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What Is Left of the Genius? Sherlockian Legacy in Contemporary Crime Fiction

Introduction

A contemporary crime story with no use of science is unimaginable. One of the reasons is Arthur Conan Doyle's invention of the "science of deduction," an idea that occurs in the very first Sherlock Holmes story, the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). While Conan Doyle's debt to Edgar Allan Poe, and to "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" in particular, is obvious, it is equally clear that Auguste Dupin did not share Holmes's fascination with and respect for scientific procedures and protocols. In "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (1892), Holmes addresses Watson with the following complaint: "Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore, it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell. You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales."[1] Statements like this one make us realise what Conan Doyle's dream might have been: the lecture hall, with him commanding the attention of eager students, precisely the way in which his attention was captivated by his apparently charismatic professor, Dr Joseph Bell.[2]

[1] Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," in: *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. 1, ed. Leslie S. Klinger (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), p. 352.

[2] In his short essay, "Mr Sherlock Holmes," Bell describes the scientific "roots" of Sherlock Holmes's method in the following way: "Dr. Conan Doyle's education as a student of medicine taught him how to observe, and his practice, both as a general practitioner and a specialist, has been a splendid training for a man such as he is, gifted

But, while Sherlock Holmes is an amateur scientist, his contemporary colleagues are not, a fact that that seems to have eluded criticism. They understand, accept, and appreciate the crucial role of science in the investigation, and they rely on actual scientific work for the essential evidence that makes possible a successful "trip" from the crime scene to the courtroom.[3] Yet the contemporary crime novel usually strips the detective of much of scientific expertise. The detective protagonist happily delegates scientific work to those who have the necessary competence and equipment, while stubbornly clinging to suspicions and hunches, which unmistakeably lead the investigation to its satisfactory closure.

Examples and illustrations of this narrative predicament abound. In what follows, I will examine Mark Billingham's *Time of Death* (2015), in which DI Tom Thorne solves the mystery of an abduction and murder without having been formally assigned to the case and yet finding himself unable to suppress his scepticism about the course that the official investigation has taken.

First, however, let us return to Sherlock Holmes and examine one of the successful applications of his science of deduction in the canon. The extraordinary competence of Holmes is common knowledge, as is the fact that—in the words of a critic—he was "a pioneer in forensic science."[4] It seems to me that everyone seems to take for granted just how entirely self-sufficient Holmes is.

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventures of an Overcompetent Detective

When Sherlock Holmes is introduced to us in *A Study in Scarlet*, the image before our eyes is gruesome:

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with eyes, memory, and imagination. Eyes and ears which can see and hear, memory to record at once and to recall at pleasure the impressions of the senses, and an imagination capable of weaving a theory or piecing together a broken chain or unravelling a tangled clue, such are implements of his trade to a successful diagnostician." Joseph Bell, Appendix in Arthur Conan Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Novels*, ed. Leslie S. Klinger (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006), p. 205.

[3] Val McDermid speaks about a "road" and "journey"; see the preface to her *Forensics: What Bugs, Burns, Prints, DNA, and More Tell US about Crime* (New York, Grove Press, 2014), pp. 9–11.

[4] James F. O'Brien, *The Scientific Sherlock Holmes. Cracking the Case with Science and Forensics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), the title of one of the chapters. See also Sarah Dauncey, "Crime, Forensics, and the Modern Science," in Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley, eds., *A Companion to Crime Fiction* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), pp. 165–167.

> "When it comes to beating the [corpses] in the dissecting-rooms with a stick, [Holmes's research] is certainly taking rather a bizarre shape."
>
> "Beating the subjects!"
>
> "Yes, to verify how far bruises may be produced after death. I saw him at it with my own eyes."[5]

