



Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr. John H. Watson

Lyndsay Faye

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In *Dust and Shadow* Sherlock Holmes hunts down Jack the Ripper with impeccably accurate historical detail, rooting the Whitechapel investigation in the fledgling days of tabloid journalism and clinical psychology. This astonishing debut explores the terrifying prospect of hunting down one of the world's first serial killers without the advantage of modern forensics or profiling. Sherlock's desire to stop the killer who is terrifying the East End of London is unwavering from the start, and in an effort to do so he hires an "unfortunate" known as Mary Ann Monk, the friend of a fellow streetwalker who was one of the Ripper's earliest victims. However, when Holmes himself is wounded in Whitechapel attempting to catch the villain, and a series of articles in the popular press question his role in the crimes, he must use all his resources in a desperate race to find the man known as "The Knife" before it is too late. Penned as a pastiche by the loyal and courageous Dr. Watson, *Dust and Shadow* recalls the ideals evinced by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most beloved and world-renowned characters, while testing the limits of their strength in a fight to protect the women of London, Scotland Yard, and the peace of the city itself.

Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr. John H. Watson Details

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From Reader Review *Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings* by Dr. John H. Watson for online ebook

Christopher Roden says

Sherlock Holmes pastiche is a tricky subject. Picking up on the scenes of the times is one thing - and Lyndsay Faye does a good enough job with that, seemingly having researched London of the time. Capturing the language of the times, and the language and style of Conan Doyle is another, and whilst Faye has made a promising stab at doing that, *DUST AND SHADOW* still contains material that would never have made it into *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*. Rough as one of Holmes's associates is - and street ladies from Whitechapel would have been pretty rough, one has to admit - she would never have been heard uttering 'Bollocks' in anything Conan Doyle wrote.

The basic plot of the novel is simple enough - Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper - and Faye has enough of the original Ripper reports to draw on to make her job a relatively easy one. What remains is to weave a Sherlock Holmes story around those reports, and present the world with yet another Sherlock Holmes novel. It works well enough as a story, but I cannot agree with other reports I've read: the voices are not near-perfect, though Faye makes a good enough attempt to capture them. Unfortunately - and this seems to ring true with most North American writers who take on Sherlock Holmes as their project - there are too many American-sounding touches to make this a total success.

DUST AND SHADOW is a pleasant enough way to pass a couple of hours; but it's not Sherlock Holmes as I want to read him. Few pastiches are.

Pinkerton says

Mi è piaciuto il trattamento riservato a Holmes e Watson dall'autrice che ne ha conservato la caratterizzazione tradizionale, rendendoli protagonisti - nel vero senso della parola - di questo racconto. Purtroppo gli altri personaggi non sono stati all'altezza. Intanto ho visto sin troppo buonismo ed efficienza negli alleati di turno, e poi, l'antagonista... dov'è? Capisco che si voglia tenere il mistero per il finale ma qui (e incredibilmente, dato che ha pure accoltellato Sherlock) non ho minimamente percepito la sua presenza, nemmeno nella corrispondenza o nei suoi efferati crimini. Tanto che è stata giocata la carta folla vs protagonista, infiammata dagli allusivi articoli di un giornalista poco raccomandabile; ecco, giusto lui si salva fra i personaggi secondari.

Si è talmente concentrati sull'indagine dei due segugi che quasi veniamo a dimenticarci dei delitti. Ho trovato troppo sommarie le descrizioni, e in generale le parti, dedicate a come la collettività ha recepito la brutalità di questi assassinii e l'essere che ne è responsabile. Una tensione paradossalmente così smorzata (nonostante sia sbandierata come altissima) ha trasformato "Jack the ripper", il "Mostro dell'East End" che viene direttamente dall'inferno! in un criminale qualunque, oggetto di una delle tante indagini del famoso investigatore privato.

Si tratta comunque di una discreta lettura ma che non è riuscita a sfruttare bene un cattivo così famigerato come quello che aveva a disposizione. Ci sarebbero voluti più schiettezza, bassifondi, e meno convenevoli... oltre ad un finale che rispecchiasse maggiormente le elucubrazioni che hanno reso famoso questo detective, a confronto con quelle di una mente folle, crudele e malata. Invece no, conclusione da action movie e chi s'è visto s'è visto.

Barbara (The Bibliophage) says

Lyndsay Faye braves the legendary waters of both Ripper and Holmes with her imaginative novel, *Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings* by Dr. John H. Watson. Let me say right up front that I'm not an aficionado of either genre. However, I enjoy a good historical fiction mystery / thriller. So I was all in for this audiobook!

