Victorian Detectives in Contemporary Culture
Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko
Editor

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Beyond Sherlock Holmes
Numerous scholars and critics have analysed the Great Detective in various contexts, and recent edited collections demonstrate his continuous cultural significance—Sam Naidu’s *Sherlock Holmes in Context* (2017), Nadine Farghaly’s *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes* (2015), Lynette Porter’s *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century* (2012), or Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse’s *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom* (2012)—but academics have not forgotten about the presence of other Victorian sleuths. In contrast to the main body of current Victorian detective criticism, which tends to concentrate on Conan Doyle’s creation and only uses other detectives as a backdrop, the texts gathered in this volume examine various contemporary ways of (re)presenting real and fictional detectives that originated in or are otherwise associated with that era.

“Beyond Sherlock Holmes: An Introduction” provides an overview of the continued yet changing presence and appeal of the figure of the Victorian detective.

Justyna Jajszczok discusses Tony Jordan’s mashup TV series (2015–2016) in the chapter entitled “Inspector Bucket: A Dickensian Detective”. Appearing in sixteen out of twenty episodes, he is a much more prominent character than Dickens’s and it is his investigation of the murder of Jacob Marley that constitutes the major story arc. Jajszczok presents Jordan’s series as fanfiction and juxtaposes the literary and screen detectives. One of the questions she asks is whether the traits exhibited by the Inspector that might be perceived as contemporary were present already in the literary original.
Jacek Mydla examines “Sergeant Cuff and Spectacles of Detective Intrusion in *The Moonstone* and Its Adaptations”: a play by Wilkie Collins himself (1877), and a play by Robert Kauzlaric (2011); Robert Bierman’s film (1997); and the latest mini-series (2016). Like his real-life prototype in the Road Hill House murder case, Whicher, Collins’s Cuff is discussed dealing with class and gender issues, within the public and the private sphere.

Dorota Babilas analyses “Edmund Reid and the Representation of the Middle Class in *Ripper Street*.” Presented as part of a crime-solving team at East London H Division police station, Reid is teamed with a working-class sergeant, Bennet Drake, and an American forensic surgeon, Captain Homer Jackson. Juxtaposing the historic Reid with his screen reimagining and the sidekicks, the chapter addresses the question as to what extent this character is a neo-Victorian invention and/or a depiction of the Victorian middle-class worldview.

Brigitta Hudácskó discusses “The Case of the Two Gregsons: From *A Study in Scarlet* to *Elementary,*” and her chapter analyses the American TV series that brought Gregson, not Lestrade, into the spotlight and presented him simply as a good cop. Captain Tommy Gregson not only combines the Holmesian vision and method and everyday police work, but may also be interpreted as Sherlock’s father-figure. Apart from analysing their interpersonal relationships, Hudácskó places the Captain in the context of police procedural and contemporary social commentary.

Robert Perret, in the chapter entitled “Flaxman Low, Occult Psychologist,” presents a detective who seems in need of a more detailed introduction. That is why he begins by describing the key elements of a Flaxman Low story, and then moves on to interpreting the occult detective’s appeal to the Victorians and to contemporary audiences in the context of various supernatural TV series. He also reads Barbara Roden’s story entitled “The Things That Shall Come Upon Them” (2008) as, in his words, “a subversive Sherlockian pastiche offering Low as an avatar for the Victorian detectives lost in Holmes’s gaslit shadow.”

Barbara Braid analyses three neo-Victorian crime novels in the chapter entitled “A Psychiatrist as a Detective: Laszlo Kreizler, Stratham Younger, and Max Liebermann.” She reads Caleb Carr’s *The Alienist* (1994), Frank Tallis’s *Mortal Mischief* (2005), and Jed Rubenfeld’s *The Interpretation of Murder* (2006) as expressions of contemporary anxieties with a certain degree of anachronism apparent in the depiction of psychiatry, but also in the characterisation of the detectives and the detective process itself.
The chapters should offer consumers of modern Victoriana a critical framework that will not only heighten the pleasure they derive from reading and/or watching the modern tales of (neo-)Victorian characters, but also potentially broaden and deepen their interest in the period. Such a collection allows for a critical reassessment of both the detectives’ importance to Victorian literature and culture and provides a better basis for understanding the reasons behind their contemporary returns, reimaginings and recreations, contributing to the creation of a base for further cultural and critical works dealing with reworkings of the Victorian era.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my Reader No. 1 for his patience and support.
CONTENTS

