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The Temptation of Sherlock Holmes: Aesthetics, Expectations, and the Gothic

Sarah M. Davin
Bard College

The Temptation of Sherlock Holmes: Aesthetics, Expectations, and the Gothic

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Sarah Davin

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Introduction
The Many Sides of Doyle

When considering Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character, Sherlock Holmes, he is often directly associated directly with science. There is support for this popular view, as there is evidence that the Sherlock Holmes character is based partially on one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's teachers, a doctor named Joseph Bell, whom Doyle met while practicing medicine at Southsea. (Young 374) Doyle was impressed by Bell's ability to swiftly diagnose his patients, appearing to interpret their symptoms and identify the ailment before the patient had even spoken. This skill is reflected in the powers that Sherlock Holmes employs when interviewing his clients, for he too is capable of interpreting visual clues. For example, when Watson meets Sherlock Holmes in the novel *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock Holmes is able to read Watson's past through Watson's attributes and clothing.

Despite the influence of Joseph Bell on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writing, the Sherlock Holmes character can not be simplified to being a fictional representation of Joseph Bell. Despite his admiration of Bell and being a medical student himself, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did not ultimately become a a doctor, but a writer, and just as he was effected by his teacher, he was also affected by the English culture and literary traditions that characterized the Victorian era. For not only was Doyle influenced by the science of the time, but by the art as well. For the Victorian era was not simply a time of major technological advancements, but artistic and literary evolution as well. One of the biggest sources of conflict in the art world at this time was the discussion of the true purpose of art. In a society where massive amounts of cultural shift were taking place in reaction to the rapidly changing country, the English people were concerned with preserving

their identity and morality. Because they feared that with the rise of innovation and mechanization that all morality would be lost, some writers felt it was necessary to write morals into their stories. This anxiety was also reflected in the rise in popularity of moral sermons as well as the idea of the perfect middle-class family, which was portrayed very consciously by the family of Queen Victoria. The writing and culture became preoccupied with how best to order their rapidly changing society. In the eyes of some Victorians, the good must be rewarded, the evil punished, and the reader cautioned. Artists and writers were encouraged to have their stories and art take on this moral code, and in doing so, would be acting as dutiful citizens, advising the common Englishmen or Englishwoman to always act as proper as possible.

Not all artists and writers accepted these limitations on their expression. Though many writers saw art and writing as a method which could reinforce moral standards, other writers found support in the French idea of “L'art pour l'art,” which interpreted into English means, “Art for art's sake.” Though it was not so popular with the respectable traditional Victorian, it was strongly taken up by those who were identified as Bohemian. For example, one of the major literary figures who supported this idea was Oscar Wilde. Wilde was notorious for his eccentric behavior. For example, many photographs of him posing in unusual outfits still exist. He embraced writing for the sake of aesthetics rather than obeying any moral calling. In his “Preface” to the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, he writes, “No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything. Thought and language are to the artist instruments for an art. Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art.” (Wilde 3) For Wilde, limiting what can be expressed in writing is crime against the artist and their art.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle occupies a unique place in the Victorian tradition. He considered himself a Bohemian, (Cottom 551) something not unusual amongst medical students, such as Keats. Indeed, in his academic essay, “Sherlock Holmes Meets Dracula”, Daniel Cottom of the John Hopkins University writes,

> In identifying himself as a bohemian, the young Doyle clearly meant to suggest only the life of a young man at the outset of his career who has a limited income and who, therefore, lives rather more informally than is the norm among settled members of the respectable middle classes. No reference is made to disdain for middle-class respectability, much less to bohemians’ legendary tendencies toward idleness, improvidence, sexual license, and passion for the arts. When vagabond- ism comes into play in his correspondence, prompting Doyle to assert that he has “a strong Bohemian element” in him, it is in the form of his most respectable service as a dedicated ship’s surgeon aboard the Hope, a whaling ship bound for six months in the Arctic. (Cottom 552)

Despite his own actions not being particularly Bohemian, a certain element of the Bohemian is embodied in his character, Sherlock Holmes. Still, certain elements of the Bohemian remain absent in Sherlock Holmes as well. For example, Sherlock Holmes is not at all sexual, and he loathes his periods of idleness in between his cases. This being said, he does have an affinity for art, and indeed, sees his engagement is solving crimes as an artistic calling. When asked by Watson in “The Adventure of the Red Circle” why he would take on a case with seemingly no interest, Holmes responds, “What indeed? It is art for art's sake Watson.” (Doyle, Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2, 387) Sherlock Holmes represents the positive elements of Bohemianism, the bohemian that Doyle values. Historically, the reader can get a glimpse of this in Doyle's writing after the success of his Sherlock Holmes stories in the Strand, in which he writes about his freshly acquired freedom found in his newly won success. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes,

> I remember in my delight taking the handkerchief which lay upon the coverlet in my enfeebled hand, and tossing it up to the ceiling in my exultation. I should at least be my own master. No longer would I have to conform to professional dress or try to please any

> one else. I would be free to live how I liked and where I liked. It was one of the greatest moments of exultation of my life. The date was August, 1891.
> (Doyle and Lellenberg, *A Life in Letters*, 294)

In this letter, Doyle is excited about how his new literary success will loosen the social constraints of how he will be allowed to dress. This excitement on his part illustrates his eagerness to be seen as unusual and eccentric, while still adhering to the regulations that guided Victorian society. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote Holmes as the figure of his ideal bohemian, and indeed, coming from a family of artists himself, Doyle identified as one like many medical students of his time frequently did (Cottom 16), but he was also a man who loved order. This is manifested in his feeling that he must reach a certain status in order to have the leverage to safely defy social norms, demonstrating his valuing of stability for himself and his family, something that other bolder or less controlled individuals may not be as concerned about. This valuing of duty and order is a type of conduct which would seem contradictory with the Bohemian lifestyle. In contrast to the Bohemian ideal, Doyle was faithful to his family, cultivated a respectable public image, and most distinctly, felt a moral duty to be an active member of his society, especially when it came to law and the justice system. In the 1930 New York Times Obituary commemorating his life, it says,

> On two occasions Sir Arthur carried his proclivities for crime detection into the world of realities. In both cases his purpose was to right a miscarriage of justice, and in both instances he succeeded in exonerating a man who had been convicted and sentenced to a long term at hard labor. The beneficiaries were Adolph Beck, a Swede by birth, whose conviction for swindling resulted from mistaken identity, and George Edalji, a young lawyer whose father was an East Indian, whose conviction for maiming animals was apparently brought about through manufactured evidence inspired by the local unpopularity of the victim. (New York Times, “Conan Doyle Dead From Heart Attack”)

