Introduction
Amateurs

Undercover traces the momentous consequences of a Victorian journalist's decision to report a news story in disguise. The innovation was unannounced, its location obscure, and its instigator unknown – merely a reporter describing the night-time squalor of a London casual ward. Yet James Greenwood's sensational exposé of spending a night in a workhouse as 'The Amateur Casual' not only widened the definition of newsworthiness and launched an immensely popular genre of newspaper writing that we now call undercover reporting, it changed forever what readers understood as truth. Driving that seismic shift was an original narrative perspective known today as covert or full participant observation. Authority that had once been conditional upon access to officials, experts, and published sources could now derive directly from the journalist. It was a revolutionary development whose reimagining of the value of first-hand experience confounded two core tenets of press work: the prioritizing of reportorial objectivity and the subsuming of the individual journalist into a collective editorial voice. Above all, the emergence of incognito reporting dissolved, if only temporarily, the seemingly insuperable barrier between self and other. Undercover investigating had discovered a royal road to other people's experiences in the most unexpected of places – the journalist's own person.

None of these outcomes were anticipated by James Greenwood (Figure 0.1), a struggling author who infiltrated Lambeth Workhouse on the suggestion of his brother Frederick, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[1] Rather, both Greenwoods saw the commission as a bohemian stunt likely to supply scandalous revelations of municipal failure that would boost sales of a faltering daily. This was not 'slumming', the philanthropic forays and poverty safaris in vogue among the middle and upper classes, but espionage motivated by self-interest: a thirty-pound fee for one brother, a circulation uptick for the other. In the event, their expectations were spectacularly fulfilled. James Greenwood, who had engaged a bodyguard for the night, was hardly naïve, but even he was shaken by the filth and depravity that

Figure 0.1 Portrait of James Greenwood. © The National Portrait Gallery.

he witnessed behind the workhouse walls, and parts of his ordeal defied description even in euphemism. Readers were understandably transfixed.

The appearance of Greenwood's 'A Night in a Workhouse' in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 12 January 1866 marked a watershed in press history. Most immediately, it presented newspaper readers with an eyewitness account that had been gained surreptitiously. Greenwood's novel use of a false identity set his account apart from other journalistic accounts of poverty and abuse in more ways than one. Reporters covering wars, natural catastrophes, and gruelling voyages had necessarily shared in the privations and dangers endured by those around them. They had done so openly, however, as credentialed observers and legitimate fellow-travellers, whereas Greenwood had pretended to be homeless specifically in order to sample the misery and wretchedness of society's least fortunate. Far from being incidental, the journalist's suffering was a prerequisite for achieving his main objective. Equally ground-breaking was Greenwood's decision to frame 'A Night in a Workhouse' as a gripping, first-person narrative centred on his own thoughts and feelings. No longer a shadowy, anonymous presence, the journalist had stepped into public view.

This basis in first-hand experience joined 'A Night in a Workhouse' to larger currents of journalistic professionalization and widening press influence. Like Henry Morton Stanley's vaunted 'discovery' of David Livingstone in Africa five years later, Greenwood's coup heralded a new era in which journalists no longer contented themselves with relaying the news (whether based on police blotters, official proceedings, or scheduled events), emulating the methods of social investigators like Charles Dickens and Henry Mayhew, or fleshing out telegraphed summaries with local colour in the mode of special correspondents. Instead, journalists sought out and created news stories by themselves. To those who objected that using disguise and deception to access otherwise closed environments was unethical, Greenwood insisted upon its social utility: 'There are places to which, for the good of the community, it is desirable to penetrate but which, without the aid of a certain amount of subterfuge, could no more be reached than a ship of a foreign foe could steam unmolested into Portsmouth Harbour'.[2] Following this precept and disregarding opprobrium, danger, and discomfort, his imitators let themselves be guided only by curiosity, the constraints of libel law, and their readers' sense of justice. Unblinking accounts of those experiences introduced into journalistic discourse a startling degree of realism that left few readers unmoved. By the end of the century, Greenwood's admission to Lambeth Workhouse had acquired iconic status, a feat of heroism to rank alongside the Charge of the Light Brigade (Figure 0.2).

Most writing on Victorian investigative journalism mistakenly treats the undercover tradition that Greenwood helped launch as a sub-category of the broader realm of social enquiry by reformers and experts.[3] Until relatively recently, 'A Night in a Workhouse' has been available to readers only in anthologies that situate investigative journalism among other media such as pamphlets, books, and large-scale surveys.[4] In turn, the slender scholarship on the history of incognito journalism is largely confined to isolated case studies, usually of workhouses, poverty, and sweated labour, and almost always in relation to London periodicals.[5] The result has been an unwarranted downplaying of the impact and special character of covert investigation for journalists and readers as well as an obscuring of the pioneering role played by British investigators. Press histories in this vein typically present Greenwood's stunt as a novelty whose full potential was not realized until the 1880s and 1890s, and only then in the wake of transatlantic influences.[6] Thus, Joel Wiener's account of American influences on the British press, advancing twenty years in a single paragraph, moves straight from 'A Night in a Workhouse' to W. T. Stead's use of supposedly 'American' methods to

Figure 0.2 *The World of Adventure: A Collection of Stirring Scenes and Moving Accidents* (London: Cassell, 1896), 425. From the British Library Collection: 12330.i.28.

expose sex trafficking in 1885.[7] This chronological leap gives the misleading impression that, during the interim, nothing significant happened in the domain of British investigative journalism.

With a view to overturning these assumptions, *Undercover* reconstitutes a largely unknown archipelago of British incognito journalism, much of it published in local and provincial newspapers beyond the reach of previous historians. The contours of that archipelago, we argue, emerged soon after January 1866 and continued to shape the global development of undercover investigating well into the twentieth century, during which time it exerted a major influence on the writing of leading novelists such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, George Moore, H. G. Wells, and Robert Louis Stevenson, the last of whom himself went undercover as what he called a 'masquerader'.[8] This textual corpus of investigations, which has only recently been made accessible by the digitization of newspaper archives, had consolidated itself into a discrete journalistic genre well before the advent of the muckrakers: contrary to received wisdom, the investigative exposé was not an American import.[9] Eye-catching, rapidly

evolving, and driven at least as much by journalistic considerations as by reformist or political agendas, undercover investigation reached into every sphere of British life in the half-century following Greenwood's début. Nowhere and no one were beyond its scrutiny, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* triumphantly proclaimed when exposing the elite clientele of a child prostitution ring. And yet, as will become clear, Stead's 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' – probably the only Victorian undercover investigation that is familiar to many readers today – was a reckless innovation within a widely recognized genre, not a foundational moment. By 1885, posing as a paedophile signalled less the infinite possibilities of incognito investigation than the extremes to which practitioners were now resorting and, not least, the undercover genre's value for Stead's own paper.

I.1 Trying Every Phase of Life

Our study of Victorian investigative journalism presents three main arguments. The first is that there exists a sprawling corpus of undercover reporting in Britain from the period 1866 to the First World War, which, with the exception of a few individual investigations, has escaped the notice of press and social historians. A decade ago, when introducing our anthology of Victorian investigative journalism, we argued for the existence of a British investigative tradition predating not only the New Journalism of the 1880s but even 'A Night in a Workhouse'.[10] These mid-century investigators included the likes of Angus Reach and Hugh Shimmin, provincial journalists who went incognito to report on clandestine activities such as baby-drugging and dog-fighting.[11] Although we stand by this claim, those precursors were relatively few and had only a slight impact at the national level. Greenwood may not have single-handedly invented investigative journalism, but he was unquestionably the catalyst of its golden age and the model for all those who subsequently adopted undercover identities.

