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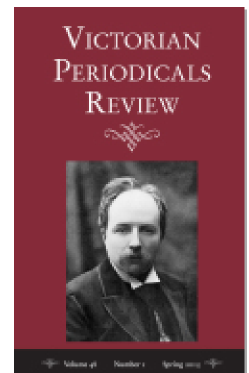

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Something for the "Silly Season": Policing and the Press in Israel Zangwill's *The Big Bow Mystery*

CLARE CLARKE

Israel Zangwill's intriguing but little-known crime novel, *The Big Bow Mystery* (1891), was serialized in London's only politically Radical daily newspaper, the *Star*. T. P. O'Connor founded the *Star* in January 1888 as a "Radical evening organ for the metropolis."[1] It soon became known for its sensational crime reportage as well its stirring editorials in support of Home Rule and the reform of Scotland Yard. The paper became particularly notorious for its prurient and sensational coverage of the Whitechapel murders in the summer of 1888, during which time its circulation soared to over 300,000 copies daily.[2] Israel Zangwill was appointed the *Star*'s literary columnist and soon developed a reputation for his witty, politically charged reviewing style. In the summer of 1891, the editor of the *Star*, Ernest Parke, contacted Zangwill requesting something "original" for the "silly season": a piece of fiction that would capture and reflect readers' interest in crime, politics, and sensation.[3] With "murder in my soul," Zangwill later quipped, *The Big Bow Mystery* "was written in a fortnight, day-by-day," reaching upwards of 250,000 readers daily during its serialization in the *Star*.[4] It proved so popular that directly below the story's final instalment was an advertisement advising readers that the novel in "shilling book form," published by the London firm Henry and Co., would "be on sale everywhere within a few days."[5]

In spite of its popularity at the fin de siècle, *The Big Bow Mystery* is usually only briefly cited in histories of crime fiction as one of the first full-length "locked-room mysteries," where a murder takes place inside an apparently sealed space.[6] This genre was pioneered by Edgar Allan Poe some fifty years before with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), was later used by Sheridan Le Fanu in *Uncle Silas* (1864), and was ultimately employed to great effect by Arthur Conan Doyle in "The Speckled Band"

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(1892), one of his most popular Sherlock Holmes stories.[7] *The Big Bow Mystery* yokes the "locked-room mystery" formula to a fascinating tragicomic portrait of life in an East London slum. The result is an intriguing and often self-conscious experiment with the conventions of the detective genre which offers insight into the manifold links between crime, policing, and the press. It is remarkable for its East End setting, its engagement with socialist politics, its satire of press sensationalism, and the extraordinary fact that the murderer turns out to be the police detective who found the body.[8] In this article, I argue for the rehabilitation of this important text, concentrating upon Zangwill's adaptation and critique of the conventions of crime reportage as well as his satire of Scotland Yard, both of which were specifically designed to appeal to the readers and editors of the *Star*.

As the novel is not widely known or studied, it is helpful to provide a brief overview of the plot. The narrative recounts the murder of the upright-sounding Arthur Constant, who is discovered in his bed at a Bow boarding house. Constant had been slumming in East London whilst defending the rights of the working classes.[9] Constant's landlady, the also aptly named Mrs. Drabdump, discovers his body whilst in the company of her neighbour, retired police detective George Grodman, whom she asked to break into her tenant's room when he did not answer his morning wake-up call. The subsequent list of suspects for the murder is a coterie of East End working-class residents, including a leading trade unionist, the victim's impoverished landlady, and a hack journalist. The surprising denouement reveals that the retired police officer who found the body and functioned as the novel's main detective was the murderer, his crime motivated by a desire for notoriety in print. He seized the opportunity to murder Constant after breaking down the door and discovering that he was sleeping soundly, having taken a draught for toothache. He hoped that the story of this perfect crime would provide a fitting appendix to his best-selling memoir, *Criminals I Have Caught*, which had already been published in its twenty-fifth edition.

