. Henderson even warns that a piece of evidence on its own can never be considered entirely reliable:

> Mr. Aldrige's statements are also to a certain extent supported by those of two other witnesses; but, unfortunately, there are, as will be seen, circumstances that throw considerable doubt upon the whole of this evidence and especially on that of Mr. Aldrige […] however, in conjunction with other circumstances, I learned enough to induce me to extend my researches. (4–5)

His concern illustrates that exactitude can be achieved only if relations between separate items or documents can be established and thus points out the processual nature of exactitude.

If the case is to be solved, Henderson's use of referencing systems suggests, an exact step-by-step comparison of all the documents is required. There is no single document or clue that conclusively proves Baron R.'s guilt. Instead, *The Notting Hill Mystery* presents detection as a process, in which each step is equally important. The dossier format relies on the representation of multiple perspectives and independent sources in order to fill the blanks left in one document with information provided elsewhere; the bigger picture only unfolds if all the pieces are viewed in conjunction. Since joining the pieces of information contained in the documents can only proceed step by step, a perusal of Henderson's files (i.e., the act of reading) reproduces the way in which each step of an investigation draws on previous steps and constitutes the basis for new insights.

Henderson asks his addressee (the insurance company committee in charge of deciding how to proceed with his findings) to verify that his reasoning steps meet the high standard of exactitude he sets for himself, and the dossier assigns readers the same role by making available to them the same listing mechanisms that Henderson relies on for cross-referencing his documents. The dossier offers the reader a position similar to that of an archivist trying to extract information from a compilation of documents,[6] and it supplies the tools that enable even an amateur to handle the

material (see Codebò 2007, n.p.). Through its abundant use of list-like referencing devices, *The Notting Hill Mystery* encourages readers to reproduce each of Henderson's reasoning steps and thus merges the reader's role with that of the addressee of the text.

Processes of Exactitude: Footnotes and Cross-referencing

The Notting Hill Mystery employs a number of list-like devices to enable the reader to take part in the process of detection. Compared to other novel formats, dossier novels typically "present readers with a richer apparatus of 'finding aids,' or the instruments used by archivists to facilitate the retrieval of records, such as indexes, tables, calendars, and cross-reference guides" (Codebò 2007, n.p.). Dossier novels thus enable the reader to navigate the text and jump back and forth between passages that do not chronologically follow one another. Codebò's "finding aids" facilitate processes aimed at establishing relations between different points of data or information, narrow down possibilities, and are designed to eventually lead to an exact result.

In an attempt to define exactitude, Markus Krajewski views it as relational and as depending on certain practices. He argues that exactitude can only come into existence when nonidentical sources are viewed in relation to one another. Exactitude, thus, is related to comparability. This means that the greater the abundance of material, the greater the degree of exactitude that can potentially be achieved (2016, 213–214). In the case of *The Notting Hill Mystery*, every new perspective, and every additional witness statement Henderson adds has the potential to make his report more exact, be it by adding something new or by verifying information already known.

Krajewski enumerates several examples for what he considers to be processes that can be employed to achieve exactitude in a text, among them classifying, structuring, defining, quoting, referencing, and researching (see ibid., 224). All of these play a role in the *Notting Hill Mystery*. Strikingly, in both their form and their mechanics, Krajewski's processes of exactitude are closely related to the form of the list, as are Codebò's "finding aids" mentioned above. This clearly showcases the form's aptitude as an organizing tool and its ubiquity as a structuring device. Due to their brevity and function to condense information, lists make an abundance of content quickly accessible. The lack of context such condensation necessitates makes for quick access to and maximum variability in structuring and restructuring the information thus arranged. The list's reduced degree

of mediation allows for different connections to be drawn based on the needs of any specific situation. The list form easily adapts to renegotiations of the reader's needs at different points in time, whereas a text with full syntax tends to link the content items in a specific way, be it causal or thematic or otherwise. Lists by definition separate the items on them; they thus make it considerably easier to restructure the information they contain and fit it to changing demands.

Right from the beginning of *The Notting Hill Mystery*, Henderson makes clear by his attention to detail and repeated emphasis on the "accuracy and completeness" (2) of his work that exactitude and the processes associated with it will be crucial for the investigative work to be performed. His careful compilation and cross-referencing of his source material encourages readers to apply exactly those techniques that Krajewski labels as processes of exactitude in their reading of the novel. Similar to Krajewski's approach, Henderson's investigative method relies on relationality. Instead of starting from a fixed number of reference points or a set of assumptions to be verified, Henderson's case, apart from his central aim to verify whether the life insurance claim made by Baron R. was justified, relies on a network of reference points that develops gradually as certain practices of exactitude are being applied to his collected materials.

Practices such as cross-referencing can generate reference points as they are being applied and thus contribute to organizing material in a relational way (see Krajewski 2016, 224). It is the combination of several such practices that can help the reader to work out the solution for the mystery presented. Henderson's evidence is circumstantial and only makes sense if his witness statements are compared with and related to one another. To turn his dossier into an unassailable chain of evidence, it is necessary to draw out connections between the individual statements that are not immediately apparent.

One means Henderson employs to make these connections visible and accessible to the reader is his use of footnotes to cross-reference statements. The footnotes supply explanations for unclear terms or items, and they help to bridge the gaps between his witnesses' different perspectives by providing cross-references between sections. Such references always go back to earlier sections of the case file and, for example, draw attention to several events that initially seem unrelated but occurred on the same date. The footnotes highlight events that might otherwise have been dismissed as coincidences, and through them, Henderson sketches out logical connections without making them explicit. Readers who are willing to follow

the footnotes and skip back and forth between sections, for example, are much more likely to notice that Mrs. Anderton and Madame R. fall sick on the same day with the same symptoms (see 109). The serial publication format in which *The Notting Hill Mystery* first appeared further encourages such reading practices. With time passing between individual installments, Henderson's references also offer themselves for being used by readers as a memory aid in addition to a means of verifying the exactitude of his collected material.

Krajewski argues that simple acts of compilation can render an exact result if they are used to systematically generate an overall picture (see 2016, 214). Henderson's "descriptive strategy" (ibid., my translation)[7] leaves it up to the reader to go back and compare contrasting or complementary representations of events. The footnotes serve as a lead as to where such points of contrast or comparison can be found, but they leave it to the reader to spell out the conclusions to be drawn from those comparisons. The footnote hinting at the coincidence of dates for Mrs. Anderton's and Madame R.'s illness, for example, reads "Compare Mrs. Anderton's journal, December 9, p. 80" (109), thus pointing out to the reader where to look but leaving implicit the conclusions to be drawn. Later footnotes are even less explicit and only give references to other sections of the dossier to be consulted for reference, such as "Compare Section III., 3 &c" (170) or "Vide Section V., 5" (175).

Only by establishing relations between material that initially seems unrelated does Henderson (and can the reader) manage to uncover the hidden links between the collected documents. By structuring and cross-referencing his material, Henderson is able to access knowledge that he could not have gained through even the minutest examination of a single source (see Oertzen 2017, 427).[8]

Cross-referencing is, however, not the only use Henderson puts his footnotes to. He also uses them to comment on the quality of documents or the truth value of statements, for example, by listing further witnesses who can corroborate a statement or quoting from actual nineteenth-century state-of-the-art medico-legal specialist literature (see 263).[9] Statements such as "[t]he housemaid's deposition corroborates this part of the evidence" (201) or "[t]his I find to be the case.—R.H." (220) furnish Henderson's case file with a semblance of objectivity because they give the impression that only statements that have been verified are included in the file or that doubtful sources will be marked as such in the footnotes. This meticulousness greatly contributes to awarding reliability

to the collected statements and makes even incomplete statements that leave open questions usable. The use of medical and technical terms[10] further contributes to the impression of reliability and objectivity and at the same time actuates another of Krajewski's processes of exactitude and incorporates it in the presentation of the novel: quoting. The most striking and innovative way, however, in which Henderson uses processes of exactitude becomes apparent from a look at how he uses structuring and restructuring as a tool to guide the reader and arrange and rearrange information.

Processes of Exactitude: Structuring

Henderson's notes that provide a commentary for the evidence he collected constitute the frame story of the novel, and they are an ideal and obvious starting point for examining the effects of structuring and restructuring in the text. Henderson's memoranda are uniquely fit for this purpose because in them, he explains in detail how he arranged his material according to a self-chosen structuring principle. These explanations provide insight into how his categorizing system works and why it was done that way. Henderson explains that "[t]he length to which these depositions have run has obliged me to divide them into distinct sections, each of which should bear more directly upon some particular phase of the case" (133). One of these sections, for example, is concerned with the first illness of Mrs. Anderton and her husband's death, and another one is concerned with the illness of Madame R.

Henderson chooses to arrange his evidence by topic rather than sticking to a strictly chronological sequence in order to give his readers the opportunity to consider each case separately and draw their own conclusions about the connections between the sections. In one of his frame story memoranda, he explicitly comments on his choices for arranging his material:

> I had at first proposed to submit to you in a tabular form the singular coincidences to which I allude; but, on reflection, such a course appeared objectionable, as tending to place too strongly before you a view of the subject with which I must confess myself thoroughly dissatisfied. I have, therefore, preferred leaving entirely to yourselves the comparison of the various dates, &c., limiting myself strictly to a verification of their accuracy. (136)

That the seemingly unmediated and list-like form of the table is considered to produce too biased a view of the case is curious but becomes logical when Henderson's preferred method of investigation is taken into account. Since he considers detection to be a process in which exactitude is based on comparing various materials, a compilation of evidence in a table would compress his findings into a single source, and he seems keenly aware that every act of reduction—which becomes inevitable when fitting things into a table—takes facts out of their context and thus already constitutes an act of interpretation. Thus, it is not only the comparison of dates on which his case rests but also the background information about characters and circumstances. Henderson's use of footnotes and cross-referencing proves that he is aware of the potential multirelationality of list-like forms and that their capability for grouping and rearranging information can be both an advantage and a setback. Henderson's dossier is an attempt to use the advantages and circumvent the setbacks by proposing multiple ordering systems and thus viewpoints from which to consider the case.

