



Is Heathcliff a Murderer?: Great Puzzles in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (Oxford World's Classics)

By John Sutherland

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In this quirky and intriguing book, John Sutherland has conveniently gathered together thirty-four nagging little questions, puzzles, errors, and enigmas from some of the best-loved examples of Victorian fiction. Readers often have stumbled upon seeming mysteries in their favorite novels. Why, for example, is the plot of *The Woman in White* irrevocably flawed? (The timing of the crime is off.) Is the hero of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* illegitimate? (Probably, although he was later legitimized.) Why does the otherwise sensible *Jane Eyre* give in to a sudden and unexplained outburst of superstition? (Charlotte Bronte, in reality, had a similar experience.) What is the real reason we find *The Picture of Dorian Gray* so disturbing? (There is an overwhelming emphasis on the sense of smell.) These answers and more can all be found in John Sutherland's entertaining and maddening book.

When it comes to literary criticism there's really nothing quite like the joys of close reading and good-natured inquiry. This is the spirit in which *Is Heathcliff A Murderer* was conceived and executed. Rather than trying to catch great authors in mistakes, Sutherland usually turns up perfectly plausible reasons for the seeming anomalies.

Everyone who reads nineteenth-century novels will thoroughly enjoy John Sutherland's exploration of the seemingly unanswered, and each chapter is a direct link to one of Oxford's *World's Classics*.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Did Heathcliff kill the brother of Catherine Earnshaw in 'Wuthering Heights'? Was the second husband of Dorothea Brooke born out of wedlock in 'Middlemarch'? Is 'The Adventure of the Speckled Band' a veiled story of incest? These questions might sound like headlines from a tabloid called the Victorian Enquirer. But one of Britain's most respected literary scholars makes a plausible, if speculative, case for each of them in a fascinating collection of essays on 34 classic novels or short stories."--*The Plain Dealer*

"A stimulating discussion."--*The Economist*

"An enjoyable and shameless puff for the Oxford *World's Classics* series....This is a series of mini-essays on some of the great conundrums of Victorian literature. The highlight is reached, perhaps, in a learned disquisition of the exact composition of the street dirt in Bleak House. The book should have been twice as long."--*The Oldie*

About the Author

John Sutherland is Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College, London. He is the editor of a number *World's Classics*, including works by Anthony Trollope, Adam Smith, Jack London, and Thackeray.

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