Doyle's activity in crime detection is on one level very parallel to that of the character that he writes. However, this passage also reveals a distinct difference between the author and his

creation. Whereas Doyle very clearly engages in detective work because of a strongly held belief in moral duty as demonstrated by the phrase “his purpose was to right a miscarriage of justice,” (New York Times, “Conan Doyle Dead From Heart Attack”) used by the New York Times, it is uncertain if his character has any opinion on moral duty or if Sherlock Holmes engages in solving crimes for more surprising reasons. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's history of engagement in public justice highlights both the similarities and contradictions that exist between the author and his character. With his actions, Doyle departs from his Bohemian identity to act as a respectable authority working to solve crimes. While his character can also be described as respected by those who know of him, Sherlock Holmes does not have a cultivated public persona as his author does. Rather, Doyle has Sherlock Holmes very pointedly works behind the scenes, allowing Scotland Yard to take credit for his achievements. He only gains notoriety through clients telling their experiences to others. Thus, Holmes continues his existence as undefined man, living outside the limitations of society and without even a predetermined job description, an imagined existence remarkably more Bohemian than his author's life. Because of this potential disagreement in reason for engaging in sleuthing, Doyle with his strong moral stance and Holmes without such a stance, Doyle's approach towards public activity is the first of multiple differences between artist and creation.

Despite his reputation as logical and scientific, Sherlock Holmes seems to share some of his author's belief in the supernatural. In the *Hound of the Baskervilles*, Sherlock Holmes seems to scoff at the idea that Lord Baskerville was killed by a legendary phantom hound, however he doesn't seem to completely dismiss the possibility of paranormal existence. This may serve as both expression of how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle approached the paranormal as well as indicating

a distinct authorial choice. Despite being largely known for his works involving Sherlock Holmes, Doyle was a dedicated Spiritualist. Spiritualism, or the belief in the existence of the supernatural, was very popular at the time of Doyle's writing. Though initially skeptical, Doyle quickly became a vocal spiritualist, writing many books on the subject. He was also involved in a series of “scientific” experiments in relation to spirits and the limitations of the body. According to the First Spiritual Temple,

> Shortly thereafter, he joined the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and carried out a series of experiments with a Mrs. Ball. From these experiments, Sir Arthur was convinced that telepathy was genuine. As far as survival and mediumship were concerned, in 1902, when he first met Sir Oliver Lodge, he had not arrived at any definite conclusions. However, Myers' classic, Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death, made a deep impression upon him. (First Spiritual Temple, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle”)

The First Spiritual Temple organization is very proud of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's spiritualism, which is reflected in their somewhat biased writing, a tribute to his importance as a spiritualist writer, but the basic documentation is right. In his lifetime, Doyle wrote many spiritualist books, including *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* in 1921 and *The History of Spiritualism* in 1926 (Edwards). Knowing of Doyle's involvement in Spiritualism is notable, primarily because of how few references to the supernatural are made in his Sherlock Holmes stories. Rather than using his stories to showcase his belief in Spiritualism, he uses them to focus acutely on the natures of characters set in a very grounded, very nonspiritual world. Never once in the stories, when a supernatural solution presented itself as possible for the crime committed, did it actually prove to be the cause. Despite Doyle's interactions with the supernatural world of Spiritualism, the stories he chooses to write are all about interactions between living characters. These are crimes committed by the living against the living. Even when Doyle chooses to reference the supernatural in his stories, he writes these moments intentionally, so that these forces are never

the cause of crime, though he himself believes in their potency and existence.

Reflecting on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's involvement in Spiritualism, especially when considering his experiments, is also revealing of the nature of practicing science during the Victorian era. Though thoroughly idealized in the Victorian Era, science was not the concrete source of fact that it is now. As opposed to now, where clearly defined fields exist with established protocols and extensive peer-reviewing processes, the Victorian era included many pseudo-scientific disciplines such as Phrenology and Eugenics as part of the scientific discourse. This made the factual content of “scientific” explorations questionable and controversial. Thus when Sherlock Holmes is engaging in “scientific” processes, this action, though still idealized, has a substantial potential for failure. Thus, Sherlock Holmes' ability to solves cases is made more remarkable when, even with his “deductive” process, or even despite his deductive process, Holmes never comes to the wrong conclusion.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's belief in the supernatural is reflected in the types of literary traditions he chooses to incorporate into his writings. Despite his stories and novels never confirming or denying the existence of supernatural forces within the world of Sherlock Holmes, he does draw upon pieces that do explicitly have the paranormal features in them. Namely, Doyle is influenced by other Gothic texts, and in response seems to take on some of the elements of the Gothic tradition. Though the Sherlock Holmes novels and stories seem superficially to exist in a world separate from the Gothic, or at least the texts avoid referring frequently to grim, shadowy towers or bleeding nuns, in truth as subtle as the elements are at times, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did see himself writing in the Gothic tradition, or at least in the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe. In a letter to Dr. Bryan Waller, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes about the significant contributions Poe

has made to the literary field. He writes,

> Just think of what he did in his offhand, prodigal fashion, seldom troubling to repeat a success, but pushing on to some new achievement. To him must be ascribed the monstrous progeny of writers on the detection of crime... Each may find some little development of his own, but his main art must trace back to those admirable stories of Monsieur Dupin, so wonderful in their masterful force, their reticence, their quick dramatic point. (Doyle and Lellenberg, *A Life in Letters*, 94)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work draws from Poe's contributions. For Doyle, detective fiction descends directly from the Gothic, perhaps not even separated from it as distinct genre, but an extension of that tradition. Due to it descending from the Gothic, themes such as magic and supernatural have a natural place in Doyle's writing, especially since he himself is so invested in the spiritual. It is as if Doyle restrains this aspect of the Gothic, preventing it from taking its rightful place in his stories. Instead, the explicit incarnation of these forces are replaced by the immoral actions of criminals, never addressed and bubbling just below the surface of rational world Doyle creates in his stories.

After delving into Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's life and the elements that influenced his writing, it is possible to see that his admiration for Dr. Joseph Bell is not the sole element being expressed in his Sherlock Holmes Stories. In fact, it is certain that his work may be more affected by the literary and social climate around him than his medical background. In popular perception, Sherlock Holmes stories are seen as simple. However, perhaps more accurately, Doyle's writing is concise, taking something that is complicated and making it seem easily comprehensible to the reader while masking the complex layers behind their understanding. This is reflected in form, as these stories are short, as they tend to be around twenty to thirty pages each. Because of their deceptively short length and repetitive narrative form, Sherlock Holmes stories have gained a reputation of being “easy.” Though Doyle's short

story form does make his stories easy to read, they are far harder to digest and quite complex to interpret. Due to all of the elements that influenced Doyle while writing as well as the shear amount of text involved in analyzing the Sherlock Holmes canon, academics have interpreted these stories in a diverse variety of ways.