Told in the classic Arthur Conan Doyle style, Faye writes from Watson's point of view. Sherlock Holmes has been called in as consulting detective on the gruesome Whitechapel murders. He and Watson employ various methods to information gathering, including the use of people who live and work in Whitechapel.

Chief among these is the fictional Miss Mary Ann Monk, who proves a welcome addition to a testosterone-heavy cast of characters. She's able to elicit information and gain entry to places in a way that the men cannot. And she does it with considerable aplomb. Miss Monk reminds me of Faye's Jane Steele from the pleasing 2016 novel of the same name.

As you can imagine, Holmes and Watson hit some bumps in the road. Inflammatory reporters are suggesting Holmes is the killer. Plus, he's wounded during their investigation. These combine to increase the urgency of finding the Ripper, and add to the novel's suspense.

Faye strikes the perfect note in her writing style, strongly reminiscent of the Conan Doyle oeuvre. The plot and pacing roll right along, never straying into unnecessary details. She pokes gently at social commentary, both about the nineteenth century and at Fleet Street journalists.

The narration by Simon Vance was spot-on. He articulates the many accents, as well as Watson's measured tones perfectly. A perfect match for Faye's writing!

This was the last book I'll complete for 2017. Interestingly, my first book was also a tale with ties to Sherlock Holmes—Kareem Abdul-Jabar's *Mycroft Holmes*. Bookish synchronicity, FTW.

More reviews at TheBibliophage.com.

Gabrielle says

After a month of heavy readings and professional madness, I wanted some lovely, escapist stuff to take my mind off the gloomy weather and the office chaos. I had loved Ms. Faye's great "Jane Eyre" homage "Jane Steele" (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) and I was thrilled to get my hands on a copy of her exploration of one of my favorite fictional universe: the London of Sherlock Holmes!

While I am huge fan of the Holmesian canon, I am far from an expert in Ripper-ology: my understanding is that Faye really did her homework before incorporating the most famous of fictional detectives in the story of this real series of crimes, but I have to take other people's word for it. The Ripper case was significant on so many levels, and it's almost impossible to resist pitting him against Sherlock Holmes. The trick with such a story was always going to be capturing the tone of Doyle's stories and keeping the historical atmosphere on

point.

I find Faye does a better job than Lovegrove at really recreating Dr. Watson's narrative style and inflections, which is pretty crucial if you are going to undertake the telling of such a story. She also does a wonderful job making Holmes' character indistinguishable from the one we can find in Doyle's work. Irascible, but compassionate. While I thought the spunky Miss Monk was a bit predictable, I was delighted with the awful Mr. Tavistock and his libelous brand of journalism, as well as with Dr. Agar and his unorthodox specialty!

Its hard to say more without spoilers, so let's just say that Sherlock Holmes fan will find a great, entertaining homage to the Doyle canon, and those who simply like a good Victorian mystery will be very satisfied. Definitely worth checking out!

Gianfranco Mancini says

L'ennesimo pastiche che contrappone il Grande Detective per eccellenza al primo e più famoso serial killer della storia (basti citare i film "Delitto su commissione" e "Sherlock Holmes: Notti di Terrore") è, a sorpresa, uno dei migliori.

La ricerca storiografica sui delitti dello Squartatore e sulla Londra del 1888 compiuta dall'autrice è perfetta (un errore ci sarebbe, ma se non lo leggevo nella postfazione non me ne sarei mai accorto) e si intreccia a meraviglia con l'indagine portata avanti da Holmes ed un esercito di alleati: Watson, i giovani Irregolari di Baker Street, Lestrade, Scotland Yard e la coraggiosa miss Monk.

La prima parte è abbastanza nella media con pochi twist narrativi (se conoscete storia e vittime di Jack), ma le ultime 50 pagine sono state divorate letteralmente ed ho personalmente adorato l'atmosfera di inquietitudine ed orrore che trasuda dalle pagine di questo romanzo.

Complimenti a Lindsey Faye per lo splendido debutto letterario, per nulla intimorita dal cimentarsi con due icone di tale calibro. Devo assolutamente procurarmi prima o poi qualche altro suo libro.

Shaun says

Loved it...LOVE, LOVE, LOVED it!

A fan of Sherlock Holmes who is fascinated by Jack the Ripper, I started this with high expectations. And I was not disappointed. A big kudos to Lyndsay Faye for managing to successfully integrate these two popular characters in one fantastic mystery.

What can I say...she's nailed Holmes and Watson in a page turner that boldly and cleverly pits the greatest detective of all time against one of history's most notorious serial killers.

