Jonathan Cranfield, *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the* Strand Magazine*, 1891-1930*, Edinburgh Critical Studies in Victorian Culture, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2017. 272 pp. £24.99.

As the title indicates, Jonathan Cranfield's *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the* Strand Magazine*, 1891-1930* takes great joy in blurring clear-cut boundaries. The periodisation from the birth of the *Strand Magazine* to the death of Arthur Conan Doyle and retirement of Herbert Greenhough Smith circumscribes the project and provides the main structuring principle, challenging both the dates of author biography and magazine history. Cranfield points out that the magazine 'is seldom seen as belonging to the twentieth century in any meaningful way despite spending only a single decade of its sixty years under the reign of Victoria' (5). In interrogating the perception of both magazine and author as primarily Victorian, he traces the continuation of and changes to the 'Victorian' through the early decades of the new century, and follows both Doyle and the *Strand* through their negotiations with a world that is changing around them. Perhaps most interesting to students of authorship is that he attempts to follow the interplay between author, publisher, medium, characters, genres, all through a changing cultural and political environment, while keeping an eye on the dialogic interplay with other texts published at the same time. This is the book's strength as well as its main challenge.

Cranfield sets out to offer 'a reading of the magazine and its most famous author through the lens of their relationship and the footprints that they left elsewhere upon British culture' (1). The result is a rich book, full to the brim of often overlooked texts and connections, particularly with regard to Edwardian literary life. It continues a developing scholarly interest in middlebrow and periodical research, and follows in the footsteps of Kate Jackson, Christopher Pittard, Winnie Chan, and Peter MacDonald, in tracing the editorial, commercial, and the medium's impact on literary production. Cranfield broadens the scope, however: he displays the complexities behind the public perception of the *Strand*, Doyle, Holmes, and Victoriana; follows the dialogue between Doyle and the *Strand* from harmony to increasing disagreement; traces the pattern of influences between both and the historical periods of which they are part, including through Doyle's writing for other journals and the reactions of contemporary journals to the content of the *Strand.* He attempts to capture the experience of Victorian readers who 'became its Edwardian readers; they weathered at least one world war and saw the world around them change beyond all recognition' (5). He also resituates stories by a range of *Strand* authors in the periodical as a medium, showing how individual stories can be read as part of a whole that spans (and connects) fiction and non-fiction. The ambition is laudable, and while the end result is somewhat fragmented, it could be said to fail better than many treatments of Doyle have succeeded.

The first chapter, 'The *Strand* at the Beginning', covers the period from 1891 to 1899 and traces the *Strand*'s creation as a departure from the more sensational and openly confrontational *Review of Reviews*, targeting the readers of *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Tit-bits.* It presents George Newnes' strategy in building a reading community, with the hiring of

Smith as fiction editor and bringing 'the broader network of advertisers and news-stand owners into the shared community of his success' (21). The advent of Sherlock Holmes is not seen as a precondition for the success, but the inclusion of Holmes 'raised it from a notable publishing success to a fully fledged cultural phenomenon' (22). This chapter reads one of Doyle's lesser-known short stories, 'The Voice of Science' (1891), in connection with the early Holmes stories, adhering to readings of the latter as reassuring to readers in a new and chaotic environment, and as preoccupied with the capitalist logic of wage work and a harmony in supply and demand. Students of authorship may find particular interest in an illustration of Winnie Chan's argument that the centrality of the short story to the monthly magazines affected 'artistic autonomy of the author' and 'residual notions of creative genius', with E. W. Hornung's *Strand* story 'Author! Author!' (1893). This use of short stories, recounted and used to illustrate wider trends of the magazine or British culture, is a staple of Cranfield's method in this book.

'Chivalric Machines', spanning 1899 to 1903, focuses on the magazine's turn to a rhetoric of science, masculinity, and modernity through the Second Boer War and the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris: there is an increasing focus on 'physical culture', with physical strength seen as a sign of a healthy empire, and a brief reorientation towards popular science and an increased status of scientists. Mounting tension between the rhetorics of modernity and Victorian values contributes to the idea of the 'chivalric machine' as a military ideal encompassing both the soldier as cog and individual. This chapter also traces a marked awareness of the end of an era with the turn of the century and the death of the Queen, noting how readers of H. G. Wells' *First Men in the Moon* (1901) and Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), published concurrently in the magazine, from being 'nineteenth-century Victorians' became 'twentieth-century Edwardians' (44). Cranfield points to an awareness of this in the magazine itself: 'readers of the *Strand* were addressed directly as transitional subjects' (43). A reading of Wells' story offers perhaps the best illustration of Cranfield's claim that the situational reading of the short stories as part of a wider text potentially alters the meaning it would have had for readers (and as a result an interesting example of a text at odds with its author's ideological position), in its claim that in echoing the *Strand*'s non-fiction Bedford's becomes the dominant voice of the story.