The purpose of this senior thesis is to interpret Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novels and short stories in the context of the literary landscape Doyle lived in. In this way, Doyle will be understood primarily as a Victorian author, drawing from the Romantic and Gothic traditions while writing in a climate of immense social change and moral anxiety which gave rise to a debate about artistic expression and purpose of art and literature. While acknowledging Doyle's history as a medical man, this paper will focus on the artistic elements of the Sherlock Holmes character and seek to understand why Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would choose to imbue his character with such qualities, a character who is unique in his ability to find the true solution to his cases.

This thesis will be concerned with challenging the preconceptions of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novels and stories, and how different readings of the text are revealed when those preconceptions are challenged. While the character of Sherlock Holmes is often considered as very scientific in nature, this thesis will attempt to challenge this, suggesting alternative readings of Holmes that might situate the character within a literary tradition rather than pretending that the Holmes character can somehow be psychoanalyzed or that his work as a detective in a text somehow directly interacted with the real world. By focusing on the context of Doyle's writing during the Victorian era, the major motions and conflicts during the literary world at that time and how what aspects Doyle chooses to emphasize in his text may be more

related to art and the Gothic than the scientific, and how Sherlock Holmes as a character and the fictional powers that Doyle gives him reflect a love for art and its relationship to morality.

By focusing on Holmes' love of art and his love of performing his art, this thesis will explore how Doyle shapes a narrative concerning morality and using moral terms while giving power to a character that is invested more in the aesthetic than he is in the moral. As Sherlock Holmes is brought to face many villains, it appears as though the Holmes character has may common attributes that he shares with the villains that he confronts. These similarities are revealed through Holmes and these villains' similar techniques such as the affinity for disguises and performance and need to collect beautiful material objects. By bringing the character that the reader wants to label as a hero, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle makes Sherlock Holmes dangerously close to being a villain himself while retaining the impression that Holmes is a distinctly different force from the evil characters that he faces.

This compelling struggle to categorize Holmes in a way that makes the reader comfortable is perhaps the reason for the character's continued popularity. Over the decades, many have tried to define Holmes concretely as a scientist, an addict, or a sexually repressed man, but none of those terms can define Holmes in a meaningful way. Indeed, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle works diligently in these texts to prevent Holmes from becoming definable, even inserting the narrative voice of Dr. John Watson between Holmes and the reader. Thus, the reader must live in a space of an unresolved question, watching the consulting detective refuse to take any action that would define his identity as something human, despite his temptations, in favor of engaging a larger realm of themes. In addition, the reader is artfully tempted by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to want the character quit his superhuman, and possibly supernatural, powers of deduction

in favor of resolving this tension between a very clear existence of evil in the text with no distinct presence of good.

Chapter One
Sherlock Holmes as an Artist

In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the reader never finds learns much about Sherlock Holmes' life outside of his cases, nor do they know much at all about his past life before he meets John Watson, the narrator of his adventures. The text tells the reader that he is tall, that he has a brother, that he solves cases, and it says that he lives at 221B Baker Street. There seems to be a remarkable lack of defining information about this enigmatic character present in the text. Despite this, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle does imbue Holmes with elements of his ancestral background, which is possibly the only significant information the reader get about the family from which he descends. On page 683 of “The Adventure of the Greek interpretor,” in reference to his own ancestry, Holmes tells Watson,

> "To some extent," he answered, thoughtfully."My ancestors were country squires, who appear to have led much the same life as is natural to their class. But, none the less, my turn that way is in my veins, and may have come with my grandmother, who was the sister of Vernet, the French artist. Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms." (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1,* 683)

Of the few details Doyle chooses to include about Sherlock Holmes' life, he chooses to give his character an artistic lineage. Popular notions of the character of Sherlock Holmes tends to paint him as a scientific character, capitalizing on his use of what Holmes calls “deductive” reasoning. However, this culturally structured image of this character is superficial, as it seeks to impose a more modern admiration of science, especially Forensics, on to a Victorian character that is more complicated than simply an expression of Positivism. For amongst all of the excitement about the progression of science, there was also a fear of what threat it may have on an individual's moral character. Though Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived in a time with immense excitement over

scientific feats, he also lived in a time of immense fear of those same achievements. Thus, this anxiety leads writers to write pieces that are concerned with the moral character of the people around them. Though Doyle differs with some of his contemporaries with how he approaches writing about morality, his piece is very essentially structured around crime, justice, and morality. Because Sir Arthur Conan Doyle chose to write stories about a character who uses his powers to solve crimes rather than simply writing about the wonders of machinery, it is necessary to analyze these stories and a novels with a clearer understanding of what Sherlock Holmes' powers may represent, and consider why Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would choose this character, a character with an artistic ancestry, to be the sole character who can find the true story behind these cases.

To begin to break down this facade of Sherlock Holmes as a scientist, it is important to demonstrate that the aspects of Sherlock Holmes that the reader is tempted to label as scientific, may not be truly scientific at all. Indeed, one of the defining features of the scientific process is the mode of the logic that is employed in proving that is something is true. The type of logic that is best suited is deductive reasoning, which is the type of reasoning that Sherlock Holmes claims to be using. However upon analysis, this is untrue. According to Massimo Pigliucci, the author of the academic article “Sherlock's Reasoning Toolbox,” he writes that Holmes' reasoning isn't deductive at all, but perhaps better defined as inductive. In his article he gives an excellent example of what the inductive process can be like. He writes,

> Remember that induction is a method of generalizing from a set of observations (Holmes's “Data! Data! Data!”). For instance, I can be highly confident that the sun will rise tomorrow even if the absence of any understanding of astronomy and planetary orbits, the reason being that there is a long record of observations of the sun doing just that. Because there have been no exceptions so far, it is reasonable – the inductivist would say – to assume that tomorrow is not going to be an exception either.

(Tallon 53)

Despite Sherlock Holmes' emphasis on his deductive skills, the reality is that Sherlock Holmes' logic isn't deductive in form. This is illustrated by the character's consistent use of the criminal index that he has created in his room. One instance of Sherlock Holmes consulting his stockpile of data happens in the first of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes short stories, "A Scandal in Bohemia." When presented with the name of Irene Adler, Holmes asks Watson to look up her name in the index. Watson narrates,

> For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information. In this case I found her biography sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep-sea fishes." (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 246)

It is the access to knowledge of the individuals in this index that is part of what makes Sherlock Holmes so powerful, for it helps him maximize his knowledge of their backgrounds. It is not only his encyclopedic knowledge of those involved in his cases, but his knowledge of past cases is essential to his unique ability to solve crimes. Sherlock Holmes has solved hundreds of cases in his lifetime. This makes him especially qualified to see patterns in the way crimes are committed, because his past experiences informs how he solves his cases. Because, despite having nearly no knowledge of basic education in certain fields, he has an extensive knowledge of "Sensational Literature" (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 14) This may come to the reader as a bit surprising considering that the reader would assume that Sherlock Holmes should have an extensive knowledge of science, considering that he frequently, but inaccurately refers to his method as deductive. However, as it comes to the sciences, he seems to primarily only have what Watson describes as a "profound knowledge" (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 14) of Chemistry.