It is surprising that scholars have overlooked the sheer volume of undercover investigations given how frequently Victorian commentators mentioned the phenomenon. Newspaper editorials published shortly after the Amateur Casual's début illustrate the extent to which contemporaries regarded the burgeoning genre as influential and pervasive. Barely three years after the publication of Greenwood's experiment, editors were marvelling at an undercover boom that showed no sign of slowing:

> A vast amount of useful and interesting information has been furnished by enterprising explorers with respect to the character and habits of 'casuals',

> costermongers, and, we believe, cabmen; but as yet, notwithstanding the enormous voracity of editors, publishers, theatrical managers, and purveyors of novelty in general, no 'amateur' bargee, lighterman, lumper, captain or engine-driver of a penny steamboat, pier or ferryman, aquatic fiddler or 'bird of prey', has regaled the public appetite for sensational story with a veracious narrative of personal experiences.[12]

Even these exotic lacunae were quickly being filled as journalists rushed to capitalize on the opportunities offered by Greenwood's innovation. 'Amateur' investigations proved to be much more than a fad. Many investigations later, it was the genre's longevity that stood out as noteworthy:

> Details of explorations in the lower strata of society, ostensibly undertaken for the purpose of letting the upper classes know how the lower manage to exist, and with a view to the amelioration of the condition of the former, have become extremely common in journals of every description since the memorable adventures of an amateur casual in London were published; jails, workhouses, lunatic asylums, shebeens, brothels, and many of the other useful and baneful institutions of the country have been 'done' over and over again, and yet strange to say such narratives are still as popular as ever, the interest in them not seeming to be in the least abated, though the supply has been extensive enough.[13]

Runaway demand for a seemingly limitless product: the undercover era was in full swing well before the turn of the century. Whereas press historians typically present Greenwood's coup as an isolated incident, contemporary observers credit him with founding a movement that had clearly and irrevocably transformed the practice of journalism.

As the comments above suggest, both the nature and the underlying motives of undercover journalism remained unclear. For advocates, the new genre attested to the press's growing confidence about exposing abuses to further the cause of reform. Sceptics, for their part, saw only a pernicious fusing of the journalist's willingness to try 'every phase of life' with the public's thirst for 'special and very often useless information':

> The Special Correspondent will soon have to sit down, as Alexander of Macedon did, and weep to think there remain no more fields of discovery to be explored by his ingenious enterprise. Since the now historical 'four-wheeler' dropped Mr. James Greenwood, the 'Amateur Casual' of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, at the Lambeth Workhouse, the extraordinary proceedings of the newspaper 'specials' have known no limit. Nothing has been sacred to the correspondent in search of novel information; he has been kept back by no danger, he has been daunted by no difficulty. He has disguised himself with the genius of a Scotland-yard detective, or a Woodin; he has scraped acquaintance with all manner of disreputable companions, and then come

> back into the world again with columns of spicy information: he has taken opium at the East-end; he has gone as a steerage passenger to New York; he has packed up his portmanteau and discovered lost travellers and new watersheds; he has gone out on strike with the carpenters; he has feigned conversion to all the strange creeds of heterodoxy, and then revealed the secrets of their communions; he has 'interviewed' with indomitable perseverance; he has, in short, tried every phase of life, except the leaving of it, and would no doubt have undergone an experimental hanging long ago, could he have been assured that his experiences would be conveyed to his journal by a spiritualistic medium…. He would be a bold man who should dare to assert that even at this very time some of our contemporaries have not their 'specials' already feigning idiocy at Earlswood [Asylum]; or malingering in the wards of some of the London hospitals. We confidently expect soon to hear that a 'special' has enlisted in the line; that a 'special' has insisted on being 'run in'; that he has driven a Hansom for a week, and been obligingly 'catted' [flogged] by Sir John Bennett at Newgate. Indeed, if this craze after special and very often useless information continues, we shall not be surprised to read in the papers some day revelations from 'Our Special Footman' in the Premier's household, from 'Our Own Jenkins' at the Court, and from 'Our Special Constable' in the A division.[14]

From a twenty-first century perspective, the truly extraordinary aspect of these undercover forays is less their assault on privacy, defiance of social norms, or disregard for personal safety than the completeness with which they have disappeared from public memory.

It should be noted that all three of the above editorials about the amateur casual mania were written prior to 1873, fully a decade before Stead's landmark infiltration of metropolitan vice (an episode that will be revisited in our book's epilogue). Undercover journalists were not only ubiquitous but also widely viewed as such, fostering suspicions that almost anyone might turn out to be an investigator. The hiring of female staff by the House of Commons prompted speculation that '[these] beautiful waitresses … are doubtless lady journalists in disguise', for instance, and one enterprising newspaper offered readers a prize for sighting its 'Missing Dispatch Man' as he roamed the country incognito.[15] Being a savvy newsreader meant knowing all about the activities of covert investigators, as is clear from a comic ditty of the period:

> Who is that vagabond, dirty and stark?
> Only a journalist out for a lark!
> Who is that beggar there, minus a groat?
> Only a journalist making a note!
> Take him up tenderly – oh! what a mess:
> Great is the strength of the halfpenny press.

> If we a mendicant catch at his game,
> Well, we shall know he's a tramp but in name.
> Saying, if e'er at our door he is seen,
> 'Get away, journalist, *we* are not green!'[16]

By adopting the perspective of an insider who refuses to be taken in by the subterfuge, the satirical lyrics highlighted a dilemma that would be explored by journalists and novelists alike. In a world of false beggars, tramps, and vagabonds, how could one recognize the real thing?

Covert investigation complemented other forces of modernity, notably the extension of education and the technological transformation of space and time, in bringing the world to newspaper readers. In recovering this history, *Undercover* evaluates six areas opened up by incognito journalists – urban workhouses, mental asylums, private nurseries, passenger ships, street begging, and the countryside – with the goal of assessing their larger social and literary impact as well as identifying the varieties of audience participation that they invited. Our decision to examine the genre through thematic clusters is more than just a methodological convenience, however. Contemporaries enjoyed the rhetorical flourish of listing every conceivable activity that a reporter might undertake, but in reality most investigations dealt with a well-defined set of occupations that lent themselves to infiltration and, for reasons relating to their particular focus, were felt to be particularly urgent. As we will show, newspaper audiences reread the same kinds of investigations not because they had short memories but because the subject matter remained compelling and engaged with their own anxieties and concerns in ways that no other mode of reporting could. '[T]he narrative is curious', remarked one commentator of an undercover investigation into poverty, 'as narratives of personal experience in an obscure and unfamiliar social sphere must always be to the mass of mankind'.[17]

These six topics represent only a fraction of the cornucopia of subjects addressed by undercover journalists. Although Greenwood's penetration of a workhouse was widely imitated, other investigations attracted no more than a handful of copycats. Some related to fringe activities – spiritualism, for example, which had already been infiltrated by would-be debunkers – or were almost impossible to replicate: helping out a sick neighbour by standing in as a burial society collector, say, or using a friend's name to gain admittance to a secret gambling den.[18] Other investigations required unusual attributes such as a disability or were occasional by their very nature, as was the case with the London reporter who appeared in blackface atop an elephant in the Lord Mayor's Show.[19] Personal risk also served as a deterrent. The first instalment of the series

'In Queer Places' had to be postponed after the investigator contracted a disease while visiting one of those queer places.[20] The ethical dangers of pursuing sensational novelty at all costs likewise became more visible: Greenwood's daredevil imitators in France were accused of committing burglary and faking their own suicides.[21] The outbreak of war made going undercover especially risky. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, two reporters for the *Times* and *Illustrated London News* daringly posed as pedlars in order to send dispatches from behind Cossack lines.[22] But the penalties for exposure could be severe. Cautionary tales included the freelancer Dorothy Lawrence, who disguised herself as a tommy during the First World War in order to join a mine-laying company on the Western Front, only to be arrested as a spy and threatened with prosecution for trying to publish her experiences in *Wide World Magazine*. In a cruel irony, Lawrence ended her career in a mental institution of the kind that had once been targeted by undercover investigators.[23]