That the success of such processes of comparison crucially depends on the order in which documents are arranged becomes especially clear when Henderson rearranges the information from his sections in his concluding note to the case to better illuminate his suspect's motives and actions. In his summary, he changes the order of events to foreground a chain of causation rather than focusing his attention around certain topics, persons, or around temporal sequence (see 277). These changes of order are explicitly marked as such, with the original section numbering from his file sections placed next to each successive argument to highlight exactly in what way his material has been rearranged. By systematically arranging and rearranging evidence without entirely uncoupling it from its original context, he utilizes the very fragmentary form of the list to bridge the gap between pieces of evidence that initially seem fragmented and incoherent. Krajewski emphasizes the crucial importance of such a systematical approach to one's material if exactitude is to be achieved (see 2016, 214).

Another interesting effect of Henderson commenting on his structuring system is that it makes the novel's table of contents part of the story world rather than a paratextual device. Henderson's table of contents thus goes beyond the "basically functional nature of the paratext" (Genette 1997, 7). For Henderson's addressee, the table of contents remains paratext, the function of which is to present the text to potential recipients (see ibid., 1); for the reader, however, it becomes part of the story world. Since

upon opening the book, the reader shares the addressee's perspective, the table of contents clouds the difference between the factual and the fictional world and thus creates an additional means of immersion. In his function as narrator, Henderson explicitly references his dossier's table of contents and refers to the captions used therein in his footnotes (see e.g. 38). This prompts the conclusion that the table of contents is included in Henderson's report as a reference and orientation point for the jury the case is presented to. By perusing the table of contents, the reader thus already takes on the role of a member of the jury and becomes an independent examiner of the facts of the case even before engaging with Henderson's documents.

Furthermore, the indication that the table of contents was created by Henderson and is part of his case file marks the order in which the documents are presented as deliberate and significant. It prompts the reader to watch out for connections between documents placed next to one another. Through such acts—or processes—of comparison, reference points for the case are generated and can then help to assess and place documents presented later in the file. That the witness statements are presented in writing rather than a court room setting is essential for how Henderson's dossier works because "the materialization of the speech act in writing enables it to be inspected, manipulated and re-ordered in a variety of ways" (Goody 1978, 76).[11]

Henderson carefully classifies each document included in his case file according to its genre as letter, statement, diary entry, or copy of official records. These labels are displayed right at the beginning in the table of contents. Through his choice of label, Henderson not only stabilizes his ordering system but also assigns an implicit value of reliability to the various documents. The mere fact that a statement was written down, Lisa Gitelman suggests, awards it a degree of implied reliability (or value) that depends on its visibility. "Documents are epistemic objects," she argues, and the knowledge they contain and convey depends on being displayed (2014, 1). The knowledge documents disclose is based on "an implied self-evidence that is intrinsically rhetorical" (ibid., 2), which Gitelman calls the "know-show function" (ibid., 1).

Henderson indeed gives a lot of thought to the way in which his evidence is to be presented as he is apparently aware that the form of presentation will influence the reception of the information. In section five, in his memorandum, he justifies why he opted for the full witness report rather than the table of dates he originally intended.

An excerpt from the table Henderson describes (and which is not included in his files) would look something like this:

Date	*Mrs. A.*	*Madame R.*	*Baron R.*
Oct. 14, 1854			Learns of Mr. W.'s will, which leaves money to his female heirs or, in case of their death, their husbands
Nov. 7, 1854			Marries Madame R.
Dec. 9, 1854	Falls sick the first time. Symptoms of antimony poisoning	Falls sick, treated for antimony poisoning	
Nov. 1, 1855–Feb. 5, 1856			Takes out various life insurance policies for his wife
Oct. 12, 1856	Dies, symptoms of antimony poisoning, but no evidence		
Oct. 1856	Husband commits suicide (with prussic acid from the Baron's medicine chest)		
Mar. 15, 1857		Dies, antimony poisoning	

The table as a form of presentation makes clear at first glance the parallel dates and symptoms between Mrs. Anderton's and Madame R.'s fits of illness, and the proximity of dates between Baron R.'s gaining knowledge of the fortune Madame R. is to inherit, their wedding date, and her first sickness. It furthermore makes apparent the relatively but not conspicuously short interval between the Baron insuring his wife's life and her death, and thus throws immediate suspicion on the Baron. However, it gives Henderson no feasible way to highlight the facts that cast doubt on the idea that the Baron may have arranged the three deaths, and it leaves no possibility to elaborate on what makes the case such a complex one. While the table can be seen as the final result of the processes of comparison Henderson employs to reach his conclusion, it takes away transparency and reproducibility. Since it cannot replace the judgment, doubt, and interpretation necessary to reach a conclusion, it ultimately has much less evidentiary force than Henderson's collected documents.

The Notting Hill Mystery presents the findings of Henderson's investigation not as depending on or relatable to a given constant that can be achieved by following a fixed set of rules (such as filling in dates in a table), but rather as the endpoint of a process during which gaps can only be filled in gradually, through acts of comparison. Reliable points of reference can be determined only through active engagement with the material.

The Evidentiary Force of Authenticity

The evidentiary force of Henderson's material has a twofold origin: one factor Henderson himself stresses is the form of presentation that enables the jurors (and the reader) to form an informed yet unbiased opinion of the documents laid before them. The second factor is related but different: the reliability and authenticity of the materials Henderson presents. The concept of authenticity that, in the nineteenth century, is closely tied to a non-biased and objective presentation of facts (both in detective fiction as in science) is closely linked with positivist beliefs common especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.[12]

Much of the nineteenth century's fascination with detection and detectives sparked from the idea that detection is based on scientific methods and logical reasoning and that those tools could potentially enable anyone to reach conclusions that initially seem nothing short of magical. In *The Notting Hill Mystery*, Henderson tries to strengthen this impression of detection as an exact science when he speaks of his investigation as "minute" and "laborious" and guarantees for the "accuracy" and "completeness" of his documents (1–2). These words not only emphasize the process-oriented nature of detective work but are also designed to evoke connotations of exactitude and verifiable scientific procedures. Henderson's introduction encourages readers to verify his claims about completeness and exactitude. This approach both serves as a confirmation for positivist beliefs and awards the reader the power detectives supposedly held at the time of the novel's publication—to be able to verify the facts of the case posed before them and to identify and correct possible flaws in his logic.

Since exactitude is of such paramount importance when working with the documents Henderson presents, it becomes only logical why he places great emphasis on posing his case in as unbiased a way as possible. The emphasis on exactitude also explains why the reader finds supposedly authentic documents such as a marriage certificate (101) or a copy of a handwritten letter (239) included in the dossier. In fact,

> [r]ealist writers relied heavily on the archives of courts of law as sources for creating characters and crafting stories. Quite often, their works imitated legal discourse by proving the authenticity of wills, dowry contracts, deeds, or purchase agreements. (Codebò 2007, n.p)

This practice shows the fascination with and importance of authenticity in relation to objectivity at that time. The rhetorical technique of visualization has been employed to convey knowledge since baroque times (see Vismann 2000, 211), and the feel of authenticity that supposedly original documents (as included in Henderson's dossier) evoke makes them appear to be objective and unbiased evidence, mechanically reproduced without human intervention. According to Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, the absence of human intervention and the mechanical reproduction of observations are central to the understanding of objectivity most prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, "mechanical objectivity," as Daston and Galison dub it, is the "attempt to capture nature with as little human intervention as possible" (20). Daston and Galison describe the scientist, or the detective—*The Notting Hill Mystery* does portray detection as a scientific process—in the age of mechanical objectivity as someone in possession of diligence and self-restraint but with as little capacity or tendency for interpretation as possible (see Daston and Galison 2007, 128). [13]

Henderson's approach to detection accords with this principle of not interfering with what is directly presented to the eye. He only compiles data and largely leaves the task of interpretation to his addressee (and, hence, to the reader). Even when he rearranges his reports in the last section to highlight causal connections, he merely changes the ordering system of what was already presented and thus sticks with the minimum level of interpretation that any form of processing or presentation entails. Henderson's aim is to create a reflection of the facts as they are without imposing his own opinion on them.

At a first glance, the list's lack of mediation, seeming removal of an interpretative instance, and its short, concise rendition of data points may seem the tool of objectivity par excellence; yet Henderson rejects the table as a suitable form of presenting his evidence. This reveals a curious contradiction: on the one hand, his rejection of the table form shows he is aware of the authenticating effects of form (especially the representational form of the dossier) he is apparently trying to avoid,[14] and on the other hand, he heavily relies on techniques and practices such as listing and

cross-referencing to achieve a degree of detachment and to try and convey an objective unbiased impression of the facts of the case.

The relation of fact and form in the dossier format is worth exploring in more detail. In nineteenth-century print culture, the majority of print products were functional rather than literary texts (see Gitelman 2014, 12). For functional texts such as fill-in-the-blanks forms, their formatting was central to how they conveyed meaning. Lisa Gitelman dubs this the "know-show function" and argues that such forms—the name itself is telling—"helped to shape and enable, to define and delimit, the transactions in which they were deployed" (ibid.). Form can thus express purpose even before the content of any given document is known to a reader. Henderson compiles his documents in the form of a dossier to signal to his addressee (the role of whom the reader is to take on) as soon as they open the table of contents that his documents are to serve as evidence and that they have been purposefully structured into distinct sections to support an argument.

