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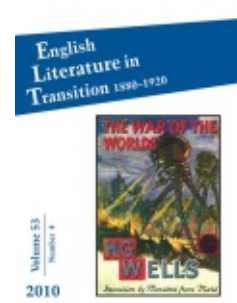
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Detective Fiction

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seen by her *after* a long lunch with Garnett and his friends? And there are glimpses of his sheer, cowardly bolshiness: visited by an uninvited Frank Harris together with Norman Douglas, Conrad asked the latter, “I should like to know why you bring this brigand into my house. Am I never to see the last of him?” JC stayed upstairs until Harris had left.”

There are some slips. Miss Hallowes does not appear, as the index would have it, on page 170, but a page later: the same is true of Gatti’s Restaurant, page 114. Editorially, it does not seem necessary to make a politically correct mention of either Doris Lessing or Toni Morrison in an index to a book about memories and impressions of Joseph Conrad who had died long before either Nobel laureate had picked up a pen. But these quibbles aside, there is no question that this volume achieves more than what Ray declares he set out to achieve, to be “useful and interesting.” *Memories and Impressions—An Annotated Bibliography* supercedes this aim and further cements the fact that Ray’s gift to Conrad studies was quietly magnificent and will be, without a shadow of doubt, hugely significant to any dedicated Conradian. Be warned: the book is for the specialist, but any innocent picking it up with no knowledge of Conrad might also become as sufficiently smitten as Martin Ray was by his subject. You leave the book feeling the need to read more by its subject. How often do we say that about scholarship?

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Detective Fiction

Paul Fox and Koray Melikoglu, eds. *Formal Investigations: Aesthetic Style in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Detective Fiction*. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2007. xii + 236 pp. Paper \$40.00

THE APPEARANCE of the literary detective in the nineteenth century is generally accounted for by its relation to a middle-class desire for social regularity, yet little has been said of the relationship between the ordering of criminal transgression by aesthetic form and the aesthetic theories proliferating during the period. The essays here provide an exploration of how writers in the genre actively engaged with the intellectual and aesthetic currents of the day. They show how interests such as French naturalism, psychical research, aestheticism, geology, degeneration theory, and even the Arts and Crafts movement affected the literary resolution of social chaos.

Paul Fox’s introduction analyses the *Punch* illustration, “Horrible London: Or The Pandemonium of Posters” (13 October 1888). Victorian

anxiety about urban expansion and an attendant explosion in crime was equaled by anxiety about the burgeoning popularity of crime writing. *Punch*'s bill-sticking demon (adding the latest to a collage of posters for penny dreadfuls, murder mysteries and crime headlines) satirizes public avidity for the Ripper atrocities. The accompanying verse bemoans the effect of these "mural monstrosities" on the "toiling" classes yet, Fox points out, *Punch* participates in just such attention-grabbing sensationalism, implicitly acknowledging the broad appeal of crime writing that encompassed its own readership. It is *Punch*'s familiar structuring aesthetic that "orders" this sensation for them, "making it amenable to the intellect if still titillating the lower instincts."

As dubious moral and literary merit adhered to the mass-market, the designations of "high" and "low" that emerged have tended to obscure the complexities of the genre's initial dialectical relation to literary realism. Rudolph Glitz's essay illustrates this, showing how Conan Doyle's preoccupation with "serious" versus commercial art is played out in Holmes's and Watson's metafictional dialogues. When Holmes surprises Watson with the observation that the scattered houses of the Hampshire countryside fill him "with a certain horror," he upends the convention that associates urban density with squalid crime. Glitz reads Holmes's response to the isolated domestic as rooted in the principles of French naturalism. He discusses a range of stories that have a setting of familial domesticity (key to the programatics of Balzac and Zola), noting a concurrence of dialogue that deals with questions of genre and aesthetics. Whilst Holmes is "the criminological purist" committed to the "principles of contemporary avant garde realism," Watson, "the populariser," juxtaposes Holmes's accounts, drawing on the conventions of sensation fiction and the gothic. Significantly it is Holmes's rationalist accounts that are conclusive: the source of criminal horror is always located in the material conditions of the family system.

The relative obscurity of Algernon Blackwood's psychic detective, Dr. John Silence (1906–1907), is down to generic stricture, argues George M. Johnson. He suggests that Blackwood's detective fiction might usefully be reread as a protomodernist investigation into "the imaginative potential of the new psychology, psychical research and more esoteric mystical ideas." Blackwood's engagement with Frederick Myers and the Society for Psychical Research case studies directly informs the stories not only in content but form, modernist in their "profound gaps" and "blossoming with possibilities at [their] close." The generality of

Johnson's argument for a shared project with "many ... modernist contemporaries, including D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf" is less convincing than a comparison with the equally esoteric Mary Butts might prove, on whose high modernist works Blackwood's tales were indeed a profound influence.

Omissions and "refusal to name" are characteristic too of Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894), as Paul Fox's excellent essay discusses. Critically questioned for stylistic and structural fragmentation since its publication, the story is not what the reader expects from a narrative of detection. Fox resolves this by revealing the text's purposeful patterning through the prism of Pater's aestheticism. The structuring tendency of art outlined by Pater hides the horror of undifferentiated chaos, and what Pan truly represents here is the disintegration of unified narrative.