So enjoyed this and so sad it had to end...I want more.

Philip Jones says

This is a first novel for Ms. Faye and it is subtitled “An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr. John H. Watson.” As a Sherlockian scholar, I maintain a database of Sherlockian pastiches, parodies and related fiction. Among other things, this database keeps reference to the subjects of its entries and “Jack the Ripper” is the single most popular subject for pastiche writers, other than “The Hound of the Baskervilles.” There are at least seventy five different items on file about attempts to tell the story of JACK, including Ellery Queen’s excellent “A Study in Terror” and Carol Nelson Douglas’ two volumes from her Irene Adler series; “Chapel Noir” and “Castle Rouge.”

The literature on the Ripper killings is also complex and lengthy. Numerous individuals have been nominated for the role and reasons for the abrupt end to the killings are also legion. Among the Sherlockian offerings, the number of ripper suspects approaches seventy five with almost as many explanations offered for the end to the killings. Although the Sherlockian works are often interesting, they offer little in the way of solid evidence from history for their resolutions of the questions left by the events. The true Ripper Literature tends toward the ‘Police Procedural’ school and is often merely gross, with little entertainment value except to sensationalists.

In this book, one is taken by the Good Doctor along on an investigation by The Master into the world of monsters. This is not the world of Vampires and Ghosties; instead a sense of growing horror brings both the investigators and the reader to the awareness of the monsters that dwell amongst us, the human monsters that may be our neighbors or our contemporaries. Holmes and Watson are driven to face this reality and to find ways to deal with apparently ‘motiveless crimes.’ Holmes says “But I have repeated to myself Cui bono? until I can feel the words burned upon my brain, and the only answer is No one.” This adjustment in outlook is what made the Ripper Killings so difficult for contemporary society to deal with. No one could believe that Jack wandered around like a normal person, killed his victims and then dissolved back into the crowd of humanity in Whitechapel.

This novel presents an interesting solution to the identity of The Ripper and to the resolution of his fate. So far as I have read, it does not duplicate other proposed solutions, but it does seem to fit the established facts. There are a number of ‘unestablished facts’ that surround the Ripper Murders but many of those have been debunked by one author or another and many are discussed here. The activities of Press and the reactions of the denizens of Whitechapel are well covered in this book, in fact, they are integral to it. I wish I could call it a ‘pleasant read’ or a ‘good Holmesian tale,’ but it is not either of these things. It is dark and disturbing and frustrating. Holmes is discouraged, the Doctor is outraged and Scotland Yard is held up to ridicule by everyone involved.

The resolution is believable and the identity given for the Ripper is plausible. The book is hard to leave for even a moment and the usual distractions of Americanisms and untimely slang are mostly absent. Holmes’ investigation is real to the reader and his frustrations are apparent. The book is well worth reading and deeply disturbing.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, February 2009.

Sara says

Okay let me start by saying that anyone who takes on the gargantuan task of attempting to put on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's mantle and manages to stay true to the world, language and spirit of Sherlock Holmes is to be commended. It's no small feat that Lyndsay Faye, a clearly talented writer, is so successful in grasping Sherlock and Watson's personalities and the dynamic of their relationship so well. There is a tendency, with the exception of Jeremy Brett's fabulous interpretation, in film and television takes on Sherlock to play him as an unfeeling, sociopathic genius who just happens to find criminal investigation more fun than say serial killing (no offense to Benedict Cumberbatch or the fabulous "Sherlock" intended, I LOVE the show). Faye perfectly grasps Sherlock's very real humanity and affinity for those less fortunate even if he doesn't have much use for personal relationships beyond his friendship with Watson.

Unfortunately while the idea of having Holmes tackle the Ripper murders is a great one (I mean who doesn't want to read that?) at the end of the day there's almost too much out there about what is arguably the most famous serial murder mystery in history to make it possible to write a really good fictional account of the crimes AND try to make it a good Sherlock Holmes case as well.

The problem with using the Ripper case is we know too much. Though he was never identified there are so many theories and so many people he couldn't be, so many things understood about his probable character, occupation and psychology that Faye has a really limited number of directions to move in regarding who the Ripper actually is in her story. Certain things simply aren't going to work though they'd probably make for better story telling fodder.

Everything about the set up and execution works, the identity of the killer makes sense, it's even clear why the public can't know who he really is, it's just not that interesting when all is said and done. Limited by historical facts and the genre she's writing in Faye never really gets a chance to launch into a full blown, startling Sherlock Holmes yarn. But if she wanted to try writing a Holmes tale of her own? I would read that book in a heartbeat.