Cornelia Vismann argues that lists do not communicate directly, but that, rather, they control what is being communicated (see 2000, 20). Henderson's table of contents is a case in point, and the footnotes in the dossier fulfill a similar function. Footnotes provide additional information or evidence that supports arguments made in the text, and their mere presence in the dossier, regardless of their content, signals to Henderson's addressee that he is trustworthy and meticulous, and that his exactitude can be relied upon. In the context of the dossier form, where exactitude holds such a high value, even the mere wealth of documents Henderson has collected makes him appear as a competent investigator. The quantity of the statements and documents included in his dossier is turned into a signifier for the quality of Henderson's research through the format of their presentation alone.

Mesmerism, Lists, and Science

There is, however, a twist to Henderson's meticulous presentation of his conclusions to the case. According to Henderson himself, the conclusions his documents suggest are "so at variance with all the most firmly established laws of nature" (6) that he would rather "ignore a chain of circumstantial evidence so complete and close-fitting in every respect, as it seems almost impossible to disregard" (6) than accept what his own investigation indubitably points to: that mesmerism is real, meaning that people

can be manipulated to act against their own will through a kind of undetectable psychic force.

This seems so shattering and shocking to this story world because it invalidates the foundation that (positivist) scientific thinking is based on, namely that any perceptible event can be explained with logic and reason, and that whatever claims the status of truth must be verifiable. Both possible solutions to Henderson's dilemma—that either mesmerism is real or that his logic is flawed—seem equally implausible and equally unacceptable.

This leaves readers with a paradox: they can follow the process through which Henderson arrived at his conclusions, and they can testify to the flawlessness of his logic. But the only possible inference this allows for invalidates the method by which readers have come to it. The practices of exactitude which a reader of this dossier must follow to ascertain verifiable results lead to mesmerism as an explanation—a phenomenon so inherently *un*verifiable that Henderson wonders if crimes of such a kind can even be prosecuted (see 284). These two dominant forces are diametrically opposed to one another and hence incompatible in Henderson's understanding.

Although mesmerism was initially advertised as a science when it gained rapid popularity in the 1840s (see Willis and Wynne 2006, 2), by the time *The Notting Hill Mystery* was published, mesmeric experiments were disreputable within the scientific community (see Karpenko 2017, 148–149). Even though mesmerism had a profound impact on Victorian culture, it was generally considered a pseudoscience (see ibid., 6), and especially toward the end of the nineteenth century, the practice carried a "whiff of fraudulence or charlatanism" that even spread its taint to its more legitimate relative hypnotism (Leighton 2006, 207).

Since the reader of *The Notting Hill Mystery* is encouraged to share Henderson's role as investigator and verify the steps of his reasoning, it stands to reason to assume that readers will accept the Baron's mesmeric abilities as a given rather than question their own judgment. Lara Karpenko, in her essay on mesmerism and sympathetic identification in *The Notting Hill Mystery*, does not even consider the possibility that Henderson's reasoning might be flawed and states that from Henderson's investigation, "it is clear that the Baron committed the murders" (2017, 159) and that, hence, the Baron's mesmeric powers are a fact of the story world. Henderson's clearly voiced reluctance to believe what his investigation seems to point to draws attention to the stark contrast between the

positivist methods he employs and the belief in the objectivity of reasoning on the one hand and the lack of verifiable proof that makes it impossible to see the Baron punished for his crimes on the other hand. *The Notting Hill Mystery* thus seizes on the fear that the Victorian belief in science as a universal instigator of progress and way of explaining the world might not live up to expectations. The novel's innovative form and emphasis on exactitude as the foundation of scientific investigation testifies to a strong belief in positivist thinking and methodology as capable of producing universally valid explanations, but the success of its villain at the same time draws that belief into question and makes apparent the tensions inherent in it. The reader is left with the uncomfortable realization that even if Henderson's methodology can validly identify the Baron as the guilty party, it leaves the authorities incapable of convicting him of the crime. It is left to the reader to resolve this paradox.

Detection as a Game: *The Murder Dossiers*

Like *The Notting Hill Mystery*, the *Murder Dossiers*, written by Dennis Wheatley and planned by Joe Links, are arranged in the form of a dossier. On the cover for *Murder off Miami* (1936), the first of four of these crime dossiers that were published between 1936 and 1939, Wheatley and Links announced that their creation would introduce "a new era in crime fiction." The main innovation Wheatley and Links introduce is that the dossiers contain actual physical objects such as bloodstained cloth or (allegedly) human hair that serve as evidence and can be examined by the reader. As a consequence, "[r]eaders could have the satisfaction of solving the mystery by examining the same clues, in a physical sense, as the detective" (Cox 1989, 320). The possibility to physically handle material clues rather than just follow a text that describes these clues invites the reader to slip into the role of detective and takes reader engagement yet one step further than *The Notting Hill Mystery*.

Wheatley and Links, in their author's note preceding the first volume, emphasize their authentic presentation of the crime "in exactly the same sequence as that in which it was unravelled by the investigating officer" (n.p.) and promise their readers they will respect the fair play principle of Golden Age detective fiction and not make use of "any extraneous or misleading matter," thus setting their dossiers apart from other novels of the era that have disappointed their readers by disobeying the fair play principle.[15] The *Murder Dossiers*' innovative approach to the genre, together

with Wheatley's renown as a writer[16] and the affordable price of three shillings and six pennies the dossiers were sold at, all contributed to the success and popularity of the *Murder Dossiers*—the first volume sold over 100,000 copies.

The clearly defined fair play rules hotly discussed and mostly observed in the 1920s and 1930s hint to a readership that appreciated the opportunity to get involved in the act of detection and guess along to a certain degree, and the *Murder Dossiers* cater to that wish in a special way. Both dossiers discussed in this section merge the role of reader and detective, but they do so in very different ways. While *Murder off Miami*, the first dossier, almost painstakingly attempts to emulate the presentation and proceedings of an actual police investigation, the fourth and last dossier, *Herewith the Clues* (1939), presents itself as a game that engages the reader by awarding points on a score sheet for the correct interpretation of the pieces of evidence it contains. The remainder of this chapter will juxtapose the two dossiers and trace the development from police file to game by looking at the way these dossiers employ lists and list-like elements to involve their readers in the act of detection.

Murder Off Miami*: The Case File*

Murder off Miami includes a paratextual author's note printed on the inside cover of the dossier that introduces readers to the new format and gives the authors the opportunity to explicitly praise the merits of their creation. The author's note teems with words from the semantic field of authenticity: it promises readers "original handwritten documents," "actual clues," and a presentation of facts in "correct order," which, together, make up "the complete Dossier of a crime" (n.p.). This focus on authenticity casts the reader in the role of detective: if the document constitutes the collected evidence of a crime, then the person to whom it is addressed and who engages with it must be the one who is meant to solve the crime.

As a means to convey objectivity and authenticity, the list makes its first appearance even before the reader enters the story world. Already in its second paragraph, the author's note lists the variety of documents and constitutive parts of the dossier. The cumulative mention of "[c]ablegrams, original handwritten documents, photographs, police reports, criminal records" (ibid.), and many more items function to convince the reader of the originality of the *Murder Dossiers*' format. By including an

abundance of elements that are tied to factuality and bureaucracy in the real world, this enumeration conjures up the illusion that the *Murder Dossiers* contain or at least accurately represent the kind of documentary evidence that would make up an actual police investigation file.

The instructions in the author's note emphasize that the crime can be solved by someone "who has never seen any of the people concerned, but reaches the correct solution of the mystery solely upon the evidence in Dossier form, exactly as it is presented to you [the reader]" (ibid.). These words are underlined in the author's note to stress both the authentic character of the collected documents and the reader's intended role as the investigating officer's superior. The reader is supposed to take the position the story world assigns to the character who signs the document with the solution and warrant concealed in the sealed section at the end. Furthermore, by asking the reader to decide "who *you* will arrest" (ibid., emphasis in original), the author's note not only imparts on them the viewpoint and role of investigator, but also implies that the reader now holds the responsibility of a detective to punish the guilty and protect the innocent; in addition, the wording implies that in their role as detective, readers will also have the power to do so. This implied investigative authority strongly contributes to fostering reader engagement.

Despite their innovative form and high potential for reader engagement, however, Wheatley's dossiers are still novels of the detective genre and as such could hardly function without providing closure. Accordingly, the dossiers also contain the solutions to the crimes they pose. The solution to *Murder off Miami* is presented as a police report that matches the documentary style of the case file-based story and thus seamlessly blends in with the other documents in the collection. However, this section of the dossier is sealed with a piece of paper that is glued to the back cover. The paper presents a physical obstacle that has to be removed before the solution is revealed and thus institutes an additional means of involving the reader: the forced stop in the reading process functions to give the reader pause to think about the correct solution themselves before they read on. Unlike texts that only engage readers intellectually, the dossier's sealed solution section prompts interaction with the dossier as a physical entity.

