

intersections of genius, effeminacy, sapphism, and literary mystique. Scholars who consider themselves students of literature primarily and sexuality incidentally may find themselves reassessing their priorities. That the work defies simple classification is all to its credit.

Bruce Parr

***The Murder of Madeline Brown*, by Francis Adams. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2001.**

Francis William Lauderdale Adams (1862-93), consumptive, charismatic and caustic, arrived from England in 1884, turned his analytical gaze upon “marvellous Melbourne” and used it as the setting for a murder mystery, *Madeline Brown's Murderer* (a “realistic and sensational novel”). First published in 1887 by the Melbourne firm Kemp and Boyce, this is a racy *fin de siècle* murder mystery by a writer whose work spanned many genres. Adams later retitled the book *Madeline Brown: Australian Social Life*, but the novel shows only vestiges of the political and social analysis that usually drive his writing; as Stephen Knight has remarked, “the more excitable title suits the book better.”² Now republished under a new variation of its title, *The Murder of Madeline Brown* is being marketed as crime fiction, with a strong emphasis on its evocation of Melbourne in the 1880s.

U.S. crime writer Laurie R. King commented that if she had been told *The Murder of Madeline Brown* was written in 1987 rather than 1887, she would have believed it, despite the obviously Victorian setting.³ An introductory essay by Melbourne crime writer and former journalist Shane Maloney also picks up on the modernity and freshness of a novel that appeared in the early days of urban crime fiction, the same year as Sherlock Holmes made his appearance, and just one year after the success of another Melbourne novel, Fergus Hume's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. Stephen Knight drew attention to this out-of-print, out-of-copyright publisher's “gift” in his 1997 history of Australian crime fiction, *Continent of Mystery*. He identified Fergus Hume and Francis Adams as early proponents of the urban crime novel, and specifically of the “thriller of Melbourne social life.”⁴

² Stephen Knight, *Continent of Mystery: A Thematic History of Australian Crime Fiction* (Melbourne: MUP, 1997: 73). The annotated copy of the novel showing Francis Adams's revisions is held in the Mitchell Library as “Special MS Copy C,” rather than the State Library of Victoria as indicated in Knight's discussion.

³ Laurie R. King, discussing *The Murder of Madeline Brown* with Michael Cathcart, Shane Maloney and Meg Tasker, ABC Radio National, 4 Sept 2000.

⁴ Stephen Knight, *Continent of Mystery* (72). Knight suggests that Adams was influenced by *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, and that Hume in turned used elements of Adams's narrative and character development in his subsequent novels, *Madame Midas* (1888) and *Miss Mephistopheles* (1890).

Realism and sensation were by no means incompatible in the Australian or English literary environments of the 1880s. Having taken on different meanings and connotations over the decades they are now less readily linked, and in his introductory essay "Sex, Drugs and Opera Bouffe," Shane Maloney has clearly opted for sensation over realism. Following Stephen Knight he sees the smell of laudanum lingering at the scene of the murder as suggestive of "excess" on the victim's part. (It is worth noting that Adams changed the laudanum to chloroform in his revisions, confirming that the sedative was meant to have been used to subdue the victim, rather than as a recreational drug.) Quibbles about drug use aside, Maloney's introduction is lively, engaging and informative. It is a journalistic piece, drawing liberally on published accounts of Francis Adams, but not aiming for scholarly precision. While the broad strokes of the biographical account are valuable in creating a sense of the author's personality and ideas, it should be treated with caution on matters of fact. The account of Adams's life, for instance, contains half a dozen errors which could easily have been corrected with a little research in the right quarters.⁵

It is hard to justify the lack of references or bibliography, even in what is avowedly a popular publication, as the ten-page introduction sets out to provide the reader with both background information on Francis Adams and commentary on the novel. Stephen Knight's discussion of the novel, extending over several pages of *Continent of Mystery*, should have been mentioned. Yet the introduction opts for marketing "hype" about the discovery of a forgotten talent, with a modicum of "aca-bashing" (almost wrote "a dash of aca-bashing," but realized in time that a Latin word would be more scholarly. . . . *phew*). Maloney asserts that "critics and scholars have characterised a lot of Adams's output as mere bread-and-butter hackwork . . . Ironically, despite its modest pretensions *The Murder of Madeline Brown* may now become the means whereby Adams's largely forgotten place in Australian letters is drawn to the attention of a twenty-first-century readership" (p. x).

The introductory essay is strongest and most original in its discussion of Melbourne as setting and as a cultural phenomenon. It is less perceptive on gender issues, being quick to identify Madeline Brown as a demoniac *femme fatale* (as she is portrayed by some of the characters, most notably Canon Hildyard, a prurient and lust-crazed priest who has his own reasons for finding her all too fatal). This is a reading that Adams was alarmed to find in contemporary reviews, and took some pains to "correct" both in his responses to reviews, in revisions of the novel and, more remarkably, in a couple of later stories and novels where Madeline Brown's character is discussed

⁵ For those who would like to identify (and avoid repeating) the errors: page vii the parents' careers are distorted, Adams did not spend his 'teenage years' in Paris; page ix he did not marry Edith in Brisbane, he left Brisbane for literary/intellectual rather than health reasons, he did not travel to Egypt and the Riviera before going to England, his wife did not hand him the revolver, and George Bernard Shaw did not abuse Edith for helping with the suicide (he accused her of lying about it). Some of these errors have been perpetuated in standard reference works, some have been corrected in conference papers and articles that have limited circulation. My forthcoming biography of Francis Adams (MUP 2001) should be of assistance to future researchers, although there are still going to be gaps and ambiguities.

retrospectively. For instance, a conservative young doctor who would probably have shared the values of the *Sydney Morning Herald's* review (which had denounced the novel as unsavoury and immoral on the basis of Madeline Brown's character), is persuaded to think otherwise when he hears David Stuart's account of

the notorious Madeline Brown, the Melbourne actress, who was mysteriously murdered not so many months ago. I could not refrain from expressing a certain sense of repulsion which I had to her as a type. I had never met her, but I had heard things about her which, together with what I had read in the newspapers, led me to look upon her as nothing much more than a loose woman. The tale he told was from a totally different point of view. To him she was an incarnation of beauty with a certain element of genius and passion.⁶

David Stuart's worship may be simply another form of objectification, but at least Adams was at pains to explore the related issues of sexuality and gender from several perspectives. While we may argue over the gender politics of the novel (is Madeline Brown a New Woman or a *femme fatale*?), it was written to please a reading public accustomed to "sensation" in fiction, and the controversy over its "unsavoury" subject matter appears not to have done it any harm commercially (7,000 copies of the 1887 edition were sold).

This new edition is likely to sell well, too, being heavily promoted in bookshops and having a clever and seductive cover design that features a 1910 photograph by May Moore of "Lily Brayton as Cleopatra." This is not a scholarly edition, but it is attractively published and reasonably priced, and it does offer a welcome opportunity to read some of Francis Adams's fiction in a coffee shop or at home, rather than in a rare books room or out of a manilla folder. There should be more such pillaging of out-of-copyright novels by enterprising publishers. *Vive le hype!*

Meg Tasker

***Sartor Resartus Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh in Three Books*, by Thomas Carlyle. Introduction and notes by Rodger L. Tarr. Text established by Mark Engel and Rodger L. Tarr. The Norman and Charlotte Strouse Edition of the Writings of Thomas Carlyle. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000.**

Make no mistake. By any criterion, *Sartor Resartus* is a classic. The author is dead. Many important men and women who are also dead pronounced that it is a classic. It is

⁶ Francis Adams, "Dr Fletcher's Love Story," *Australian Life* 1892: 73.