Jayson says

(B+) 77% | Good

Notes: Clever, historically sensible and true to tone, but missing the requisite *raison d'être* present in every Holmes mystery.

Candi says

"Once the sun has fallen, you can hardly see your hand before your face, and the slaughterhouses allow blood-spattered men to pass without remark."

Such is the district of Whitechapel, the legendary stomping grounds of the infamous killer, Jack the Ripper. I picked up this fantastic book for a challenge, never expecting to become quite so hooked!! In this one, Sherlock Holmes himself teams up with Dr. Watson, Scotland Yard's Lestrade, and a delightful new character, Miss Monk. Miss Monk was a refreshing new addition to the famous pair of Holmes and Watson. A resident of the district and friend to one of the recent victims of the Ripper, Miss Monk becomes an

indispensable amateur sleuth in her own right. Able to blend into the crowds of that seedy district of Whitechapel and speak with the other residents without suspicion, Miss Monk still needs to watch her own back before she herself falls victim to this madman. All the characters in this book were very well-drawn and believable. I have read several of Doyle's Holmes mysteries in the past, and if my memory serves right, author Lyndsay Faye has done a superb job of recreating the essence of both Holmes and Watson. The story is unfolded through Watson's narrative. Thus we are sometimes left in the dark regarding exactly what the enigmatic Holmes has in mind and therefore adding another layer of suspense to the novel. Watson gripes *"Though I was entirely inured to Holmes's adoration of secrecy at the closing moments of a case, on occasion his dictatorial glibness grated upon my nerves."*

I loved the descriptions of Whitechapel and its inhabitants; such an atmospheric read! The squalid buildings, the misty darkness, the lurid feel of the slaughterhouses, the colorful people! So easy to visualize the surroundings and feel as if we are right there in the midst of the action.

"Light poured from the doorways of the gin palaces, illuminating the fruit peddlers who laboured at the end of the day to sell their remaining wares. An organ-grinder with his chattering simian companion stood before a music hall upon a crumbling street corner. Everywhere men leaned in doorways puffing at cigars, and everywhere women strolled about, some housewives with hair in loose buns gossiping with their neighbours, some ladies of more mercurial design who kept in constant motion to avoid the attention of the local constabulary. Gentlemen of leisure too, weary of concerts and dinner parties, lounged from temptation to temptation with cynical aplomb. The place was a veritable hornet's nest of whirring activity, illicit and otherwise..."

I can't say too much else without giving away too much of this wonderful little book, but I will say that it kept me guessing throughout as Holmes endeavored to seek the identity of this brutal murderer and rid London of such horror. There is plenty of clever sleuthing, entertaining banter and some thrilling moments of action. Some of the descriptions are gruesome, but are brief and not overdone by any means – something that the faint of heart should be able to tolerate as the main focus of this book is not to shock the reader with graphic details. **Dust and Shadow** is my first introduction to Lyndsay Faye and I can't wait to see what else she has to offer!

Kim says

I was encouraged to listen to this audiobook by the enthusiastic reviews of GR friends (thanks Tracey and Chrissie!) and by my own positive experience of listening to Simon Vance's excellent narration of a very different kind of novel, Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. As I expected, Vance is excellent. His voices are appropriate for the characters, each one easily distinguishable from the others. If Vance has a weakness as a narrator, it's in his voices for young female characters. However, that comes with the territory of being a male narrator.

As for the novel, it's a well-written addition to the Sherlock Holmes literary brand, in which Holmes investigates the Jack the Ripper murders with the assistance of Dr Watson and a couple of engaging Irregulars. I have no background knowledge of the Ripper murders apart from what I gleaned from a quick scan of Wikipedia as I read, but as far as I can tell, Faye seems to have got the history right. The narrative convincingly meshes the Ripper murders with Holmes' investigative process and comes up with some clever

explanations for particular aspects of the crimes and their consequences. (view spoiler).

In this novel, Holmes is recognisably the Holmes created by Conan Doyle, with arguably more concern for the victims of crime and a little more vulnerability. The other characters are equally well-drawn and Faye does an excellent job creating a sense of place and time. This was definitely worth the time I spent listening, and was all the more interesting because I was also reading *Locked Rooms*, the eighth novel in Laurie R King's contribution to the genre, the Mary Russell series. Overall, I think I prefer King's writing, which means that this novel gets a solid 3-1/2 stars.

