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Richard Joseph Knapp

Iowa State University

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Mark Twain, Detective

by

Richard Joseph Knapp

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In this paper I intend to consider how, when, and why Mark Twain used elements of the detective story in his work. Of all Twain's works only five are true detective stories: Simon Wheeler, Detective; Pudd'nhead Wilson; Tom Sawyer, Detective; "The Stolen White Elephant;" and "A Double-Barreled Detective Story." At times he produced material which contained elements common to detective stories, and he also produced work which bordered on the detective genre but did not quite fit the mold.

For example, "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut" (1876) is a story that may seem to fit the category of detective story. The tale of a man who is visited by a dwarf (which later turns out to be his conscience), the dwarf's murder, and an ensuing crime spree, the story is something of a mystery. But a detective story? No. For one thing no detectives are present, the major criterion for any detective story.

The American Claimant (1892) appears to be more a case of mistaken identity (a motif Twain made great use of throughout his career) than anything else. Instead of a detective story it is a sort of mystery tale, a mystery created when the protagonist and a criminal trade clothes.

Finally, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899) is a tale of revenge, not murder. Set in a small town of self-righteous citizens, the story is an account of how one man, falsely accused and driven from
Hadleyburg, who returns to expose the town's residents as the hypocrites they really are.

All considered, these works lack a great many things traditionally associated with detective stories. Nowhere in them is the equivalent of Sherlock Holmes, puffing his pipe, ferreting out clues, and, by means of brilliant deduction, inferring seemingly impossible solutions. Nowhere is seen the equivalent of the bumbling yet likable Watson, intelligent in his own right, yet decidedly inferior to the ingenious Mr. Holmes when it comes to high-level analysis. Nowhere is seen the equivalent of Professor Moriarty, the incorrigible yet worthy nemesis who avoids capture. Instead, we merely find a group of interesting semi-mysteries.

In the years 1828-29, Eugene Francois Vidocq, a Frenchman, published *Memoires de Vidocq*, a fictionalized account of his life as founder of the world's first detective agency and what might be considered western culture's first detective stories. (The agency would evolve into the Sûrete, the French equivalent of England's Scotland Yard.) Others, such as Emile Gaboriau and Allan Pinkerton, soon followed. Often, these stories were embellished accounts of detective cases, semiaccurate and pregnant with sensationalism.

But most authorities would agree that the father of the ratiocinative detective story was Edgar Allan Poe. With the publication of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" in 1841, followed by
"The Mystery of Marie Roget" in 1842-1843 and "The Purloined Letter" in 1845, Poe produced what became the basic formula for the classical detective story.

What makes Poe the best candidate as founder of the detective story is his establishing what became traditional features of the genre. For example, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" Poe introduced: the nameless narrator; the convention of the detective being able to follow the thoughts of his companion effortlessly; the locked-door mystery; the "red herring"; and the detective's long explanation at the end of the story. Poe's "The Mystery of Marie Roget," is also important because it introduced the concept of the armchair detective. This derivation of the genre allowed the detective to solve the mystery often without leaving his home. Finally, in "The Purloined Letter," Poe introduced three more conventions that are sometimes used: the ultra obvious concealment, the staged diversion, and the protagonist's involvement in affairs of state.

Detective stories grew in popularity and by the late 1870s and early 1880s a virtual flood of detective novels saturated the reading public, the leading swell of the wave being a "product not produced entirely as fiction by professional writers but as semifictional accounts of their own exploits by former policemen or detectives, foremost of whom was Allan Pinkerton." ¹ Other authors of the day, such

as George S. McWaters, Captain George P. Burnham, and J.H. Warren, did not achieve the same popularity that Pinkerton did, but they were still widely read.

In contrast to the Poe's ratiocinatively influenced armchair detective who often ran the investigation from his study, Pinkerton, as Vidocq and Gaboriau before him, was concerned with tracking down the criminal primarily through the accumulation of evidence and constant surveillance. According to Frank Rogers in the introduction to Twain's *Simon Wheeler, Detective*, the typical Pinkerton novel followed a rather predictable format which always ended in the capture of the criminal. Initially Pinkerton would dispatch hordes of detectives to the scene of the crime, some in disguise. Once on the scene they collected any and all data concerning the crime and shadowed the principal suspects in the case for as long as the situation dictated, whether it be days or months. Often another Pinkerton agent would be dispatched who tried to convince the criminal of his friendly intent, and then beguiled the suspect into a confession. This course of events led to the eventual capture of the suspect and a confrontation with the alleged friend at the ensuing trial, which proceeding ended in the suspect begging for clemency.

Ultimately, thirty-two years after the publication of "The Purloined Letter," Arthur Conan Doyle would popularize the detective genre and make it a permanent fixture in the western literary world.

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with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, the story that launched the Sherlock Holmes series. Doyle continued to publish stories about Holmes until shortly before his death in 1930. But more important than the popularity that Doyle's works achieved is the fact that he borrowed heavily from Poe.

Like "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Doyle (in "A Study in Scarlet") made use of a narrator (Watson) who was an active participant in the story yet clearly detached from the main character (Holmes). And like Poe's Dupin, Holmes was capable of following the thoughts of his companion with minimal effort. Doyle also established Holmes, as Poe did Dupin, as an eccentric.

Poe's Dupin is well-born but appears to have lost his fortune, and seems unconcerned with re-establishing it. He and the narrator spend their days "in a time eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions, . . . and tottering to its fall in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain." During daylight hours they stay in darkened rooms, reading, writing, and conversing by feeble candlelight, admitting nobody and only venturing forth into the streets under the cover of darkness.