Though Chemistry as a discipline is highly respected in our current time, Watson seems surprisingly underwhelmed by Holmes knowledge of science,

> He was not studying medicine. He had himself, in reply to a question, confirmed Stamford's opinion upon that point. Neither did he appear to have pursued any course of reading which might fit him for a degree in science or any other recognized portal which would give him an entrance into the learned world. Yet his zeal for certain studies was remarkable, and within eccentric limits his knowledge was so extraordinarily ample and minute that his observations have fairly astounded me.
> (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 12)

This is notable because despite the reader's view and Sherlock Holmes' view of himself as a scientific character, when judged by two doctors, Watson and Stamford, neither of them consider him as someone qualified for a degree in any scientific discipline. This initially feels rather unexpected, again, considering it's easy to confuse Sherlock Holmes specific knowledge about traits related to crime as something that is indicative of science. However, in this case, it may very well be more of a tribute to how dedicated Holmes is to his passion rather than an indication of skills that are specifically scientific. Rather, an orientation towards analyzing details isn't necessarily scientific, as there are many disciplines that rely on engaged analysis and interpretation. Art, and within that including the field of literature, is one of these disciplines. For just as a doctor might analyze the physical symptoms of a patient, an artist will analyze the elements of painter's masterpiece or an educated reader might analyze each word in a text for meaning.

This comparison between Sherlock Holmes and a physician is nothing new, though unusual to consider after introducing Watson's analysis of Sherlock Holmes as not scientific, though thoroughly applauding his ability to attend to detail. Yet, comparing Holmes to a doctor is apt, especially considering his creator initially based him of Dr. Joseph Bell as well as paired him

with a crime-solving companion who is also a medical doctor. This comparison, though it may at first seem contradictory, actually aids the image of Sherlock Holmes as an analytic, but not scientific being, for Holmes' approach to solving crime is very similar to that of a doctor's approach to diagnosing the body with an illness based on the symptoms. When considering medical science, it is easy to forget that the discipline of medicine, unlike the deductive discipline of Physics, also relies heavily on inductive reasoning. Though an individual may be able to engage in some experimentation, which relies on deductive reasoning, such as when creating a serum through trial and error. Doctors, by the nature of their trade, can not truly engage in deductive reasoning because they can not afford to lose the life of their patient. Not only this, but doctors in practice rely heavily on their past experiences when approaching each of their patients, even using similar language to Holmes in calling each instance of an illness needing to be diagnosed as a “case.” When approached with a patient, as Sherlock Holmes might be approached with a client, doctors must rely on their encyclopedic knowledge of past cases of illness so they can correctly diagnose the proper ailment and treat their patient as quickly as possible. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was immensely impressed by Dr. Joseph Bell's ability to do this process at a remarkably efficient speed, in such a way that he was so primed with the knowledge of past experience that he would be sensitive enough to identify the disease on sight based on prior knowledge. This is exactly the same process Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has his character Sherlock Holmes use when faced with patients. He diagnoses the characters around him with pasts. For example, in the *Hound of the Baskervilles*, he is able to use the elements that make up James Mortimer's cane to derive the story of Mortimer's past. The reader gets an insight to Holmes' process when he innumerates to Watson after Watson falsely interpreted the occasion

that the cane was given as a gift and conservatively guesses that Dr. Mortimer practiced medicine in the town before moving to the country,

> I think that we might venture a little farther than this. Look at it in the light. On what occasion would it be made probable that such a presentation would be made? When would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their good will? Obviously at the moment when Dr. Mortimer withdrew from the service of the hospital in order to start in practice for himself. We know there has been a presentation. We believe there has been a change from a town hospital to a country practice. Is it, then, stretching our inference too far to say that the presentation was the occasion of the change?
> (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 5)

Sherlock Holmes is able to derive the history of Dr. Mortimer's life from observing elements such as the inscription on the cane and carefully considering what the circumstance of when such a gift would be given. The cleverness of Sherlock Holmes is ability to look at a person or an item and sense an intricate story from his interactions with the subject. Perhaps the more notable element of this power is not only is Holmes able to reconstruct a sequence of past events, but to reveal a full description of the the character in terms of their most meaningful qualities. For example, by analyzing the cane, Holmes transforms the unknown Dr. Mortimer into “a young fellow of under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favorite dog,” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 6) a dynamic character with very human and relatable qualities. The reader does not merely learn a series of objective facts about another character through Holmes' analysis, but the reader learns what kind of personal qualities the character, such as the young and amiable Dr. Mortimer. Thus, the “deductions” that Sherlock Holmes makes aren't deductions, nor are they merely an objective collection of facts, but a collection of facts that have been synthesized in to a story centering around a character with both positive and negative traits that work together to make the character feel very human, be that in a positive or

negative way.

John Watson's analysis of Holmes as not a scientist is still valid, though Sherlock Holmes shares his inductive process with doctors such as Watson. For, as Watson's discipline exists within the realm of science, Holmes' powers mirror more of that of an analysis of art. One of the most telling differences between Holmes' work and that of a doctor is that while doctors are merely looking for symptoms that lead to a diagnosis, Holmes is looking at symptoms that lead him to a narrative. Holmes is able to accomplish something that Watson can't when both are looking at Mortimer's cane. Despite Watson using the same logical process, he isn't able to discern the sweeping narratives that Holmes can. Watson can simply deduce that Mortimer is a doctor working in the country based on wear on his stick. This is where Sherlock Holmes' process deviates from that of his companion. Watson, when he has attention directed to the proper elements of an object or a person, may be able to make true factual statements about where that object has been or what that person has been doing prior to the moment, but it is Holmes' superior imagination that allows him to create these narratives about the characters behind the object or an individual's facade. The defining difference between Holmes and Watson is imagination. Watson may try his best to derive the facts from the elements he sees on the stick, he is not able to synthesize a story like Sherlock Holmes is. Imagination is an inherently artistic quality. By sensing facts about a person's past, Sherlock Holmes is able to craft a full story from these facts. In a sense, Sherlock is a writer, discovering the elements about a given character that the reader will be able to care about and presenting them to the characters around him while Watson relays these stories to the reader. Sherlock Holmes is an artist and a storyteller, and through his imaginative powers, he able to create a true narrative about this person that reveals

something about their character.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in creating a character such as Sherlock Holmes, is illustrating an artist with the interpretive powers of Dr. Joseph Bell. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle takes the qualities he admires in Joseph Bell and has his character, Sherlock Holmes, reflect the qualities as well. However, imbuing Sherlock Holmes with the intense interpretive powers of Bell does not make Holmes a scientist. Doyle is taking one of the skills he feels is best demonstrated in Bell and applies it to the field he chooses to embrace, literature, another field that necessitates analysis and interpretation. Thus, Sherlock Holmes' connections to Bell do not at all contradict his artistic elements. Rather it highlights the two major parts of the process of interpretation that Doyle finds to be important. The first of these is a sensitivity to detail, something that Holmes shares with those in the realm of science. However, this quality is not limited to scientific disciplines, but are also essential to the arts as well. The similarity in the first part of this interpretive process only emphasizes the difference in the goals and results in the type of synthesis Holmes chooses to do that differs from that of doctors, illustrating the subtle difference between a doctor diagnosing a patient and reconstructing the meaningfulness of someone's past. For as Watson is successful in *The Hound of The Baskervilles* in correctly labeling Dr. Mortimer as a country doctor, he is unable to imagine the personal qualities of the person who own the stick, such as his love for his dog or his good nature. Sherlock Holmes is able to provide the reader with this. In it's simplest form, the difference between a scientific interpretation and an artistic interpretation is that while Watson is successfully give Mortimer the label of “country doctor,” Holmes is able to demonstrate what about Mortimer the reader ought to care about, the meaning of him.