A key feature of the undercover genre's development was the series, whether a sequence of separate but linked investigations or instalments of a single investigation such as 'Homeless in London for 50 Days', which ran for four months in *Cassell's Saturday Journal*.[24] Series magnified the overall impact of investigative journalism, enabling reporters to repeat a successful infiltration in different locations, devise more ambitious investigations, or use their experience of disguise to enter new milieux. A series might use a team of investigators, such as the *English Illustrated Magazine*'s long-running feature on 'How the Other Half Lives', whose undercover contributors variously posed as flower girl, organ grinder, sandwich man, and dressmaker's apprentice.[25] More typical was the approach taken by *Temple Magazine*, which dispatched a single reporter to induct its genteel readers into the mysteries of life as a crossing-sweeper, street vendor, barber, newsboy, and pawnbroker (Figure 0.3).[26] Yet series did far more than just emulate other multipart investigations by social explorers, special correspondents, and official commissioners. In encouraging specialization and raising the status of individual writers, they consolidated journalism's professional status: undercover investigators were among the first journalists to be given bylines in British newspapers, a distinction they exploited when recycling their original reports as books, pamphlets, lectures, and theatrical performances. Greenwood was exemplary in this respect, cashing in on his celebrity by reissuing his journalistic revelations of plebeian life in cheap volumes such as *The Seven Curses of London* (1869) and *Low-Life Deeps* (1875) as well as undertaking longer commissions for provincial newspapers.[27]

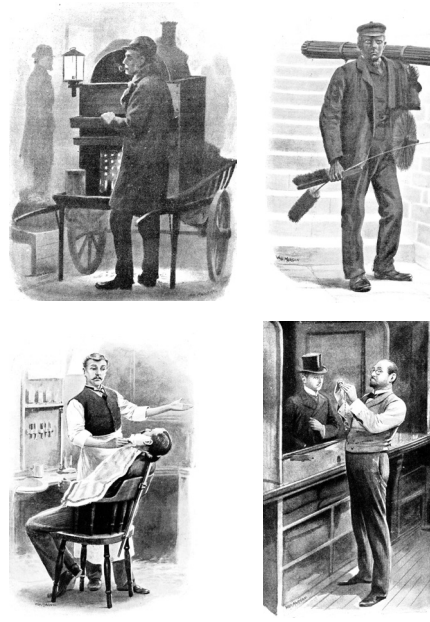

Figure 0.3 Various disguises used by an undercover journalist for the series 'My Experiences as…' that ran in *Temple Magazine* March–July 1898. Illustrations by Will Morgan. From the British Library Collection: P.P.6004.gmt.

Undercover series also served the interests of editors, who were constantly seeking material that would help their publications stand out in a crowded market. As the lively correspondence they generated makes clear, multi-part investigations were an effective means of catching the eye of prospective readers and building audience loyalty, in the manner of a feuilleton rather than a news item, and for this reason often prompted rival series by competitors. The subject matter of 'The Dark Side of Glasgow', the *North British Daily Mail*'s six-part exposé of 'the inner life of the outcasts of our community', originated in an exchange of letters between readers that continued for weeks after the series had ended.[28] Extended coverage of noteworthy investigations could raise a periodical's national profile and even perform a kind of branding function with regard to the topic itself. Series in this category gave rise in turn to a global network of reprints, excerpts, plagiarisms, and editorial commentary – a Victorian forerunner of today's social media ecology. In more ways than one, investigative series put journalists and their periodicals on the map.

In reconstructing the evolution of incognito investigating, *Undercover* turns a spotlight on the dynamic role played by local and provincial periodicals. While the costs involved in war reporting and foreign correspondence exceeded the budgets of all but a few metropolitan titles, undercover journalism was terrain on which the provincial press could compete.[29] Being located in rural Lincolnshire did not stop the *Boston Guardian* from dispatching its reporters to explore the work of migrant potato-pickers; nor did being based in Aberdeen deter the *People's Journal* from commissioning a multi-part investigation into tramp life around Scotland.[30] These newspapers did more than copy their London counterparts: the world's first undercover investigations of emigration and childcare were published in Birmingham and Glasgow, respectively.[31] Provincial readers were similarly among the first to replicate the exploits of undercover reporters. The ranks of these genuine amateurs included an elderly Oxfordshire clergyman named William Wigan Harvey, who endured severe privation to supply insider accounts of workhouse life to the *Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter*.[32]

Incognito journalism thereby sets in motion two reciprocal relationships, one between periodical and readership, the other between different periodicals. In emulating, reprinting, and commenting upon investigations commissioned by other newspapers, including their competitors, editors effectively connected readers with unseen audiences elsewhere. Once detached from their original context, these stories travelled ideologically as well as geographically, giving concrete form to the abstraction of public opinion – a concept that contemporaries increasingly conflated with the act of newspaper-reading – as well as illustrating the press's crucial role in shaping collective national identities.[33] 'How English Children Are Tortured' thundered a headline in the *Pall Mall Gazette* following revelations of child starvation in 1888.[34] In this regard, it was decisive that the genre had announced itself by means of a near-simultaneous national media event. Even as the genre's practitioners followed Greenwood in taking audiences into closed social spaces, investigative journalism integrated these readers into larger reading communities.[35]

The advent of undercover investigating was particularly important for female journalists, who faced higher barriers to entry and more restrictive expectations about conduct than their male counterparts. Although most investigative journalists were middle-class men, the new mode presented opportunities for women of all classes to advance professionally by exploring spaces segregated by gender while also raising issues of special concern to female readers. From early on, Greenwood's imitators included women whose impersonations of beggars, tramps, street vendors, and prospective

clients of abortionists often demanded greater personal courage than those of their male colleagues. During the Whitechapel murders in 1888, Lillie Harris published a series in the *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph* based on her nocturnal tour of crime scenes in a neighbourhood gripped by fear.[36] Although she styled herself an 'Amateur Detective', the experiment bore a discomforting resemblance to streetwalking, with the gloom of one alley forcefully reminding her 'how comfortably a person could be murdered here'.[37] Showing similar resolve, Harris's peers entered workhouses and Salvation Army hostels, tried to pawn stolen clothes, and even managed to infiltrate the providers of charity.[38] By the turn of the century, the grit and resourcefulness of investigators such as Elizabeth Banks, Margaret Harkness, Mary Higgs, and Olive Malvery had so impressed national audiences that commentators easily conflated undercover journalism with covert enquiry in general. Hence, a reviewer of Charles Booth's survey *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889–91) described his informants within the garment industry as 'amateur shop-assistants who were journalists in disguise' even though Beatrice Potter, Clara Collet, and May Abraham had not, in fact, published their findings in the press.[39]

The reviewer's error illustrates the hardy misconception that undercover journalists were primarily pursuing political or reformist agendas. Reinforcing this view, most historical accounts of provincial investigations have appeared in institutional and regional studies where they are situated within local struggles rather than a new phase of journalism, as illustrated by a recent volume on Scottish police courts that treats 'The Dark Side of Glasgow' primarily as an attempt to influence policing policy.[40] Yet incognito reporting, unlike the dispatches of campaigners, philanthropists, and social scientists, was more often actuated by narrowly journalistic factors of topicality, sensationalism, and interest for local readerships with heterogeneous political sympathies. Here, too, the attention given to Stead's 'Maiden Tribute' and its significance for the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act has distorted the larger picture. As contemporaries pointed out, Stead's project of 'Government by Journalism' was not just idiosyncratic but unrealistic.[41] Both the potential legal exposure and the expense of investigative journalism – which, as press historian Lucy Brown notes, required a willingness to waste resources on false trails – severely limited activism's appeal for commercially minded practitioners whose overriding concern was to sell newspapers, not solve society's problems.[42] Indeed, this economic imperative was part of the genre's DNA. In the final analysis, what led Greenwood to Lambeth Workhouse was the decline of party political support for newspapers: the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s main Conservative

backer had sold out his interest the year before.[43] Here and elsewhere, the progress of undercover journalism paralleled the growth in press coverage of popular spectacle in the 1860s and 1870s. But while the *Daily Telegraph* and sensation-mongering Sunday papers turned outwards to sport, stunts, pageantry, and celebrity culture, investigative journalism took readers inwards – literally, into the closed spaces of poverty and exploitation, but also figuratively, into the realm of individual experience.