The Big Bow Mystery is one of the earliest crime novels to invert the "detective as hero" model characteristic of Holmes-era crime fiction.[10] It was published in the *Star* during the same timeframe as the first stories in the Sherlock Holmes series in the *Strand Magazine*, yet it contains no detective hero or sidekick narrator, nor is the total focus of the narrative on the investigation of crime. Rather, it documents the amorality of a famous police detective, emphatically blurring the boundaries between criminal and investigator. Zangwill's novel also provides satirical comment on modern policing, press coverage of murder and detection, and the detective genre itself, all of which are shown to exploit the poorest segments of London society. The title of the serial is the first indication of its satirical and self-reflexive qualities: the phrase "Big Bow Mystery" refers to the area of

East London where the murder takes place and evokes the sensationalism of headlines in newspapers like the *Star*.[11]

In his depiction of urban crime in *The Big Bow Mystery*, Zangwill called upon his own boyhood experiences living in the impoverished Bow district.[12] The son of Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland, Zangwill considered himself "pure Cockney" and often boasted of being born "within the sound of Bow Bells."[13] On Charles Booth's 1898–99 poverty map, Bow is mainly identified as a neighbourhood with a mixture of comfortable and poor inhabitants, but it also has pockets of the "vicious, semi-criminal," "poor," and "very poor" classes. The Bow district is almost adjacent to Whitechapel, which is not only the setting for Zangwill's celebrated novel *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) but also the site of the Ripper murders, the nineteenth century's most notorious unsolved crimes. Bow is an appropriate location, then, for a novel about a crime whose "insolubility" would "tease the acutest minds in Europe and the civilized world."[14]

Zangwill also set his serial novel in a neighbourhood rife with contemporary political and social meanings. Although not far from the city and the prosperous West End, late Victorian Bow was figuratively a million miles away from the "fancy hotels, mansions overlooking the park, [and] great banks" which formed the geographical epicentre of the most famous late Victorian detective stories, the Sherlock Holmes series.[15] The area housed a large number of factories, including the Bryant and May match works; a number of flour mills, breweries, and gasworks; the Great Eastern Railway; and the philanthropically funded centre of culture for the lower-classes, the People's Palace. In neighbouring Bethnal Green and Mile End stood the philanthropic settlements Oxford House and Toynbee Hall, from which idealistic male university graduates like *The Big Bow Mystery*'s Arthur Constant sought to bring friendship, education, and enlightenment to the local poor. Given the district's poverty, large immigrant population, and liberal philanthropic institutions such as Oxford House, it is not surprising that in the 1880s and '90s East London became known as an area of growing class agitation and socialist activity. Bow, in particular, was famously the site of the successful match girls' strike of July 1888 at the Bryant and May factory, organised by prominent social reformer Annie Besant and *Star* writer George Bernard Shaw, amongst others. This successful strike encouraged the growth of New Unionism among workers at the Port of London, leading to the famous dock strikes of August 1889 and the first attempt to organise unskilled women workers into a trade union. Bow would also later become the location for the East London Federation of Suffragettes, formed in 1913 by Sylvia Pankhurst after her break with the Women's Social and Political Union.

The Star was launched in January 1888 as a paper designed to speak to and for these social and political concerns. In O'Connor's editorial address

for the first edition, he asserted that the paper was intended for the "charwoman who lives in St Giles', the seamstress who is sweated in Whitechapel, the labourer who stands begging for work outside the dockyard gates in St George's-in-the-East."[16] "The effect of every policy," he added, "must first be regarded from the standpoint of the workers of the Nation, and of the poorest and most helpless among them."[17] To pursue this political agenda, O'Connor recruited a young writing staff with Radical political beliefs. In the years 1888–91, this included number of Fabian socialists and committed political Radicals, including George Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant, Ernest Parke, and Sidney Webb. O'Connor's editorial focus in these years was very much on issues that affected the residents of East London: Home Rule, exposure of loopholes in the Factory Act (1878), and demands for the overhaul of Scotland Yard. It also criticized the Metropolitan Police Detective Branch in light of Chief Commissioner Charles Warren's overzealous policing of working-class political demonstrations.

Like most of his fellow *Star* writers, Zangwill was a committed political activist with "distinctly socialist and communitarian sympathies" who was also a talented literary craftsman.[18] After meeting Theodor Herzl in 1895, Zangwill became the leading British spokesman for the Zionist movement and later went on to found the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), which was committed to the establishment of a homeland for Jewish people wherever suitable land could be found. Zangwill's political activism was not confined to Jewish issues, however. He was also active in the women's suffrage movement and was a founding member of the Union of Democratic Control, a pacifist organisation which opposed Britain's involvement in World War I.[19] As he pointed out in "My First Book," an 1893 article on the beginnings of his literary career, Zangwill felt that his work should always touch on important social issues and contain the "subtler possibilities of political satire."[20] His first novel, *The Premier and the Painter*, published in 1888, was a political satire in which the Tory Prime Minister changed places with a Radical working man from Bethnal Green. Zangwill explained that in his novel Bethnal Green was presented in "photographic fullness," "governmental manoeuvres were described with infinite detail," and contemporary social events were captured in "Female Franchise and Home Rule episodes."[21] The whole novel, he contended, was intended to offer "nothing less than a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole system of Party Government."[22] Likewise, in the *Big Bow Mystery*—in theory merely a lightweight crime novel for the "silly season"—Zangwill takes every opportunity to reflect on the many hardships of East End slum life.[23] A background of class conflict, poverty, police brutality, and corruption haunts *The Big Bow Mystery* like the "wraithlike" fog that shrouds the novel's evocative opening passage.[24]