The reader may wonder: is the self-proclaimed ultimate judiciary authority in the justice system superior to the common homicide? The answer seems to be obvious. Yes, he is, for in this case the act of ostensibly desecrating human remains is carried out in the name of science (the science or rather group of sciences which later came to be known collectively as forensics or criminology or criminalistics), while the homicidal violations of human dignity are performed for very different reasons altogether. And yet it is difficult to stifle the unease produced by the image of Holmes going at human remains with a stick. Who knows, maybe Conan Doyle himself decided that he had gone too far, and so, in "The Black Peter" (1904), Holmes is satisfied with experimenting with dead pigs[6]: the goal here is to see how difficult it is to put a harpoon through the body. He may not be following textbook forensic protocols, but the results do save an innocent man from being charged with murder.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes lays before Watson his idea of "science of deduction" and the latter congratulates Holmes on bringing "detection as near an exact science as it ever will be brought in this world."[7] No doubt this is an expression of the 19th-century fascination with science, and with exact and natural sciences in particular; also, it points the way in which methods of conducting the criminal investigation were to develop in the 20th century. Moreover, this idea has determined the fate of crime writing, sealing the bond between it and forensics. In the words of a best-selling author of the genre: "the truth is that crime fiction proper only began with an evidence-based legal system. And that is what those pioneering scientists and detectives bequeathed us."[8] So, because these days it is not possible to imagine the "journey" from a crime scene to a courtroom unassisted by

[5] Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 19.

[6] Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 20, n. 34. As the editor points out in a side note, the story "Black Peter" (1904) also depicts gruesome experimentation: "Holmes tested the sticking-power of harpoons on the carcasses of pigs."

[7] Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 69.

[8] McDermid, *Forensics*, 10.

scientific protocols, crime authors, if they want to validate the investigations they recount, need to make forensics present and compelling, even if their interests as fiction writers may—as they usually do—lie outside the lecture hall and the dissecting room.

In canonical Sherlock Holmes stories, the science of deduction has three components:

- observation: collection of evidence ("facts"), as symbolised by the magnifying glass;
- knowledge: not limited to the strictly scientific sense (e.g., human anatomy, botany, etc.), but broadened by familiarity with different aspects of common life and social interaction, e.g., types of cigarette ash, types of ink, types of handwriting, etc.;
- reasoning: the application of rules of logic (or inference), which allows the detective to make legitimate deductions and, more specifically, to "reason backwards," i.e. to reconstruct past events on the basis of observable facts and knowledge.[9]

Let us examine how this works on the example of a particular case. In "The Cardboard Box" (1893), the investigation begins after the delivery of the title box containing two severed human ears (incidentally, a pertinent example of what I call "homicidal desecration"). This passage aptly illustrates the cooperation of the three components:

> He took out the two ears as he spoke, and laying a board across his knee he examined them minutely […]. Finally he returned them to the box once more and sat for a while in deep meditation. "You have observed, of course," said he at last, "that the ears are not a pair." "Yes, I have noticed that. But if this were the practical joke of some students from the dissecting rooms, it would be as easy for them to send two odd ears as a pair." "Precisely. But this is not a practical joke." "You are sure of it?" "The presumption is strongly against it. Bodies in the dissecting-rooms are injected with preservative fluid. These ears bear no signs of this. They are fresh, too. They have been cut off with a blunt instrument, which would hardly happen if a student had done it. Again, carbolic or rectified spirits would be the preservatives which would suggest themselves to the medical mind, certainly not rough

[9] On the role of so-called reconstructive sciences (paleontology, archaeology, and geology) in the formation of Holmes's system see Dauncey, "Crime, Forensics, and the Modern Science," pp. 165–166.

> salt. I repeat that there is no practical joke here, but that we are investigating a serious crime."
>
> [...]
>
> "One of these ears is a woman's, small, finely formed, and pierced for an earring. The other is a man's, sun-burned, discoloured, and also pierced for an earring. These two people are presumably dead, or we should have heard their story before now."[10]

Meticulous observation of evidence is combined with knowledge, chiefly, the knowledge of chemistry and human anatomy. Later in the story, we find a fine demonstration of Holmes's scientific competence: he is an active and publishing researcher. Again, observation (the "facts" concerning one of the severed ears and those of Miss Cushing), assisted by anatomical knowledge, allows him to make incontrovertible inferences:

> "As a medical man, you are aware, Watson, that there is no part of the body which varies so much as the human ear. Each ear is as a rule quite distinctive and differs from all other ones. In last year's *Anthropological Journal* you will find two short monographs from my pen upon the subject. I had, therefore, examined the ears in the box with the eyes of an expert and had carefully noted their anatomical peculiarities. Imagine my surprise, then, when on looking at Miss Cushing I perceived that her ear corresponded exactly with the female ear which I had just inspected. The matter was entirely beyond coincidence. There was the same shortening of the pinna [i.e. "The broad part of the upper, external ear"[11]], the same broad curve of the upper lobe, the same convolution of the inner cartilage. In all essentials it was the same ear."[12]

The female victim and Miss Cushing were sisters then, as the above train of thought demonstrates with the help anatomy. Besides, Holmes also uses the knowledge that comes from day-to-day experience, knowledge of people's ways, not strictly scientific. Thus, for instance, he knows the

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[10] Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Cardboard Box," in: *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. 1, ed. Leslie S. Klinger (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), pp. 430–432.