In accordance with the dossier's formal structure, the physical shape of Wheatley's novel, too, is designed to resemble a case file rather than a work of fiction. All pages are only printed on one side, punched, and held together by a piece of strand threaded through the punched holes (see Fig. 3.1). The table of contents typically found in novels is omitted entirely,

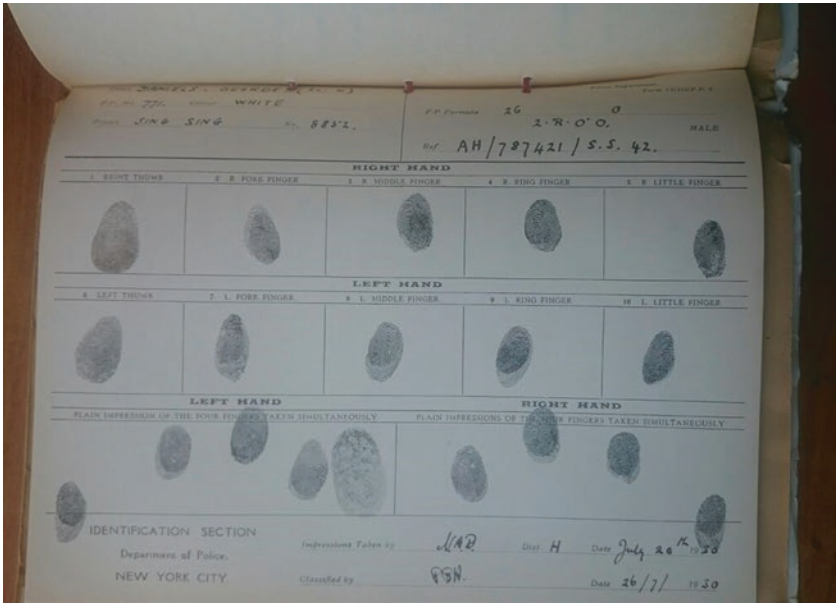


Fig. 3.1 Dossier format with punched holes

which implies an uncertain progression and outcome of the investigation to be conducted and points to the possibility that a failure to resolve the case may result in a lack of closure. The absence of a table of contents suggests the reader is expected to become active as a detective to prevent such a lack of closure. Even the bibliographical information that is usually printed on an extra page or on the inside of the front cover is, in this case, printed on the inside of the back cover and can thus only be accessed once the seal to the section with the solution is broken. If the jacket were removed, the dossier would appear like a loose collection of documents taken out of a folder.

The reports are printed in typescript, which, in the 1930s, was very much part of the "aesthetic ideologies" of "business, journalism, corporate and state bureaucracy, education, and scholarship" (Gitelman 2014, 13) and thus awards Wheatley's collection of documents an official character. The typescript font in the reports is clearly distinct from the font in which the author's note preceding the dossier is printed, and the change of font indicates a shift of focus from literary entertainment to

administration matters. According to Lisa Gitelman, the look of typescripts was associated with office environments and "secretarial production" during the 1930s (ibid., 56), and *Murder off Miami* evokes those contexts to create the illusion that the reader is perusing a file produced for the administrative purposes of a police station rather than for private entertainment.

Furthermore, the documents display file and form numbers that mix letters and numbers in the top outside corner of the page where one would expect to find page numbers in a novel. The actual page numbers are printed on the top inside corner, close to the inner margin, and become almost invisible once the first couple of pages are turned. Moreover, only those pages that the form numbers classify as report carry page numbers at all. Page numbers are omitted from documents the file classifies as photographs, telegrams, and other document types. By seemingly replacing the consecutive numbering of pages as an ordering system for the content of a book with the file and form numbers that designate different types of documents in bureaucratic procedures, *Murder off Miami* emulates the formal setup of real-world documents or police files and thus contributes to evoking an impression of authenticity—"Form RL/2120/C.7" (1), for example, designates a report, "Form GO/7431/N 58" (following page 13) is a memo, and "Form IS/828/P7" (following page 58) denominates a criminal record, with the letters determining the document type.

Besides the paratextual clues that directly address the reader, it is these structural alterations that signal to the reader they are dealing with a police file rather than a novel. The way these different signifying systems structure and categorize is inextricably linked to the form of the list. The form and file codes listed at the top of each page classify and thus prestructure the documents in the dossier according to its source: the classification code for report, for example, signals that the document will contain first-hand observations and deductions, and the form that marks the criminal records documents conveys the implicit assurance that the information it contains is verified by an official government agency. The file code thus gives hints as to which kind of clue may be found in the document and additionally indicates how reliable the information thus gained is likely to be. It is the list's exceptional power of condensing information that makes this possible. By listing each form code with its designated document type or function, the reader detective can gain an enormous amount of information on a meta-data level even before engaging with the content of any individual document.

The continuous labeling of documents with form numbers creates coherence that is situated on the level of formal presentation but takes on functions typically ascribed to the level of plot. The coherence that the form numbers create thus goes beyond the function of page numbers as indicators of sequence in regular novels because it provides additional information such as the source of a document, its origin and channels of distribution, and its reliability—factors that affect the level of plot. It is a typical strategy for dossier novels to "imitate the most commonly accepted procedures for establishing truth in [the] certain cultural context" in which they are situated (Codebò 2007, n.p.). The listing of form numbers at the top corner of the documents in the dossier thus situates the individual documents within the context of police procedures and serves to indirectly vouch for their authenticity. Authenticity in *Murder off Miami*, thus, operates on two distinct but mutually reinforcing levels: the author's note promises the reader a fair reading experience with access to all the necessary clues and no misleading strategies, and the formal setup of the text promises that the reader detective will be working with documents the reliability of which meets the standards of official police investigations.

Another factor that contributes to the M*urder Dossiers*' authenticity is that they include handwritten letters and other pieces of material evidence glued onto the pages in plastic or paper bags. The inclusion of actual objects bypasses the mediating instance that even the most objectively minded description of an object cannot go without and leaves it entirely up to the reader how much attention they want to bestow upon any individual item included. Through these objects that readers have to physically manipulate to be able to interpret the clues they contain—for example, by opening a sealed letter—the *Murder Dossiers* offer their readers an experiential dimension in the direct sense of "involv[ing] sensorimotor patterns" (Caracciolo 2014, 59–60) that are the basis of our ability to perceive and interact with the world around us.[17] The dossiers thus engage readers on a basic phenomenological level. Caracciolo argues that an experiential text "activates something akin to actual memories" and "triggers the sensory residue left by a large number of past occurrences" (ibid., 46); by bypassing the mediating instance that usually facilitates such trigger moments, the *Murder Dossiers* provide direct sensory input rather than activating memories of it and thus offer readers an exceptional degree of immersion that is based on direct sensory experience and plays into the texts' claims to authenticity.

Not all of these extra items yield relevant information, and some (such as the bloodstained piece of curtain on page 15a) are included only for the sensational effect. Others, however, feature clues that are vital to the solution, and those objects thus directly engage the reader in solving the puzzle. The lack of mediation that the inclusion of these objects allows for creates the illusion that the reader is working an authentic case in which material pieces of evidence play a central role in convicting a suspect.

As is the case with the photographs in the dossier, the pages with the material evidence pieces are excluded from the consecutive page numbering that the novel as a whole provides. They are either placed in between two consecutively numbered pages, or with some document types, a letter is added to the previous page number to create a loose tie to the more narrative context of the report in which the piece of evidence is mentioned (see Fig. 3.2). Thus the formal division between, for example, pages 15 and 15A to a degree also separates the material clues from the story(-events) described in the investigating officer's report, the pages of which are consecutively numbered. Even though only three of these alternatively numbered pages exist, this formal separation has several implications for

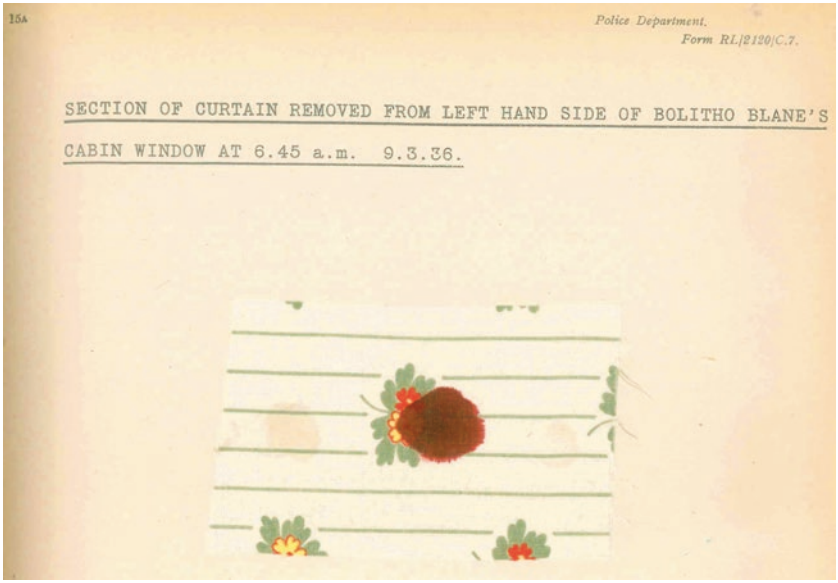


Fig. 3.2 Evidence page

how the text can be read. The list-like setup of these alternatively numbered pages creates a second-order classification system that allows the reader to go through the dossier and only consider and compare certain types of evidence, such as the consecutively numbered reports, the material evidence with alternative numbering, or the photographs, which are printed on a different kind of paper and can thus be easily picked out. The alternative ordering systems that are independent of consecutive page numbering make these pages instantly recognizable and allow for easier navigation and thus for reader engagement.

The pages with alternative numbering are further held together by an ever unvarying caption that labels the piece of evidence and then explains where and when it was found, for instance, "section of curtain removed from left hand side of Bolitho Blane's cabin window at 6.45. a.m. 9.3.36" (15A).