Although Dupin is eccentric, content to bide his time in pursuit of questionable goals under questionable conditions, he does possess great analytical skills. By his powers of deductive and inductive

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reasoning he knows how peoples' minds work, and is able to project what conclusions they will draw from a series of given events. He can weigh different pieces of evidence to determine which are of value, infer all that need be known from an amalgam of information, fit the appropriate pieces together, and determine which essential parts are missing. But when in the process of exercising this ability in which "he seemed ... to take an eager delight, ... his manners at these moments were frozen and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble. ..." As if this description by the narrator were not enough, he later speaks of how Dupin's "trance" led him to reflect upon the "old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul ... and amuse [himself] with the fancy of a double Dupin--the creative and the resolvent." Here is a man who is incapable, or at least unwilling, to function within the boundaries of normal society, yet who at the same time functions exceptionally when called upon to use his ratiocinative abilities.

Similar characteristics are found in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. Though on one side he is capable of deducing facts apparently from thin air (e.g., determining a person's occupation and mode of travel by a crease in his clothing, a callused thumb, or mud-splattered sleeves), his character also has a darker side. In chapter two of A Study in Scarlet Watson notes that Holmes occasionally takes on a "dreamy, vacant expression" and hints that it might be induced by the use of

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narcotics.

By the middle of the 19th century the classical detective genre was growing. From the genre ran two strands. One strand, that which Allan Pinkerton helped make popular in the United States, found its roots in the work of Eugene Francois Vidocq. The formula is highly physical, action packed if you will, in that it depends upon the dispatching of detectives in disguise to collect voluminous data and apprehend the criminal. The format is predictable. A more cerebral strand of the genre is the classical detective story. Fathered by Poe, this form depends upon an amateur detective (such as Dupin) with highly developed analytical skills to solve the crime and capture the criminal. Working alone, the detective is able to outwit the criminal. At times he solves crimes without leaving his room. Unlike the Pinkerton-style stories that depend upon action to hold the reader's interest, the classical detective story depends upon surprise and closely reasoned plots. The amateur detective enjoys exercising his ratiocinative skills.

Mark Twain was aware of both strands of the genre. Between the years 1877 and 1902 Twain wrote three novels (Simon Wheeler, Detective Pudd'nhead Wilson and Tom Sawyer, Detective) and two short stories ("The Stolen White Elephant" and "A Double-Barreled Detective Story") in which he employed formulaic elements of the detective story, drawn from classical patterns as well as from the Vidocq/Pinkerton models.
John Cawelti, in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, divides the ratiocinative detective story into four parts: situation, pattern of action, characters and relationships, and setting.

The classical detective story, according to Cawelti, begins with an unsolved crime and moves toward its solution. Although the mystery usually centers on the identity and motive of the criminal, the objective may be to determine how the crime was committed, or to establish evidence connecting the criminal and the crime. Murder is often used to pique the reader's interest, and sexual or grotesque overtones are often associated with the crime, but political intrigue is sometimes an element. In such tales, the detective is a gifted amateur who solves the problem for the pleasure provided by the intellectual exercise.

Cawelti identifies six elements prominent in the classical detective formula: introduction of the detective; introduction of crime and clues; investigation; announcement of the solution; explanation of the solution; and denouement. At the story's outset the detective often displays his special competence. Thus the story, which begins in the serenity and order of the detective's apartment, is usually violently uprooted, moved into the chaos of the outer world, and finally returned to the sanctuary of the detective's abode. To help reinforce the image of detachment and to help create the puzzle, the story normally is told by a third person. In Poe's case the
narrator was anonymous; Doyle uses Watson. The description of the
crime often immediately follows the introduction of the detective,
although this arrangement is sometimes inverted. More important is the
presence of a paradox: the crime must be surrounded by many tangible
clues, making it obvious that some person or thing is responsible, yet
the crime must appear unsolvable. Essential to the investigation is a
parade of witnesses, suspects, false solutions, and at least one "red
herring." While this parade passes before the reader, apparently
leading him toward a clarification of the mystery, he is in fact led to
an impasse. The reader, misled and confused, looks to the detective,
who employs powers of observation to reach a rational solution, one
that both removes the mystery and rescues the character(s) the reader
wishes to see exonerated. The final three patterns of action
(announcement of solution, explanation, and denouement) often occur
simultaneously or in rapid succession. The explanation thus insures
surprise and fulfillment by restating elements of the crime initially
presented in an out-of-order sequence. A brief denouement usually
accompanies or follows the explanation.

5 Audrey Peterson, Victorian Masters of Mystery (New York:
from this pattern was attempted by Wilkie Collins in The Moonstone and
in The Woman in White when he made use of multiple narrators. An
Englishman, Collins, like his contemporaries Dickens and Thackeray,
devoted a good portion of his career to producing novels of social
comment. But he is best remembered for these two mystery/detective
novels. Both are told through a series of narrators, which Collins
uses to control the information given to the reader. But in The
Moonstone he also introduces a detective and the whodunit formula.
The four main character roles are victim, criminal, detective, and those threatened by the crime but helpless to do anything about it. The victim should be given enough attention to attract the reader's interest, but not so much as to detract from the detective. Poe, for example, made the victims obscure but their deaths gruesome and mystifying (consider "The Murders in The Rue Morgue"), thus focusing on how the murder was done.