[11] Conan Doyle, "The Cardboard Box," p. 439, n. 23.

[12] Conan Doyle, "The Cardboard Box," pp. 438–439. This passage confirms the information contained in Watson's "document" mentioned in *A Study in Scarlet* in which we read that Holmes's knowledge of anatomy was "[a]ccurate, but unsystematic." Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, p. 34.

methods of dealing with "subjects" in dissecting-rooms. In the canon, there are many examples of how useful social knowledge can be in criminal cases.

While in "The Cardboard Box," the official police, represented by Lestrade, come to seek the assistance of Holmes in the capacity of the "scientific detective," contemporary police would seek the help of a pathologist,[13] pathology being only one of the many branches of contemporary forensics. This makes us realise how much has changed since the Sherlock Holmes stories: how much competence Arthur Conan Doyle placed in his detective and how diverse are the uses of science in contemporary investigations. One can hardly imagine that nowadays an examination of two severed human ears would be conducted upon "a board laid across the detective's knee." Even though in Sherlock Holmes we see the pioneer of scientific detection, from our perspective, his investigations hardly meet the criteria of scientific accuracy and would not be found legitimate in the courtroom. Instead of speaking about laboratories and students' pranks, the contemporary detective would actually take the severed ears to a laboratory to have them properly examined. Similarly, the box itself and its contents would be inspected for evidence by a different specialist or specialists.

Time of Death—The Adventure of a Redundant Detective?

Let us now turn to our case study, an examination of the role of forensic science in a contemporary crime novel. The goal obviously is not to draw conclusions about the genre as such but to conduct a narrative analysis which will allow us to see, on a chosen representative example, the functioning of scientific competence in a 21st-century social environment.

The situation in chapter twenty-six of *Time of Death* is symptomatic: DI Tom Thorne takes a walk in the woods where the body of a victim, a fifteen-year-old girl, has been found. Thorne "shows his warrant card" to one of the "uniformed officers," but it is obvious that he is a stranger there:

> Though the body [of the victim] was long gone, there were still four or five scene of the crime officers hard at work. Those ubiquitous plastic body-

[13] "Forensic pathology," *Wikipedia*, accessed 19 April, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forensic_pathology. "Forensic pathology is pathology that focuses on determining the cause of death by examining a corpse. A post mortem is performed by a medical examiner […]. Coroners and medical examiners are also frequently asked to confirm the identity of a corpse."

> suits, the familiar rustle as they moved. […] A white forensic tent covered the area six feet or so around the grave. Thorne watched one SOCO walk in, another walk out. Plastic trays and evidence bags were piling upon a table in the centre of the clearing, though most seemed to contain only soil.[14]

Thorne's involvement in the investigation is indeed that of an onlooker and a passer-by. Yet, early in the story, he feels a powerful urge to become involved:

> There was, it seemed, a powerful craving for the rush that went with danger. It was a drug, pure and simple. Thorne would not describe his own feelings in quite those terms, but just sensing the excitement, the urgency around a major investigation such as this one, had already got those endorphins kicking in. […] Thorne simply could not help himself.[15]

The basic premise of Thorne's unofficial investigation is that the grave where a dog found the victim's body is shallow, too shallow in fact, for the state of the body suggests a much longer process of decomposition. The reader is privy to his thinking:

> [Thorne:] "Place is crawling with dog-walkers." […]
> [Thorne:] "Why wasn't she found before though?" […]
> "There's people out there with dogs every day," Thorne said. "Morning and night. So why did it take until yesterday for one of those dogs to find the body?"
> [Thorne:] Not very deep, the SOCO had said. Not very hard to find.
> […]
> The body and the state of it. The dogs. The timings.
> [Thorne] "Doesn't smell right."[16]