The next chapter, 'The Two Conan Doyles', covers 1903-1910 and tells the established story of the *Return* stories, Doyle's hesitancy, the financial incentive, and the writing of *Sir Nigel*. It is an interesting portrayal of Doyle's self-construction as an author, torn between two models of literary value—Doyle is both a believer in 'the agora theory of criticism' (84) and a believer in 'the idea of historical fiction as the self-evidently pre-eminent literary form' (96). The chapter complicates the conventional narrative of literary vs pecuniary value, however, by observing that Doyle's idea of what constituted literary value was itself out of date: *Sir Nigel* was received as a 'boy's book' (99) in the *Saturday Review.* Following his method, Cranfield presents readings of the stories to illustrate what he perceives as Doyle's position: 'The Empty House' (1903) 'plays self-consciously with its own mythos to the extent that we find Holmes and Watson surreptitiously gazing across an unfamiliarly familiar Baker Street at a Sherlockian

silhouette. … The "illusion" of the dummy echoed the illusion of the stories themselves, brought into being through the shared responsibility of capital, editors and a professionalised publishing *milieu* as much as through the individual will of the author' (89). This does an admirable job of illustrating a general scepticism of the *Return* stories, but does not critically engage with the idea, which the chapter echoes, that if the stories spring from a financial incentive, they are somehow not 'real'. One of the strongest aspects of the chapter is the interesting reading of the *Return* stories as the first major example of neo-Victorian fiction. This ties in with the chapter's attempt to show a Doyle who in the debate over divorce reform 'began to construct himself as post-Victorian' (92).

The fourth chapter, titled 'Lost Worlds and World Wars', covers the period from 1910 to 1918. It might be more accurate to say the chapter covers two periods: the first continues the narrative set up in the preceding chapter, of increased deviation between Doyle and the *Strand*. Doyle's fiction, with a particular emphasis on the Challenger stories, is seen as an attempt to reconcile science and modernity with romance and older forms of adventure fiction. The *Strand,* funded in large part by new consumerism, is attempting a move towards the more *au courant*, embracing cinema, stars, and vaudeville records, and displaying a 'growing unease over political questions' (107). While Doyle is presented as the earnest opposition to the new frivolity of the *Strand*, however, the magazine's position on Germany is presented as deeply Victorian: 'the *Strand* took a clear line on these issues, insisting upon the durability of Victorian bonds and family ties' (111), and Kaiser Wilhelm is consequently portrayed as a misunderstood figure only setting out to 'emulate the British' (111). This makes the *Strand*'s complete about-face when war breaks out the most effective section of the chapter. Likewise, Cranfield's analysis of how the magazine redefines Britain as modern in opposition to a Germany defined as traditionalist, shows how the war has implications for the attitude to what was previously presented in the magazine as sinister modernising forces. The war section of the chapter also emphasises the propaganda efforts of authors like Doyle and Wells, who were employed by the Propaganda Office, but also shows how the *Strand*'s history of building a broad ideological consensus over several years lent itself very well to this work.

'Flights from Reason', which deals with the period from 1918 to 1925, is framed as a fall from grace: Doyle's attempts to use the *Strand* for his Spiritualist work, and his endorsement of the Cottingley fairies, place him at odds with the magazine and its readers. It traces the mix of ridicule and debate which characterised the *Strand*'s attitude to Spiritualism, and shows that following the Cottingley affair, spiritualism vanishes from the magazine, with one exception: Doyle's *The Land of Mist* (1926). Cranfield provides an analysis of the book as an inversion of the quest narrative found in *The Lost World* (1912), noting the usefulness of Challenger as a vehicle for Doyle's Spiritualist beliefs and his perception of the media as an enemy of truth. Doyle's Spiritualism is seen as both iconoclastic and radical, and at the same time an attempt to 'couch the "Victorian" values of the *Strand* in new terms' (163). The chapter argues, however, that these values were no longer the core of the magazine. It provides a series of interesting analyses of various short stories by other writers, including D. H. Lawrence's 'Tickets, Please!' (1918) and Edward Cecil's 'The Man Who Understood Women' (1919), both of which are seen as

critiques of patriarchal Victorian treatment of women (though not necessarily read in that way by the *Strand*'s readers).