I.2 Learning by Actual Experience

This book's second argument concerns the precise nature of the experience at the heart of undercover journalism. In an oft-quoted phrase, Greenwood described his goal in entering Lambeth Workhouse as being 'to learn by actual experience how casual paupers are lodged and fed'.[44] Yet nowhere did he offer a definition of either that experience or the learning it would enable, claiming instead that his motive was simply 'to learn and make known the truth'.[45] Whether or not a hefty fee negates a claim to altruism, Greenwood's notion of edification raises two important questions: What exactly did the undercover investigator's experience signify? And what was the nature of the relationship between this fictive persona and the news consumers who vicariously accompanied investigators at a safe remove? Together, these twin poles of experience demarcated a space without precedent in newspaper history. As we show, what made the genre inaugurated by Greenwood so influential was less its reliance on disguise and lurid subject matter than its basis in the individual. In recasting the relationship between writing and reading subjects, undercover journalism opened up new terrain for agency, experimentation, and imaginative participation in those encounters.

Elevating the status of the reporter's own experience marked a radical departure from contemporary journalistic protocols for researching and narrating news stories. Most immediately, undercover journalism ran contrary to the ideals of impartiality and balance, with practitioners often adopting an openly sceptical attitude towards the authorities in their efforts to understand power relationships from the viewpoint of the subordinated. (Conversely, when public authorities and aggrieved parties such as abortion doctors and emigration companies took legal action, they prosecuted individual reporters rather than newspaper proprietors.) Even when journalists betrayed their own prejudices or sided with officialdom, the subversiveness of these unpredictable experiments was hard to miss. Because immersion as an individual precluded representativeness, those wishing to verify or contest an investigator's findings had no alternative but to repeat

the investigation for themselves. 'Our representative … describes nothing but what he actually saw, heard, felt, and experienced', declared the *St. James's Gazette* after its own 'amateur casual' spent seven nights of torment in a doss-house, in his words, 'covered with one seething mass of creeping things'.[46]

Above all, by moving individual experience to centre stage, undercover investigation established a new unit of narration – the journalist's own feelings. Prior to this moment, as one commentator remarked, 'The reporter, as a reporter, has no personal feelings'.[47] A new generation of reporters, by contrast, fully embraced the opportunity to place their personal responses to events front and centre. As one of Ireland's first investigative journalists explained to readers after spending a night atop Nelson's Pillar in Dublin: 'I only want to let people know what I witnessed, felt, and afterwards dreamed…'.[48] Critics were quick to complain that gathering credible information by means of deception was self-contradictory and liable to misuse even when the practicalities of infiltration did not prevent accurate note-taking. A more profound issue, however, was that covert investigating fractured the concept of truth into two irreconcilable entities: truth to experience (the journalist's observations) and truth to the world (what readers understood as objective reality). Prioritizing the reporter's own voice thereby amplified the broader challenge to editorial anonymity posed by the spread of signature. Writing in the mid-1850s, when most journalists were still writing under the cloak of anonymity, an opponent of this convention had urged: 'Let any newspaper substitute in its leading article the singular for the plural pronoun, and write "I", instead of "we". It will at once be seen and felt how the mere fact of individualising reduces the influence of his anonymous pen'.[49] Incognito investigation added a further dimension. Whereas editors and reviewers had always supplied opinion, undercover journalists relayed the entire spectrum of physical and emotional experience.

The use of the first-person voice by covert investigators was more than just a stylistic novelty or the symptom of a shift within the press hierarchy. By asserting that subjective experience, even when acquired clandestinely, could be a conduit for truth, journalists drew readers into a uniquely interactive relationship. That relationship reveals the undercover investigator's indebtedness to special correspondents like William Howard Russell or George Augustus Sala, whose dispatches sought to blend documentary reportage with vivid eyewitness accounts that would imaginatively transport readers to the scene.[50] It also recalled the newspaper's correspondence pages, where discussion of recent investigations often appeared alongside

unsolicited testimony from whistleblowers and interventions by readers. Yet undercover reporting surpassed these genres in the intensity of readers' identification with the experiences being shared. In revealing what George Sims memorably called 'a dark continent that is within easy walking distance of the General Post Office', these incognito investigations offered domestic equivalents to the electrifying exploration narratives of Henry Morton Stanley, John Hanning Speke, and Fridjof Nansen that appeared in newspapers and magazines during this same period.[51] Undercover journalists took readers on epic journeys within their own country.

Victorian undercover investigating followed an established tradition of observing and interrogating the working classes and the poor. In the decades leading up to Greenwood's exposé, governments had increasingly made use of royal commissions to research social and economic problems and present their findings in published reports or blue books.[52] Despite the obvious differences between these commissions, which were composed of patrician appointees and experts acting in an official capacity, and undercover investigations – what Stead called 'secret commissions' – the two modes had a number of affinities.[53] Commissions advocated the standards that eventually came to define all social research – impartiality, empiricism, statistics, standardization, and verifiability – and adopted a detached structure of local informants, authorized fact-gatherers, and recommendation-framing superiors.[54] Nonetheless, the experience of the individual commissioner remained crucial. Commissioners were free to complain and express personal sentiments in their reports, as Oz Frankel notes, and sometimes even expected to use their own subjectivity in order to 'observe the poorer population and … reproduce its "voice"'.[55] Not only that, their surveys had a performative aspect in the public ritual, established by philanthropists and reformers, of 'walking into the slum or the foundry [and] encountering the poor, if only for a brief moment and under controlled circumstances'.[56] Commissioners might even resort to disguise: one managed to evade an obstructive mine owner by dressing as a collier.[57]

In other regards, undercover journalism was less like the official survey and the social investigation than press and social historians have assumed. At first glance, immersion seems of a piece with the methodology of freelance investigators such as Charles Booth, who routinely lodged incognito with a poor family for weeks on end. While many contemporaries may have seen it this way, closer examination reveals a more complex picture.[58] Whereas the survey sought to be, in the words of one official, 'a cyclopaedia of physiological, social, and moral knowledge', the undercover account offered a single sample, motivated in most cases by curiosity

rather than an agenda for reform and intended to foster empathy with the figure of the journalist rather than elicit sympathy for others.[59] Booth himself downplayed the value of 'personal investigation' in order to distance his methods from the more sensationally minded ones used by investigative journalists.[60] Even when investigations did expose criminality and exploitation in workhouses, sweatshops, ships, nurseries, and psychiatric hospitals, their legal impact was typically not the main concern. Nor was interest in a topic necessarily correlated with a political or social perspective. Conservative and Radical newspapers alike commissioned undercover investigations, and their reporters were equally capable of criticism and even outright censure of the demographic under scrutiny.