The captions in these alternatively numbered pages always follow the same pattern and provide a kind of title or overarching category (material evidence found) that holds the material clues together. The brevity that this list form of presentation enforces in this case also suggests the relevance of the items presented this way. Lists can reduce content to an informational core and thus suggest the little that remains is imbued with heightened importance. There are three of these pages in the dossier, and though they are scattered widely, the alternative numbering and repeating captions allow reader to view them as a list. If they are put together and read as a list, each alternatively numbered page, like a bullet point, encapsulates a different development stage of the case. The first piece of evidence provides a reason why the dead person may have committed suicide, the second page proves that the dead man was actually murdered, and the third and last page, which includes three separate pieces of evidence, displays objects that incriminate some suspects and exculpate others, thus mirroring the different stages the investigation takes.

Page numbering and the capitalized and underscored letters set these pages apart from the rest of the text and accentuate their special status. Those devices frame these pages as possible benchmarks that subdivide the dossier, not unlike a table of contents, the purpose of which is to divide a larger text into distinct sections. Similarly, the alternatively numbered pages divide the dossier into stages in a case. The form of the list is essential to setting up such a reading experience because it affords the condensation of information to an informational core and the loose links (in this

case given through the special numbering and unvarying caption system) that allow for an overview and easy restructuring.

Reading Strategies

Murder off Miami makes ample use of lists and their affordances to encourage specific reading strategies, which differ considerably from those that readers of *The Notting Hill Mystery* have to apply to successfully assemble useful information. While *The Notting Hill Mystery* requires readers to carefully extract information through processes of exactitude, *Murder off Miami* takes care of this for the reader. A reader taking careful notes of the times for which each suspect mentioned in the police report has an alibi will find the result of their efforts presented neatly summarized in list form on page 49. The list is captioned "times accounted for by presence in the lounge," followed by a brief explanation and an enumeration of the names of people present at a location that gives them an alibi for the murder, with the names sorted into relevant time slots. This list summarizes, for the convenience of the reader, information that could have been collected from the previous reports and thus already fulfills the main task that *The Notting Hill Mystery* poses to the reader as a detective. The list of times accounted for is followed by another list of "unvouched for times" (50), which assembles under the name of each suspect all the time slots unaccounted for so far. This list is followed by yet another list titled "possible motives" (51). Curiously, this list enumerates all the suspects, including those with no discernible motive at this point in the investigation. Entries for suspects without a motive are made in the manner of "Mrs. Jocelyn. Nil, as far as known at the moment" (51), and this statement is repeated for several suspects. The inclusion of seemingly superfluous or self-evident information, such as that no motive is known at the moment, creates an impression of completeness and thoroughness.

These three consecutive lists provide summaries of the facts known so far and thus hint to the kind of role the reader is supposed to take on in this dossier (which differs from the reader's role in *The Notting Hill Mystery*). By presenting to the reader all the information available so far from the written reports, the text aims to put them in the position of the investigating officer's superior to whom the reports are addressed. It becomes apparent that the two positions of investigating officer (that the reader takes in *The Notting Hill Mystery*) and superior (which the reader is supposed to take in *Murder off Miami*) have very different implications: the officer's task is to collect, cross-reference, and summarize information,

a duty that requires diligence but (only) routine skills. The superior, on the other hand, is required to interpret the collected data and spot the gaps in the seemingly all-encompassing information.[18]

Wheatley's dossier asks the reader to identify the odd detail in a given array of information rather than assemble said information, and the inclusion of the letters, memos, and other material pieces of evidence provides a unique opportunity to do so. Three crucial details—an ill-fitting suit, a razor cut, and a peculiar tooth brush—are to be spotted in the photographs the dossier includes and are not mentioned at all in the investigating officer's meticulous reconstruction of timelines and motives. The reading strategy that leads to success here, the readily included complete timelines suggest, is not to pick out and cross-reference details, but to spot anomalies in the details which are already arranged into a convenient and seemingly clear shape of presentation. The list is the ideal format for this modus operandi because it affords reduction, brevity, easy comparability, and overview.

The lists of timelines and motives in *Murder off Miami* are followed by yet another list titled "inventory of the late Bolitho Blane's property found in 'c' suite of S.Y. Golden Gull" (52), subdivided into the objects contained in each of the deceased's suitcases. Contrary to the three previous lists, this one contains new information not mentioned or discussed before. Hidden amid all the objects enumerated as contents of suitcase number four, readers can spot the item "1. Bottle Gum Tragacanth" (53), an adhesive that strongly hints the deceased must have had false teeth. Put into context with the conversations recorded in the reports, which reveal that one of the suspects has false teeth, this piece of information hints to the identity theft at the core of this murder mystery.

The structural setup of the novel, however, has three lists that only contain summaries of already known and irrelevant information immediately preceding the list which does contain a clue. Even though readers may deduce the spot-the-odd-item reading strategy from the presence of the previous lists, the inventory tricks them into studying it with as little attention as the already known information preceding it. Even an attentive reader, thus, is unlikely to remember the gum tragacanth from the inventory list eleven pages later when the subsequent report mentions false teeth in connection with one of the suspects who later proves to be the presumed dead person in disguise.

The formal presentation of lists with different functions following one another directly manipulates the reader into inattention. Lists, Jack Goody

claims, "must be processed in a different way not only from normal speech but from other ways of writing" (1978, 81). Because they usually lack syntactic context, they depend on practices that imbue them with meaning (see Mainberger 2003, 12). Such practices depend on the context in which the list appears. In detective fiction, the appropriate practice is frequently demonstrated by the detective figure and usually involves finding the common denominator among a number of items or recognizing the metonymical significance of a detail that stands for something else, such as the gum tragacanth that can alert a reader to the fact that the deceased must have had false teeth. By merging the roles of reader and detective, *Murder off Miami* equates the observational skills tied to perception with the interpretational skills needed to recognize patterns and allusions in a text and thus constructs "the ideal observer as an ideal reader" (Smajić 2010, 72).

Imagining the ideal observer as ideal reader, as Smajić suggests, has implications for how storytelling works in this text and (partly) explains the prominent role of lists in Wheatley's dossiers. In *Murder off Miami*, and frequently in detective fiction in general, the ability to categorize—be it top-down, bottom-up, or along a uniformly horizontal level—is equated with the capability to generate meaning. The strategies that enable readers to connect the items on a list and fill the gaps to create meaning from fragmentation thus become the dominant meaning-making strategies within the framework of detective fiction. Equating sense-making with categorization has profound influences on the approach to storytelling that detective fiction takes, as well as on the worldview it propagates. It implies, first and foremost, that everything can be sorted into distinct categories, that category boundaries are stable, and, implicitly, that there is such a thing as objective truth. This view, advocated, for example, in the anthropomorphical measurements the Bertillon system used to identify criminals or in Cesare Lombroso's (1835–1909) considerations on the science of criminal anthropology, is profoundly positivist—as is the genre of detective fiction as a whole. A reader can only take on the role of detective in a story if the assumption holds that there is an objective truth that can be uncovered via observation and rational thought.

The solution to *Murder off Miami*, in fact, takes great pains to convey such a positivist worldview and implies that there is exactly one solution to the facts presented and that this one solution must be obvious to anyone who is able to make rational conclusions. This becomes apparent from the language used to present the solution. At the beginning of the sealed

section, the investigating officer's superior, whose role the reader takes on, opens his final statement with a memo reading "Solution of murder perfectly clear on evidence admitted" (n.p.), thus embarrassing readers who have not come to a perfectly clear solution yet. The language in the solution section is dominated by expressions such as "there can be no doubt" (132), "it is obvious," "always" (133), and "it is clear" (134), and thus suggests that the conclusion presented here is inevitable and plainly outlined in the evidence presented. "[D]etective fiction does not permit alternative readings" (1988, 144), as Franco Moretti phrases it.

The list form, in which the most important clues are summarized and recapitulated, reinforces this impression. The section with the solution is titled "lieutenant Schwab's analysis of the foregoing evidence" (132) and therefore already announces that all evidence necessary to come to this conclusion has been presented in the dossier. That Schwab's interpretation of the evidence is called "analysis" implies the rational and scientific thought process that stands behind his solution and forestalls objections about arbitrariness or guessing that the reader might bring up against it. Despite these efforts, it is highly questionable whether the clues are as unambiguous and conclusive as the solution tries to make the reader believe, starting with the blurry quality of the photographs that make it hard to even identify the telltale razor cut on the murderer's face. Yet, the simple mechanics of numbering Schwab's analytical conclusions (and thus turning them into a list) awards them an air of scientificity that links them to the world of mathematics and deontic logic, where elements can be put together according to principles that render the conclusions achieved inevitable.

Toward the end of his file, the investigating officer presents a list of alibis that excludes every single person on the boat as a murder suspect (129–131). Similar to when the investigating officer presents his first list of alibis and unvouched for times, this list summarizes the information previously revealed in the reports and witness interviews. It presents names and time slots accounted for, and thus provides a reliable alibi for everyone for the time the murder was committed. The list format's seeming lack of mediation and presentation of objective facts (the accounting for time slots exact to the minute especially helps with this) is of central importance in conveying this impression. Once again, the most promising reading strategy is not to remember and put together details but to spot the gaps in the seemingly gapless weave of evidence. According to Wolfgang Iser, gaps in a text stimulate the "constitutive activity of the reader, who cannot

help but try and supply the missing links" (1978, 186). In detective fiction, filling those gaps often resembles an act of investigation, and texts such as *Murder off Miami* actively encourage readers to become involved in identifying and filling the gaps the text presents.