The concluding chapter tells the story of the *Strand*'s decline in the 20s, both in terms of profit and influence, ending with Doyle's death and Smith's retirement in 1930. It situates the *Strand* in relation to other magazines of the period, like the *English Review* and the *Bookman*, and shows the impact of the new competition from both popular newspapers and glossy magazines as carriers of middlebrow cultural trends. The reading community constructed by the *Strand* is fragmented into a series of specialist reading communities. In part as a result of the economic impact of American magazines on the British market, popular, established authors became too expensive for the magazine, and the monthly pace was no longer of interest to advertisers. Moreover, Cranfield writes, 'the *Strand* suffered because its reputation was so closely aligned with a number of hugely significant names, trends and brands that became retrospectively fixed in the public imagination as Victorian' (194). He provides a series of comparative discussions highlighting the differences between the *Strand* in the 20s and the 90s, seeing the magazine as an indicator of when modernism achieved cultural saturation. He traces how the *Strand* changed to keep up, for example by including celebrity journalism in a way which contrasts sharply with the earlier stately interviews, and through a very interesting series of articles he shows how it comes to grips with innovations in technology, architecture and art. The chapter also notes the continued presence of Doyle, though not his spiritualism. It rescues some of Doyle's short fiction from obscurity, and reads them as 'careful critique of the magazine's traditional ideological foundations' (212), presenting a 'radical reformulation of "Victorian" values in a way that might fit them for enduring purpose in the new millennium' (215). The final Challenger narratives are read as providing a 'submerged ideological connection between Conan Doyle and the multivalent culture of postmodernism that would arise after his death' (217), but also a series of warnings and resistances to the idea of knowledge production 'independently of national or political ideology' (221).

As said above, this book is a cornucopia of overlooked articles and observations of interactions between Doyle, the *Strand*, and wider cultural movements and historical events. The rich detail of each period and the enlightening connections made by seeing individual stories in their wider context make the book well worth reading. To Doyle biography it provides a much-needed, textured context, and a willingness to lift unknown stories into the light and make them part of the critical discussion. For authorship studies it offers an instructive illustration of the interconnections that produce writing, dismantling to some extent the tendency to erase the untidiness of culture. The wide field and the lack of a clear boundary, however, also produce a fragmented effect, while simultaneously introducing another type of homogenisation: close readings of texts by other writers to illustrate the points attributed to Doyle leads to a tendency to treat what supports a narrative, rather than account for what does not or what complicates the claim. This is reinforced by regular reference to 'the reader of the *Strand*', which appears to be Cranfield's own construction based on his own readings of the magazine rather than any member of the historical readership. Likewise, the use of Doyle's Holmes stories is

inconsistent. In part, this seems to spring out of a desire to tell an alternative history of both Doyle and the *Strand*, and to lift both out of the shadow of Sherlock Holmes. While the impulse is understandable, the book's analysis would have been strengthened if it had been willing to incorporate the sometimes discordant notes offered by the Holmes stories in a more consistent manner. In connection with the discussion of the interconnections between the Boer War and 'physical culture' in chapter two, for example, where Doyle's "articles and stories speak of a necessity to redraw cultural boundaries to more masculine dimensions and, in doing so, exculpate and occlude the 'feminised' cultural domains which were frequently linked to physical and moral weakness" (55), it would have been interesting to see a discussion acknowledging the reading of the bohemian Holmes as embodying precisely these tensions. Instead, only the short story which is most immediately useful for confirming the connection between individual and imperial health, 'The Three Students', is used. When marriage is presented as 'one of the key pillars of the *Strand*'s fiction' (92), Holmes again problematises the pattern. Cranfield wants to see Doyle's scepticism of the institution as arriving post-hiatus, tied to a new questioning of Victorian values and his campaign for divorce law reform, through a 'repetitive fascination with issues pertaining to marital unease and its unintended consequences' (90), but it is hard to see how one could not trace the very same patterns in 'A Scandal in Bohemia', 'A Case of Identity', 'The Speckled Band', 'The Engineer's Thumb' and 'The Noble Bachelor'—all stories from the 1890s. Following the *Return* stories, Holmes disappears, to be replaced by Challenger, and Brigadier Gerard does not appear at all. The effect is one of a much stronger periodisation than is perhaps warranted, which reinforces the established story of a Doyle moving from science and detection to spiritualism and decline.

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