The detective is attributed with certain qualities, such as aristocratic detachment, brilliance, eccentricity, intuitive insight, and extraordinary powers of induction and deduction. These gifts allow the detective the ability to expose the most unusual secrets, and they are used to identify the criminal and to exonerate the innocent. The characters who are involved with the crime but who need the detective's help to solve it are the friends of the detective (like Watson), the bungling members of the police force, and the collection of innocent suspects who require exoneration from suspicion of any wrongdoing. Suddenly disrupted by the abnormality of the crime, their lives are disrupted. Thus they require the detective to re-establish their equilibrium, to put them at ease.

Described below are the formulaic elements Twain chose for inclusion in his detective tales. Using the criteria set down by Frank R. Rogers concerning Pinkerton-like stories, I have sought groups of
detectives smothering the crime scene in gaudy disguises and with a propensity for gathering all clues (relevant or irrelevant), detectives of dogged determination shadowing the suspect, and confederates planted to beguile the suspect into a confession. Under the criteria set down by Cawelti concerning the classical detective story, I have examined situations, patterns of action, characters and relationships, and settings. Certainly, Twain did not use all conventions of the genre; however, he employed enough to allow the conclusion that he was quite familiar with classical tales and the Pinkerton formula.

Robert Rowlette touches upon Twain's use of the detective genre in Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson. In it he examines the form and substance of Pudd'nhead Wilson, concentrating on the areas of slavery, detection, and twinhood. By tracing the development of these elements in Twain's work prior to Pudd'nhead Wilson, Rowlette tries to determine the meaning of each of these themes to Twain and to establish Twain's method and intentions. Rowlette concludes that Twain's burlesques of detective fiction are due in large part to his belief that social ills (specifically innocent people being unjustly accused) are often a consequence of man's inability to reason properly. He further states that Twain's use of the courtroom scene to exonerate the innocent is a product of his hope that man would transcend faulty reasoning and alleviate social problems. He breaks Twain's detective stories into two groups: Simon Wheeler, Detective and "The Stolen White Elephant"
comprise a group Rowlette labels Pinkerton burlesques; Pudd'nhead Wilson, Tom Sawyer, Detective, and "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" comprise a group he labels Doyle burlesques.

His assessment of the former two stories as lampoons of Pinkerton's works are solidly grounded. Twain's use of the popular conventions found in Pinkerton's stories is unmistakable in Simon Wheeler, Detective and "The Stolen White Elephant." And throughout the stories Twain also makes direct reference to Pinkerton's detective agency.

Rowlette's appraisal of Pudd'nhead Wilson, Tom Sawyer, Detective, and "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" also seems accurate. But by lumping the three works under the category of enlightened human reasoning, Rowlette leans too heavily upon this recurring theme in accounting for Twain's detective writings. It is true that by ignoring certain aspects of Twain's life and literature Rowlette makes a persuasive argument, but it is somewhat lacking. For example, by taking into account Twain's financial duress at the time Pudd'nhead Wilson and Tom Sawyer, Detective were published, one can easily see a more natural impetus for producing the works. Rowlette's account of "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" is also reasonable, to a point. True, the story also contains elements common to burlesques on Doyle's writing. But in no way should it be considered a tribute to man's ability to right injustice, unless one considers a trail of ruined lives justice. On the contrary, the inhumane behavior of at least four characters (Archy, Archy's mother, Jacob Fuller, and Fetlock Jones)
would appear instead a scathing attack upon human nature.

I intend to take a different view than Rowlette of Twain's detective fiction. Whereas Rowlette's analysis focused basically on thematic aspects, mine stresses financial pressures and Twain's history as a satirist. I hope to show how factors more immediate than human enlightenment influenced Twain's product, and how Twain adjusted his product to contend with these factors. Like Rowlette, I will divide Twain's work into two major groups: burlesques of Pinkerton's work and burlesques of Doyle's work.

Mark Twain had by the 1870s made his name and a comfortable living as a satirist, both in writing and lecturing. (His sojourn into the world of investment would not prove to be so kind.) He began his writing career as a reporter/correspondent from 1862-1869, and also published short stories during this period. By the late 1860s he had established himself as a humorist/satirist, a talent he fell back on from time to time over the course of his rollercoaster-like financial

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5 Robert L. Gale, *Plots and Characters in The Works of Mark Twain* (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoestring Press, 1973) xix-xxi. From 1862-64 Twain worked as a reporter on the Virginia City Enterprise; from 1864-66 he worked for San Francisco newspapers, including the Morning Call, and magazines; in 1865 "Jim Smiley and his Jumping Frog" was published; in 1866 he lectured in San Francisco and was a correspondent for the San Francisco Union; in 1867 he was correspondent for the San Francisco Alta California and published The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and other sketches; and in 1869 Twain bought an interest in the Buffalo Express, contributed to it, and published The Innocents Abroad.
life. But the work which catapulted him to national prominence was *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), a narrative of his excursion to Europe and the Holy Land. In 1870, Twain, after an unusual courtship, married Olivia Langdon, a member of a well-to-do eastern family, and his financial and literary success by this time appeared assured. The ensuing six years found him quite active: he issued four major works (*Roughing It*, 1872; *The Gilded Age*, 1873; *Sketches, Old and New*, 1875; and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1876), and fathered three children (Langdon, 1870; Susan, 1872; and Clara, 1874).

