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Rev. by Jude Fogarty

In *Nineteenth Century Detective Fiction: An Analytical History*, LeRoy Lad Panek examines an archive of transatlantic periodical detective fiction alongside canonical nineteenth-century authors to trace the rich variety of forms, themes, and characters that emerged across detective fiction during the nineteenth century. Situating these works within the context of book, periodical, and legal history, Panek demonstrates how the range of detective fiction that flourished in the periodical press during the nineteenth century adds to, and complicates, typical critical understandings of the genre as based on a few canonical authors—primarily Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe, and Wilkie Collins. In fact, one of the most striking points of Panek's argument is that our understanding of detective fiction as it was read, circulated, and received during the nineteenth century is not only incomplete but inaccurate, given the breadth of material that has been omitted or lost entirely. In overlooking the variety of media where detective fiction could be found—such as magazines, story papers, and newspapers—we miss key moves in the genre's development as well as how wide-ranging detective fiction's readership was in terms of age, gender, class, and education.

Panek's first two chapters outline the historical and cultural contexts he brings to his analysis of the rise of detective fiction. Situated within periodical history, chapter one provides an overview of detective fiction's movement across the boundaries of form and media, geography, class and readership, and copyright. Since American protections did not extend to foreign

copyrights, Panek argues that the development of U.S. detective fiction can be attributed at least in part to American publishers' pirating and recirculating of British texts. Nineteenth-century detective fiction has a well-established tradition of borrowing and referentiality—with the most infamous example being Conan Doyle's debt to Poe's Auguste Dupin for the character of Sherlock Holmes. This chapter adds to our understanding of this tradition as Panek shows how publishers frequently modified pirated stories to avoid copyright law and to fit the tastes of their readers, so that the same stories appeared with slight alterations throughout the Anglophone world.

Chapter two turns to legal history to demonstrate how detective fiction's emphasis on circumstantial evidence developed in tandem with evolving court systems. Panek begins with the eighteenth-century judicial reforms that led to legal representation for accused individuals, the use of cross-examination, and stringent debate over the legal value of eyewitness versus circumstantial evidence. He then shows how literary depictions of lawyers and the dangers of circumstantial evidence set the stage for detective fiction by introducing a figure who could methodically examine the evidence at hand in pursuit of justice.

As Panek shows, circumstantial evidence played a central role in detective fiction, with plots commonly revolving around problems of wrongful accusation created through misinterpretation of circumstantial evidence. Over the course of the book, Panek traces how detective fiction reformulated this problem: while early works focused on the pathos of wrongful accusations and resolved them through a miraculous intervention of providence, later works introduced detective-like figures—first the lawyer, then the police officer—who were able to properly interpret the evidence, accompanied by a shift away from pathos towards involving readers through the puzzle-like structures of the narrative.

One of the most interesting aspects of Panek's focus on circumstantial evidence emerges in his discussion of Conan Doyle's contribution at the end of the century. As he argues, Conan Doyle shifts the emphasis away from the dangers of circumstantial evidence towards the process of analysis: it is not circumstantial evidence itself that is faulty, but rather, the untrained eye of everyone other than the detective. While Panek highlights this as Conan Doyle's contribution, however, it is not entirely clear how this differs from the earlier stories he discusses, which similarly center on problems of misinterpretation. It is, nevertheless, an intriguing way to frame the questions of objectivity and reliability that underlie both the legal developments and literary shifts Panek outlines.

In expanding beyond the canon, one of Panek's main premises is how many varieties of detective fiction there could be without "detectives"—a term which emerged in the 1830s to describe investigative police work (6). Framed within the context of the development—and subsequent debates about—police forces in the United States and Britain, chapter four examines how many police detective stories of the period functioned as propaganda, depicting police officers as intelligent and middle class, and focusing attention on the mundane details of police work in addition to the more exciting tales of apprehending criminals. Chapter five focuses first on several recurring detective characters before shifting to a discussion of the two distinct camps of detective fiction that emerged: hunt and chase stories and stories of deduction.

Panek develops his argument in these two chapters through focusing on fiction he unearthed from periodical archives. Given Panek's emphasis on the importance of moving beyond the canon, these chapters are most interesting for the amount and range of texts Panek presents for inclusion in our understanding of the genre. This comprehensiveness also works against him, however, as he is only able to devote at most a few pages and sometimes only a few paragraphs to

each text. While this leaves fruitful ground for future critics to explore, it often makes it difficult to understand the significance of the works included, particularly as Panek states that many of them do not display the features of later detective fiction, do not have bearing on the development of detective fiction as a whole, or are not worth reading.

In chapter six, Panek traces the use of detectives and detective-fiction-like plots throughout the works of novelists such as Charles Dickens, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Ellen Wood, and a host of lesser-known authors. His primary focus is on sensation novels, which frequently included "detectives" and plot points similar to those found in shorter detective fiction. Most interesting in this chapter is Panek's formal argument about the limitations of detective fiction's plot structures. Developed for periodical publication, detective fiction featured pared-down, problem-solution plot structures designed for the formatting and restrictions of magazines, story papers, and newspapers. Thus, for the majority of the century, Panek argues, detective plots included in novels were ancillary by necessity, as they were not formally capacious enough to stretch over the course of the lengthy novel form.

Panek examines some of these changes to detective fiction plots in chapters seven and eight when he turns to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In addition to discussing Conan Doyle's debt to Poe and the evolution of circumstantial evidence described above, Panek focuses on how Conan Doyle merges previously-distinct forms of detective fiction plots. Panek describes how Conan Doyle sets up Sherlock Holmes's character as a series of contradictions: Holmes is both analytical automaton and fallible human, both relentlessly energetic pursuer and lethargic addict. These bifurcations, Panek argues, are held together by Conan Doyle's synthesis of the problem-solving and hunt-and-chase narratives, allowing him to strike the balance between cold rationality and Romanticism that has made Sherlock Holmes such an enduring character. While this is interesting, it was

disappointing to see two chapters devoted to Conan Doyle in a work that asserts the value of moving beyond the canon, particularly as much of Panek's discussion of Conan Doyle stays within familiar critical terrain and considers aspects of Conan Doyle's work—such as the role of laughter in the depiction of Holmes as a character—that are difficult to connect to the work's larger argument.

Over the course of *Nineteenth Century Detective Fiction*, Panek traces a history of detective fiction that begins much earlier and is far richer than we tend to imagine when our reference points are limited to those authors that are now well-known members of the canon. However, the strength of Panek's work in terms of introducing new archival material, also ends up being its primary drawback, as the number of texts he discusses and the span of historical and national contexts he covers limits how deeply he is able to engage with any one particular text or theme. Much of Panek's work with his archival material takes the shape of lengthy lists of titles and block quotes with limited commentary, standing in contrast to the detailed chapters he dedicates to Poe and Doyle. Lastly, Panek passes over opportunities to engage with criticism from the many fields he brings together, offering only generalized references to critical consensus. For instance, the information that he presents on copyright is well documented in book and periodical studies and much of what he says about Poe and Conan Doyle has long been established within criticism on the authors, yet his works cited contains few secondary sources, most of which are websites. While this work is interesting for its turn to the archive and the periodical fiction it introduces, it ultimately attempts to be too comprehensive at the expense of engagement with its primary texts and the critical context.

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