Amy Sturgis says

It's entirely possible I've cast a shadow over the rest of my reading of Holmesian pastiches by devouring this novel so early in my project. I'm not quite sure how others will compete. That said, I can't remember when I've enjoyed savoring the first reading of a book as much. (Maybe *The Thirteenth Tale* last year? Although I think *Dust and Shadow* may exceed that experience, as well.) Lyndsay Faye delivered all I was wanting in this ambitious novel: excellent characterizations of the main characters in Arthur Conan Doyle's works (Sherlock Holmes, D.I. Lestrade, Mycroft Holmes, and an especially good Dr. Watson); beautifully wrought historical details (the result of excellent research, without any self-indulgent extraneous information); appropriate angst and humor and peril in the service of a well-designed plot; and the expert incorporation of the Jack the Ripper events and mythos into a truly haunting Gothic tale. It's the best of all possible worlds: Sherlock Holmes on the trail of Jack the Ripper in a story that deals with both subjects in an educated, sensitive, and imaginative fashion.

Chrissie says

[caught, by none other than Sherlock Holmes (hide spoiler)]

Pupottina says

Jack the Ripper sfida Holmes

È sempre un piacere divorare l'ennesimo pastiche che pone Sherlock Holmes sulla scena del crimine di terribili delitti. Soltanto lui può indagare e giungere ad una soluzione. La verità, anche la più difficile da scovare, con lui non ha scampo. Lo scenario è quello gotico del degradato quartiere di Whitechapel a Londra, nell'autunno del 1888.

Lyndsay Faye ha portato il personaggio di Conan Doyle ad indagare su uno dei più celebri gialli irrisolti della storia. Come sempre, a narrare gli eventi è il fedelissimo amico John Watson. Non mancano anche Lestrade ed il fratello di Holmes, Mycroft Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes è dunque sulle tracce di Jack lo Squartatore con una trama che si occupa di entrambi i personaggi in modo sapientemente colto, intelligente e fantasioso.

Gli omicidi efferati di due prostitute nel quartiere di Whitechapel convincono l'ispettore Lestrade a chiedere aiuto al massimo specialista di investigazioni criminali. Senza dubbio Sherlock Holmes, accompagnato dal

fedele dottor Watson, sa come dare la caccia all'assassino che con la sua lama, grondante sangue, sta terrorizzando l'East End. Ma quando il segugio di Baker Street rimane ferito nel tentativo di catturare il mostro, un sospetto infamante finisce per coinvolgerlo direttamente.

Il grande detective deve rompere gli schemi e contravvenire a ogni regola per smascherare l'inafferrabile assassino, che per lui è un vero e proprio avversario, poiché lo ha sfidato a catturarlo.

Lo consiglio vivamente.

Tracey says

It is inevitable that writers feel a deep-seated urge to pit Sherlock Holmes against Jack the Ripper. The murders happened in the midst of Holmes's career; his contemporary readership must have wished he could step out of the pages and hunt down their nightmare for them. So it's no surprise that this is not the first time the idea has been pursued; there have been a couple of films (*Murder by Decree* with Christopher Plummer and James Mason as Holmes and Watson, and *A Study in Terror*), a handful of other books (including Michael Dibdin's *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*), and a video game. This was my first foray into the mashup.

Half an hour into the audiobook, I had small doubts. Holmes and Watson both faithfully give their solemn word that they will never reveal the details of the case the story starts with ... but the concept is that the book is one of Watson's memoirs (albeit one he leaves sealed). It seems a bit odd that he'd even write the story down. I wasn't fond of this beginning, this prologue, wondering why it was starting there, with such an extended look at another case ... until nearly the very end, when the reason for starting there becomes clear and it all just adds to the brilliance of the book.

First of all, as I commented somewhere, if Simon Vance narrated all audiobooks I would never read another page for myself again. I love this performance – every character is dead on: Watson, warm and a little dusty; Holmes, the famous clear strong tenor; Miss Monk, believably feminine and East End without going falsetto Eloiza Doolittle. And the Welsh accents just made me happy. All the accents made me happy. The reading was a joy.

I loved the Doyle-esque "Several highly publicized investigations that year displayed Holmes's remarkable skills to the public, including the appalling affair of the faulty oil lamp, and the matter of Mrs. Victoria Mendoza's mysteriously vanishing thimble and its consequences." Shades of the Giant Rat of Sumatra ... Although perhaps Ms. Faye can be prevailed upon to do what Doyle never did, and give us those stories. (Along with "the affair of the second cellist".) I live in hopes that this is only the first of a new Holmes series.