Twain first used detective genre elements in Chapter 31 of *Life on the Mississippi* (1874). In relating a dying old man's story of a murder/mystery, there is a reference to the difficulty a detective would have trying to solve the crime, an allusion to the Pinkerton Agency. (More pointed assaults upon Pinkerton came later.) But more important than this is how the old man discovers the identity of the criminals and manages his revenge: through the use of his ratiocinative prowess the old man determines the criminals' occupation (military service) and how long they have been employed. He then trails the suspects to two military units, determines through deductive reasoning which company his quarries are attached to, and sets out to

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7 Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966) 52. Twain first saw the face of his future bride in the form of an ivory miniature which belonged to Olivia's brother Charlie in 1867 while on the *Quaker City* cruise, and immediately after his return to the United States he began his courtship, which culminated in a request by Olivia's mother for letters of reference. It seemed she was concerned that he was little more than a vagabond, a bohemian, a "west slope humorist."
find and kill the man who murdered his wife and daughter. All the while he is armed with no more information than a thumb print, the knowledge that the man who killed his family is missing a thumb, and his ratiocinative abilities.

Two elements Twain borrowed from Pinkerton are the use of outlandish disguises and the idea of befriending the criminal to gain his confession. The old man dresses in "various odds and ends of clothing" and a pair of blue goggles, a disguise Twain employs again in *Tom Sawyer, Detective*. He also establishes himself as a confidant of the alleged criminal for the sake of obtaining a confession, a technique common to Pinkerton's work. But the reader is left wondering why the criminals could not recognize a man they had seen and known only days earlier when he is now made up in such a paltry disguise. (The criminals also make use of disguise during the act of robbing him and his family.)

In Chapter 23 of *Tom Sawyer* (1876) the reader encounters the archetypical "red herring" as embodied by Muff Potter. Potter, accused of murder and held in the local jail, is convinced he committed the gruesome act while in a drunken stupor, and he somberly awaits his pending trial and execution. (This motif is found again in *Tom Sawyer, Detective.*) The parade of witnesses, all called before the jury to give incriminating and what appears to be damning evidence against the accused, is also present. Finally, when all seems lost and the "hanging" of Muff Potter appears a foregone conclusion, the explanation of the crime is given, this time by Tom Sawyer, who has been called to
the witness stand by the defense attorney. His testimony results in the release of the falsely accused. We find in this short passage the announcement of the solution, the explanation of the solution, and denouement, all first rate examples of Cawelti's criteria. (Although Injun Joe, the real killer, is not captured, he does, for all practical purposes, confess.)

The final paragraphs of Chapter 24 indicate that Twain was also aware of and had formed opinions about the Pinkerton-style detective stories flooding the literary market at the time. The few sentences from the story concerning the matter aptly express Twain's opinion:

One of those omniscient and awe-inspiring marvels, a detective, came up from St. Louis, moused around, shook his head, looked wise, and made that sort of astounding success which members of his craft usually achieve. That is to say, he 'found a clue.' But you can't hang a 'clue' for murder.

Twain's initial attempt at a detective novel came in 1877 when he began work on Simon Wheeler, Detective, a book that would not see print until 1963. And although there are certain elements of the traditional detective story contained within this novel, such as an

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9 Mark Twain, Wheeler xxvii. Although the Simon Wheeler concept first appeared in the form of a play in 1877, the idea itself may have gone back as far as 1873. With the encouragement of William Dean Howells Twain began work on the novel soon after the play's opening. But by February of 1878 Twain abandoned it and the work went unfinished.
investigation resulting from an apparent murder, it is by no means a replica of the classical detective story. Instead, it appears to be a satire of Pinkerton's novels.

The main character of the story, Simon Wheeler, is a Missouri farmer who is unable to excel in any of a variety of enterprises he has dabbled in. Consequently he falls back on his agricultural roots for his livelihood. But in his spare time he voraciously consumes every dime detective novel he can get his hands on, the cornerstone of his reading being Tales of a Detective, by Allan Pinkerton. As a consequence of this hobby and his rather ethereal nature, he ultimately creates a world that parallels reality where he is the chief of a group of detectives.

Although left unfinished, this work possesses what Frank R. Rogers refers to as elements of Pinkerton's works. For instance, when the escaped convict Jack Belford wanders into the area, he is soon followed by a trio of detectives, who try to find and arrest him. Twain also makes use of ample disguises (Jack Belford trading clothes with Hugh Burnside, and Simon Wheeler dressed as an old woman).

But besides these more traditional elements, Twain makes an even greater effort to lampoon the Pinkerton tales. For example, Wheeler is obviously a bit of a bumbler, incapable of arriving at adequate conclusions about things and/or people either because of inadequate "clews" or because of his inability to separate good "clews" from bad

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10 Twain, Wheeler xxiv.
ones. (A characteristic the Pinkertons possess is the tendency to collect any and all information concerning a case, no matter its insignificance.) Possibly the most telling occurrence of the story is when Simon Wheeler mistakes Hugh Burnside for a log and sits on him to rest. Not long after this he removes his hat, sets it on the ground and begins pacing around it, directing his thoughts and a barrage of dialogue at the unarmed head-piece because it helps him to think. An account of Wheeler's preposterous notions of how a detective works is also given.\footnote{11} Finally, Twain attributes to Wheeler all the characteristics essential in a good detective: an insatiable appetite for detective books (which increases with every one read); the perception of a Don Quixote; and an unequalled imagination (which contains within it his own detective's world). Twain ultimately refers to Pinkerton as a "two-penny hero" and calls Simon Wheeler the "true detective."