Sherlock Holmes' artistic nature is not only reflected in how he thinks, but also in the language Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has him use. This is most explicitly expressed in “The Adventure of the Red Circle,” in which Sherlock Holmes responds to Watson's question asking for what reason he would be taking a seemingly trivial case in which no clear crime has been discovered, Sherlock Holmes replies, “What, indeed? It is art for art's sake, Watson.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes, Vol. 2*, 387) Holmes, in sighting the idea of art for art's sake, or as known by it's original French name is *l'art pour l'art*, references a heated debate in which Victorian artists and writers were invested in. This debate centered around the purpose of art. While some writers believed that writing should have inherent morals and should be written in such a way that could lend moral guidance to the English people as they struggle to find themselves in a rapidly changing world, other writers and artists rejected this notion. One of these artists was the bohemian, Oscar Wilde, a contemporary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Oscar Wilde, in his outrageous outfits and devious behavior was the embodiment of the quintessential bohemian. The most important element of Wilde's bohemianism was his view on the role of art. He, believing firmly in art for art's sake, embraced the idea of Aesthetics. For Wilde, beauty in art is everything, and any limitations made on art in the name of morals is misguided.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle also identified as a bohemian, yet he was altogether a different type of bohemian. While Oscar Wilde embraced all of that which is bohemian, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle only chose to embrace the elements he wanted. So while Wilde embraced the sexual deviance and laziness that was apart of the bohemian, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did not as he lived his life a good family and a hard worker. The bohemian values that he did share with Wilde are reflected in Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes represents the bohemian values that Doyle

values while excluding the values that he doesn't. In a sense, Sherlock Holmes is Doyle's ideal version of a bohemian: bold and artistic, but not slothful or devious. Holmes is the respectable bohemian, demonstrating an immense appreciation and talent for the artistic while rejecting other less flattering elements of bohemianism. Indeed, Doyle has made his character despise certain elements of the bohemian attitude. For example, Sherlock Holmes can not stand not to have a case and relies on drugs to keep his intensely active mind under control with a drug that stimulates his imagination (Diniejko) in times of peace without a crime to solve, for without the stimulation of finding and interpreting clues, it seems he would fall into madness. In the novel *The Sign of Four*, after injecting himself with a solution of cocaine, Holmes tells Watson that his mind,

> rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world. (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 124)

This is rather contrary to the bohemian idea of leisure and perhaps more accurately, living off others. Holmes, unlike the common idea of the bohemian, must continue to work, or can not seem to stand to be existing in a world where he can not analyze and solve problems. He must engage in his work, a type of profession that he has created for himself, or risk sinking into an existential crisis. Just as Sherlock Holmes is injured by stagnation, he also refuses to engage in any sexual or romantic relationship, despite it being a common trait amongst bohemians to engage in scandalous romantic affairs. However, Doyle has created Sherlock Holmes in the image of his bohemian ideal as he omits the qualities that he finds more objectionable.

Not only are Sherlock Holmes' imaginative and artist-like interpretive powers reflected in

his especially imaginative logic, but in the objects he is called upon to analyze as well. For example, being able to analyze a painting plays an essential part in solving the case in *The Hound of The Baskervilles*. In this novel, the identity of the perpetrator is largely unknown until Sherlock Holmes is able to see Mr. Stapleton's likeness in one of the paintings. During this scene, Holmes reveals a love of art,

> "Excuse the admiration of a connoisseur," said he as he waved his hand towards the line of portraits which covered the opposite wall. "Watson won't allow that I know anything of art, but that is mere jealousy because our views upon the subject differ. Now, these are a really fine series of portraits." (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2*, 131)

This passage is remarkable for two reasons. The first notable detail in this passage is that Holmes identifies himself as a connoisseur of art, and it is this skill as a connoisseur that enables Holmes to identify the wrong-doer in this case, for it reveals Stapleton's likeness to Sir Henry's ancestors, illustrating that Stapleton in indeed a descendant of the Baskervilles and is attempting to gain the inheritance by killing all other living members of the Baskerville line. The second notable piece about this passage is when Holmes sites his disagreement with Watson about the subject of art. This amusing moment seems to illustrate the differences between the pleasantly bohemian Holmes and the strongly moralistic narrator, Watson. Thus, it assumable that in the larger Victorian debate about art, Holmes and Watson might find themselves on opposing sides of the debate. Holmes, by his artistic nature and ancestry most likely supports art with unlimited expression, without regards to moral issues. Watson, on the other hand, is strongly invested in justice. This investment is especially imposing as the stories are framed in such a way that we are told that not only is Watson the narrator of these stories, but Doyle asks the reader to believe that Watson is the writer of these accounts, and that he is recording the cases for public posterity.

While Watson shapes the narrative with his strong moralistic feelings, there is something

rather strikingly Wilde-like revealed in Holmes' analysis of the painting. Upon revealing the painting's likeness to Stapleton, both Holmes and Watson are shocked by the near exactness of the image of the ancestor is to the living Stapleton. In response to Watson's shock, Holmes replies,“Yes, it is an interesting instance of a throwback, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation. The fellow is a Baskerville – this is evident.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2*, 132) The use of the idea of reincarnation is an apt one here, for it is not the first use of the idea of using a portrait to extend the life of a nefarious individual. In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the title character, Dorian Gray, succeeds in doing just that. It seems that the portrait in *Hounds of the Baskervilles* takes on a similar role to that of the portrait of Dorian Gray, exposing a hidden and long-lasting evil that would otherwise be hidden. In this passage, Basil Hallward examines the tainted painting that has been corrupted over time with Gray's sin,

> He held the light up against the canvas, and examined it. The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed, and also as he had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful. (Wilde 262)

