

# Introduction to Crime Fiction

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## review: Poe

- ▶ who did it? what did it?
  - ▶ “analytical” puzzle solved
  - ▶ moral puzzle unresolved
- ▶ “ratiocination”
  - ▶ more like manipulation
  - ▶ character emptied out
- ▶ weirding narrative, weirding the human
  - ▶ you are the orangutan

in conclusion, ...

- ▶ Does the resolution of “A Scandal in Bohemia” satisfy?

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|           |                                                                            |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1859      | Arthur Conan Doyle b. Edinburgh                                            |
| 1885      | MD, Edinburgh                                                              |
| 1887      | <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> (first Holmes novel)                             |
| 1891      | "Scandal in Bohemia" initiates Holmes stories in <i>The Strand</i>         |
| 1892      | <i>Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> (London: George Newnes)               |
| 1893      | "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (Holmes's death)                      |
| 1900      | Boer War propaganda (knighthood)                                           |
| 1901      | <i>Hound of the Baskervilles</i> ( <i>Strand</i> ): £££ brings Holmes back |
| 1903      | "Six Napoleons" in <i>Strand</i> and <i>Collier's</i>                      |
| 1910s–20s | spiritualism, fairies                                                      |
| 1930      | d.                                                                         |

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# plot analysis

- text* the narrative discourse, a structured sequence of (linguistic or other) signs
- sjuzet* (Ru. сюжет) a particular organization or arrangement of fictional events
- fabula* (Ru. фабула) a series of logically related events caused or experienced by actors, proceeding forward in time

# anachrony

anachrony differences between the arrangement in the *sjužet* and the chronology of the *fabula*

| focus    | direction | term                    |
|----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| external | forward   | objective anticipation  |
|          | back      | objective retroversion  |
| internal | forward   | subjective anticipation |
|          | back      | subjective retroversion |

“Now you clearly see the sequence of events, though you see them, of course, in the inverse order to the way in which they presented themselves to me.”

“The Six Napoleons,” 249.

- Find an example of anachrony in “Scandal in Bohemia.” Say how you know it is a retroversion or anticipation. Then reflect: what does it do?

## preposterous

“It was the most preposterous position in which I ever found myself in my life, and it was the thought of it that started me laughing just now.”  
(18)

< classical Latin *praeposterus* placed in the wrong order, inverted, unseasonable, wrong-headed, perverse ( < *prae-* pre- prefix + *posterus* later, next)

*OED*, 3rd ed. (2020), s.v. “preposterous.”

# New Jersey pride

- ▶ Who's in charge in “Scandal?”
- ▶ And how do you know?

There was something in his masterly grasp of a situation, and his keen, incisive reasoning, which made it a pleasure to me to study his system of work. (14)

“When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most. It is a perfectly overpowering impulse, and I have more than once taken advantage of it.” (24)

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“My Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,—You really did it very well.” (27)

## gender trouble

“My dear Holmes, you would certainly have been burned, had you lived two centuries ago.” (2)

“She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men.” (8)

Male costume is nothing new to me. I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives. (27)

His Majesty to regain it with his own hands."

"And when will you call?"

"At eight in the morning. She will not be up, so that we shall have a clear field. Besides, we must be prompt, for this marriage may mean a complete change in her life and habits. I must wire to the King without delay."

We had reached Baker-street, and had stopped at the door. He was searching his pockets for the key, when someone passing said—

"Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes."

There were several people on the pavement at the time, but the greeting appeared

to come from a slim youth in an ulster who had hurried by.

"I've heard that voice before," said Holmes, staring down the dimly lit street. "Now, I wonder who the deuce that could have been."

### III.

I SLEPT at Baker-street that night, and we were engaged upon our toast and coffee in the morning when the King of Bohemia rushed into the room.

"You have really got it!" he cried, grasping Sherlock Holmes by either shoulder, and looking eagerly into his face.

"Not yet."