The Police and the Press

A few years before the publication of *The Big Bow Mystery*, the reputation of the London police force and detective branch took a battering, particularly from Radical papers. The force's reputation suffered because of its heavy-handedness at a number of demonstrations by socialists and the unemployed. It was criticized most particularly for its reaction to the protest against coercion in Ireland held on November 13, 1887, a violent conflict which came to be known as Bloody Sunday. In the course of the demonstration, held at London's Trafalgar Square, police attacked protesters with batons; hundreds were injured and three were killed. *The Pall Mall Gazette* (whose editor, W. T. Stead, was one of the protest organisers) reported the incident in characteristically strident tones: "London was yesterday delivered up to the terrorism of the soldiery and the police. In order to prevent the holding of a lawful meeting, ruffians in uniform were dispatched to ride down and bludgeon law-abiding citizens who were marching in procession towards the rendezvous."[25] After the events of Bloody Sunday, police incompetence became a favourite topic of *Star* editorials for the next few years. As L. Perry Curtis has noted, "No editorial voice was more caustic about Scotland Yard and the CID [Criminal Investigation Department] than the *Star*, which could neither forgive nor forget the baton charges of Bloody Sunday."[26]

No event provoked more intense and sustained scrutiny of the police than the investigation into the Whitechapel murders during the summer and autumn of 1888. When the number of murders rose from four (September 30) to five (November 9) without the identification of a viable suspect, the *Star* amped up its outrage about the force's inefficiency in a series of daily editorials entitled "What We Think." In an early leader, O'Connor opined, "Whitechapel is garrisoned with police and stocked with plain-clothes men. Nothing comes of it. The police have not even a clue. They are in despair of the utter failure to get so much as a scent of the criminal."[27] As the days passed, murders increased, and a culprit was not found, the newspaper's criticism of the inadequacies of the police intensified. As the September 18 editorial put it, "Public discontent with our present detective system increases with every day that passes over without any satisfactory clue being obtained to the perpetrator or perpetrators of the latest Whitechapel horrors."[28] On October 1, with the culprit still at large, the paper declared, "The police, of course, are helpless. We expect nothing of them. The metropolitan force is rotten to the core."[29] The detective branch, in particular, was described as "fallible and ill-armed"—a squad of "men whose incompetence and ignorance are the laughingstock of London."[30]

In its coverage of the Whitechapel murders, the *Star* lost no opportunity to interpret the police force's failure as evidence of its disregard for the plight of London's lower classes. In an editorial published on the night of the first murder, the paper claimed that police brutality against East End residents was a daily occurrence: "During the last few weeks hardly a day has passed when some constable has not been convicted of gross insult and harshness to some peaceful inhabitant."[31] As the Ripper murders escalated, the *Star* increasingly interpreted the crimes as evidence of class and economic divisions in London. Its September 14, 1888 editorial shrieked, "Neighbourhoods go mad like individuals, and while the West is discussing the Whitechapel horrors over its wine, the East is seething with impatience, distrust, horror. What a situation!"[32] Indeed, as Curtis points out, the *Star*, more than any other paper, served as a "crude barometer" of public interest in the Ripper murders and their related feelings about the police.[33] Notably, its sales reached new heights just after the murder of Mary Kelly, the fifth and final Ripper victim, on November 8, 1888.