Both paintings demonstrate a hidden an hereditary evil. Both make references to corruption as if it were a disease. Wilde accomplishes this by referencing the degenerate quality of leprosy while Doyle shapes this evil as something that can be passed on from generation to generation, like a hereditary disease. Indeed, this idea is reinforced by the lack of resemblance of Sir Henry, the true Baskerville to his ancestor. While Watson notes some similarity in the jawline, Holmes minimizes it by saying, “Just a suggestion, perhaps.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 132) Thus, it it is fitting that the good-natured American, Sir Henry, would have little physical resemblance

to his dastardly ancestor in the painting, if the painting is a reflection of an inheritable evil, an evil that Sir Henry does not possess. In a way, this moment in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel feels a bit like a reference to Wilde's short novel, especially with the way that both Holmes and Hallward must press a candle to a painting to see it properly, and it is entirely possible. Though there was no epistolary communication between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Wilde, they were a part of each other's literary climate. One of the most important events in Doyle's career was an invitation to dine at London's grand Langham Hotel in 1889. (Doyle and Lellenberg, *A Life in Letters*, 272) Here he mingles with the "literary lion" Oscar Wilde, whom Doyle wrote as being,

> already famous as the champion of aestheticism. It was indeed a golden evening for me. Wilde to my surprise had read Micah Clarke and was enthusiastic about it, so that I did not feel a complete outsider. His conversation left an indelible impression upon my mind. He towered above us all, and yet had the art of seeming interested in all that we could say. (Doyle and Lellenberg, *A Life in Letters*, 272)

Lellenberg then notes that this dinner lead to Doyle receiving a commission to write *The Sign of Four* and Wilde receiving a commission to write *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. (Doyle letters 272) Historically, The *Portrait of Dorian Gray* was published in the July of 1890, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was published in *1902*, twelves years later. Though it may be that both authors who are living in the same literary moment are merely using similar imagery to obtain similar effects, it is entirely historically possible that Doyle is drawing from Wilde's work and having Sherlock Holmes mirror the artist, Basil Hallward, in this moment essential to the solving of the case in *The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

In his *Preface to the Picture Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde elaborates on the viewer's relationship to art, a process that is reflected in Sherlock Holmes' interactions with other characters. In his preface, Wilde discusses the necessity for art to be fully expressive, and that

art's true power isn't what the art itself expresses, but what it reveals about the nature of the viewer. This is similar to the interactions Sherlock Holmes has with his clients and other characters. When a character who would ordinarily withhold information is faced with Holmes, they reveal much more about themselves then they would need to or do so ordinarily. Because of this, not only is Sherlock Holmes a connoisseur of art, but he becomes a piece of art as well. For example, in “Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez,” after being discovered by Holmes, Anna emerges from the hidden cove behind the bookcase, and as Watson describes her, she feels as though she could be a painting. Watson narrates,

> She was brown with the dust and draped with the cobwebs which had come from the walls of her hiding-place. Her face, too, was streaked with grime, and at best she could never have been handsome, for she had the exact physical characteristics which Holmes had divined, with, in addition, a long obstinate chin. What with her natural blindness, and what with the change from dark to light, she stood as one dazed, blinking about her to see where we were. And yet, in spite of all these disadvantages, there was a certain nobility in the woman's bearing – a gallantry in the defiant chin and in the upraised head, which compelled something of respect and admiration.
> (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1,* 983)

This moment is very much painted for the reader. Anna is still and unmoving, as if frozen in a frame. This description of Anna is very detailed. The dust and cobwebs are described in such a way that it feels as though Watson is describing a painting to us. This passage also bears a strong sense of a moment where truth is about to be discovered. The light shifts from dark to light as Anna and her hiding place are exposed to the characters and the reader. Not only is this the moment in which she is physically discovered, but this precedes the moment in which the reader is about to learn the story of her past. Watson's narration of this moment makes this description feel very much like a heavily symbolic portrait of Anna. This passage reveals a lot about her personal character, the most revealing line in this moment is, “in spite of all these disadvantages,

there was a certain nobility in the woman's bearing." (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 983) This line summarizes the nature of the character and the story she is about to tell about herself, for Anna is indeed an impressive woman who survived harsh challenges in her life. Thus, her portrait-like description reveals the essence of Anna before she even tells her story. The reader, though they have yet to learn about her escape from Russia, must decide how they feel about this woman by her description. Once the reader does this, the image of Anna as a noble survivor will color their perception of the following revelation about her past.

This position of Sherlock Holmes as a viewer alongside the reader shifts once Anna begins to tell her story to Holmes. In fact, not only does she reveal her story, but she confesses it. Thus, it isn't just that she decides to reveal herself to Holmes, rather she is compelled to without a sense of choice. She does this involuntarily. After being discovered, she tells Holmes,

> "Yes, sir, I am a prisoner,"she said. "From where I stood I could hear everything, and now I know that you have learned the truth. I confess it all. It was I who killed the young man. But you are right – you who say it was an accident. I did not even know that it was a knife which I held in my hand, for in my despair I snatched anything from the table and struck at him to make him let me go. It is the truth I tell."
> (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol.1*, 983)

In this moment, she tells Holmes that her story is the one that he has already pieced together for the others. Her arrival is the affirmation of the existence of this story, but it isn't affirmed as true until she faces Sherlock Holmes. Thus, not only is Sherlock Holmes the interpretor of others, but he is their mirror, reflecting their history back on to them, just as Wilde's theory on the purpose of art would have him do.

When writing his Sherlock Holmes stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was strongly influenced by the Gothic tradition. This reinforces some of the themes that Doyle has already

embraced, like the use of the philosophy of l'art pour l'art in his writing of these stories. However, the amoral approach to art extends to other aspects of the Holmes character's philosophy towards life. This is a trait that Sherlock Holmes clearly demonstrates when he is asked for what reason he participates in his profession. In the “Adventure of the Red Circle,” he responds, “What, indeed? It is art for art's sake, Watson.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 387) Thus, in contrast to Watson and all of the clients that come to him asking him to solve their crimes and provide them with the answer that will provide them with justice. However, in a text that is invested and structured around justice, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's main character is not engaging in crimes because he feels that he has a moral duty to do so. Rather, while all others view it as a moral duty, Sherlock Holmes sees it as something he likes to do for its own sake. By choosing to respond in terms of *l'art pour l'art*, it is implied that Sherlock Holmes engages in solving cases because there is something about the aesthetics of crime that he finds beautiful. This shows both a lack of regard for moral value as well as a potentially perverted taste implied in a love for the aesthetic of crime. Thus, Holmes takes a very unique position in the text.