Not a motive, a moral or political agenda, or even a subject, what defined undercover journalism was its mode of engaging readers. And while that mode hinged on first-hand experience, it was abundantly clear – not least to real tramps, beggars, emigrants, and the like – that the journalist's experiences differed in kind from those of the population being infiltrated. Greenwood, as Marina Remy Abrunhosa points out, repeatedly emphasized his own gentility as well as the 'artificiality and constructedness of [his] account'.[61] Investigators might conceal the habitus of speech, physique, deportment, and clothing, but the myopia of class privilege was inescapable. Not only were the journalists' own sufferings self-elected and temporary, the psychological damage wrought by social exclusion and precarity was simply too alien to them. Lacking the statistical data and analytical distance of the commissioner, reporters often fell back on expressions of pity or horror, effectively conceding their inability to access the inner lives of those brutalized by poverty and toil. As a social document, therefore, the first-hand experience of an undercover journalist was arguably less authentic than the second-hand testimony of a public official. Greenwood's confession that the sight of a teenage boy bedding down among naked tramps was 'almost enough to make a man cry' gave voice to emotions that were unique to the investigator.[62]

This blurring of participation with spectatorship reflects undercover journalism's debt to another category of immersive reporting: the low-life guide. Penned by bohemian outsiders, fly-on-the-wall accounts of urban curiosities and the *demi-monde* came into vogue in the Regency period and had a lasting influence on the style and subject matter of Victorian popular literature. Critics frequently accused undercover reporting of the titillation that characterizes Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), a picaresque whose title page boasts 'numerous illustrations from real life', and imitative works such as John Duncombe's *The Dens of London Exposed* (1835).[63] The charge

had some merit given the obvious continuities between exposés such as *How to Live in London; or, The Metropolitan Microscope* (1828) and later investigative series such as *Answers* magazine's 'The Secrets of London' (1888–89).[64] In each case, eye-opening revelations by an insider played a central role, as they did in campaigning journalism, another important cognate mode.[65] 'Wherever possible', explained a contributor to the *University Magazine*, 'the special commissioner is dispatched in cases where investigation and the qualities of the detective are needed'.[66] Here, too, incognito journalism seemed merely to replicate and extend the logic of pre-existing genres – bohemian sleuthing or sightseeing by another name.

There was a crucial difference, however. What the official survey, the social investigation, and the low-life guide each revealed was a social milieu external to the narrator. The dramatic interest of those genres lay in the specific features of the lifeworlds exposed to readers. Undercover journalists, even when infiltrating the same environments, had quite another object of discovery in view, namely their own feelings. All forms of investigation could be sensational for the reader, but the sensationalism of undercover journalism derived in the final instance from shocks delivered to the sensibilities of the journalist. More than just the basis for the undercover story, personal experience *was* the story. Put simply, the novelty of every investigation reflected the singularity of every investigator's experience.

Recognizing this fact – that the reporter, not the setting, is the real subject – has far-reaching consequences for how we understand undercover journalism's social and literary significance during this period. In their accounts of coping with strange and distressing environments, undercover reporters typically describe in detail physical spaces, official procedures, and economic transactions. But they are equally careful to gather dramatic incident, lively dialogue, and philosophical reflection into a coherent narrative arc in which suspense is punctuated by surprises, risks of discovery, and, in almost every case, a moment of self-recognition or reappraisal. Incognito investigators, in sharp contrast to those around them, emerge from their trials as changed individuals – enlightened, indignant, traumatized, or chastened, perhaps, but forever grateful to have been spared such a fate.

What makes the investigator's experience of immersion so compelling for readers, we propose, is that it stages a disturbing hypothetical: their own subjection to the same ordeal. More than just a campaigner or preacher, the undercover journalist is a proxy, not for hapless emigrants or destitute labourers who may or may not deserve sympathy, but for readers who imagine their own submission to degradation and discomfort as a cataclysmic social fall. This distinction was crucial. Polite readers, the American

journalist Elizabeth Banks recalled in her autobiography, would have rejected her investigation of servant life had they known that its author was 'quite as much compelled by necessity to go into domestic service in order to earn her living as was any real housemaid who ever applied to a London mistress for a situation'.[67] Far from being undercover reporting's blindspot, the distance of class and privilege was its enabling dynamic.

I.3 Searching for Novel Information

The final argument of *Undercover* is that incognito investigating had a hitherto unacknowledged influence on the narrative form, thematics, and compositional methods of contemporary literary production. That a historic advance in journalistic method spurred innovations in literary writing should come as no surprise given the overlapping origins – and etymologies – of the novel and the newspaper.[68] In his classic analysis of national consciousness, Benedict Anderson identifies those formats as kindred 'forms of imagining', each predicated on individual identification with a modern abstraction: the nation.[69] Newspapers, he proposes, can be thought of as 'one-day best-sellers' whose ostensibly disconnected protagonists, like those of novels, exist simultaneously and collectively in the minds of readers as the constitutive elements of an imagined community.[70] Although historians of the nineteenth-century press have variously extended and modified Anderson's thesis, his emphasis on the affinities between reading journalism and reading fiction remains essential for understanding the connectedness of newspapers and novels, particularly as regards their narrative forms and themes. As a co-author of this book has noted elsewhere: 'The news was integral to the novel's development in its provision of narrative elements that were ultimately transformed into an altogether different enterprise'.[71] Importantly, this was a two-way relationship. As newspapers assumed greater prominence in works of fiction, which now featured pastiches of newsprint *en bloc*, novels in turn began physically entering the newspaper page as feuilletons, a development that boosted their social impact by giving them what one contemporary called 'the further effect of pamphlets or magazines'.[72]

The press's adoption of an investigative approach to social and economic ills left its mark on literary writing long before Greenwood entered Lambeth Workhouse. 'Reading the morning newspaper is the realist's morning prayer', declared the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel early in the century, and in subsequent decades, realist fiction in particular became indebted to the methods and findings of journalistic investigation.[73] A number of scholars have examined how Victorian novels, in Jessica R.

Valdez's words, 'experimented with news discourse by injecting it into varying kinds of plots and modalities'.[74] Richard Altick has pointed out that Anthony Trollope's *The Three Clerks* (1857) portrays the public's demand for topicality as forcing novelists to turn themselves into 'crusading journalists', for example, and John Sutherland has argued that Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) derives both its subject matter and forensic structure from a rapidly expanding penny press whose 'larger circulation and more competitive tone fostered what we now call investigative reporting'.[75] The most programmatic exemplar of this tendency was the novelist Charles Reade, whose compositional 'Great System' involved collating newspaper reports and court transcripts as the factual underpinnings for extravagant plotlines involving prisons, penal transportation, and mental asylums.[76]

Conversely, social investigating had always involved a substantial element of embellishment, melodrama, and outright fabrication, an aspect highlighted in the subtitle of John Marriott and Masaie Matsumara's anthology *The Metropolitan Poor: Semi-Factual Accounts, 1795–1910* (1999).[77] For *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), a survey allegedly sourced 'from the lips of the people themselves', Henry Mayhew made extensive use of what Leah Price calls the 'stylistic tricks' of novel-writing: blanking out names, hinting primly at 'delicacy' and 'confidence', and, above all, reconstructing an archive of letters into legible narrative.[78] Other investigators went even further by adopting an invented identity in the manner of the French urban explorer Flora Tristan, who cross-dressed as a man in the early 1840s in order to access the all-male space of the House of Commons – curiously, a disguise seldom exploited by English journalists despite their readiness to cross nearly every other line.[79] Journalistic investigators were likewise attracted to the revelatory format of 'penny bloods', sensation novels, and detective thrillers. It was not only nepotism but also his authorship of picaresque tales such as *The Adventures of Reuben Davidger* (1865) and *The True History of a Little Ragamuffin* (1866) that qualified Greenwood to undertake an exposé of workhouse conditions: early reprints were justly titled 'A Literary Adventure in a Workhouse'.[80] And this intermedial relationship remained strong after 1866. The *North British Daily Mail*'s investigative series 'The Dark Side of Glasgow' conveniently shared its title with a recently serialized novel.[81]

Novelists registered the advent of undercover reporting in a number of ways. Greenwood sought to promote his own potboilers through advertising their authorship by the 'Amateur Casual', his celebrated alter ego (Figure 0.4). Echoing such boosterism, the authors of popular

