The soldier and the sleuth: death and the detective novel after the First World War

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Abstract
The First World War was a confrontation with death as well as with the enemy, and this confrontation continued in the British detective novels that were so popular in the interwar period. Both the war and the detective novel revealed the importance of death and its associated rituals to the correct functioning of society. As society and its needs changed, so did the appropriate responses to death, and we see these changes occurring in the postwar novels of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, two of the most popular authors of the period. The effects of individual death on the community are explored in detail in the detective novel, as each mourner must perform the correct emotional display in order to prove their innocence. The rituals surrounding death are also revealed in the novels’ depiction of the inheritance of property, which is a common motive for murder, underlining its importance in the social structure. The First World War had transformed the role of the transmission of property, and it also deeply affected the position of the scientific community, which came under suspicion for its role in the war’s brutality. In the years after the First World War, the memory and legacy of the conflict shifted in response to upheaval in the present, in particular to the threat of a new war. The detective novels’ depiction of violent death recalls and rewrites the experience of war, and through social responses to violence, the dead body is made safe again.

Keywords
detective fiction; World War One; mourning; death
With all the clues and answers: our own literary detective, Paul Collin, who's done some sleuthing and figured out who wrote the first detective novel. He joins us from the studios of Oregon Public Broadcasting in Portland. Thanks very much for being back with us, Paul. Prof. COLLINS: "The Notting Hill Mystery." You know, the usual suspects are Edgar Allan Poe, 'cause he wrote "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," in 1841, which, you know, most people would consider to really be the first piece of detective fiction. It's the first short story with a detective at the center of it. Or Wilkie Collins, who wrote "The Moonstone," and he kind of married Poe's idea with the sprawling novels of Dickens. And that was in 1868. The men and women who served in the First World War endured some of the most brutal forms of warfare ever known. Millions were sent to fight away from home for months, even years at a time, and underwent a series of terrible physical and emotional experiences. The new technologies available to First World War armies combined with the huge number of men mobilised made the battlefields of 1914-18 horrific, deadly and terrifying places. Photograph of Woman in the Russian cavalry (savage division). Female member of the Russian savage division, part of the Russian imperial guard, July 1917. The novels chronicles the life of "the last Tory", a wealthy and brilliant government statistician serving in the British Army during World War One. Rather than depicting the real-time experiences of warfare, this novel instead focuses on its psychological and social aftermath. 12. Richard Aldington – Death of a Hero. Death of a Hero is the story of a young English artist named George Winterbourne who enlists in the army at the outbreak of World War One. It presents an unfiltered picture of war, including graphic descriptions of sexual experiences alongside those of life in the trenches. It wa