Not only does Sherlock Holmes enjoy solving the crimes that do happen, but when there isn't a crime to be solved, he always desires more crime. When he doesn't have a crime to preoccupy himself, he complains and resorts to drugs. Relying on his “seven-percent solution” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1,* 123) to keep him occupied during these times, he abstains from it all together when he has a case. It is implied that if he weren't to sedate himself, his yearning for a case would be so strong, and the weight of his powers would become so intense, that he would not be able to control himself. This idea that Holmes could be in some sense taken over by his powers gives the impression that he exists continuously teetering on the edge of something,

perhaps insanity. His mind may be a place of intensity and conflict, for without his occupation, it is unclear what Sherlock Holmes would become. In fact, it entirely possible that he would become one of the most dangerous criminals the world has ever seen. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson imagines this possibility of Holmes becoming a terrifyingly powerful villain, telling the reader, “So silent and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained bloodhound picking out a scent, that I could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defense.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol.1*, 161) And yet, though Watson cites the law as the order that Holmes is defending, Holmes seems to have no regard for the law, for in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” He tells Watson while attempting to break into the house of the notorious blackmailer, Charles Augustus Milverton, “You know, Watson, I don't mind confessing to you that I have always had an idea that I would have made a highly efficient criminal. This is the chance of my lifetime in that direction.” (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1*, 914) After this scene, Holmes and Watson do indeed break into Milverton's house, thus committing a crime in the eyes of the law, yet aside from avoiding capture, Holmes does not seem to care. Thus, Holmes is not working on the side of the law, nor is he shaped as a particularly “good” character, because when he sees that he has the opportunity to be a criminal in this adventure, he embraces it. It seems that the only thing that is holding Holmes back from embracing the criminal world is his love of solving crimes. Thus his love of unraveling the stories behind the crimes others commit keeps him perpetually amoral, never committing to the criminal world or the civilized word.

Sherlock Holmes is akin to one of the literary world's most famous Gothic character's, Bram Stoker's character of Dracula in his novel by the same name, *Dracula*. Dracula and

Holmes, despite initially feeling rather different, are actually somewhat descended from the same idea. For as Sherlock Holmes is an amalgamation of the positive elements of the Bohemian, Dracula is Bram Stoker's collection of everything wrong with the bohemian. This argument was originally made by Daniel Cottom of the John Hopkins University in his scholarly article, "Sherlock Holmes Meets Dracula." In his article, Cottom suggests that Dracula and Sherlock Holmes are both two interpretations of the character of the Bohemian that have both been set in the Gothic tradition, He writes,

> It need hardly be said that Stoker's and Doyle's protagonists never literally met, but this is not only because they happen to be fictional. The tales in which they live have incompatible premises, which represent two strains of Gothic tradition. With Dracula, we have an exploitation of otherworldly terrors in the tradition of Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis, whereas Holmes updates the heritage of Ann Radcliffe, whose works dramatize eerie mysteries that are then all submitted to a rational explanation as her narratives draw to a close. No matter how accidental it may appear, however, the meeting of Holmes and Dracula within the cultural world of the late nineteenth century provides us with a telling reevaluation of the struggles that were played out through the conception of the bohemian from the 1830s on to the final decades of that century and the beginning of the next. As the fate of modern civilization is put at risk in the careers of these characters, their meeting suggests that the definitively marginal figure of the bohemian is central to the history of modernity. (Cottom 537)

Thus, by embracing the Gothic influences that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker are drawing on, the different ways that Stoker and Doyle attempt to portray the bohemian character reveals a lot about what Doyle intentionally chooses to embrace and omit in his forming of Sherlock Holmes. In a sense, the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dracula are both derived from the same image, but also opposite interpretations of the same themes. In terms of skills, they both have superhuman abilities. Holmes has uncanny abilities of imagination and interpretation, while Dracula's abilities, while also focused around the minds and actions of the other characters, are really much more invasive. For while Sherlock Holmes is about getting the

other characters to release something about themselves in the form of a confession, such as in the case of Anna, Dracula's main powers come in the form of an infection, as it eats away at the identities of those who have been infected by his influence. For example, in *Dracula*, After failing to save the fair Lucy and witnessing her gradual transformation into an Undead, Van Helsing and his group of gallant young men travel into her tomb to release Lucy from her curse, Dr. Seward writes in his diary about how in her vampiric state, that though the creature in indeed Lucy's body, she is not Lucy's essence, writing, “She seemed like a nightmare of Lucy as she lay there, the pointed teeth, the blood stained, voluptuous mouth, which made one shudder to see, the whole carnal and unspirited appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity.” (Stoker 199) Dracula has stolen Lucy's identity of a sweet woman in her life, and replaced it with his own corruption, as aspect of himself that he has fully embraced in his animalistic and impulsive behavior. Sherlock Holmes, in this way, is the opposite of Dracula, for he endows those whose identity and story were previously hidden and uses the presence of those characters and the clues they leave behind as a way to make them who they really are. In this way, Holmes, compared to the evil Dracula, serves a beautiful purpose as the character who is able to restore identity, yet Holmes' goodness is precarious, as he only uses his power because he loves the action of revealing these stories, rather than because it is the right thing to do. Sherlock Holmes is attracted to these stories, but he his also attracted to these crimes, thus he is always on the precipice between good and evil, using his powers for actions that are perceived as good while being tempted towards crime, never concretely choosing a side.

In light of this revelation of Sherlock Holmes as a character deeply invested in art and connoisseurship, as well as an amoral character in practice, it is a bit odd that Sir Arthur Conan

Doyle would choose a character that is largely uninterested in with justice and make him the only character able to successfully solve these crimes. This is an ability that none of the other character's share. Not even those who aspire to replicate Sherlock Holmes' powers such as the character of the young Stanley Hopkins are successful. Thus, as all of the characters' attempts fail at finding the truth as the are concerned with morality, the unique question that the form of Doyle's stories ask is, “What is it about Sherlock Holmes' amoral and aesthetic concerns that allow him to access the truth?” If Doyle is invested in Justice and his stories are centered around crime, then what is it about art and aesthetics in this text that makes Sherlock Holmes so powerful?

Chapter Two
The Beastman and the Angel: Artistry Beyond Holmes

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character of Sherlock Holmes is a lover of art. In the *Hound of the Baskervilles*, he says when looking at the portraits hanging in Baskerville Hall, "'Excuse the admiration of a connoisseur,' said he as he waved his hand towards the line of portraits which covered the opposite wall. 'Watson won't allow that I know anything of art, but that is mere jealousy because our views upon the subject differ. Now, these are a really fine series of portraits.'" (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2,* 131) Holmes' love of art isn't limited to painting, because for him, solving crimes is his art. In the "Adventure of the Copper Beeches" he tells Watson, "If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing – a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell." (Doyle, Vol. I, 493) Though logic is often associated more with science, here Doyle has Holmes connect his logic with his art. By doing so, Holmes's logic gains an inherently interpretive quality as he is a connoisseur of crime. However, Holmes is not the only character in Doyle's adventures that sees the world in terms of art, as this view of the world both brings him closer to the realm of evil as well as defines him against it. He, like the villains, the evil men existing within the world of Doyle has created, also consider themselves as connoisseurs. When he is informed by Sir James of the murderous Baron Gruner's "considerable artistic side" (Doyle, Vol. II, 517) and his collection of Chinese pottery, Holmes responds with, 'A complex mind,' [...] 'All great criminals have that. My old friend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso. Wainwright was no mean artist. I could quote many more. Well, Sir James, you will inform your client that I am turning my mind upon Baron Gruner. I can say no more.' (Doyle,