The conclusion to be drawn from this list of facts is to think outside the box: if nobody on the list committed the crime, it must be somebody not on the list. The only person this leaves is the supposed murder victim, who indeed turns out to have murdered his secretary in his stead and taken his place as impostor, which makes the entire carefully established timeline invalid. The list that presents the alibis frames and preselects evidence, and determines a priori what readers will most likely consider relevant. It functions to present a time structure as linear and complete that is in fact missing relevant pieces of information and thus invites readers to assume a focus that entails misguided conclusions—a strategy that will be elaborated on in my chapter on Agatha Christie.

Herewith the Clues*: The (Detection) Game*

Across the four volumes of the *Murder Dossiers*, their focus shifts decidedly from trying to accurately imitate a real-world police file and investigation to turning the acts of identifying and interpreting evidence they ask for into a game. The second dossier already is less meticulously about the file format that the first dossier relies on to convey authenticity. *Who Killed Robert Prentice?* opens with an explanatory newspaper clipping that informs the reader why the detective they encountered in Miami in the last volume is now in London (see 1). As a piece of evidence, it has no value and therefore no place in a police file. Even if readers accept the dossier's later claim to be detective Schwab's personal collection of evidence, its compilation exhibits stark continuity and plausibility errors and appears less coherent in its design than the first volume.

These errors do not concern the level of story (fabula) but its presentation (suzhet) as a case file.[19] The volume still plausibly explains how Schwab could have access to the material collected, but its presentation as a police file—with its pages punched and held together by a piece of thread and with material pieces of evidence from the official police investigation included—does not withstand even superficial scrutiny. Although Schwab might plausibly have access to police evidence (see 46), it makes no sense for these objects to be included in his private dossier (there are, e.g.,

obvious problems with police procedures such as observing the chain of custody).

The author's note printed on the inside cover of the second volume, in fact, announces that the second dossier is "not like a straight police investigation at all" (n.p.). The authors' aspirations, this suggests, have changed. The documents compiled in the second dossier constantly remind the reader of their position as the reader of a piece of fiction rather than try to conceal it from them. One consequence of this is that the merging of the roles of reader and detective is much weaker in this volume. This already becomes evident from a look at the jackets of the dossiers: while the first dossier asks the reader to "[b]e your own detective" and thus emphasizes the role the reader is supposed to take, the jacket of the second dossier prompts to "[t]est your powers of deduction," which also demands a high level of engagement but turns the putting together of clues into a personal intellectual challenge, eschewing the connotations of responsibility that resonate with the first dossier and also with *The Notting Hill Mystery*.

Over the course of the volumes, the clues become more playful and less oriented toward authentically representing a police investigation. The newspaper the second volume includes after page 52, though it features a report of court proceedings that contains information relevant to the plot, also comprises a clearly ludic element: page 6 of the newspaper includes an article titled "Writer Who Made 'Murder Fiction' History Living near Scene of Crime: Famous Authors [sic] Views on Sussex Mystery," in which Wheatley and Links speculate about who the killer might be (both express contesting views and both suspect the wrong person).[20] As does *Murder off Miami*, *Who Killed Robert Prentice?* attempts to merge elements of the story world with the real world. Instead of positioning the reader as the investigator of a real case, though, in this case the authors purport to have performed a metaleptic crossing of diegetic levels. This is a more playful but less subtle variation on the first dossier's blurring of diegetic levels.

These experimentations attest to the ludic quality that has been ascribed to detective fiction by several scholars. George Dove, when trying to establish elements of a "detection formula," argues that one of the two basic ingredients of detective fiction is that it invites the reader "to participate in a game that carries its own special rules and conventions" (1990, 29),[21] and in a later volume he argues for "the primacy of the play mode in detective fiction" (1997, 13). Carl Lovitt further contends that the fair play tradition that British writers in the Golden Age of detective fiction adhered to is rooted in "a distinctly bourgeois conception of

gamesmanship" and thus caters to a "readership that appreciated refined and highly civilized forms of play" (1990, 68).[22]

The *Murder Dossiers*' shifting focus from authenticity to play illustrates an interesting tension inherent in the ideology of the Golden Age detective novel. In aiming for a maximum degree of realism, Julian Symons argues, *Murder off Miami* achieved the contrary and instead "blew the gaff on the artificial nature of the Golden Age story" (1985, 120). By placing such a high value on imitating a real case file, it not only exposed its own artificiality but also drew attention to the highly constructed nature of other Golden Age novels. Yet, in making the novel appear in the shape of an actual case file, *Murder off Miami* appears to be the ultimate unison of the Golden Age principle of fairness and Wheatley's claims for authenticity—the opposite of artificiality.

A closer look, however, reveals that Wheatley's aspirations to authenticity and the Golden Age principle of fairness, which necessitates the artificial and constructed nature of detective fiction to disperse clues throughout the text, are quite at odds with one another. Crime is rarely fair, and criminals tend to try and conceal hints to their identity rather than give the detective a fair chance. The ideal that all the clues necessary to solve a case should be accessible to the reader and the premise that the crime must be solved in the end are ideological demands that clash with the realistic representation that Wheatley's first dossier aspires to.[23]

Somewhat ironically, the authors' attempt at creating a realistic detective experience by presenting their story as objective case data triggered criticism about both the first dossier's artificiality and its lack of characterization—and thus a lack of attributes that characterizes fictional texts. Roughly fifty years after the crime dossiers first appeared, Symons picks up on these original points of critique when he surmises why the later volumes of the *Murder Dossiers* were less successful than *Murder off Miami*. Symons writes that after the novelty of including real clues had worn off, people were put off by the circumstance that:

> it was very nearly impossible actually to read them [the dossiers]. There was in the nature of things no characterization of any kind, and interest rested solely in the comparison of the texts with the visible clues in an attempt to discover discrepancies. (1985, 120)

Symons rightly points out the necessarily artificial nature of *Murder off Miami* that results from this tension between fairness and authenticity.

He, however, does not discuss how the later volumes' deliberate shift of focus toward more playfulness affects both their target audience and their formal design and thus makes the dossiers interesting case studies despite their dwindling commercial success.

The fourth dossier, *Herewith the Clues*, takes the ludic elements to an extreme and embeds them on the level of form as well as on the level of content. It signposts to its readers, for example, by including a score sheet on which readers can award themselves points for correct guesses, that it is to be considered as a narrative game rather than a typical detective novel.[24] This shift of focus already becomes apparent from the title, which flaunts the physical objects included that make the dossiers unique and showcases their importance to the reading experience. Above the title, the cover additionally advertises in bold print "five times as many clues as in any of the previous dossiers" to alert readers to its main selling point. The earlier dossiers feature more sensational titles that contain genre-typical keywords such as "murder," "killed," and "massacre."[25]

Games demand and create a different kind of immersion than fictional narratives, and the role they assign to players differs from the role fiction assigns to its readers. Two central qualities of games are that they have great interactive potential because they "have to be actively (and often physically) interacted with in order to 'work'" (Schubert 2019, 116) and that they often follow a non-linear structure because players have the agency to make choices from a number of options the game provides, which "can lead to different experiences and outcomes" (Schubert 2019, 117). This runs counter to the "focus on 'linearity' in representing [textual] events" that is usually considered a key feature of narrative (see ibid., 116).[26] The remainder of this chapter will explore how *Herewith the Clues* negotiates the tension between narrative and play and situates itself at the intersection of both. The form of the list plays a central role in making the play-like qualities of this dossier possible, and the shared affordances of narrative and play (such as coherence and involvement) enable the dossier's liminal position.

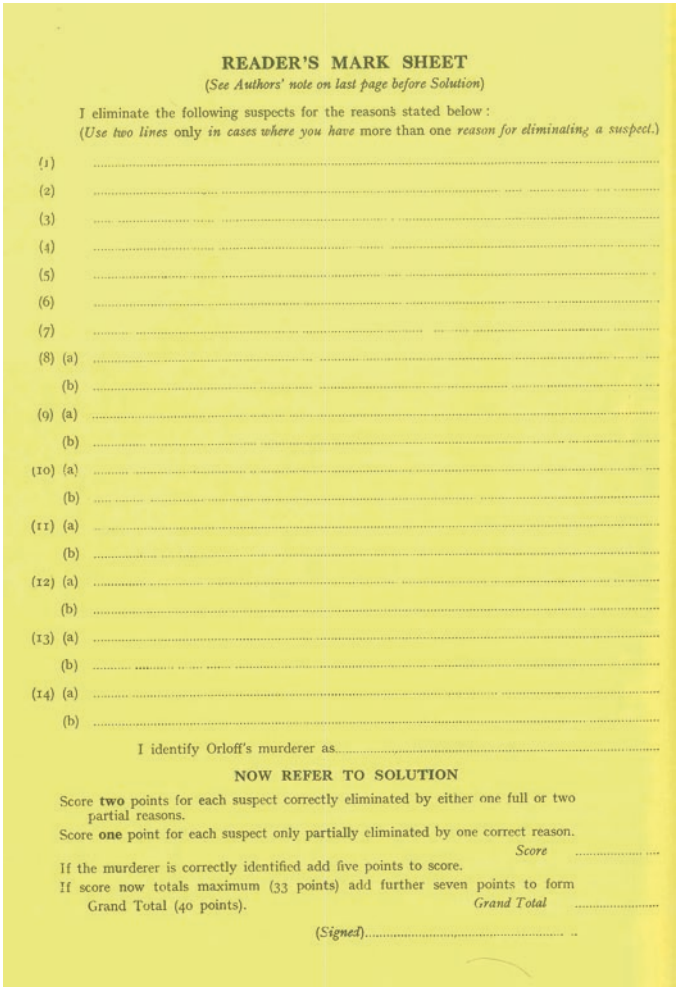
Interestingly, it is the very same features that the first murder dossier uses to assert its authenticity that now take on the function of turning the fourth dossier into something like a game: the material clues. Across the volumes, the reader's engagement with those clues demands more and more interaction. The second volume, for example, includes two sheets of letter paper that smell of the same perfume and therefore indicate they were written by the same person. Even the first volume only contains one text-based clue, but having its readers spot objects in a photograph at least

sticks to seeing as a mode of perception. Asking the reader to use an organ of perception other than their eyes requires interaction with the book as a physical entity that goes far beyond turning pages.