There was, it seems, an innocence that was lost when Jack the Ripper began his work. It's hard to fathom that before 1888 ordinary folk could not conceive of such atrocities – or at least this is the sentiment Lyndsay Faye puts into the mouths of the gentlemen set to pursue the monster, from Holmes to the lowliest constable. Now, with 24-hour news and CSI and Criminal Minds and true crime novels, it's sadly hard to conceive of such a sweet time. There had been serial killers before the Ripper, but through some confluence of the media and the infancy of modern investigative techniques he became the first one to cause such a tremendous flurry, the first one to make the history books.

It's been some time since I read the actual original stories, but not so much time since I watched the

wonderful current BBC series, and something that strikes me throughout *Dust and Shadow* is that this Holmes is much *nicer* than Benedict Cumberbatch's. He is much freer in his friendship with Watson than I was expecting – this Holmes is less "sociopathic genius with absolutely no social skills" than "so much smarter than everyone else there's no point in talking to them, with the exception of Watson". He placates Mrs. Hudson and pours tea for his friend and everything.

And this pastiche makes me want to go back and read all of the original work soon (had I world enough, and time). The characterizations of Holmes and Watson, and also LeStrade, are so engaging that part of me wants to hold them up against the originals. The tone of the writing feels very genuinely Watsonian. (Quotes are a right pain to make note of in the audio format – I usually hear lines I wish I could make note of while driving – but there have been several descriptive flourishes which made me smile at their Victorian purple tinge. Ah, there's one: "shafts of lunar illumination": beautiful) This is a Watson I want on my side, a Watson I want more of, staunch and solid and not remotely stupid. I love this Watson.

And I love this Holmes. A great deal of it is, of course, the really gorgeous tone of the narrator – his Holmes just rings out, clarion. But this is a Holmes that fits the template in my head: he feels right. This is one of the reasons I keep reading fan-fiction and pastiche and media tie-ins despite all the garbage that brings: when it's bad it's unconscionable, but when it's good – when the writer captures the voice of a well-known and well-loved character - it's so very much fun.

I also enjoyed the new part-time member of the team, Miss Mary Ann Monk. She's thisclose to being a cliché – but Lyndsay Faye pulls off a young woman toward whom it seems Watson and Holmes both harbor fondness, and indeed admiration – *and I don't mind*. Non-canon romance, liaisons outside of the bounds of the Official Story, is usually something that raises my hackles, but I found myself mentally nudging one or the other of the duo her way.

I think the only fault I can possibly find is that there's not enough Mrs. Hudson. I can live with it. And honestly, the use of Mrs. Hudson – particularly at the end – was wonderful. So ... not a fault, after all.

There is a comeuppance that is received a good ways into the book which was one of the most satisfying examples of just deserts ever. And the final confrontation hit all the right notes. And that's all I'll say about that.

Being me, I looked up Ripper history. Lyndsay Faye was completely faithful to it up to the point of Holmes's growing involvement, and in fact wove him into the reality with enviable skill. And part of the brilliance of this book is the life breathed into a one hundred and twenty-four year old story: new suspense is added with the question of how it would play out. Would Holmes manage to save any of the victims? How would his involvement affect the sequence of events? Would the inconclusive end – the Ripper kills just ending with no real explanation – be worked into the tale? I can't really answer the questions without massive spoilers, so instead I will say simply this:

*standsup*clap*clap*clap*clap*

Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com:]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted here illegally.)

As I've mentioned here before, I'm one of the millions out there with an obsessive love for the great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, originally the product of Victorian genre author Arthur Conan Doyle but that has since passed into the public domain, which now that anyone can write stories concerning has created in our modern times an entire "Holmesian" cottage industry of new tales, some of which are unofficially "blessed" by the Doyle estate and some of which aren't, not for legal reasons but to increase those stories' stature in the eyes of the buying public. (And in fact if you want a concrete, easy-to-see example of why it's so important that copyrights be held to a realistic timeframe, and why corporations shouldn't be allowed to own the rights to characters until the end of time, just look at all the detective projects in the last few decades that have exhibited Holmes-like characteristics [most recently, for example, the popular dark comedy *Monk*:], and how all these shows would've been sued into non-existence if the official rights to Sherlock Holmes were still owned by, say, Viacom or Time-Warner. All modern stories share at least some traits with the older stories that came before them, which is why it's so important that these older stories eventually fall back into the public domain after the authors and their families have died, so that culture will have a chance to grow and expand in the first place, instead of stagnate into an endless series of empty, exactly-repeating "authorized remakes" of all the stuff that already exists, like is happening more and more in our corporate-dominated days. Whew, sorry, soapbox digression over!)