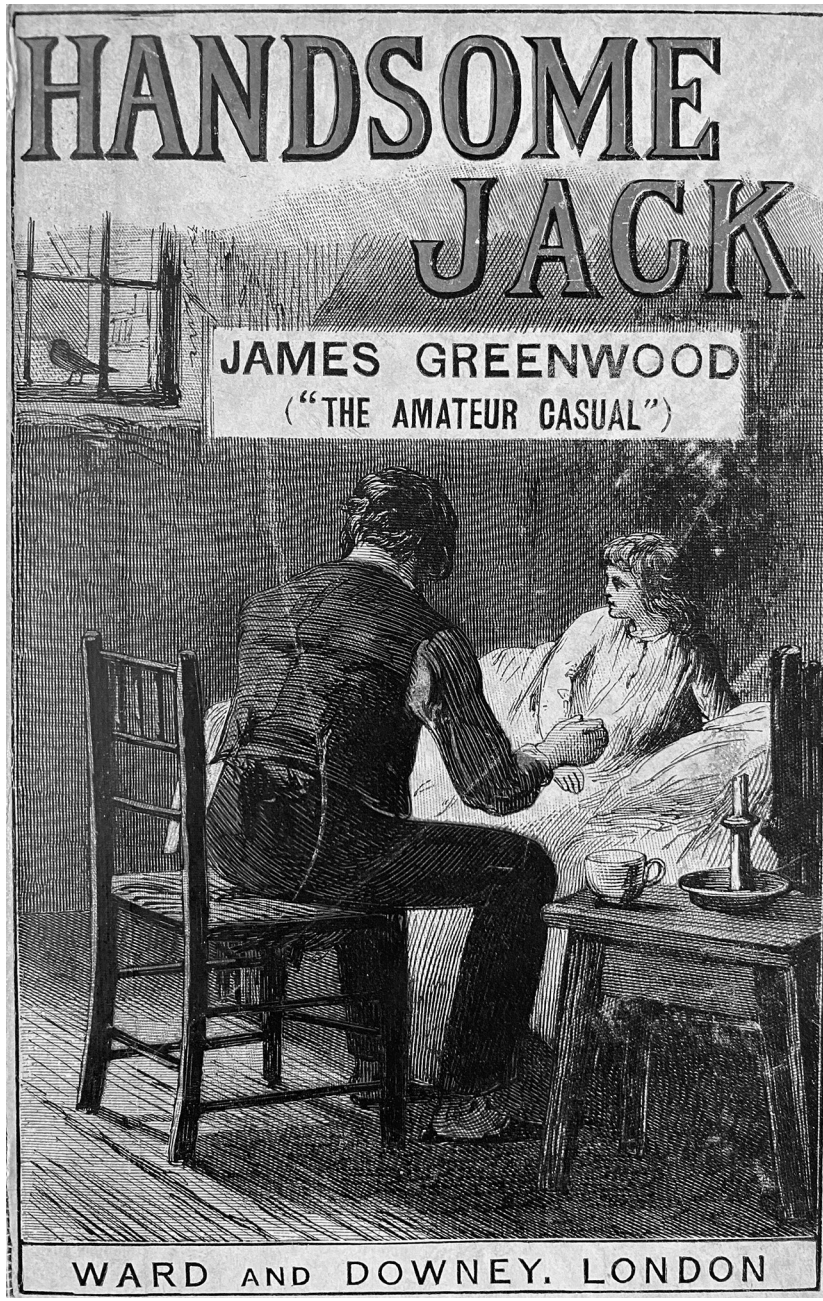

Figure 0.4 James Greenwood, *Handsome Jack* (London: Ward and Downey, 1888). From the British Library Collection: 012633.m.23.

tales of press life portrayed the investigative scoop as a golden key to advancement:

> We've had an amateur casual, an amateur balloonist, and an amateur lunatic. I determined to burst upon the public gaze and coruscate as an amateur working man. There was money in it; there was fame; it was perfectly original; it had never been thought of before.[82]

More subtly, some writers incorporated into their fictional narratives material that had originally appeared as specimens of the new genre. In William Le Queux's *Scribes and Pharisees* (1898), for example, a young journalist shares an anecdote about posing as a pilgrim that matches Le Queux's own undercover exposé of a Catholic shrine at Trèves.[83] The genre's foundational moment is also a recurrent point of reference in plotlines of these years, if less with reverence than derision. In Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Hueffer's *The Inheritors* (1901), the plight of a broken-down journalist prompts a sarcastic quip: "'Why doesn't he go to the work'ouse.... Make a good sketch that, eh?'"[84] A once-daring innovation had become a dreary rite of passage by the time Philip Gibbs's tyro journalist entered the profession in *The Street of Adventure* (1909):

> He had to spend a night in a 'tuppenny doss', where he lay awake for hours in a cold sweat, listening to the breathing, the occasional moans, the restlessness of men eaten by vermin, the horrible snoring, the sudden shriek of terror as a boy woke out of a nightmare, the fight for breath of asthmatical old men, in that dark dormitory where five hundred human beings lay in box-beds like coffins.[85]

In recycling the undercover experience as fiction, a device that manifestly offered diminishing returns, novelists betrayed their desire to elevate the status of their own profession at the expense of a rival one.

Yet, despite novelists' efforts to downplay its importance, undercover journalism was actually a driver of literary innovation throughout this period. Its repurposing of personal experience – the perspective of the incognito reporter as a source of documentary truth – supplied abundant 'copy' for contemporary writers. Of course, seasoned recorders of human behaviour did not need a new journalistic genre to teach them the value of covert observation. In his Christmas story 'The Seven Poor Travellers' (1854), Dickens exposed the corrupt trustees of a charity house in Rochester that he had visited personally while in character as a penniless wayfarer.[86] But the boom in undercover reporting established incognito investigation as a narrative mode against which fiction's realism would be measured. This was a convergence of genres that revisited the novel's own origins

in a personal history that is true, not in a legal or literal sense but in its adherence to the principles of observed material existence. Impersonation for the purposes of storytelling, while superficially akin to concealment, is fundamentally an act of fictionalization. The *Times* reporter who infiltrated the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852 by posing as an undertaker had relayed impressions as they appeared to a third party rather than as filtered through his own consciousness.[87] He was not the subject of this account, merely its chronicler. By contrast, the fictional narrator and the undercover journalist share a special kind of privileged knowledge. Just as the former provides a conceptual link between the diegetic and non-diegetic worlds of the novel, the latter invites newspaper readers to inhabit a consciousness that is itself an assumed identity.

The literary ramifications of what commentators dubbed 'realistic journalism' are easily discernible in contemporary responses.[88] When discussing the undercover genre, editors often invoked as a point of reference the subject's prior treatment by novelists such as Dickens – the workhouse in *Oliver Twist* (1837), say, or steerage conditions in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844).[89] With the advent of incognito investigation and the growing influence of the press more broadly, it seemed to many that the mantle of representational authenticity and moral authority was passing from fiction to journalism. Covert reporting implicitly challenged the novelist's claim to be better qualified not simply to give a human face to the poverty and suffering catalogued by blue books but to bridge the chasm of social class by inculcating in novel readers what George Eliot called 'a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity'.[90] Yet novelists would not go down without a fight. The following chapters uncover how Victorian authors responded to investigative journalism's growing clout by staging their own undercover forays, retelling events from alternative perspectives, or restoring a level of narrative complexity felt to be missing from media coverage of events – what might be thought of, contrary to the claims made by the press, as 'journalistic realism'.

I.4 Self-appointed Investigators

Undercover begins with a thoroughgoing reassessment of Greenwood's infiltration of Lambeth Workhouse that establishes its centrality for the emergence of undercover journalism and the 'amateur' investigations that followed in its wake. Despite the original investigation's fame, the breadth and depth of its impact have been woefully underestimated. Not only was 'A Night in a Workhouse' one of the most reprinted news stories of the

century – the visible tip of an iceberg of Victorian covert investigations – it defined the methods, terminology, and even descriptive monikers used by generations of practitioners. Whereas previous scholarship has treated 'A Night in a Workhouse' as an exercise in social exploration, an intervention in debates over welfare provision, and a popular culture spectacle, our focus is on the historical novelty of the reading experience that underpinned the new mode of covert reporting. Greenwood's account, we propose, gripped the public where previous investigators had failed because it inaugurated an original narrative subject position. As Chapter 1's analysis of a Greenwood imitator who was motivated primarily by scepticism confirms, undercover journalism ultimately appealed to audiences not on the grounds of compassion or political sympathy but because the incognito persona of an immersed reporter presented a powerful opportunity for identification – a proxy for the reader's own hypothetical social catastrophe.