Unable to suppress his doubts, Thorne asks his friend and colleague, Phil Hendricks, a pathologist, for help. Hendricks is described as "the finest pathologist Thorne ha[s] ever worked with."[17]

Not being an investigating officer, Thorne has no immediate access to the "forensics": the evidence collected by specialists and examined by

[14] Mark Billingham, *Time of Death* (London: Sphere, 2015), p. 187.
[15] Billingham, *Time of Death*, pp. 37–38.
[16] Ibid., pp. 223, 241, 245.
[17] Ibid., p. 239.

experts. However, he is given a chance to look at the report. In an exchange with the detective officially assigned to the case, DI Cornish, Thorne says: "Listen, would you mind if I had a quick look at the file?"[18] Chapter thirty-one recounts this interview, during which—much to the colleague's irritation—Thorne reveals his doubts and suspicions as to the direction that the investigation has taken: why wasn't the body found earlier in a place "crawling with dog-walkers"? Much of Billingham's novel recounts how the official investigation has been derailed and misdirected, despite the extensive use of forensics. Thorne is positive that the enormous effort and so much manpower have been misspent, concentrating on providing incriminating evidence for the suspect: Stephen Bates, already arrested and soon charged with murder.

Let us now examine in some detail the progress of Thorne's investigation by looking at samples of Thorne and Hendrick's analysis of the existing evidence and its value:

> [Thorne:] "The body was weeks old."
> [Hendricks:] "Four weeks, give or take, based on the insect activity." "[…B]urning gets rid of the DNA"; "He burns the body just enough to destroy any forensics, but not enough to destroy *her*."
> [Thorne:] "But somehow he still manages to drop a cigarette butt in there when he's burying her." [Thorne:] "His [Bates's] DNA on a fag-end in a shallow grave. The victim's DNA all over his car."

The conclusion drawn by Hendricks is simple: "It's all about the bugs." The hypothesis is as follows:

> [Hendricks:] "He [the actual perpetrator, whose goal was to mislead the police] burned the body just enough to open it up, didn't he? To expose what was needed."
> [Thorne:] "To open it up for what?"
> Hendricks shrugged and answered as though it were bleedingly obvious.
> "To put the bugs in."[19]

[18] Ibid., p. 227.
[19] Ibid., pp. 236, 294–295, 305–306, 318, 321.

As we can see, it is the pathologist who supplies Thorne (whom he calls, for instance, "you dozy cock"[20]) with the essential scientific knowledge. In fact, Hendricks causes their unofficial investigation to move forward:

> [Hendricks:] "The killer wouldn't need to buy them [bugs]."
> [cont.:] "You harvest them from another body."
> [cont.:] "You let another corpse decompose naturally. You wait for the flies to come, to feed and lay their eggs, for the beetles to pitch up and feed and lay their eggs. You wait for all that stuff to happen and when you've got enough, you just transfer them from the old body to the new one."
> [Thorne:] "There's another body?"
> [Hendricks:] "Doesn't have to be human, though, does it?"
> [cont., a little irritated at his "dozy cock" of a friend:] "The skin of a pig is so similar to human skin that they use it to train people like me. Right? They use pigskin to train medics learning how to treat battlefield trauma, to test new surgical techniques, all sorts. It's a bit easier to come by now they've made grave-robbing illegal."[21]

This makes one think that, had Holmes been privy to this piece of knowledge, he would not have had to perform the gruesome experiments on human subjects mentioned at the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet*.

Such exchanges between a forensic expert and the detective are characteristic of contemporary crime fiction. The detective may be driven by an irresistible urge to solve murders and he or she may be capable of formulating suspicions, but without criminological expertise, the detective may be quite helpless. In other words, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the contemporary detective is now in the position formerly occupied by Watson, as suggested by: "Hendricks answered as though it were bleedingly obvious." The language has changed, but the meaning is pretty much the same. Hendricks's shrug means: "Elementary, my dear Thorne."