"But you have hopes?"

"I have hopes."

"Then, come. I am all impatience to be gone."

"We must have a cab."

"No, my brougham is waiting."

"Then that will simplify matters." We descended, and started off once more for Briony Lodge.

"Irene Adler is married," remarked Holmes.

"Married! When?"

"Yesterday."

"But to whom?"

"To an English lawyer named Norton."

"But she could not love him?"

"I am in hopes that she does."

"And why in hopes?"

"Because it would spare your Majesty all fear of future annoyance. If the lady loves her husband, she does not love your Majesty. If she does not love your Majesty, there is no reason why she should interfere with your Majesty's plan."

"It is true. And yet— I Well! I wish she had been of my own station! What a queen she would have made!" He relapsed into a moody silence which was not broken, until we drew up in Serpentine-avenue.

The door of Briony Lodge was open, and an elderly woman stood upon the steps. She watched us with a sardonic eye as we stepped from the brougham.

"Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I believe?" said she.

"I am Mr. Holmes," answered my companion, looking at her with a questioning and rather startled gaze.

"Indeed! My mistress told me that you were likely to call. She

left this morning with her husband, by the 5.15 train from Charing-cross, for the Continent."

"What!" Sherlock Holmes staggered back, white with chagrin and surprise.

"Do you mean that she has left England?"

"Never to return."



"GOOD-NIGHT, MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES."

## the origins of crime

It was evidently taken by a snap-spot from a small camera. It represented an alert, sharp-featured simian man with thick eyebrows, and a very peculiar projection of the lower part of the face like the muzzle of a baboon. ("Six Napoleons," 231)

The garden gate swung open, and a lithe, dark figure, as swift and active as an ape, rushed up the garden path. (243)

- ▶ this is a description of the murderer in "The Six Napoleons." Anything here remind you of Poe?
- ▶ primates again!

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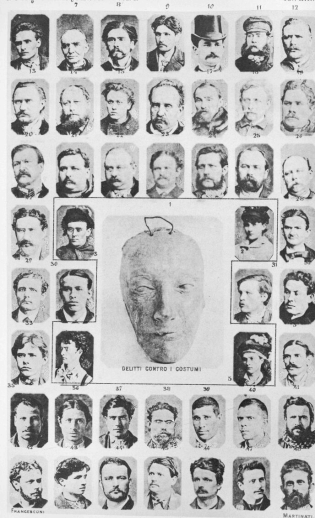
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Sidney Paget, illus., "Six Napoleons," 244.

“Why, it’s Beppo. He was a kind of Italian piece-work man.” (235)

“His name is Pietro Venucci, from Naples, and he is one of the greatest cut-throats in London. He is connected with the Mafia, which, as you know, is a secret political society, enforcing its decrees by murder....The other fellow is probably an Italian also, and a member of the Mafia.” (240)



RITRATTI DI CRIMINALI TEDESCHI ED ITALIANI.

47 Photographs of criminals, with mask in the center. Cesare Lombroso, *L'uomo delinquente* [Criminal Man] (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1889), vol. I, table XIII, [Wellcome Collection](#).

At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal—an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek-bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake.

Cesare Lombroso, introduction to *Criminal Man* (New York: Putnam, 1911), xiv–xv, [HathiTrust](#), qtd. in Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 122, [Cambridge Core](#).

The detective positions himself at the watershed point between singularity and crime, precisely where the two are still indistinguishable, that is, at the point where it is impossible to tell the difference between normality and legality.

Luc Boltanski, *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 49.

“‘No explanation save mental aberration can cover the facts.’ The Press, Watson, is a most valuable institution, if you only know how to use it.” (238)

“Beppo did not despair, and he conducted his search with considerable ingenuity and perseverance.” (250)

next

- ▶ Bring back Conan Doyle
- ▶ Pirkis, “The Redhill Sisterhood” (Canvas)
  - ▶ please print