After the unsuccessful Ripper investigation, public distrust and suspicion of London's police force rumbled on for the next few years.[34] It is within this lingering post-Ripper mood of police distrust by the lower classes that Zangwill's novel was serialized in the *Star*. It should come as no surprise, then, that Zangwill chose to foreground the brutality and incompetence of the police in what surely must have been a calculated appeal to the sensibilities of the editors and readers of the *Star*. In the novel, tensions between the police and the public are brought to the fore in a pivotal scene where labour leader Tom Mortlake is arrested for Constant's murder. The location of this arrest—at a working men's club on Whitechapel Road where a commemorative portrait of the murdered Constant is to be unveiled—allows Zangwill to bring together police and community members from all parts of the class spectrum and to comment on the highly charged atmosphere of such cross-class encounters. The meeting is attended by Liberal leader and Home Rule supporter William Ewart Gladstone, along with "several local M.P.'s of varying politics[,] . . . three or four labour leaders, a peer or two of philanthropic pretensions, a sprinkling of Toynbee and Oxford Hall men," and a "densely-packed" mass of East End residents.[35] After Mortlake's shocking arrest by Detective Wimp of the metropolitan police, the polite intermingling of upper and lower classes breaks down: a number of men scale the platform, and a "conscientious constable" wallops an Irish MP "with a truncheon."[36] As a result of overzealous policing, the meeting erupts into a "fury . . . black with staves, sticks, and umbrellas, mingled with the pallid hailstones of knobby fists."[37] Voices rise up from the crowd, shouting, "Boys! . . . This is a police conspiracy. . . . Three cheers for Tom Mortlake! . . . Three groans for the police!"[38] Of course, through

its description of this baton charge and the resultant breakdown of order, the narrative invites readers to remember Bloody Sunday, a favourite topic employed by the paper in its ongoing critique of the metropolitan police.

Zangwill draws attention to the disparity in how the Conservative and Radical papers interpret such politically charged events. In its coverage of Bloody Sunday, the *Star* had strenuously argued that the riot was caused by overzealous policing. *The Times*, by contrast, reported on the "heroic" victory of police over a "vast mob of organized ruffianism, armed with lethal weapons" which had attacked "civilized society."[39] In the novel, Zangwill creates a similar disparity in how politically opposed papers interpret the events of the "Big Bow Mystery Battle—as it came to be called."[40] The riot is denounced in the Conservative press as evidence of the "raging elements of Bow blackguardism" and the "pernicious effects of socialism."[41] In contrast, a Liverpool workers' paper interviews an "artisan orator" named Mortlake who attributes his arrest to the "enmity and rancour entertained towards him by police throughout the country."[42] Zangwill tells us that Mortlake "had never shrunk upon occasion from launching red rhetoric at society."[43] Given the opportunity to reflect on the failings and corruption of the police, Mortlake sharply criticizes their behaviour, suggesting that the motto of the metropolitan force should be "first catch your man, then cook the evidence."[44] He ends the interview with a final accusation of injustice, exclaiming, "Tell your readers it's all a police grudge."[45]

Zangwill's portrayal of a police force fundamentally at odds with—and even threatening to—the residents of Bow and Whitechapel was clearly designed to appeal to the opinions and emotions of the *Star*'s readers. In depicting the police force as incompetent, corrupt, and unpalatable, though, Zangwill was consciously and fundamentally inverting the conventions of the nascent late Victorian detective genre.[46] Zangwill did not create the heroic avatars of the disciplinary system so often associated with the detective fiction of his day. Rather, he appealed to the interests of the working-class readers of the *Star* by portraying the metropolitan force as an organisation that was limited, corrupt, and unsuccessful.

Crime, Publicity, and the Press

In *The Big Bow Mystery*, Detective Grodman admits that both the murder and his confession were motivated by a desire for acclaim and publicity. From the novel's outset, then, the narrative of the crime is intimately bound up with its representation in the media. Indeed, the novel recounts that "within a few hours [of Grodman's confession] the jubilant news-boys were shrieking" about the murder, and the "leader-writers revelled in recapitulating the circumstances of 'The Big Bow Mystery.'"[47] In an instance of even greater self-reflexivity, the *Star* is identified as the first paper to break

the details of the crime to the public.[48] The clamorous press attention surrounding the Bow murder means that the story of the crime reaches and fascinates even those outside its immediate milieu. The "Big Bow Mystery" is reported in all sorts of publications, from comic papers to medical journals like the *Lancet*, whose "leader on the Mystery was awaited with interest."[49] *The Star* and the *Pell Mell Press* are flooded with theories about the crime in editorials and letters from readers. As morning and evening newspapers disseminated further details, the case "came up for breakfast with the rolls, and was swept off the supper-table with the last crumbs."[50] Very much like the Ripper murders, then, the Big Bow mystery was not simply a crime but rather what Judith Walkowitz has called a fully-fledged "cause célèbre" or "media event."[51]