I just finished one of the newest Holmesian tales out there, in fact, Lyndsay Faye's unbelievably great *Dust and Shadow*, which very much does carry the symbolic seal of approval from the official Doyle estate, not the least of which is because of taking on a hypothetical question that Holmes fans have been dreaming of ever since the stories were first being published -- that is, what if the World's Greatest Detective had tackled the real-life "Jack The Ripper" murders, which really did happen in London in the same late-1800s period that the fictional Holmes was supposed to have been an active detective there? It's a question that presents all kinds of creative opportunities, and here Faye just delivers and delivers and keeps on delivering, turning in an astonishingly entertaining book almost steampunkish in its fantasticality, yet just enough grounded in the real world to not offend the sensibilities of those simply into Victoriana. It skirts a thin line sometimes to get there, granted, and there are moments when the story's credulity comes close to tearing at the seams (and of course if you're not a fan of Victorian literature in the first place, the entire project in general will give you a case of eye-rolling so severe as to warrant a hospital trip); but rest assured that the author eventually pulls the convoluted tale off by the end in spades, even more remarkable given that this is the young New York actress's literary debut.

And indeed, how is it even possible to think of either Sherlock Holmes or Jack The Ripper without automatically thinking of the other? Certainly, news of both were being delivered to original Victorian-Age readers at the same time, sometimes side-by-side in their daily papers and weekly periodicals; the latest fictional escapades from the haughty, logic-obsessed antihero, the latest true atrocities from the monstrous yet brilliant psychopath (the very man who inspired the term "serial killer"), both of them heavily informed by the rapid advancements in science and psychology at the time, both of their stories shrouded in the dark, smoky mist of a pre-electric London, both of them dependent on the crime-filled back alleys of the city's worst neighborhoods in order to accomplish their aims. It's just natural to want to bring these two archetypes together, something that Holmes fans have been doing in their heads for over a hundred years now; and in fact, given that the development of Holmes' character was heavily influenced by the actual events going on in Doyle's lifetime, it should come as no surprise that their milieus should so neatly match up.

Now combine this with what has turned in recent years into a whole cottage industry of its own, the

obsession among so many modern true-crime fans in actually trying to solve the Ripper case, which for those who don't know has by now inspired hundreds of books and a dozen informed websites; and you can see why this might be the most perfect moment in history for someone to finally bring these cottage industries together into one giant uber-cottage industry. In fact, in what is sure to be a relief to all you Ripperologists out there, Faye herself starts out on the factual side with her own story, first laying down a narrative that pulls together all the undisputed details we now know about the cases; or that is, I'm not exactly an expert myself, but at least all the strange little details found here (the exotic grapes, the anti-Semite chalk graffiti) match up precisely with the only other detail-obsessed Ripper book I've ever read, Alan Moore's *From Hell* which was reviewed here last year. It's only then that Faye starts shoehorning in the Holmesian elements of the story, changing the details on the detective-side of the tale to complement the true facts of the Ripper murders, never the other way around; but like I said, "shoehorn" is too harsh a term here, in that the usual tropes of a Sherlock Holmes story actually match quite perfectly on their own with the real facts of the Ripper case.

And thus do you end up with a perfect hybrid of a book, which can be enjoyed in two different ways by two entirely different sets of people; it is not only a speculative nonfiction account of what Faye thinks happened during the Ripper murders, told through an inventive narrative format, but it's also a ripping Holmes pastiche that happens to have an extra-gory plotline, something as spectacular and melodramatic as any of the fictional Holmesian tales written over the decades. Because make no mistake, Faye gets in all the well-known beats that we "Baker Street Irregulars" demand in our Holmesian pastiches, which is what makes the genre in the first place so popular to try but so difficult to pull off: it is outlandish but not too much so; relies on a series of exotic costumes and locations; makes great use of Holmes' observational deduction of the world around him; is sure to play on Holmes' habit of doing morphine when bored, so to slow his freakishly fast brain down to normal human speed (with crime-solving being the only other thing besides dope to have this effect, one of the many tragically fascinating quirks about the character that makes us fans obsessive ones); and as is becoming more and more popular these days (although with its roots all the way back to the original Doyle tales), features a female with all the cunning and powers of Holmes himself, and who the notorious sociopath shares an uneasy mix of respect and sexual tension with throughout the book.