Our reappraisal of this pivotal moment in the history of British investigative journalism provides the starting point for five case studies of amateur investigations inspired by Greenwood: mental asylums, transatlantic steerage, childcare services, street begging, and rural tramping. To a large extent, Greenwood's biography itself supplies the narrative arc for this book, as he proceeded to report on nearly every one of the topics covered here during a storied career as what he called the 'self-appointed investigator' of Britain's underclasses.[91] Recovering key examples of amateur investigations modelled on 'A Night in a Workhouse', we show how the advent of covert reporting represented a major advance on the methods of previous journalistic investigators, who had merely replicated or extended those of their non-journalistic counterparts – what Melissa Score, in reference to an investigation of textile manufacturing for *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* in 1846, calls 'the work of an individual but framed as though conducted by a commission'.[92] No longer merely reporting on the findings of others, as *Reynold's Miscellany* had done in the 1850s by reprinting the *Lancet*'s exposé of food adulteration, newspapers now laid claim to the story itself.[93] This faultline serves as the basis for our assessment of undercover journalism's significance for literary treatments of the topic in question, followed by evaluations of its shaping influence on the composition, narrative form, and reception of fictional narratives by major writers, some of whom emulated Greenwood by putting on disguises of their own.

Chapter 2 considers the implications of Greenwood's innovation for contemporary perceptions of one of Britain's most sensationalized but least visible social spaces: the mental asylum. Exceptionally for our study,

the roles of undercover pioneer and literary author converge here in a single individual: the Anglo-Irish aristocrat Lewis Strange Wingfield, who impersonated an asylum warder for the purposes of literary research. By going undercover in a private asylum at a time of mounting public concern about the care of people affected by mental illness, Wingfield aimed to expose the endemic abuse of vulnerable individuals – but in the form of a novel. Covert observation, he believed, would furnish him with material for a new kind of fiction whose authenticity would supersede the factual scrupulousness of a 'newspaper novelist' like Charles Reade and even the first-hand testimonies of former inmates. While the resulting novel *Gehenna; or, Havens of Unrest* (1882) has largely been forgotten, Wingfield's extraordinary experiment in undercover authorship attests to the creative opportunities opened up by undercover journalism as well as to the subsequent overshadowing of British trailblazers by American investigators such as Nellie Bly.

Chapter 3 examines the successive exposure of conditions in emigrant steerage travel to the United States and other countries. Despite the efforts of campaigners and the appointment of several commissions of inquiry, the public long remained unaware of the sufferings of transatlantic emigrants, which were vehemently denied by shipping representatives. In exposing the brutal realities behind the assurances of emigration firms, undercover journalists gave a voice to the countless thousands of emigrants who endured overcrowding, inadequate food, and sexual harassment while crossing the Atlantic. And yet, we contend, their harrowing accounts of squalor and danger also offered newspaper readers a vicarious experience of the exotic. Drawing on this investigative archive, we establish how Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Amateur Emigrant* (written 1879–80; published 1895), a literary classic conventionally seen as a travel memoir, began life as an incognito investigation destined for a newspaper. By turns idealizing and disillusioning, Stevenson's narrative illustrates the social insights and unanticipated personal transformations that are hallmarks of undercover journalistic experience and whose influence extends to his best-known fictional work, *Treasure Island* (1883).

The focus of Chapter 4 is childcare and adoption services, at this time a motley array of provisions that included long- and short-term supervision by impoverished private entrepreneurs, whose negligence or callous calculation, in a few proven cases, resulted in infant deaths. Despite the public's strength of feeling on the issue, neither the authorities nor the medical press were ever able to demonstrate the existence of neglect or infanticide on a systemic scale. Undeterred, undercover journalists conducted

lurid and manipulative investigations into so-called 'baby farmers' and abortionists that, in going beyond the exposure of malpractice and child abuse, effectively created their own discursive object of enquiry. Tracing the contours of this development, we show how investigative journalism harnessed popular outrage and a spirit of vigilantism to call for greater state regulation. This investigative context is crucial to understanding the force of George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), we contend, and underwrites the novel's climactic scene in which the eponymous protagonist refuses a baby-farmer's offer to dispose of her illegitimate child.

Chapter 5 addresses undercover investigations of street begging, a topic that illustrates with particular clarity what we regard to be a hallmark of the new genre: the priority of journalistic considerations over humanitarian or reformist aims. The rise of undercover reporting in the final third of the century coincided with a hardening of social attitudes towards mendicants, particularly a widely reviled subcategory known as 'professional' beggars. Beggary's conflation with fraud in the public imagination, which was reinforced by fanciful reports of its profitability, made the practice a unique object for incognito investigating – the impersonation of an impersonator. Undercover journalists sought to reveal not the sufferings of those driven to public humiliation but the exploitation of charity by a cadre of swindlers. Despite repeatedly failing in this ambition, such would-be exposés were perennially popular with newspaper audiences, who saw in them a simulation of their own hypothetical shipwreck but also a low-life equivalent to the specialist expertise and terminology characteristic of all professions. In tapping into a wider unease about the nature of modern work, we argue, undercover investigators forged the troubling connection between respectability and criminality that informs the portrayal of beggars in fictional works such as Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Man With the Twisted Lip' (1891), a Sherlock Holmes story hinging upon the revelation that a highly respected businessman is in fact a professional beggar – a lucrative career discovered by him during a foray as none other than an undercover journalist.

Chapter 6 centres on a cluster of related activities loosely designated as 'tramping': primarily labour migrancy and rural vagrancy but also the leisure activity known today as hiking. Rural conditions were the most surveyed area of British society prior to the First World War, and the advent of covert investigation radically extended the possibilities for exploring the hardships and freedoms associated with these overlapping varieties of mobility. In illuminating the psychology, social mores, and solidarities of lives spent on the move, undercover journalists changed the way

Britons viewed rural space and its inhabitants. Foremost among the many writers impacted by this development was Thomas Hardy, the country's preeminent novelist of the countryside, whose *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891–92) is set in a landscape being doubly reshaped by labour migrancy and pedestrian tourism. In Tess Durbeyfield and Angel Clare's aimless but utopian flight from the authorities across open country, Hardy imagines a new kind of cross-class 'tramping' whose origins can be traced back to the impersonations and blurred identities of investigative journalism's most openly participatory genre.

An investigation of the investigators is long overdue. Our five case studies establish the scale and complexity of the undercover revolution in British journalism and the diversity of literary responses generated by it. Although these investigations shared the genre's most important trait – an incognito subject position through which readers could imagine themselves in such a predicament – each inquiry tapped into very different attitudes and emotions, including the fear of being wrongfully incarcerated or plunged into poverty; the impulse to protect children and other vulnerable groups; and deep-rooted notions of class, national identity, and personal freedom. Similar variety characterizes investigative journalism's literary impact on a range of genres that span the three-decker melodrama, the popular romance, the Naturalist novel, the magazine short story, and the travelogue. As we will see, undercover investigating spurred writers to reimagine the relationship between realism's constituent elements of narrative, theme, and plot as well as that between author and reader.