Zangwill continues to foreground the relationship between crime and the press by embedding a large number of newspaper reports and letters to the press into the text. The novel thus echoes the sensational techniques associated with crime reportage in papers like the *Star* during the 1880s. T. P. O'Connor believed that the New Journalism practised by the *Star* should "strike your reader right between the eyes."[52] Therefore, from its inception, the paper became notorious for its attention-grabbing and graphic coverage of crime, which was notably more lurid than that of its more established counterparts. After the body of the second Ripper victim was found, for instance, the *Times* headline mildly reported on "Another Murder in Whitechapel."[53] *The Star*, by contrast, led with the rather more unrestrained multiple headline, "A Revolting Murder. Another Woman Found Horribly Mutilated in Whitechapel. Ghastly Crimes by a Maniac," with the visceral sub-head, "A Policeman Discovers a Woman Lying in the Gutter with Her Throat Cut—After She Has Been Removed to the Hospital She Is Found to be Disembowelled."[54] This lurid headline did nothing to deter readers—quite the opposite, in fact. At the height of the *Star*'s coverage of the Ripper murders, the paper became a self-declared "phenomenal success," with a soaring circulation of over 336,300 copies a day, a "figure never yet approached by any other Evening Paper in the world."[55]

Zangwill's experience as a writer for the paper doubtless helped him establish a sense of authenticity in the novel's pastiche of headlines such as "A Philanthropist Cuts His Throat" and "Horrible Suicide in Bow."[56] These lurid headlines and the novel's sensational news reports evoke the *Star*'s prurient reportage on the Whitechapel murders just a couple of years before. Zangwill's faux news reports and headlines reproduce the type of visceral detail commonly found in popular press reports of crime and murder, emphasizing a "cut throat," "blood," and "horror."[57] However, Zangwill's headlines appear to function not only as an extension of the *Star*'s sensational techniques but also as a critique of editors' willingness to oblige the public's appetite for gory detail. Despite his appropria-

tion of sensational journalistic tropes, then, Zangwill's commentary on the press coverage of the Big Bow Murder is often far from sympathetic. His ghoulish observation that after the inquest, the "floodgates of inkland were opened, and the deluge pattered for nine days on the deaf coffin where the poor idealist mouldered" juxtaposes the short-lived span of prurient press attention with the finality of the victim's resting place.[58] Zangwill satirises incessant press speculation on sensational crimes in his pointed observation that the "tongues of the Press were loosened, and the leader-writers revelled in recapitulating the circumstances of 'The Big Bow Mystery,' though they could contribute nothing but adjectives to the solution."[59] Despite his connection with the *Star*, one of the leading organs of New Journalism famed for its attention-grabbing reportage, Zangwill maintained a healthy disrespect for the apparent glee with which the contemporary press covered serious crime.

Grodman and the Press

The reason "great detective" Grodman commits murder is related to the intricate relationship between policing, press, public opinion, and power that structures much of the novel. In a highly satirical piece of plotting, Grodman confesses that a desire to provide "an appendix to the 25th edition . . . of my book 'Criminals I Have Caught'" was his "sole reason" for committing the murder.[60] In the 1880s and 1890s, the publication of real detectives' memoirs was a popular trend.[61] Well-known examples include Andrew Lansdowne's *A Life's Reminiscences of Scotland Yard* (1890) and Inspector Maurice Moser's *Stories from Scotland Yard* (1890). This literary genre persisted into the twentieth century, with later examples such as G. H. Greenham's *Scotland Yard Experiences* (1904), Francis Carlin's *Reminiscences of an Ex-Detective* (1920), and Percy Savage's *Savage of Scotland Yard: The Thrilling Autobiography of Ex-Superintendent Percy Savage* (1934). As the titles suggest, the majority of these memoirs were written not by everyday officers but by retired high-ranking detectives who had served in the prestigious detective branch of London's Scotland Yard.

