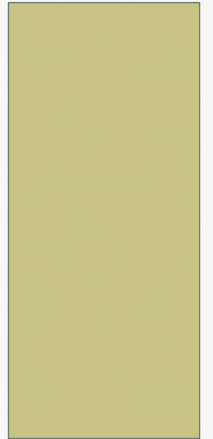


SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: SHERLOCK HOLMES

BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION &
BIOGRAPHY



BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION GENRE

- Most Victorian novels involve a crime, false identity, or secret plot that must be solved/uncovered*
- Most famous detective (and literary figure) of the nineteenth century is, of course, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes
- Detective fiction coincides with, in the 19th century, the advent of the official/modern police force and the modern bureaucratic state—control of revolutionary movements, democratic reforms, urban growth, imperial expansion. Also, advances in law, medicine, and criminology (forensic science)
- “Detection” is both a genre **and** a quality of Victorian novels
- Critiques and confirms key impulse in the Victorian novel: identification of and limits on individualism/character

BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION GENRE

- Development of the novel in the 18th and 19th centuries—focus on the individual's (inner) search for autonomy and self-definition. Biographical novel: authority within the individual character—subjective authority
- Individual is a romantic rebel who exposes the tension between autonomy/desire and the social order—development of the modern police force and the science of criminology
- Newgate novel (Newgate prison): Borrowed from Gothic fiction. Criminal as sympathetic (and often romanticized) character against unjust legal system. Also, reform novel: Romantic hero/rebel fighting corrupt legal system and relentless social forces with courage and resolve
- Newgate Calendar
 - From late 18th century through 1820s
 - Criminal memoirs/biographies
 - Romanticized, rebellious exploits/moral warning/voyeuristic
- Sensation novel: complex plots—mysteries, secrets, murder— and discovery and validation, by private and professional individuals, of characters' identities through legal constructions—documents
- Victorian novel: Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*. (In America—Poe: "Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Purloined Letter")

BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION

- Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841)
 - France—revolutionary spirit 1840s
 - Use of forensic evidence
- Newgate Calendar
 - From late 18th century through 1820s
 - Criminal memoirs/biographies
 - Romanticized, rebellious exploits/moral warning/voyeuristic
- Newgate Novel (Newgate Prison)
 - 1830s through 1840s
 - Rebellious, daring (criminal)protagonist who challenges and defies the harsh law and unjust social forces
 - Coincides with political activism and reform
 - Newgate prison---Bastille
- Crime as a legitimate subject for serious literature (fiction--novel)

BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION

- Newgate novel also coincides with reforms to the English penal code
 - Capital offenses eliminated from crimes punishable by death
 - Consolidation of theft laws
 - Reduction of corruption among constables and magistrates
 - Police Act of 1829—new, modern, professional, preventive police force
 - Detective Office within the Metropolitan Police Dept, 1842

BRIEF HISTORY OF DETECTIVE FICTION

- Introduction of the detective—move from criminal protagonist being pursued to detective protagonist (amateur or professional) pursuing criminals
 - Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53)
 - Law does not protect and order society; it obfuscates and even confuses
 - Detective: Inspector Bucket—unifying force who restores faith in the law (and police) and solves the crime/mystery
 - Duty and disinterest
 - Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone* (1868); *The Woman in White* (1860)
 - Sensation novel—complex plots, intrigue, mystery, questions of identity
 - Middle class anxieties about status and stability of identity
 - Criticized for plot over character—criticism of detective fiction
 - Characterization connected to plot—detective, lawyer, or physician clears up ambiguity; role of legal documents to solve mysteries and verify a public identity

VICTORIAN DETECTION BEFORE SHERLOCK HOLMES

- Combination of factual criminal cases and Gothic/sensational narratives in serial publications
 - *The Female Detective* (1864), Andrew Forrester
 - *The Experiences of a Lady Detective*, W. Stephens Hayward
 - *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab* (1886), Australian Fergus Hume
 - *Locked Up* (1887), Arthur Griffiths

SHERLOCK HOLMES

- Introduction of Sherlock Holmes—developments in criminology: fingerprinting (Sir Francis Galton), forensic medicine, toxicology. Also, anthropology (Alphonse Bertillon), chemistry, biology, and technology are applied to criminology—examples in Holmes stories
- Holmes stories anticipate and popularize these new methods
- C. Auguste Dupin (Poe, 1840s) & Monsieur Lecoq (Emile Gaboriau, 1860s)
- Holmes is an imaginative composite of these—like a machine, a finely tuned, reasoning instrument
- Medical and criminal science---controlling the British empire
- Literary form of case studies—form of diagnosis: patient's environment, physical condition, personal history
- Character vs Identity—which is fixed, documented (focus in urban, industrialized societies. Authority figures (the detective becomes a key figure here) have the power to determine/prove identity outside of the individual, subjective claims about character, which are suspect.

VICTORIAN SHORT STORY/ADAPTATION

SHORT STORY

- Competed against the novel
- More specific audience
- Limited main characters, single plot event, symbolic forces, economy
- “Quick fix of excitement or sensationalism”
- Less taxing reading experience
- Overall, less expensive than novels
- 1890s most popular decade for short fiction
- ADAPTATION THEORY
- Fidelity model: reproduce the “source” text faithfully
- What is the relationship between the “source” text and the adaptation? Is an adaptation “original”?

LIFE OF CONAN DOYLE (1859-1930)

- Conan Doyle would occasionally take cases at the request of citizens—relationship between author and his fictional creation
- His mother, Mary Foley Doyle—spirited, intelligent—fostered a sense of family pride in their lineage, in chivalry, and in national pride
- Charles Doyle—impractical civil servant—institutionalized for alcoholism, epilepsy, depression—not prominent in Doyle's upbringing
- Eight years of Jesuit schooling
- Five years of medical study—Edinburgh Univ.
- Practiced medicine for ten years before turning to writing
- Detection and medicine—scientist's training and keen eye for observation. (Stories as “cases”)

LIFE OF CONAN DOYLE (1859-1930)

- Doyle was an outpatient clerk for Dr. Joseph Bell, a model for Holmes
- Bell could diagnose patients based on observation
- Bell's real-life cases—subject for fiction—Holmes fictional cases
- In his life, Conan Doyle applied analytical mind to other pursuits—public investigations for wrongly convicted men, inventions
- Conan Doyle became a proponent of spiritualism—belief that spirits of the dead survive and can communicate with the living. (Holmes is skeptical of the supernatural)

LIFE OF CONAN DOYLE (1859-1930)

- Honor (chivalry) manifests itself in Doyle's historical fiction (See *The Lost World* & *The White Company*)
- Honor also motivates the causes he adopts and is a key element in the Holmes stories
- Doyle's attitude toward women—supported divorce law reform but opposed women's suffrage. Also, fell in love with a woman while his wife was ill with tuberculosis (secret, platonic relationship), but waited until after his wife had died until marrying
- Holmes and women—chivalric (and stereotypical?); professional rather than personal. Representation of gender, race/ethnicity, and empire?
- Tension between Holmes's liberalism (independence from state institutions and concern for others' moral well-being) and his role as a professional in surveillance and absorbing/organizing/controlling information—his place in Victorian information culture. The difference between describing and characterizing individual identity—ordinary, trifling details

MAIN SOURCES

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