



# Doctoring the Novel: Medicine and Quackery from Shelley to Doyle

*Sylvia A. Pamboukian*

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If nineteenth-century Britain witnessed the rise of medical professionalism, it also witnessed rampant quackery. It is tempting to categorize historical practices as either orthodox or quack, but what did these terms really signify in medical and public circles at the time? How did they develop and evolve? What do they tell us about actual medical practices?

*Doctoring the Novel* explores the ways in which language constructs and stabilizes these slippery terms by examining medical quackery and orthodoxy in works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Wilkie Collins's *Armadale*, and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Stark Munro Letters*. Contextualized in both medical and popular publishing, literary analysis reveals that even supposedly medico-scientific concepts such as orthodoxy and quackery evolve not in elite laboratories and bourgeois medical societies but in the rough-and-tumble of the public sphere, a view that acknowledges the considerable, and often underrated, influence of language on medical practices.

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