Just as cutting and pointed is Twain's consideration of the three detectives sent by the "Flathead" from St. Louis. Throughout the story the motto "We Never Sleep" is repeated, direct reference to the Pinkerton Agency. And attributed to these watchful detectives is less than adequate intelligence. When they first arrive on the scene they think the escaped convict Jack Belford is "grazing" the countryside disguised as a cow or a wolf. Over the course of two hours, and helped

\footnote{11} Twain, Wheeler 106-109. In this section Wheeler does not look for the natural things a man might do but the most "unnaturalist," which gives a good indication of how Twain views the Pinkerton detective.
by Wheeler, they determine that cows in Missouri are not shod and that Belford has disguised himself as a cow. By the time the team of tenacious detectives finally spot their man he convinces them he has earlier seen their cow (man) climbing a tree, and persuades them to follow. (The detectives do not recognize him because he has traded clothes with Hugh Burnside.)

Obviously Twain is intent upon poking fun at Pinkerton (witness the detectives) and also at the concept of superhuman ratiocinative power. (In The Mysterious Stranger through young Satan, and in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court through Hank Morgan, he carries this idea a step further when he states that the human race is void of reason.) But he is also warning of the dangers inherent in taking the Pinkerton-like novels seriously. He implies it is bad enough some detectives do.

Also in this work Twain develops a character who possesses something of a dual character. Poe had developed Dupin, who was analytically brilliant on the one hand, but exhibited a dark, somber side to his person. Twain, though, dispenses with the somber character in favor of a nearly clownish personality. On the one hand somewhat of an eccentric, Simon Wheeler is tolerated by the town, the population condescending to him. On the other hand, when he transcends the real world in favor of the detective's, he becomes more a village idiot than anything harmful. Decidedly different than Dupin, the character nonetheless indicates that Twain has given some thought to the concept of duality.
But probably the most effective satire that Twain wrote of Pinkerton's work was the short story "The Stolen White Elephant" (1882). In it he follows most closely the format that Pinkerton used, and thus he can more easily and directly lampoon Pinkerton's formula.

For example, upon the report that an elephant has disappeared, Inspector Blunt dispatches 30 men to guard the scene of the crime. Thirty more stand in relief of the first group, and countless detectives are immediately put on the elephant's trail. An entire page is devoted to the elephant's description as given to Blunt by the narrator, consisting of information about its family background, a physical description (including its dimensions), and its eating habits. (No bit of information is too small, at least in Blunt's estimation.) Finally, after expressing concern about the numerous avenues of escape and hiding places available to an elephant in Jersey City, Blunt issues 55,000 copies of the animal's photo to be distributed, although he voices concern that the photo shows the elephant with his trunk in his mouth, and as this is not his normal posture it could conceivably be confusing to the detectives.

Soon eleven theories suggesting what happened to the elephant are offered, all different in every respect but one: they all agree that the animal did not leave through the broken-down wall of the building he was held in, but that this was merely a clever diversion designed to confuse the detectives. Meanwhile, massive numbers of telegrams, all
contradictory, arrive from the detectives. Citing missing haystacks and vandalized bottle factories as clues (one detective misidentifies holes left from uprooted shadetrees as elephant tracks), the reports indicate the animal is in all areas of the northeast United States at once. Even P. T. Barnum, seeing the value of such an occurrence, agrees to purchase advertising to display on the side of the animal for the price of $7,000.

After weeks of searching, the reports stop, and the elephant's rotting carcass is accidentally found in the basement of the detectives' office, amidst 60 detectives, some sleeping and others playing cards. Meanwhile a telegram arrives from a detective, "one of the finest minds on the force," who has been unable to locate a telegraph office for three weeks, but who is 1,000 miles away and hot on the elephant's trail.

Twain's final swipe at Pinkerton comes on the last page of the story in the form of a newspaper article, the one dissenter among a wave of reviews praising the detectives' work:

Great is the detective! He may be a little slow in finding a little thing like a mislaid elephant—he may hunt him all day and sleep with his rotting carcass for three weeks, but he will find him at last—if he can get the man who mislaid him to show him the place!"  

12 Mark Twain, The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1957) 469.
Twain's first concentrated effort at a full-length classical detective story was *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, published in 1894, but, in many respects, it deviates from the conventions of the genre. For one thing, Twain uses much of the novel to set the stage for the murder. The story begins with the introduction of Pudd'nhead into a small Missouri river town, the elaboration of his eccentric personality and his above average intelligence, and the switching of two nearly identical infants. Twain also establishes well-detailed backgrounds of his main characters, develops characters fully, and lays the groundwork for the ensuing crime. In all, Twain uses the first eighteen chapters (164 pages) to establish the environment leading up to the murder; he brings the mystery to conclusion within the final forty pages.

Because the story is told from an omniscient point of view, the reader is aware of the crime, who committed it, the motive for the action, and how it was accomplished. In the eyes of the reader the criminal and the crime are indisputably connected. Besides this, the detective has a great personal interest in the outcome of the trial: the prime suspect is a personal friend of his.

However, some elements in the novel are parallel to the conventions of the classical detective story. For example, the crime is murder and Wilson is an amateur detective. Twain also keeps the reader's attention directed towards the traditional focal point, the detective, in spite of the fact that the details of the murder are displayed for the reader to see.
In the eyes of the reader Wilson is quickly proven superior to the general population of Dawson's Landing. But he is nonetheless labeled a "pudd'nhead" by locals incapable of understanding his wit as revealed in an unfortunate remark. Unable to begin his career in law as a result, he is reduced to earning his living as a surveyer and part-time accountant. Twenty years later he finally has the chance to redeem his career as a lawyer, and when the opportunity beckons he is pitted against seemingly insurmountable odds. All the while the readers know the true identity of the killer and the injustice about to be inflicted upon an innocent man.

