

examination of the ending of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and the character of Markham in terms of several other Victorian novels leaves one wanting more. For example, how does it compare with the equally debated union of Dorothea Brooke and Will Ladislaw at the end of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*?

This volume has started the process of examining Anne Brontë's novels in a manner that reaches beyond the context provided by the framework of her life, beyond the perspective of those novels written by Emily or Charlotte Brontë, to the milieu provided by other contemporary novels. We can only hope for future reassessments to go even further.

Abigail Burnham Bloom

***The Alternative Sherlock Holmes: Pastiches, Parodies and Copies*, edited by Peter Ridgeway Watt and Joseph Green. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. 361p. ISBN: 0-7456-0882-4. £45 (hardback).**

In 1968, Jorge Luis Borges declared, "I suppose the future will bring all things in the long run, and so we may imagine a moment when Don Quixote and Sancho, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson will still exist, although all their adventures may have been blotted out. Yet men, in other languages, may still go on inventing stories to fit those characters – stories that should be as mirrors to the characters." Borges, who counted Holmes and Watson, along with Mr Pickwick, Huckleberry Finn and Peer Gynt, as "dear friends," might have revelled in Peter Ridgeway Watt and Joseph Green's entertaining compendium of alternative Holmesian fiction. A plethora of alternative adventures had already appeared before Borges's death in 1979, and Watt and Green have undertaken the a catalogue raisonnée of the variations published in the period from 1893 (when Doyle's friend James Barrie wrote the first spoof, "The Late Sherlock Holmes") to 2001.

Watt and Green do not claim to have compiled a comprehensive annotated bibliography. Nor would a definitive listing be possible in print format while the Internet mushrooms with citations of further ancient and modern "mirrors to the characters" beyond the Watt and Green pale that are already available in electronic as well as print media. We can be thankful at any rate that Watt and Green have issued such a commodious, portable and often uproariously funny *vade mecum*.

The *Alternative Sherlock Holmes* summarises individual stories under four main headings: Watson's unchronicled cases and their pastiches, period pastiches, non-period pastiches, and parodies and imposters. A brief chapter notes and summarises pastiches based on minor canonical figures, and another short chapter sensibly gives short shrift to the rivals of Sherlock Holmes. Bibliographies and comprehensive indexes are particularly good supplements to the material in each chapter. Separate indexes list authors, titles of stories, copies and rivals, and parodic

names (“Bumlock Tomes (and Dr Flotsam)”; “Sherlock Bones (and Dr Whatsit)”; “Sherlocko Homo (and Dr Twatson)”). Science-fiction recensions, along with theatre, film, radio and television versions are almost entirely omitted from the survey, and readers had best consult relevant encyclopaedias for fuller information. The editors’ introductions to the main sections of the text are crisp; the chief concern of the book is to provide engaging summaries of the stories, and Watts and Green go to their task with infectious raciness.

This is not a book to read at a sitting. The material is overwhelming, and one senses that, faced with God’s plenty, Watts and Green were at times in a bind as to which stories they should summarise to give the flavour of an anthology or single-author collection. From David L. Hammer’s 1995 collection, *My Dear Watson: Being the Annals of Sherlock Holmes*, for instance, the editors elect to summarise and evaluate four of the thirteen tales. The summaries whet the appetite. While some of the parodies and pastiches recorded in *The Alternative Sherlock Holmes* are bathetic, preposterous or surreal, the editors have an eye for the true blue. Michael Doyle’s “The Legend of Rachel Howells” (1917) and June Thompson’s account of “The Little Affair of the Vatican Cameos” (1997) are justly celebrated: these stories have the smack of genius about them, in their subtle intertextuality, interweaving of historical characters and attention to detail.

Editorial superlatives abound: Ellery Queen’s 1944 anthology, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, is “the finest classic in the field of Sherlock Holmes story-making” (84); Robert L. Fish’s stories centring on Schlock Holmes and Dr Watney (residents of 221B Bagel Street) are “simply the best in comic parody” (233). Stephen King’s novel, *The Doctor’s Case* (1987), is “brilliant.” Readers will weigh such assessments against experience. The editors are fond of interjections and rhetorical questions, many of which are couched in theatrical anachronisms that echo Watson’s queries and expostulations. At the same time, the transatlantic twang resonates in “There must a simpler way to hornswoogle the bookies” (in reference to the plot of Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr’s pastiche of “The Darlington Scandal” (7). The editors offer excellent critiques of the parodies, and their strictures on stories that stray too far from the canon will appeal to the converted. They clearly appreciate the *mot juste* that pays homage to Doyle’s style, and they note such hits as Lawrence Schimel’s “Alimentary, My Dear Watson” (1995), a story that gathers Charles Dodgson, his niece Alice and a smiling cat into a tale of sexual abuse and apt retribution.

Some eccentricities in this collection have nothing to do with the conduct of Holmes, Watson and other canonical characters smuggled into the “alternative” stories. As one instance, Watts and Green proceed direct from their account of “Thor Bridge” to “The Sussex Vampire,” and omit the intervening tale “The Creeping Man,” from their summaries of Doyle’s tales in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. The omission is puzzling. “Thor Bridge” contains references to three unrecorded cases; “The Sussex Vampire” is rich in allusions to recorded and unrecorded cases,

and while "The Creeping Man" does not make reference to other Holmes cases, it is the first story in the canon to inform us that Watson has finally left Baker Street, and it contains one of the most celebrated Holmes expressions, in the message that summons Watson: "Come at once if convenient – if inconvenient come all the same.–SH." The story contains sterling matter for pastiche or parody, in its recording of a renowned academic's attempt to achieve rejuvenation and longevity through self-dosing with monkey serum.

One final quibble, and a celebration: while details of every pastiche and parody are listed in the end notes, and while authors' works can be swiftly located by references to the indexes, inclusion of page numbers of magazines, newspapers and collections in which the versions appeared might have extended the usefulness of the book. This nitpicking aside, scholars and passionate lay readers of the Holmes canon will appreciate the book's wit and scope: no other book so entertainingly and comprehensively discusses the field of alternative Holmesiana.

Michael Sharkey

Works Cited

Borges, Jorge Luis. "A Poet's Creed." *This Craft of Verse: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1967-1968*. Ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000, 103-104.

***Phil May: His Life and Work 1864-1903*, by Simon Houfe. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. 169p, 73 illustrations. ISBN: 1-8401-4652-4. £55.00 (hardback).**

During his three-year stint at the *Sydney Bulletin*, Phil May was once asked by W. H. Traill (who had headhunted the up-and-coming young artist in London) whether he couldn't "finish up" his drawings "a bit" with some of the elaborate lineation favoured by older cartoonists. "When I can leave out half the lines I now use," May responded, "I shall want six times the money!"

The story may well be apocryphal (it first appeared in the *Bulletin* after May's death) and that, perhaps, is why it finds no place in Simon Houfe's new study. But apocryphal stories (as the history of Christian art attests) often encapsulate truths which remain diffused in more soberly authentic sources, and this one seems to me a case in point. May's suppositious reply to Traill perfectly captures the revolution in draftsmanship for which (at least in the English-speaking world) he was very largely responsible, his discovery that less can be more, that a rigorously disciplined economy of line (abetted by the reproductive fidelity of new photomechanical printing technologies) can produce a greater expressive impact than any amount of fussy cross-hatching or redundant detail. His finest black-and-white drawings are