The fourth volume takes the interaction required by the reader to yet another level: it contains a secret note, the invisible writing on which becomes visible only if the paper is dipped in water and thus requires the involvement of material that is not part of the dossier. This kind of manipulation goes far beyond the role of the attentive reader a more conventional detective story calls for, and the degree of interactivity required to reach the desired goal is much more typical of games than of stories.

That *Herewith the Clues* is meant to be considered at least partly as a game becomes particularly clear from the score sheet included before the sealed section with the solution (see Fig. 3.3). The score sheet is accompanied by an author's note that instructs the reader on how to fill it in and on how to award points for each suspect correctly eliminated. This paratextual note bears great resemblance to game manuals that aim to introduce players to the rules of boardgames, and the fact that several score sheets are included suggests that this game of detection is meant to be played by more than one player. The author's note explicitly states that "[e]ight solution sheets are provided so that each member of the family may fill one up" (53) and even warns against cheating: "[n]o peeping, now!" (53). Cheating, of course, is only possible if we assume that the reader's job is not to merely follow the story and read through the solution, but to engage with the material included in the volume in a way that will enable them to score the points that the score sheet promises as a reward for such engagement.

Furthermore, for cheating, there need to be agreed-upon rules which can be broken by the recipient, which is another feature of games rather than narratives. In *The Reader and the Detective Story*, George Dove posits detective fiction as a kind of game with agreed-upon rules between author and reader when he writes that "the rules of the tale of detection are the rules of organized play; they exist only to make possible the playing of the game" (1997, 11). Dove's conception of "game" is based on genre conventions and the assumption that detective fiction, more so than other fiction, facilitates a "hermeneutic impulse that acts as a structuring force" (ibid., 21), meaning a desire to become actively involved in solving the problem. The rules Dove speaks of are the unspoken rules of fair play that dominate the detective fiction of the Golden Age. They are directed toward the authors rather than the readers of detective fiction. The rules



READER'S MARK SHEET

(*See Authors' note on last page before Solution*)

I eliminate the following suspects for the reasons stated below:
(*Use two lines* only *in cases where you have* more than one *reason for eliminating a suspect.*)

(1) .....
(2) .....
(3) .....
(4) .....
(5) .....
(6) .....
(7) .....
(8) (a) .....
(b) .....
(9) (a) .....
(b) .....
(10) (a) .....
(b) .....
(11) (a) .....
(b) .....
(12) (a) .....
(b) .....
(13) (a) .....
(b) .....
(14) (a) .....
(b) .....

I identify Orloff's murderer as .....

NOW REFER TO SOLUTION

Score **two** points for each suspect correctly eliminated by either one full or two partial reasons.
Score **one** point for each suspect only partially eliminated by one correct reason.
Score .....
If the murderer is correctly identified add five points to score.
If score now totals maximum (33 points) add further seven points to form Grand Total (40 points). *Grand Total* .....

(*Signed*).....

Fig. 3.3 Score sheet

in the fourth dossier (that the "[n]o peeping, now!" admonition implies might be broken), however, are directed to the recipient. They, for example, include the number of points awarded for each correctly interpreted clue and the instruction that the reader/player's suspicions must be entered on the score sheet before the sealed section is opened. Furthermore,

they only apply to the very specific volume within which they are printed rather than to detective fiction as a whole and, therefore, are closer to the set of rules included in a boardgame than to the generally applicable genre rules that Dove discusses.

Another feature that *Herewith the Clues* shares with many games is that it promotes competition between several players/readers who are encouraged to try their hand at solving the murder case presented simultaneously. The inclusion of not one but eight score sheets attests to that, as does the awarding of points for correct interpretation of the evidence. The purpose of awarding points is to make individual approaches comparable and to let the player who scores the most points emerge as the winner of the activity.

Last but not least, iteration can be named as a defining characteristic of play as a symbolic form, as discussed by Stefan Schubert.[27] According to Schubert, games "encourage repeated playthroughs or repetitions of individual sequences" (Schubert 2019, 117) and thus award play an iterative nature. If the reader wants to successfully attribute each exculpatory piece of evidence to the correct suspect, they will have to go through the material presented multiple times, each time with their efforts focused on a different suspect. This clearly iterative reading process deviates significantly from reading processes in conventional fiction, where the reader always starts at the beginning, follows along the numbered pages, and when s/he finishes does not need to start again to get the full experience the novel provides.

Iteration, interactive engagement with the material, being able to compare one's performance to that of other participants in an activity, and the element of competition are highly unusual elements for storytelling but standard features of competitive games such as Cluedo (1949),[28] in which players also have to solve a murder case by eliminating suspects and possible murder locations and weapons. The difference between the dossier and the game is more one of degree and presentation than one of kind. By showcasing its ludic elements and deemphasizing its (undeniably) narrative core, *Herewith the Clues* blurs the boundaries between narrative and play.

With this altered orientation, the structure of the dossier also changes significantly: the individual parts of the dossier become clearly divided into separate sections, and each section becomes increasingly list-like. The dossier starts out in the by-now-familiar format of reports narrated by an officer who was present at the crime scene, from which the reader learns

that a murder was committed at the so-called Milky Way Club. The suspects are the members of a criminal organization using the club as a meeting place. In addition to the page numbers, which stay located at the upper inside corner of the pages where they are nearly invisible, these documents no longer display file numbers but instead show dates followed by page numbers within each specific report.

Rather than have the pieces of material evidence scattered through the text according to when and where they were found, this dossier opts for collecting them all in the same place and having them form a separate section following the reports. A list of handwritten signatures is followed by another list of material objects contained in semitransparent paper bags glued to the page. Each piece of evidence is labeled and listed as "Exhibit A," "Exhibit B," and so on, alphabetically sorted, all the way to P (see Fig. 3.4). The material evidence section is followed by another section consisting entirely of photographs of each suspect taken the night of the crime. The objects and photographs are, again, not included in the consecutive page numbering, but the photos are easily identifiable even without page numbers because they are printed on different, thicker paper. The photos, in turn, are followed by a one-page profile and mini biography of each suspect. The profile comes in list form and gives information about age, height, build, eye color, and so on, and the biography is written in paratactical style, dominated by main clauses. At the end of the volume, we find the score sheets—easy to locate because they are printed on yellow paper—included before the sealed section with the solution.

The list format, both on the level of structuring the different story elements into distinct sections and also within each section, plays a central role in organizing the content. It is no coincidence that both the game Clue and Wheatley's dossier use list-based score sheets to track the progress of the players'/readers' investigations. Lists afford order and are apt to provide a (structured) overview over large quantities of data. The score sheet achieves this same function in providing the reader with a prestructured grid for note taking. The number of available lines in the grid already reveals that fourteen suspects can be eliminated and that only seven of them can be eliminated by a single piece of evidence. For the other seven suspects, the score sheet subdivides the lines to be filled in into "a)" and "b)" (see Fig. 3.3). This prestructuring through the form of the list not only tells the reader how to collect evidence but also ensures efficiency of note taking by exactly indicating and limiting the space available for comments on each suspect. Additionally, the limited space provided for the

Fig. 3.4 List of pieces of evidence

notes assures a degree of clarity and overview because prestructuring the page into sections for each suspect ensures that all the notes can be reviewed within the space of one sheet.

Furthermore, alphabetically labeling the material pieces of evidence as exhibit A to P already constitutes an act of classification and ordering on several levels: having separate and labeled items makes it clear from the beginning that each object the reader can engage with has a clear purpose (for the game or the story), one that is directly tied to incriminating or exculpating a suspect. Moreover, the labels determine what kinds of

objects can count as evidence. The structured labeling imbues each object with importance and relevance, and thus with the potential to change the investigation (i.e., by exculpating or incriminating suspects). At the same time, the concise list structure situates the dossier within a positivist system of belief in which a single objective truth is possible and desirable. The list structure thus places this dossier in the tradition of the positivist ideology of detective fiction.

In its function to organize and categorize knowledge, the list also plays a role in forming the structure of this dossier as a whole. The distinct sections that present content in a list-like way, pre-sorted into categories, encourage an engagement with the text that is inherently non-linear. The sectioned list format makes it extremely easy for the reader to navigate between photos, reports, and pieces of evidence without losing time locating items. It thus affords easy comparability and cross-referencing between the individual types of evidence. Such a non-chronological engagement with the material can forge connections that lead to uncovering the guilty person.

The non-linear reading strategy this format demands seems to run counter to linearity as a key feature of narrative. Regardless of the presentation order of events, which can skip back and forth in time, at least on the reception end, stories are marked by a clear and unalterable progression from beginning to end, as indicated by the consecutive numbering of pages. The missing page numbers from the evidence and photo sections are a strong indication that these sections are not meant to be read in the sequence in which they are presented but instead are intended for browsing, depending on which suspect the reader is investigating at the moment. If page numbering is read as a list that dictates sequence and linear order, the absence of this elsewhere ubiquitous structuring device can be considered as another indicator that the dossier is to be located more in the realm of games than that of stories. On the fabula level, all these sections are part of the story world, but the arrangement into separate parts has them appear as more of an appendix, to be consulted as necessary, and separate from the more narrative and linearized crime scene reports. This gap arises from the different ways in which stories and games work. While a narrative is best experienced in the sequential order of its presentation, games typically require the kind of targeted interaction that the dossier's sections seem tailor-made for.