But in this way the readers remain focused on the detective and the trial. They wonder if Wilson will be able to arrive at the appropriate conclusion and save the defendant, if he will finally be able to salvage his career in law, and if he will expose the secret of the switched infants which occurred 23 years earlier. Though these are unusual variations in the detective genre, they are nonetheless effective.

Cawelti's patterns of action are also only partially used by Twain. Though Wilson is not introduced as a detective, amateur or otherwise, many aspects do parallel the criteria. For one thing, Wilson has the special ability of collecting and classifying

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fingerprints. And to the reader the crime appears unsolvable, although to the courtroom audience the conclusion is obvious. Also, a number of witnesses are paraded in front of the jury. And finally, the Italian twins, Luigi and Angelo, are genuine "red herrings."

The final three patterns of action (announcement of situation, explanation, and denouement) appear in this story in a prescribed, traditional manner: Wilson announces the true motive behind the murder and his solution to the crime, exposes Tom Driscoll and Chambers as being victims of a baby switch, explains the circumstances leading up to the murder and under which the murder was committed, exposes Tom as the true murderer, and causes him to be arrested.

Judge Driscoll is known to the residents as a man of sound character, which might in ordinary cases draw the reader's attention to him, and thus detract from the focal point of the story. Twain deals with the problem by making the murder despicable and the murderer identifiably bad, thus insuring the reader's contempt for him. This serves to concentrate attention on the detective and it whets our hopes that the murderer will be apprehended. (Throughout the early sections of the story Twain specifically points out the bad aspects of Tom Driscoll's character.) Also, the reader depends on the detective to exonerate the accused and implicate the guilty. Finally, it is Wilson's eccentricity and his combination of intuitive insight and inductive reasoning which ultimately throw guilt upon the criminal.

Those characters involved but in need of assistance to solve the crime are also present. The bungling police officer is there in all
his incompetency; the falsely accused are there in the persons of Luigi and Angelo; Wilson's friends are there; and, finally, the entire middle class population of Dawson's Landing is there, shaken to their moral roots. The setting offers a controlled environment isolated from the mainstream.

Of even more interest, though, is the development of the dichotomous detective. Merely satirized in Simon Wheeler, Detective, here Twain develops a true eccentric. On one hand, Wilson is a nondescript member of the community, although well-liked. On the other hand, he is a nonpracticing lawyer obsessed with taking and documenting the fingerprints of every citizen of Dawson's Landing. This hobby ultimately proves the undoing of the criminal and saves the town from hanging an innocent man.

Because Pudd'nhead Wilson is Twain's first effort at writing a true detective story, the question of why he chose to do so is immediately posed. A humorist by trade, why did he not lampoon the genre? Why, instead, make a serious effort at a detective story, using many of the same elements found in Poe's work? To answer these questions one must examine the circumstances Twain found himself in.

Between 1880 and 1893 Twain made a series of poor investments which seriously threatened his financial security.14 In 1893 the

14 Kaplan 301. During these years Twain was engaged in financing the Paige typesetting machine, a project doomed to failure by many causes. By 1889 Twain had invested nearly $200,000 into the project and agreed to pay Paige $585,000 over the course of the next seventeen years.
stockmarket crashed, virtually wiping out his assets. By 1894 creditors were clamoring for payment. Twain, no doubt, by 1893 was beginning to feel the pressure to produce a profitable piece of prose. Also at this time Arthur Conan Doyle was finding great success with his Sherlock Holmes series. (Between 1876 and 1893 Doyle had published four novels and three collections of shorter works.) When these two facts are coupled it is not hard to see the impetus Twain found for writing Pudd'nhead Wilson. A commercial writer from the outset of his career, he had learned to tailor his works to fit the audience.

The next effort Twain made to produce a novel that resembled a classical detective story was Tom Sawyer, Detective (1896). Its roots were found in an eighteenth century Danish murder mystery. Still, like Pudd'nhead Wilson before it, it varied from the standard formula, although by and large it was his purest use of the genre. As in Pudd'nhead Wilson Twain employs a good portion of this short novel to develop his characters in terms of backgrounds and character, allowing the reader to become familiar with them.

In this story, as in most detective stories, the antagonist's identity and motive are in question, and the evidence connecting the

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15 Hubin 125.

16 Rowlette 51. The story was The Minister of Veilby, by Steven Blicher.
crime and the unknown criminal is not clear. The crime, murder, generates interest in the reader, but the victim, Jubiter Dunlap, is of such questionable character and the murder act given such little detail that they do not detract significantly from the detective. As in Pudd'nhead Wilson, the detective in this story also has a vested interest in the outcome of the trial: he (Tom Sawyer) is a nephew of the accused, Silas.