What may be the reasons for this change of position? First of all, science needs to be present and actively done to make investigations credible. But it no longer needs to be validated and popularised, the way it was in the Sherlock Holmes canon. In fact, protagonists like Thorne and Helen (his partner from their child abuse investigation team) better not

[20] Ibid., p. 355.
[21] Ibid., pp. 354–355.

be scientists, for this is not what readers expect. As we have seen, Conan Doyle himself—that is to say, Watson—knew what readers want: stories, not lectures. Meeting these expectations, much of *Time of Death* is devoted to the ordeal undergone by the family of the wrongly accused man and to Helen's efforts to be there for Bates's wife, her former school friend. The shocking revelation towards the end of the novel, that, as a child, Helen was abused by her father's friend, makes this theme of female solidarity especially significant. Helen seems preoccupied to such an extent that she is only remotely interested in Thorne's investigation (e.g., the beginning of chapter seventy).

At the same time, the fact that Thorne, as we have seen, has basically delegated the "serious" investigative tasks to his friend, makes it easier rather than more difficult for the reader to accept him and identify with him. In my opinion, the reader enjoys time spent in the company of a man who stubbornly clings to hunches, even though he has no competence, let alone the means to demonstrate their superiority to the theory formulated by the official investigative team.

An interesting twist in Billingham's novel comes when the final—scientific—confirmations of the planted-bugs theory are needed to exculpate the wrong suspect. The bugs' DNA must be examined to prove that they fed on a pig before being put in the human body. Chapter fifty-four recounts a meeting during which Thorne and Hendricks talk to Dr Liam Southworth, an entomologist at Warwick University. Before the meeting, Thorne observes: "He's a scientist […]. We should make it all about the science." At the very same time, Thorne hints at the human dimension: "Tell him he'll be helping an innocent man."[22] As it turns out, the human dimension has another and a very different side to it. Hendricks claims: "I reckon I know which buttons to push."[23] He has met Southworth and knows that one of the buttons is the fact that, like Hendricks himself, the scientist is gay and may fancy spending some private time with him.

Southworth confirms Hendricks's hypothesis, which he describes as "theoretically possible"[24]: "If you're right and the insects removed from the body had initially invaded the body of a pig, fed on it, then that animal's

[22] Ibid., p. 377.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, p. 380.

DNA should still be present within the insects themselves."[25] Eventually, Southworth agrees to help. However, he too has to ask another scientist to do the actual testing: "This is a bit out of my area. I think I need to ask someone at the lab to do it. Can't imagine too many of them have ever done a post-mortem on a beetle though."[26] The result arrives soon; the tests are positive: "A hundred per cent match for porky DNA."[27]

It is obvious at this point that the perpetrator is "someone with at least a basic knowledge of forensic procedure."[28] It is, we may add, someone whose competence exceeds that of Thorne but also someone who may not have gone as far in his planning as Hendrick's hypothesis: the possibility of detecting "porky DNA" in the bugs he planted on his victim's body. For this reason, we may say, science has been victorious. At the same time, towards the end of the novel, there is no link that connects the bugs to Jessica's killer. Bates may have been proven innocent, but the perpetrator has not yet been identified, let alone caught. So far, the readers have been made familiar—in a few short first-person chapters strewn around the book—with reflections of a psychopath who relishes in the "possession" of teenage human trophies. The man's identity of a kidnapper and an abuser remains well-hidden behind a façade of respectability.

Unexpectedly, it falls to Thorne to connect the dots and identify the perpetrator in a brilliant mental flash, in which he recalls the mention of a tattoo on Jessica's body by the owner of the local pub Trevor Hare. That apparently innocent piece of knowledge is, in fact, incriminating because, as Jessica's friend has told Thorne, someone who knew about the tattoo must have had intimate knowledge of Jessica's body: "The tattoo wasn't in a place he could possibly have known about unless…."[29] At the same time, Thorne knows very well that, as we have mentioned, there is no real evidence to tie this suspect to the murder and kidnapping: "Look,"—he says to Helen—"I've got nothing, not really, it's all circumstantial. I know it's him, and can explain why, but right now there's nothing that's going to put him away. There's only one person who can do that … she's the only real evidence."[30]

[25] Ibid, pp. 380–381.
[26] Ibid, p. 381.
[27] Ibid, p. 486.
[28] Ibid, p. 492.
[29] Ibid, p. 505.
[30] Ibid, p. 500.