Oscar Wilde's formulation of the criminal as artist and the artist as homosexual prompts the next essay's examination of his importance to the genre. Nick Freeman posits that Wilde "was moving towards an exciting theoretical basis for crime fiction" by drawing upon a "literature of roguery" that goes back to Chaucer. The subversive possibilities of the Wildean rogue lie in his resistance of unjust authority and the processes of social assimilation. Wilde's influence emerges in the 1900s in the daring reformulation of the villain. E. W. Hornung's gentleman thief, Raffles (1899–1901), and Clifford Ashdown's "urban buccaneer," Romney Pringle (1902–1903), also live double lives, charming readers into seditious moral positions.

Another prototype villain emerged in 1903, Madame Sara, perhaps "the first female psychopath." Aaron Parrett's essay reads her appearance in L. T. Meade's "Sorceress of the Strand" series as a crystallization of Victorian science's conception of crime as evolutionary aberration. Madame Sara, a medical practitioner of uncanny skills, is racially degenerate, of mixed Italian and Indian birth. Whilst her atavism renders her devoid of conscience, her true horror lies in her departure from "type." A golden-haired beauty, Madame Sara confounds not only racial typing but the generic requirements of Victorian detective fiction that a criminal look the part. More chilling are the dystopic implications of a criminal who cannot be contained via Sherlockian rationality.

Helen Sutherland's essay, returning to Conan Doyle, traces this rationale to the work of Charles Lyell and the methodologies of geology, "reading" material fragments to ascertain an originary truth. For Sutherland the realism of the stories is problematised by elements of

fantasy despite their inevitable explication by the rational. She suggests that it is aestheticism, embodied in the louche Holmes with his dandyish attraction to the bizarre, that synthesises this dichotomy. She then traces Holmes's development through the stories, from connoisseur of crime, preoccupied with the material surface, to his later questioning of a secular logic as Conan Doyle himself turned to Spiritualism. She sees an alternative twentieth-century archetype in G. K. Chesterton's tubby priest, Father Brown, who releases detective fiction's methodology from its scientific underpinnings to a spiritual plane.

Elizabeth Anderman shows the Aesthetic movement to have a formative relationship with detective fiction. Her close reading of Wilkie Collins's *The Law and the Lady* (1874–1875) reveals a dialogue about aesthetic sensation and the search for truth. The novel, in which the clues lie in paintings, enacts a tension explored in Collins's nonfiction writing on art between the instinctive emotion of a Paterian position and the practical rationality of Ruskin's.

Widely regarded as the first American detective novel is Anna Katherine Green's best seller, *The Leavenworth Case* (1878). Lucy Sussex discusses the logic of design in Green's "exquisitely structured" and sustained clue-puzzle, a model that would influence Conan Doyle. Her examination of the relationship between the writer and her husband, Arts and Crafts designer Charles Rohlfs, demonstrates a shared aesthetic project and domestic lifestyle consistent with the ethics and ideals of William Morris.

Alison Jacquet investigates the domestic underpinnings of detection fiction that originated in the sensation novel. Looking at Ellen Wood's Johnny Ludlow series (1878–1891) through the inherent contradictions of Victorian discourses around the public and private spheres, she reads the art of detection as a contested struggle for surveillance. Unlike the Holmes and Wildean detectives who operate in homosocial, antidomestic structures, Johnny, an orphaned teenager, blurs the role in his simultaneous performance as liminal family member and amateur sleuth. This indicates a discursive complexity that contrasts with the more straightforward masculine narratives of the era. A more obvious challenge to these is the female detective, yet Therie Hendrey-Seabrook suggests that the morally charged scrutiny to which "the lady detective" was subject did little more than engender a fissure in the aesthetics of detection.

The analogous relationship of art and detection had given a Bohemian edge to the figure of the detective which could not accommodate

feminine respectability. While it might seem apposite to equate the female detective with the New Woman, Hendrey-Seabrook notes that the challenges to convention posed by the New Woman meant that her fictional counterpart could not withstand the post-Wilde backlash. Her demise corresponds with a flood of female detectives in which any alliance with that transgressive figure is regularly denied. Other strategies that combat the inherent moral ambiguity of the female detective are gentle birth and a driving moral zeal. The aesthetic thrill of “the lady detective” lies in her negotiation of this double standard.

Trent’s Last Case (1913), by E. C. Bentley, is acknowledged both as the first modern whodunnit and the first send-up of the genre. Linda Schlossberg reads it as typifying the cultural moment of its conception—1910. Its general suspicion regarding epistemic certainty means that not only is the category “criminal” rendered open to interpretation, but Trent, a self-parodic, hyper-logical, Holmesian type, fails to deduce a crime for which there are eventually three different narrative revisions and a final cheerful dismissal of masculinist logic.

These important essays underscore how much our understanding of genre owes to the influence of mass culture on the establishment of literary hierarchies. In the aesthetic search for narrative the detective story emerges as a vehicle for challenges to literary classifications and as a means of articulating specific identities and forms of historical consciousness.

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Stoker: A Literary Life

Lisa Hopkins. *Bram Stoker: A Literary Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. x + 173 pp. \$65.00

GIVEN the great awareness of and the mountainous amount of commentary on *Dracula*, Lisa Hopkins’s book is refreshing for paying attention to all of Stoker’s literary output (eighteen books total). Being part of the Literary Lives series does not diminish Hopkins’s book’s usefulness, but makes it a compact, readable reference work for those interested in Stoker.

Hopkins charts signal events in Stoker’s life, assesses each of the books, offers in her list of works cited useful leads to further pursuit of Stoker and his art. Though *Dracula* is not the center of Hopkins’s attention, she does argue that all Stoker’s fiction shares some one or another affinity(ies) with that novel, and, perhaps, with Stoker’s personal life.