Detectives produced these memoirs as a form of self-promotion but also as a means of setting the record straight about the reality of detective work.[62] In Zangwill's cynical and politically motivated account, however, the police memoir genre is clearly motivated by the desire to brag, make money, and achieve fame. During his stellar career, Grodman had been "known to all the world" as the "famous . . . sleuth-hound," but since his retirement, he had become merely a "sleeping dog," who was of no consequence to the police force or the public.[63] Desperate not to let his reputation diminish, Grodman spends the months following his retirement preparing his book with the help of ghost writer Denzil Cantercot. The

book's title, *Criminals I Have Caught*, is unpleasantly egotistical, foregrounding Grodman's singular focus on the successes of his career and his glory days as Scotland Yard's premier investigator. The ex-detective makes "plenty of money" from the publication but reneges on a deal to share the profits with his ghost writer—one of the first indications of his dishonourable nature.[64] Sales eventually slump, however, and Grodman passes time re-reading his book obsessively, revelling "over and over again" in his "ancient exploits."[65] Zangwill's foregrounding of Grodman's mercenary character was doubtless designed to appeal to the working-class readers of the *Star*. The paper's East End readers most likely would have responded well to Zangwill's implication that the publication of police memoirs represented a galling money-making opportunity for members of the already well-paid but often brutal and negligent members of the force.

When labour leader Tom Mortlake is wrongly convicted of the murder, the public comes to think of this "successful" solution to the case as the high point of Detective Wimp's career.[66] Incensed by Wimp's wrongful acclaim, Grodman again uses the medium of the press to begin to tarnish his rival's reputation. The ex-detective taunts Wimp in a series of letters to the editor of the *Pell Mell Press*. This fictional organ is clearly a thinly veiled version of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the paper in which Stead had pioneered the "universal interview."[67] In his coverage of sensational events like the "Maiden Tribute" affair, he had published multiple perspectives from readers, including a correspondence column entitled "What the 'Male Pests' Have to Say for Themselves."[68] In his letters to the paper, Grodman likewise draws attention to the Detective Branch's "several notorious failures of late," cautioning Wimp not to make a similar mistake with the Bow case. [69] In particular, he singles out Wimp's embarrassing inability to catch the Whitechapel murderer, who is "still at large."[70] Once again, Zangwill's pastiche evokes recent newspaper critiques of Scotland Yard's failure to identify the Ripper—a topic that had been featured incessantly in the *Star* during the three years after the murders and still proved popular with readers.

In a short letter to the *Pell Mell Press* signed simply "Scotland Yard," Wimp declaims the "incredible bad taste of Mr Grodman's letter in your last issue."[71] This unprofessional public slanging match between the two detectives once again highlights the complex relationship between the press and modern crime fighting. The exchange achieves Grodman's desired effect, however, of reminding the reading public of his once-legendary status. Eager to re-acquaint themselves with the detective's successes, the public soon clamours for his memoir, *Criminals I Have Caught,* and the book quickly "passes from the twenty-third to the twenty-fourth edition."[72] When the old detective (now a fully fledged media celebrity) gives evidence at the inquest into Constant's death, his appearance "excited as keen a

curiosity as the reappearance 'for this occasion only' of a retired prima donna."[73] Before long he is being interviewed for many of the evening papers and is starring in headlines such as "Grodman Still Confident."[74] When he visits the home secretary's office in the final scene of the novel, the crowd gathers outside, cheering, "Grodman! Hurrah!"[75]

What is deeply satirical about this press and public attention, however, is that Grodman is not merely an interfering old crime fighter lending his expertise to the floundering Scotland Yard. Rather, he is a murderer who is arrogant and complacent enough to insert himself into the case and the media spectacle of the crime, secure in his belief that he will not be caught. This ostensibly comic piece of plotting underscores the novel's much more serious and sustained critique of the arrogance and corruption of the London police, who are presented as more interested in money and acclaim than the mundane work of catching criminals. This critique also extends to the press, however, as Zangwill seems to be suggesting that the current vogue for sensational crime reportage and detective memoirs has set in motion opportunities for ineffectual and corrupt members of the police to become lauded and sought-after celebrities.