The two novels also are similar in terms of patterns of action. Although Tom is not endowed with uncommon abilities (his powers of deduction are not displayed until the courtroom scene), he is highly praised by Huck for his extreme intelligence and he does display a certain level of cleverness at the story's outset. The murder's setting also seems sufficiently removed from the outside world. Twain also makes use of the third-person narrator in Huck Finn and introduces Tom as an amateur detective of sorts once the murder has been committed. Also, an abundance of tangible clues indicates wrong-doing and points a suspicious finger at the prime suspect. Silas, of course, is the "red herring," even to the point of admitting to the murder (consider Muff Potter's confession of murder in Tom Sawyer), and the traditional parade of witnesses, suspects, and false solutions is present during the trial. The reader by this time is at an impasse over who may have committed the atrocity, and the detective must enlighten the reader by displaying acute powers of observation.

The announcement of the solution, the explanation of the crime, and the denouement occur at this point in rapid succession, much as
Cawelti suggests. Tom Sawyer, with the eyes of all in the courtroom upon him, announces to the audience his surprise conclusion and explains how from the realization that the "dummy" was Jubiter he was able to pull all the loose strings together, deducing a sequence of events which were otherwise unfathomable. (In fact, the entire plot is held together by an absurdly coincidental string of circumstances.) The criminals are then secured and led away, and the "red herring" released.

Twain also makes use of the four main character roles (victim, criminal, detective, and those threatened by the crime). As mentioned previously, Twain gave Jubiter Dunlap a character that does not solicit undue feelings of sympathy from the reader. At the same time attention is focused upon the crime by making it so gruesome. This also insures interest in how the crime was committed.

Tom's nemesis in this case is Brace Dunlap, a man readily recognizable as a base character. And although in the traditional sense he is not the standard criminal (he does not actually murder the victim), his lies and maneuverings put him at odds with the detective. These circumstances help to focus more attention upon the detective. Tom's ratiocinative abilities and his exposure of the true events of the crime make Tom's character shine.

Classic examples of traditional detective characters are also illustrated in those affected by the crime. Huck Finn, for example, is here, the stereotypical Watson character, distinctly inferior to the detective in his ratiocinative abilities, yet a close friend, eager to
please, and anxious to observe how the detective unravels the mystery. Silas is traditional in that he is totally dependent upon the detective to free him from the grips of false accusation and in that the reader shares a certain affinity with him. And of course the entire population of the small community, in need of the detective's skills, stands in awe of him upon conclusion of his explanation.

Missing from this novel, though, is the double-natured detective. Why not carry on a tradition that was time-proven, and one that Twain had used in earlier works? Though this is only speculation, I suspect Twain was gearing this story to a younger audience, to adolescent readers who might not appreciate the darker side of a character. That Tom and Huck are both teenagers would support this idea. Also, because Tom Sawyer is a character that the readers would be familiar with, a change in his character might have proven unpopular.

But as in Pudd'nhead Wilson, Twain is making use of an established and profitable literary genre—and well he needed to. Having declared bankruptcy in 1894 and given up hope on the Paige typesetting machine in January of 1895 (a test designed to sell the machine’s merits to the Chicago Herald had failed miserably) Twain was now more than ever in need of capital. He had foregone the option of repaying his debtors only a fraction of their due and agreed to repay them in full, hoping at least to salvage his reputation. In these circumstances, Twain brushed the dust from his most successful character (Tom Sawyer) and

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17 Kaplan 331.
married him to a successful genre. This almost insured the story would gain the same popularity *Pudd’nhead Wilson* had. It did not.

Twain's final attempt to produce a novel/story in the detective genre was "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" (1902). Apparently inspired by the recent success of *Sherlock Holmes*, a play by William Gillette (1899), and the renewal of Doyle's Holmes series with the publication of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (appearing in *Strand* from 1901-1902), Twain reportedly produced his 25,000 word manuscript in six days. Referring to the work as an "abysmally bad story," Robert Rowlette considers it a parody of Doyle's work. He accounts for its fragmented structure by citing the similarities between it and *A Study in Scarlet*. As in *A Study in Scarlet*, "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" makes use of the "revenge-for-a-crime-against-a-girl-and-her-father motif and the long pursuit," but their placement in the plot is inverted and Archy's purpose is to eventually torture his quarry instead of merely murdering him. As Doyle does, Twain makes use of the American west for part of his setting and in the second section introduces an entirely new cast of characters. And though the two halves are apparently disparate (the first half is covered in a blanket of somberness, whereas the second is of a much less depressing nature),

18 Rowlette 55.

19 Rowlette 56.
Rowlette sees a certain "coherence produced by the image of justice." A major difference in the two stories is Archy's realization that he has for some time been pursuing the wrong man.

In terms of the classical detective story the work is somewhat of a potpourri, possibly due to its structure. The crime, murder, tends to pique the reader's interest. And the detective has no personal stake in the crime. But the crime does not occur until late in the story. Patterns of action are also somewhat convoluted: five of the six major elements do not occur until late in the second half of the book; only the detective's introduction occurs in the first half of the story.

But soon after the story begins Archy is allowed to display his special (though animal-like) gift which will ultimately result in his capturing the criminal. The story is also told in third person, a typical technique, and the presence of tangible clues which surround the crime makes unmistakable the fact that someone must be responsible. The investigation is also reminiscent of the traditional detective story in that witnesses are called, suspects are identified, false solutions are proposed, and a "red herring" is present. But the structure of the plot is such that all these elements are slightly different than those found in traditional mysteries. Even so, the final three elements (announcement of the solution, explanation of the crime, and denouement) occur in the traditional way--rapid succession.

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20 Rowlette 57.
Archy's explanation frees the falsely accused, allows the reader to view the crime in a new light, and also points to the guilty person. An unusual twist, however, is the subsequent escape of the murderer, which is fortunate in that it allows a person to go free for committing a "justifiable" homicide (previous to this he had been masochistically persecuted by Jacob Fuller). Thus attention is not diverted away from the detective by offending the reader's sense of justice.