Restoring this journalistic history, we argue, will add new dimensions to our understanding of the formal and thematic evolution in literary writing of these years. Landmark texts of the twentieth century took readers into new fictional spaces – including, in the notorious instance of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), the outhouse, the maternity ward, and the brothel – not from a desire to scandalize but because generations of undercover journalists had established the necessity of personal physical presence for those wishing to access, in Virginia Woolf's celebrated formulation, 'the dark places of human psychology'.[94] Undercover journalism thus revealed, among many other things, the limits of invention. As Woolf herself would later declare in the preface to a collection of memoirs by working-class women: '[T]he imagination is largely the child of the flesh. One could not be Mrs. Giles of Durham because one's body had never stood at the wash-tub'.[95]

Collectively, these journalistic and literary texts tell a new story about the fundamental components of social being at the end of the nineteenth

century and the start of the twentieth. As our book shows, what undercover reporters investigated were not simply the physical spaces of workhouses, asylums, ships, nurseries, and the countryside but entire dimensions of human experience: precarity, insanity, displacement, parenthood, and mobility. More than just a simulation of loss, the undercover experience gave narrative form and searing actuality to realms of social life that most genteel readers had encountered only as sociological abstractions and colourless news items. The genre invited audiences to step into the shoes of narrative proxies – to stand at the wash-tub, so to speak – before returning transformed, like Greenwood sombrely rejoining his brother after leaving the workhouse, by a new appreciation of their own life circumstances. As importantly, the deprivations revealed by subterfuge had the effect of reasserting the value of what had been lost: health, security, identity, affection, and rootedness. Not least, and as the literary narratives that it inspired make clear, undercover investigating challenged casual prejudice and blind faith in institutions by affirming the sense-making power of individual experience.

Notes

1. [James Greenwood], 'A Night in a Workhouse [I]', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 January 1866, 9–10.
2. James Greenwood, 'Grim Realities', *Cassell's Magazine*, 1 February 1868, 286.
3. See Lionel Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815–1985* (1988; London: Routledge, 2016); Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Mark Freeman, *Social Investigation and Rural England, 1870–1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003).
4. See Peter Keating, ed., *Into Unknown England, 1866–1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 33–53; Mark Freeman and Gillian Nelson, eds., *Vicarious Vagrants: Incognito Social Explorers and the Homeless in England, 1860–1910* (Lambertville, New Jersey: True Bill Press, 2008), 53–75.
5. See, for example, Laura Vorachek, 'Playing Italian: Cross-Cultural Dress and Investigative Journalism at the Fin de Siècle', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45.4 (Winter 2012): 406–35; ''How little I cared for fame': T. Sparrow and Women's Investigative Journalism at the Fin de Siècle', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 49.2 (Summer 2016): 333–61; and Felix M. Larkin, '"Green Shoots" of the New Journalism in the *Freeman's Journal*, 1877–1890', in *Ireland and the New Journalism*, ed. Karen Steele and Michael de Nie (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 35–55. See also Jillian J. Richardson, 'Undercover Reporting in the Victorian Newspaper', PhD Dissertation, University of Alberta, 2016.

6. See, for example, W. Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead: Britain's First Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2013).
7. Joel Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s–1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 119.
8. R. L. Stevenson, 'Gentlemen', *Scribner's Magazine* (May 1888): 637.
9. This misconception is repeated in David Paul Nord, 'The Victorian City and the Urban Newspaper', in *Making News: The Political Economy of Journalism in Britain and America from the Glorious Revolution to the Internet*, ed. Richard R. John and Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 73–106. On the first generation of undercover reporters in the United States, see Mark Pittenger, *Class Unknown: Undercover Investigations of American Work and Poverty from the Progressive Era to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
10. Stephen Donovan and Matthew Rubery, eds., *Secret Commissions: An Anthology of Victorian Investigative Journalism* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012), 9–24.
11. [Angus Reach], 'Labour and the Poor: The Manufacturing Districts: From Our Special Correspondent: Manchester: Letter IX', *Morning Chronicle*, 15 November 1849, 5; [Hugh Shimmin], 'Liverpool Life: Its Pleasures, Practices, and Pastimes: No. XII', *Mercury* (Liverpool), 8 September 1856, 3.
12. 'Wild Tribes of London', *Globe*, 8 June 1869, 4.
13. 'A Model Lodging House', *North Briton*, 2 September 1871, 2.
14. *Morning Advertiser*, 25 September 1872, 4. On the growth of interviewing in the 1860s, see Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction after the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109–40.
15. 'Political Items', *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 13 June 1896, 7; 'Our Missing Man's Adventures: £20 Reward for Finding a Journalist in Disguise', *Weekly Dispatch*, 10 September 1905, 7.
16. R. St. J. Corbet, 'The Amateur Begging Casual', *The People*, 13 January 1884, 9.
17. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 January 1884, 4.
18. 'Two Mysterious Hours: An "Answers" Special Correspondent Investigates a Queer Subject', *Answers*, 20 April 1889, 334; 'Collecting for a Burial Society (By Our Own Amateur Casual)', *Glasgow Daily Herald*, 7 January 1871, 7 and 10 January 1871, 2; 'A Night in a London Gambling Den', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 May 1888, 2–3. On the infiltration of spiritualism by campaigners and professional magicians, see Martin Willis, 'On Wonder: Situating the Spectacle in Spiritualism and Performance Magic', in *Popular Exhibitions, Science, and Showmanship, 1840–1910*, ed. Joe Kember et al. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 167–82.
19. 'Swindles on Deaf People', *Tit-Bits*, 27 August 1892, 369; 'London Notes', *Ipswich Journal*, 14 November 1876, 2.
20. 'In Queer Places', *Sport* (Dublin), 11 January 1890, 4.
21. 'Yellow Journalism', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 14 October 1905, 9.

22. Irving Montagu, 'A Journalist's Experience', *Lyttelton Times* (Christchurch, New Zealand), 28 September 1887, 6.
23. See Dorothy Lawrence, *Sapper Dorothy Lawrence: The Only English Woman Soldier, Late Royal Engineers, 51st Division 179th Tunneling Company, B.E.F.* (London: John Lane, 1919), and Elisabeth Shipton, *Female Tommies: The Frontline Women of the First World War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014), 80–2.
24. 'Homeless in London for Fifty Days: An Unprofessional Vagabond's Adventures in the Great City' ran in *Cassell's Saturday Journal* from 18 September to 30 December 1895.
25. Elizabeth L. Banks, 'How the Other Half Lives: The Flower Girl', *English Illustrated Magazine* 11 (June 1894): 925–31; Eva Bright, 'How the Other Half Lives: The Organ Grinder', *English Illustrated Magazine* 11 (July 1894): 1007–12; Fred A. McKenzie, 'How the Other Half Lives: The Sandwich Man', *English Illustrated Magazine* 13 (April 1895): 73–8; and Elizabeth L. Banks, 'How the Other Half Lives: The Dressmaker's Apprentice', *English Illustrated Magazine* 13 (September 1895): 539–45. The series was inspired by Jacob Riis's epochal survey of poverty in New York, 'How the Other Half Lives', *Scribner's Magazine* (December 1899): 643–62.
26. The monthly series began with 'My Experiences as a Crossing Sweeper', *Temple Magazine* (March 1898): 353–6 before concluding in August 1898.
27. For example, Greenwood's uncollected series 'Our Saturday Nights', which ran in the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Adviser* from 1 January to 25 June 1887. See also Edward J. Petch, 'Life with "Weary Willie" and the "Habituals" [Specially Written … by Edward J. Petch, 'London Daily News']', *Welshman*, 10 February 1905, 3.
28. 'The Dark Side of Glasgow', 27 December 1870, 4; 'Shebeens, Brothels, and the Fine System in Glasgow—To the Editor of the *North British Daily Mail*', *North British Daily Mail*, 6 December 1870, 3; 'The Dark Side of Glasgow—To the Editor of the *North British Daily Mail*', *North British Daily Mail*, 9 December 1870, 6. Subsequent instalments appeared on 3, 6, 12, and 26 January, and 2 February 1871, eliciting further correspondence and even poems from readers.
29. On the growth of the provincial press after mid-century, see Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855–1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976) and Andrew Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: The Provincial Press in England, 1855–1900* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018).
30. 'How the Emigrant Journeys', *Boston Guardian*, 15 August 1879, 4; 'Among the Lincolnshire "Tater Pickers": Some Facts about the Curious Nomads', *Boston Guardian*, 19 August 1911, 5; [George Mortimer], 'On the Road, or The Adventures of an Amateur Tramp', *Aberdeen People's Journal*, 1 August 1896, 3.
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