In *The Big Bow Mystery*, there is no true super-detective waiting in the wings to solve the case correctly. The real solution is revealed only by the murderer's confession. It is once again Grodman's inability to let Wimp enjoy wrongful credit for solving the crime that precipitates his final desperate self-incrimination. In the office of the home secretary, Grodman outlines that the "sole reason" for his confession is the "unexpected" acclaim that Wimp has achieved for wrongful "success" in arresting Mortlake for the murder.[76] As the old detective tells it, "Mortlake was arrested and condemned. Wimp had apparently crowned his reputation. This was too much. I had taken all this trouble merely to put a feather in Wimp's cap, whereas I had expected to shake his reputation by it. . . . That Wimp should achieve a reputation he did not deserve, and overshadow all his predecessors by dint of a colossal mistake, this seemed to me intolerable."[77] In the novel's final scene, Grodman discovers that his confession has proven unnecessary. A letter has just arrived which provides an alibi for Mortlake and therefore disproves Scotland Yard's ill-conceived theory.[78] As the home secretary puts it, "Mr Wimp's card-castle would have tumbled to pieces without your assistance. Your still undiscoverable crime would have shaken his reputation as you intended."[79] In one final poignant reminder of the intricate relationship between the press and the story of the crime, the "shrill voices of newsboys" float up from outside: "A reprieve of Mortlake! Mortlake reprieved."[80] "Those evening papers are amazing," notes the home secretary laconically. "I suppose they have everything ready for the contingency."[81]

In "The Future of Journalism" (1886), Stead makes a direct equation between the "'personal' mode of journalistic address and the ideological function of the newspaper as an instrument of democratic social change."[82] In his populist account of the role of the New Journalism, Stead defines the journalist "as an heroic figure: a 'leader of the people,' accountable to his followers, but opposed to the constituted authority of the state."[83] It is fitting, then, that in his crime story written for one of the foremost Radical organs of the New Journalism, Zangwill took the opportunity to offer a forceful critique of the recent poor performance of the police and to provide broader reflection on the daily hardships produced by poverty and social inequality in the East End. What is more surprising, perhaps, is that he also takes the opportunity to comment upon the role of the press in exciting fear and hysteria over crime. Given how ruthlessly the *Star* exploited the Whitechapel murders as an editorial topic, this seems a particularly daring move.

By engaging in such audacious criticism and suggesting that detectives and criminals are interchangeable, Zangwill reveals that he did not intend *The Big Bow Mystery* to be read merely as a frothy novel for the "silly season."[84] Rather, he suggests that it should be viewed as a crime novel that makes a serious attempt to capture some of the intricacies of the complex relationship between crime, policing, publicity, and the press in late Victorian Britain. In doing so, Zangwill anticipates the work of much later crime writers such as James Ellroy or David Peace, whose L.A. Quartet and Red Riding Quartets, respectively, offer grim meditations on the relationship between police wrongdoing and crime reportage. Close study of *The Big Bow Mystery* challenges claims that it was not until the emergence of hard-boiled American fiction of the 1920s that the crime genre became what Messent calls a "tool to dissect society's flaws and failures."[85] Clearly, the 1890s detective novel was capable of powerful and thought-provoking social critique.

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NOTES

1. O'Connor, "From the Editor," 1.
2. In only its second number, the paper advertised that it had broken a world record by selling 142,600 copies of the first issue. For more on the *Star*'s sales, policies, and politics, see Goodbody, "*The Star*."
3. Zangwill, "Of Murders," 202. "The silly season" refers to the months of August and September, when newspapers often published articles on trivial topics owing to the lack of "serious" news because of the summer parliamentary recess. *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites the first usage of this term in an 1861 article in the *Saturday Review*.

4. In 1891, in one of the editions that featured *The Big Bow Mystery*, the paper proclaimed proudly its own "phenomenal growth," boasting that "week by week the circulation of *The Star* has risen until . . . the world's record was broken with 336,300 copies on a Single Day, a figure never yet approached by any other Evening Paper in the world." "Phenomenal Growth," 4. Although this figure is difficult to substantiate, the *Waterloo Directory* does list the *Star*'s circulation at 280,000 daily in 1890 and 300,000 daily in 1893.
5. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
6. For more on locked-room mysteries and the crime genre see Cook, *Narratives of Enclosure*.
7. In March 1927, the *Strand Magazine* ran a competition for readers to guess which Sherlock Holmes story Doyle rated as his very best. In an article accompanying the results of the competition, Doyle presented readers with a list of his "top twelve" Holmes stories. "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" took first place in this list. The winner of the competition was Mr. R. T. Newman of Spring Hill, Wellingborough, who won 100 pounds and an autographed copy of Doyle's autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924). Conan Doyle, "Sherlock Holmes Prize Competition," 32.
8. Rochelson correctly observes that *The Big Bow Mystery* "illustrates the subversive potential of the detective genre" and the ways in which the "nineteenth-century detective novel could indeed serve as a vehicle for cultural criticism with the power to unsettle rather than reassure its readers." Rochelson, "Big Bow" 11. Kestner has singled out four non-canonical Victorian crime novels which should "receive consideration": Fergus Hume's *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886), H. F. Wood's *The Passenger from Scotland Yard* (1888), Arthur Griffiths's *The Rome Express* (1896), and Israel Zangwill's *The Big Bow Mystery* (1892). Kestner singles out Zangwill's novel as particularly important, as, quite simply, it "confutes every idea about detection and order ever conceived." Kestner, review, 551. See also Scheick, "Murder in My Soul."
9. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4.
10. Shpayer-Makov, *Ascent of the Detective,* 240.
11. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4.
12. Zangwill is today best remembered as the "Dickens of the Ghetto," a chronicler of nineteenth-century Jewish slum life who was responsible for the international bestseller *Children of the Ghetto* (1892). The novel was commissioned by the Jewish Publication Society of America to function as a kind of "Jewish *Robert Elsmere,*" emulating Mary Ward's bestselling novel of Christianity in crisis. Leftwich, *Israel Zangwill*, 11.
13. "Israel Zangwill," 11.
14. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
15. Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, 137.