Another ludic element (though one that is also frequently found in fiction) that the fourth dossier features is the breaking of the fourth wall in

the section with the suspects' photographs.[29] Besides giving each suspect's name, the photographs are also captioned with disclaimer notes which read, for example, "[t]he particulars regarding 'Scab' Wilson and 'Mug' Masters which are given in the script have, of course, no reference whatever to Mr. Dennis Wheatley and Mr. J.G. Links, who posed for this photograph" (n.p.). Putting the real names of the people photographed next to those of their characters disrupts what Coleridge called "the willing suspension of disbelief" (2006, 478)—the reader's immersion in the fictional world—and thus emphasizes the dossier's fictionality.[30] The contrast to the first dossier, which emphatically tries to evoke the impression of being a real case file (and, e.g., only includes the fictional characters' names in the photographs), could hardly be greater.

Phil Baker derisively comments that the volume used the minor celebrity photos to advertise its merits "as if this was another technical innovation" (2009, 274). If the altered purpose and target audience of the fourth dossier is taken into account, however, this advertising strategy makes sense. The clues, advertised as a technical innovation that enables heightened immersion and authenticity in the first volume, in *Herewith the Clues* serve a different function, one that is perfectly compatible with using celebrity photos to advertise: the volume aims to include the reader not in an authentic investigation, but into a circle of people who enjoy playing the same kind of game for intellectual entertainment. In playfully featuring celebrity photos in the guise of characters, *Herewith the Clues* pretends to establish a group relation between the reader and these celebrities, who handle the same objects as suspects that the reader is presented to interact with as investigator.

One might ask whether *Herewith the Clues* can be considered a novel despite the predominance it gives to its ludic and interactive elements. The dossier certainly takes the engaging and non-linear features which already emerge in *The Notting Hill Mystery* to an extreme and has to be situated at the intersection of narrative and play. The lists that dominate the structure of this dossier frequently have a dual purpose: by engaging the reader in the act of detection, they further both ludic and narrative elements. Lists that serve a primarily ludic function generally also manifest a narrative dimension. The lists of personal belongings of the murder victim that the first murder dossier includes, for instance, not only provide the reader with the possibility to spot the item that is odd but also characterize the victim; even the fourth dossier's list of material clues that is presented in no narrative context whatsoever relies on readers making judgments on a

suspect's character traits or habits: one suspect, for example, is to be excluded because of her use of an extravagant hair pin "of such an unusual type that it is not even stocked by the majority of hairdressers," the solution suggests (59).

Lists offer great potential for immersion because of their appellative function that invites readers to fill the gaps left in the story. Wolfgang Iser's concept of textual gaps is based around how readers interact with texts to generate meaning and thus provides an explanatory model for how interruptions in the continuous flow of narration stimulate the "constitutive activity of the reader" (1978, 186). The lists in this chapter invite readers to fill the gaps they contain in varying degrees of direct appellation. Sometimes the invitation remains implicit, for example, by having characters (such as Henderson) try to piece the connections together along with the reader; sometimes the texts address the reader with direct prompts, as is the case with the score sheet in *Herewith the Clues*. In the latter case, asking the reader questions such as "can your powers of detection lead you to the murderer" on the jacket of the volume questions their role as mere observer and aims at involving them in the story as a surrogate protagonist or player in a game.

Dossier novels use list-based formats to draw readers in and facilitate easy access to the information they contain. The dossiers discussed in this chapter rely on the list form's capacity to track, organize, and restructure information efficiently, and devices such as the score sheet in *Herewith the Clues* or the table of contents in *The Notting Hill Mystery* become part of the investigative tools the reader has at their disposal. The formal properties of dossier novels thus encourage readers to track the clues they find scattered throughout the dossiers and reorganize them to reveal connections between them. The following chapter will discuss how the novels of Agatha Christie take these basic mechanisms of reader involvement as their starting point to manipulate reader expectations.

Notes

1. Arguably, prototypical detective fiction will both contain a detective character and illustrate the steps in a reasoning process that ends with the solution of the crime. Sweeney argues that Poe's "Murder in the Rue Morgue" (1841) is the first piece of writing that meets both definitions (see 1990, 13).

2. Wheatley was responsible for the content of the dossiers, Links for the planning stage, for example, for arranging the photos to be included. This is why my discussion will only refer to Wheatley as the author.
3. The kind of depersonalization that collecting large amounts of data leads to has been called a hallmark of efficient bureaucracy by sociologist Max Weber. He argues that bureaucracy "develops the more perfectly, the more it is 'dehumanized,' the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation" (1978, 975). James Purdon further argues that such short paper note forms as Henderson uses are an important "part of the material culture of wartime" (2016, 60) because of their function to efficiently accumulate and at the same time depersonalize information.
4. Unless indicated otherwise, all emphases have been removed from quotations in this chapter for better readability.
5. In "How to Do Things with Words," J.L. Austin proposes a new grammatical class of words he titles "performative" (2004, 163). Performative statements differ from other statements in that they are neither true or false, but have (or at least aim at having) a direct effect. Performatives, Austin argues, are thus more closely related to actions than descriptions (see ibid., 162). Henderson's statement, in which he asks his addressee to assess his collected material, could be considered performative.
6. On practices of collecting, ordering, and archiving, which are closely intertwined with the form of the list, see the edited volume by Sarah Schmidt (2016).
7. "Beschreibungsstrategie."
8. Oertzen refers to this approach in general and does not relate it to *The Notting Hill Mystery*.
9. Henderson, for example, refers to Alfred Swaine Taylor's (1806–1880) *On Poisons, in Relation to Medical Jurisprudence* (1848) and quotes a specific edition and page number to corroborate his statement that the effects of antimony poisoning can vary dramatically depending on the idiosyncrasies of the poisoned person's constitution (see 263, compare Taylor 1859, 91; 101).
10. Interestingly, Henderson advises the general reader to skip these technical terms (81).
11. Presenting the witness testimonies as written documents also enables Henderson to use footnotes to comment on any particular witness's reliability. Such acts of classification—another process of exactitude listed by Krajewski—help both the reader and the addressee to evaluate and rank the material presented.

12. See, for example, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's work on objectivity: "[t]he history of scientific objectivity is surprisingly short. It first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and in a matter of decades became established not only as a scientific norm but also as a set of practices" (2007, 27).
13. See also Codebò, who emphasizes that "documentation exists as an essentially anonymous activity" (2007, n.p.). Just as the scientist, the compiler of a dossier is supposed to present their material in a neutral way and refrain from interpretation.
14. For the authenticating function of files and the connection of truth and writing, see Vismann (2000, 11).
15. For a discussion of the fair play principle, see the chapters on the genre history of detective fiction and on and Agatha Christie.
16. In the 1930s, Wheatley was as well known as Agatha Christie (see Baker 2009, 11).
17. According to Marco Caracciolo, experientiality "refers to the capacity of a story to tap into—and have a feedback effect on—the background of different recipients" (2014, 50). Experiential texts thus prompt strong reactions that are based on sensory imagination, emotions, or shared socio-cultural backgrounds (see ibid., 51).
18. The reader in the *Notting Hill Mystery* is asked to fill the role of investigating officer and compile the information scattered throughout the dossier while reading the text, but Henderson's frame narrative at the same time asks the reader to interpret the evidence they collected and act as his addressee and jury. Consequently, the reader of *The Notting Hill Mystery* has to fulfill two roles alternately, whereas the *Murder Dossiers* only ask their reader to interpret and not to collect evidence.
19. Viktor Sklovskij defines fabula as the chronological sequence of events. Any individual representation of these events of a fabula is called suzhet. One fabula can generate many different suzhets (see 1991, 170).
20. Moreover, the newspaper contains real advertisements, for the inclusion of which Wheatley earned an extra 300 pounds (see Baker 2009, 359).
21. The second crucial element he mentions is "the assurance that the mystery will be resolved" (29).
22. Lovitt dates the Golden Age from 1918 to 1939.
23. On the ideology of Golden Age crime fiction, see Knight (1980, 107–134).
24. Wheatley and Links considered selling the fourth volume in a box rather than as a bound volume but abandoned the idea because that would have placed *Herewith the Clues i*n the games department of stores rather than with the other books (see Humphreys 2002, n.p.). The consideration of this possibility, however, shows that *Herewith the Clues* was supposed to be framed differently than the other volumes.

25. When published in the US, the first two volumes appeared under different titles (*File on Bolitho Blane* and *File on Robert Prentice*) as part of a series including other authors who imitated Wheatley and Links's idea (see Humphreys 2002, n.p.).
26. On the role of linearity as a dominant characteristic of literary texts, see also Aarseth (1997, 41–42).
27. Schubert uses Lev Manovich's conception of symbolic form as a way of structuring experience through a specific poetics, aesthetics, and pattern of creating meaning to discuss the relation of the symbolic forms of play and narrative (see 2019, 114; see also Manovich 1999, 81). For a detailed discussion of the form of the list in relation to symbolic form, see Link 2022.
28. The title of the game appears to be a blend of the words "clue" and the Latin "ludo," which translates as "I play."
29. Contrary to the elements discussed so far, this one is situated on the level of content rather than referring to the formal and structural properties of games. The point still is worth dwelling upon because this element interlocks so well with the form-based ludic features.
30. By posing for the photographs themselves, Wheatley and Links foreground their position as authors. According to Phil Baker, this act borders on "self parody" (2009, 374).