1 Beyond Sherlock Holmes: An Introduction
   Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko 1

2 Inspector Bucket: A Dickensian Detective
   Justyna Jajszczok 13

3 Sergeant Cuff and Spectacles of Detective Intrusion
   in The Moonstone and Its Adaptations
   Jacek Mydla 27

4 Edmund Reid and the Representation of the Middle Class
   in Ripper Street
   Dorota Babilas 43

5 The Case of the Two Gregsons: From A Study in Scarlet
   to Elementary
   Brigitta Hudáčskó 57
6  Flaxman Low, Occult Psychologist  
  Robert Perret  

7  A Psychiatrist as a Detective: Laszlo Kreizler, Stratham Younger, and Max Liebermann  
  Barbara Braid  

Index  

113
Notes on Contributors

Dorota Babilas works as Associate Professor at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw, Poland. Her academic interests include Victorian, Gothic, and Film Studies. She is the author of, among others, a PhD on the literary status of The Phantom of the Opera and a monographic book on the cultural afterlife of Queen Victoria (Warsaw 2012).

Barbara Braid is Assistant Lecturer at the English Institute at Szczecin University, Poland. She has co-edited two volumes entitled Unity in Diversity (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2013, 2014) and published a number of essays in the fields of neo-Victorian literature, Gothic fiction and gender studies. During 2010–2015 she was Conference Leader for the Femininities & Masculinities Global Project at Interdisciplinary.Net. She is currently working on a monograph on the motifs of female insanity in selected Victorian and neo-Victorian novels.

Brigitta Hudácskó is Junior Lecturer at the Department of British Studies at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. Her main research interest concerns recent television adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories. Among her recent publications is a chapter about Hungarian translations of Agatha Christie’s work in The Ageless Agatha Christie: Essays on the Mysteries and the Legacy (ed. J. C. Bernthal, McFarland, 2016).

Justyna Jajszczok is Teaching Assistant at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. Her research interests include nineteenth-century life sciences and Victorian detective fiction. She has co-edited four collections of essays on the cryptic
and the funny in history, and published articles on Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Arthur Conan Doyle; recently she has defended her PhD dissertation entitled “The Parasite and Parasitism in Victorian Science and Literature.”

**Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko** is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland. Her main research area is contemporary reimaginings of Victorian villains and detectives, historic and fictional. She has published primarily on Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper, co-edited a volume entitled *We the Neo-Victorians: Perspectives on Literature and Culture* (2013), and edited a collection entitled *Exploring History: British Culture and Society 1700 to the Present* (2015). Currently she is working on a project on the narratives pitting Sherlock Holmes against Jack the Ripper.

**Jacek Mydla** is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, University of Silesia, Poland. He holds an MA in philosophy and English, as well as a PhD and a post-doctoral degree in literary studies. He conducts research and lectures on the history of British literature (specifically Gothic fiction and drama) and theory of narrative. His book-length publications are: *The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare* (2002), *Spectres of Shakespeare* (2009), and *The Shakespearean Tide* (2012). Forthcoming is a book on the ghost stories of M.R. James.

**Robert Perret** is a Librarian and Associate Professor at the University of Idaho, USA, focusing on library instruction and information literacy. He is an avid Sherlockian and member of the John H. Watson Society as well as author of numerous Sherlockian pastiches, including a few of the paranormal variety. In the world of Sherlockian research he has both a citation analysis of the *Baker Street Journal* and a survey of contemporary pronunciations of Canonical names under review for publication.
List of Figures

Fig. 3.1  Cuff (Antony Sher) smelling roses in the 1997 film adaptation (Author’s screenshot) 36

Fig. 3.2  Cuff (John Thomson) examining the smear on the door in the 2016 mini-series (Author’s screenshot) 36