Probably the most interesting area of consideration when comparing this story to the criteria for a classical detective story is that of characters and relationships. There are two detectives: Sherlock Holmes (though he is not the detective of merit), and Archy. The victims number no less than five: Archy's mother was the original victim of Jacob Fuller's crime; shortly after that Fuller's cousin of the same name fell victim to Archy's mother's revenge; next Archy became a victim of mistakenly dogging the wrong man; Fetlock Jones was a victim of Flint's abuses; and, finally, the true Jacob Fuller is ultimately murdered, a victim of Fetlock Jones' revenge. There are also many candidates for the role of criminal: although Jacob Fuller is verifiably the true criminal, Fetlock Jones can also be considered a criminal. (Or would the reader consider Archy, or possibly his mother, to be the criminal?) And finally, those threatened by the crime are the population of the mining community and Archy's grandfather, depending upon which crime one cares to consider.

The one aspect of the story which slips neatly into the definition of the classical detective story is setting. The mining community is
isolated, guarded from the outside world by high canyon walls, enterable from only one direction.

"A Double-Barreled Detective Story" contains enough elements to also support the contention that it is a parody of detective stories. For instance, Twain's use of a bloodhound's scenting abilities to distinguish Archy from the normal person smacks of ridicule, placing the abilities of the detective on the level of an animal and satirizing the "dual-natured" detective. Also, this ability leads the reader to an explanation and understanding of the crimes--the detective has no need for ratiocinative abilities. Finally, abuse is heaped upon the Simon Wheeler-like Sherlock Holmes. Holmes, as Wheeler had 25 years earlier, gathers sufficient information (both accurate and inaccurate) to develop a wholly improper conclusion concerning the murder and the murderer, which yet again signals to the audience where Twain's feelings lie.

But the reemergence of the eccentric, dichotomous detective, as ridiculing as it may have been of Poe and Doyle, also seems cynical. And it might be tempting to draw correlations between the story and some aspects of Twain's personal life. For example, since childhood Olivia had been weak, sickly, a condition that did not diminish with adulthood and something that weighed on Twain's mind throughout his married life. As an adult Twain was forced to support his mother and help other members of his family financially. He had also by this time lost two children (Langhorn, 1872; Susan, 1896) and two brothers
(Henry, 1858; Orion, 1897). His once sizable fortune having shrunk to nothing, Twain, in May of 1895, was forced upon a strenuous, year-long world lecture tour, though he felt sure travel strained his wife's health. While in England he lost his daughter Susan suddenly. His feelings as expressed in a December, 1897, letter to his sister-in-law upon the death of Orion lend credence to this idea: "It was unjust that such a man, against whom no offense could be charged, should have been sentenced to live 72 years."

But instead it is more palatable to view this story as a natural step in the maturation of a satirist. Early in his career Twain began probing the human condition—witness *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), and *Roughing It* (1872). In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) he comes down hard on man's inability to reason, as he also does in *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916). "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901) is a direct assault upon the human animal. Other satirists have exhibited similar development. With this in mind it is more easy to see the natural evolution from satirist to cynic. Twain's detective stories exhibit this evolution.

Pain and disillusionment are unmistakably reflected in the person of Archy, the main character in "A Double-Barreled Detective Story."

21 Kaplan 333-335.

Alienated from society at an early age by a peculiar ability and an obsessed mother, Archy is early forced on the trail of his misidentified quarry. After badgering the man to the brink of insanity, Archy realizes his mistake, but too late. Having lost and then relocated the trail, Archy sets out on an odyssey that spans most of the globe and the early years of his adulthood. Ultimately Archy does locate the man whose life he has ruined, but it is too late. Old, decrepit, for all purposes a blithering idiot, finding him is little consolation for a lifetime of misdirected effort and pain. Jacob Fuller stands as a monument to Archy's life.

Early in his career Twain began dabbling with the elements of detective stories, and as his career progressed so did his use of the genre, culminating in Pudd'nhead Wilson, Tom Sawyer, Detective, Simon Wheeler, Detective, "The Stolen White Elephant," and "A Doubled Barreled Detective Story." And, as Rowlette suggests, these major works can be further subdivided to reflect classical detective stories and Pinkerton-like detective stories. The latter three, as one might expect of a satirist's work, are burlesques of Pinkerton's stories, reflecting both Twain's view of them as literary works and his view of the author's ideas. They provided a forum for Twain to poke and prod at the vulnerable underbelly of the genre, all in keeping with his reputation. But the former two works are obvious attempts to produce legitimate detective stories, possessing plots that contain elements quite similar to those that Poe and Doyle used. As mentioned above, Tom Sawyer, Detective was a blatant attempt to cash in on the
Having described Twain's work in this field, having matched it with the publication and popularity of similar works, and having weighed its publication against certain aspects of his life, it becomes apparent that Twain's financial life affected his work in a large way. A commercial writer from the outset of his career, and burdened with great financial responsibilities, it is little wonder Twain strived to parlay past successes and an established genre into even greater success.

As plausible and interesting as Rowlette's thesis may be, in his attempt to find a unique angle to Twain's work, he apparently was blinded to the most obvious facts concerning Twain. Mark Twain was primarily a commercial writer and a satirist. Keeping that in mind it is easier to understand the forces behind some of his literary efforts during his most productive years.
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