Not surprisingly, then, it is not deduction but action that provides closure. Luckily—for Thorne, for the readers, for the novel itself—the second victim, Poppy, is still alive and the perpetrator becomes mortally wounded in the confrontation that ensues when Thorne and Helen surprise him in the exact moment when he is about to start having "fun"[31] with the girl.

Conclusion

The examination of just one contemporary crime novel does not justify any generalisations. I believe, however, that a pattern has been allowed to emerge, which, in my opinion, *Time of Death* exemplifies. The very title suggests the significance of forensics, which the contemporary crime author cannot ignore. To drive this point home, Billingham uses a minor character, a taxi driver, a crime show and metal music aficionado Sweeny: "Sweeney drained his beer. 'Insects on a body.' He belched softly. 'A very accurate way to determine the time of death if there's significant decomposition.'"[32] In this way Billingham exemplifies that a degree of forensic competence in the common reader of crime fiction has to be taken for granted.[33] Consequently and as a matter of course, different crime authors engage different branches of criminology, from autopsy to digital forensics, depending on their preference and competence. At the same time, while satisfying the readers' appetite when it comes to scientific expertise, Billingham confidently places the emphasis where readers expect it to lie: on the personal and the communal. In fact, *Time of Death* may be said to showcase a crisis of forensics.

The plot of *Time of Death* is symptomatic of the changes that have taken place in crime fiction since its 19th-century birth as regards the figure of the detective. Contrary to the increasingly prominent and dominant position of science in society at large, the detective has become less scientifically savvy, having to rely more and more on the competence of experts, real

[31] Ibid, p. 447.

[32] Ibid, p. 438.

[33] Worth considering in this context is the following statement: "That public expectations of science are born of fictional portrayals of science, rather than of scientific reality, has long been thought to be true of forensic science, where public beliefs have been shaped by fiction at least since Conan Doyle penned *Sherlock Holmes*." N. J. Schweitzer and Michael J. Saks, "The CSI Effect: Popular Fiction about Forensic Science Affects the Public's Expectations about Real Forensic Science," *Jurimetrics*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Spring 2007), p. 359.

rather than amateur scientists. The competences which Conan Doyle bestowed upon Sherlock Holmes have been delegated to teams of such experts, leaving contemporary crime authors with the task of bestowing upon their detectives features which would justify their central narrative position. In *Time of Death*, the effectiveness of forensics is debatable: pathology eventually exculpates the wrong suspect, but the actual tracking down and demise of the perpetrator are the result of the detective's natural endowments and his social skills.

Perhaps Billingham's subtle intertextual allusions to the Sherlock Holmes canon—such as the dog that "didn't bark"[34]—point us in the direction of the faculties which, for Dr Bell, were essential in "a successful diagnostician": eyes, ears, memory, and imagination. To this we may add the readiness to act on one's strong conviction when the situation calls for it, despite the missing scientific validation.

The canon popularised science by repeatedly humiliating the detective's companion and the official police, through demonstrations and theories. Conan Doyle's narratives put theoretical knowledge and social skills in opposition, the price being the eccentricity and social marginalisation of the genius. The contemporary detective is Watson-like: what eventually solves cases and what warms the readers' hearts is not his scientific expertise but his intuition and his powers of empathy. The winning attribute of contemporary crime fiction is its ability to put a human face on doing justice as an essential part of our being in the shared world.

[34] Billingham, *Time of Death*, p. 462; Arthur Conan Doyle, "Silver Blaze," in: *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Leslie S. Klinger, Vol. 1: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, pp. 415–416.

Jacek Mydla

What Is Left of the Genius? Sherlockian Legacy in Contemporary Crime Fiction

Arthur Conan Doyle famously popularised science in his series of detective stories by placing its three constitutive elements (scientific knowledge, the collection of evidence, and art of making inferences), in his protagonist Sherlock Holmes. The legacy is present in contemporary crime fiction, but the competencies have been distributed among a group of individuals involved in the investigation. This distribution has affected and changed the position of the detective vis-à-vis scientific expertise. Science, chiefly in the form of different branches of forensics, is as indispensable as the detective, and authors have been working out different ways of making the two work together. As an example of this cooperation, the paper examines Mark Billingham's 2015 novel *Time of Death*.

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes, science of deduction, forensics, contemporary crime fiction
Słowa klucze: Sherlock Holmes, dedukcja, techniki śledcze, współczesna powieść kryminalna