16. O'Connor, "From the Editor," 1.
17. Ibid.
18. Glover, "Liberalism," 190.
19. After 1906, Zangwill became most actively involved in Zionism, pacifism, and women's suffrage. See Rochelson, *A Jew in the Public Arena,* 129–50.
20. Zangwill, "My First," 635.
21. Ibid., 637.
22. Ibid., 635.
23. Zangwill, "Of Murders," 202.
24. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4.
25. "At the Point of the Bayonet," 1.
26. Curtis, *Jack the Ripper*, 133.
27. "Horror upon Horror," 2.
28. "Our Detective System," 4.
29. "What We Think," October 1, 1888, 1.
30. "Police Alarms," 4; "What We Think," September 14, 1888, 1.
31. "What We Think," August 31 1888, 1.
32. "What We Think," September 14, 1888, 1.
33. Curtis, *Jack the Ripper*, 59.
34. Shpayer-Makov, *Ascent of the Detective*, 212.
35. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 1, 1891, 4.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. "The Defence of Trafalgar-Square," 6.
40. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 1, 1891, 4.
41. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 2, 1891, 4.
42. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 23, 1891, 4.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. It is of course important to acknowledge that in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories the metropolitan police are typically depicted as inefficient or incompetent. In *The Sign of Four*, for instance, Holmes claims that it is the "normal state" of the metropolitan detectives to be "out of their depths." Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 98. However, it is also important to note that in his fiction the police force is never corrupt or criminal. For more on the low status of the metropolitan police, 1870–90, see Shpayer-Makov, *Ascent of the Detective*, 112–23.
47. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4.
48. When the novel was published in book form, the name of the newspaper was changed to the *Moon*.
49. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 26, 1891, 4.

50. Ibid.
51. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 191–92.
52. O'Connor, "New Journalism," 434.
53. "Another Murder," 6.
54. "Revolting Murder," 3.
55. "Phenomenal Growth," 4.
56. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4.
57. Ibid.
58. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 26, 1891, 4.
59. Ibid.
60. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
61. There were a number of highly successful foreign police memoirs published earlier in the century, including French detective Eugene-Francois Vidocq's *Memoires* (1829) and Louis Canler's *Autobiography of a French Detective* (1862).
62. Shpayer-Makov, *Ascent of the Detective*, 285.
63. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 22, 1891, 4. Zangwill's canine metaphor here at first appears to draw upon the term Doyle uses to describe Holmes. However, the term "sleuth-hound" was not used by Doyle until "The Red-Headed League," which, although written in April 1891, was not published until August 1891, the same month that Zangwill's novel was serialised in the *Star*.
64. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 106.
68. "What the 'Male Pests,'" 2.
69. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 26, 1891, 4.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Zangwill, "Big Bow," August 27, 1891, 4.
73. Ibid.
74. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 2, 1891, 4.
75. Ibid.
76. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
77. Ibid.
78. As such, the justice system does not function as a restorer of order. Rather, a piecemeal universal justice prevails, largely owing to a fluke of timing. This factor in itself may be a comment upon the ways in which the usual principles of both the justice system and the detective genre ring untrue for the poorest segments of society.
79. Zangwill, "Big Bow," September 4, 1891, 4.
80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.
82. Salmon, *Henry James*, 118.
83. Ibid., 119.
84. Zangwill, "Of Murders," 202.
85. Messent, *Crime Fiction*, 17.

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