And thus does the majority of *Dust and Shadow* tick along in this fashion, with Faye building her case more and more over who she believes Jack The Ripper really was, as Holmes and company get closer and closer to nabbing this person in fictional form within our story; and if this was all the book had been, it still would've been okay, albeit more of a clever academic exercise than anything else, kind of like Michael Chabon's competent but ultimately disappointing Holmesian pastiche *The Final Solution*. But then in the last 50 pages, Faye does a truly remarkable thing, completely taking over emotional ownership of the story and ending it being any kind of pastiche at all, delivering an absolute knockout of a unique ending that has hints of modern psychology, J-horror and more, a tantalizing glimpse of just what kind of freaky masterpiece of a genre thriller Faye could put out if dealing with completely original elements from page one. In fact, I ended up bumping up my score today a little from what I was originally going to give it, just for having such a satisfying ending, which of course is almost a demand when it comes to stories like these -- because seriously, it just isn't a Holmes story it seems without the guilty party being discovered at the end in a spectacularly dramatic way, and a resolution brought about that lets us walk away from that story happy (even if the story itself doesn't end happily, which a lot of Holmesian stories don't).

Faye obviously has a deep understanding not only of the parts that make up a great genre story, but how to put them together in a highly enjoyable way, and I'm expecting big things from her in the future as she starts

tackling her first tales of her own complete invention. Although you should be warned that it's still ultimately a story just for fans of a specific genre (which is why it's getting the score it is today -- don't forget that to rate in the 9s at CCLaP, a book must transcend a specific genre and appeal to a general audience), for what it *is* trying to accomplish it does so almost perfectly, and for those looking specifically for a delightfully inventive Victorian tale, you will find almost nothing better in the entirety of 2009. *Dust and Shadow* comes highly recommended today for all of those people in particular.

Out of 10: **8.9**

Taryn Pierson says

The day after I started reading *Dust and Shadow*, I came across Lyndsay Faye's open letter to The President Who Shall Not Be Named, which made me bawl like a baby (in a hopeful way). So yes, I'm officially a fan for life. I've added every book in her back catalog to my TBR. It's happening. Anyway, topical feels-y blog posts aside, this is a great book on its own merits and was just the kind of cozy read I needed to make me feel better about life. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson investigate the notorious Jack the Ripper killings—what could be better? Holmes and Watson are the kind of gallant, stand-up guys you don't see too often these days, in literature or otherwise. They are the opposite of cold and hardened detectives; in fact, their empathy in the face of nightmarish violence is what makes the book so great. Certain politicians should take note.

More book recommendations by me at www.readingwithhippos.com

Christopher says

It's midnight, I'm yawning about once every 60 seconds, yet here I am finishing this book because the killer must be caught before I can be allowed to rest. And that's just about as high a praise as a book can get, yeah?

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

The Gods of Gotham was great so wanted to try Faye again. Pretty gutsy for a debut don't you think? To take on Sherlock Holmes and pit him against Jack the Ripper, **had to read it just to see if she'd pull it off - she did.** Obviously did her homework, it's pretty fabulous, with Faye's strength again her mastery of dialect. The Sherlock characters are faithfully rendered plus she's thrown in Mary Ann Monk, an enchanting gin-swilling tart who "*proves herself to be a woman of extraordinary fortitude*". You've got the gothic moody flavour of 1880's London with the Ripper adding a deliciously disturbing and suitably gruesome layer. It's suspenseful and well paced, even the Ripper's true identity came off believable. Most of all I loved the dialog, the bantering between Holmes & Watson, & Holmes little tiffs with his landlady Mrs. Hudson with her "*studied dignity & silent cynicism*."

He's your classic cerebral Holmes, brilliant and flawed, coldly precise with that "*air of self-importance about him which tries the patience of his few friends*" but reworked, a subtle interjection of slightly more fragility & humanity "*Though I had never seen Sherlock Holmes so determined, I had also never seen him so at sea.*" – liked it.

Cons: To slow a build, you're a third of the way in before it hooks you – but then it doesn't let go.)

Meanderings: My 3rd ripper novel, I know I'm not alone but I'm questioning the fixation. How many more times do these poor women have to die for my entertainment? This keeps up I may seek counseling...

Holmes shrugged. "The irregularity of the baseline, as well as the downward-slanting script, indicate he is moody and unpredictable. His ts are determined, his rs intelligent, and the confidence in his capitals is troubling."

Alexandra says

As both a Sherlock Holmes pastiche and a fictionalization of the Ripper murders, this novel is completely on point. The writing and character portrayal is delicious, the language use is perfection. Holmes is a bit warmer than his original self, but not so much it's jarring. Just enough to make him a tad more relatable and not quite so tedious.