Vol. II, 518) To provide some historical context, both Charles Frederick Peace (Lewis) and Henry Wainwright (Blanco) were both murderers who lived during the Victorian era and murdered during a period between 1874 through 1876. Thus, Doyle, through Holmes, is connecting artistry with the criminal. When Holmes is informed of Baron Gruner's artistic leanings, this is the moment that he chooses to show interest in the case. In fact, it is in that instant that Holmes fully takes this case on. It is Gruner's identity as a connoisseur that causes Sherlock Holmes to desire to engage against him. Baron Gruner is not the only villain who shows elements of connoisseurship or artistic leanings. In the “Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” the master blackmailer, Sir Charles Augustus Milverton collects other characters' private letters in order to gain control over them. In a sense he is a collector and a connoisseur of letters. Milverton demonstrates his perverted connoisseurship to Holmes, Watson, and the reader when he taunts Holmes with the devastating nature of Lady Blackwell's letters, appraising her writing as, “'They are sprightly – very sprightly,” Milverton answered. 'The lady was a charming correspondent. But I can assure you that the Earl of Dovercourt would fail to appreciate them.'” (Doyle, Vol. I, 910) This connoisseurship is continued to Dr. Stapleton and his collection of butterflies which Stapleton describes as, “the most complete one in the south-west of England.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 69) Finally, in the “Adventure of the Copper Beaches,” Mr. Jephro Rucastle cites himself and his family as “faddy” (Doyle, Vol. I, 497) and when Miss Violet Hunter asks why one of the rooms at the Copper Beaches estate has the shutters closed, Rucastle claims that he uses the space for an artistic pursuit: photography. (Doyle, Vol. I, 510) Though these various criminals seem to collect a wide variety of different objects and different artistic obsessions, these men are in actuality, all collecting the same thing: the souls of their victims. For these

characters, people are objects to them, and they desire to collect, control, and ruin them. Doyle demonstrates this aspect of their villainous beings in the “Adventure of the Illustrious Client,” in which he has the character of Kitty Winter explicitly mention the ruining of souls in relation to the baron's lustbook,

> I tell you Mr. Holmes, this man collects women, and takes a pride in his collection, as some men collect moths or butterfly. He had it all in that book. Snapshot photographs, names, details, everything about them. It was a beastly book – a book no man, even if he had come from the gutter, could have put together. But it was. Adelbert Gruner's book all the same. 'Souls I have ruined.' He could have put that on the outside if he had been so minded. *(* Doyle, Vol. II, 523)

Again, Doyle presents the reader with this butterfly imagery that was also present with Dr. Stapleton. This is remarkably appropriate imagery for villains who collect souls to ruin, because the butterfly is a symbol of the goddess, Psyche, the goddess of the mind. Psyche, in it's root is the word for soul, so when a collector such Milverton has a room full of dead butterflies pinned to boards, or Doyle uses Kitty Winter to draw a parallel between collected butterflies and the souls of women in “The Illustrious Client,” it indicates that the real natures of these collections. These collections stand for a collection of human souls. This soul-related imagery is continued in the use of letters in the “Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” and in “The Adventure of the Copper Beaches” with photography. Both methods are considered mystical methods of capturing a soul. Thus, all these connoisseurs are collectors of souls as well, thus souls become objects to be controlled and obtained.

It is important to note that these villains are defined as evil, but not as lawbreakers. For example, in the “Adventure of the Copper Beaches,” none of Rucastle's acts are strictly illegal. Rather, it begins with hiring Miss Hunter as a governess under the condition the she will cut her hair. None of the things they do to Miss Hunter are punishable in a court of law. However, they

do use her as puppet in an attempt to control their hidden daughter's life and ruin her chance at marriage and happiness. Though certainly, keeping a daughter locked in a tower is probably illegal, it is illegal because it is seen as wrong and not the other way around. Furthermore, those evil acts that are punishable by law exist outside of the reach of the police. For example, The police could never know that Mr. Rucastle was keeping his daughter, Alice, locked in a tower because by all exterior indications, he is just an eccentric man looking for a governess for his son. Holmes comments on the hidden nature of crimes committed in the seclusion of the countryside. On their way to rendezvous-vous with Violet Hunter after receiving a distressed telegram. He says to Watson, “But look at these lonely houses, each in its own field, filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 503) Here, Doyle as made it so that the established legal system would be powerless in the countryside because the invisibility of crimes behind closed doors as well as the lack of knowledge of law in this area, effectively making the law as something that does not exist in this landscape. Thus, when Holmes arrives to assist Violet Hunter, both he and Rucastle are existing as forces outside of the law. However, this failure of the law does not exist exclusively within the countrysides of Doyle's world. Indeed, Lawlessness is able to exist within the private spaces of London as well. In the “Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” despite the police's awareness that Milverton is blackmailing individuals, a legally punishable offense if caught, they are rendered useless because neither Milverton or his victims choose to move into the public sphere, since it will prove inconvenient for Milverton, but prove absolutely ruinous for the victim. Thus, the cases that Doyle creates for Holmes to solve exist entirely outside of spaces

where the police can be effective at best, and devastating at worst.

Not only does Doyle remove Holmes adventures from the context of law as understood within the context of the English legal system, but through his descriptions of his villains, he seats his stories firmly within a world in which evil exists. In his descriptions of his villains, Doyle uses direct references to evil and evil-related imagery to define his criminals not simply as law-breakers, but as those who commit evil acts. Thus, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle employs references to snakes and the devil in descriptions of these nefarious men. One of the most dramatic moments of employing evil related imagery occurs in the opening scene in the "Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton," in which Holmes, when attempting to describe the nature of Charles Augustus Milverton to Watson, asks,

> Do you feel a creeping, shrinking sensation, Watson, when you stand before the serpents in the zoo, and see the slithery gliding, venomous creatures, with their deadly eyes and wicked, flattened faces? Well, that's how Milverton impresses me. I've had to do with fifty murders in my career, but the worst of them never gave me the repulsion which I have for this fellow. (Doyle, Vol. I, 907)

As if anxious to make himself abundantly clear, Doyle employs an additional reference to evil in relation to Milverton, in which Holmes compares him to the "Evil one," (Doyle, Vol. I, 908) which serves a fairly direct reference to the devil. "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" is not the only adventure in which he uses a snake motif in reference to a villain. In the "Adventure of the Illustrious client," Doyle has Watson compare Baron Gruner to a cobra. After facing Baron Gruner in Kingston, Holmes tells Watson "He is an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as one of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra." (Doyle, Vol. II, 519). By employing this imagery that relates the villains to the devil or motifs such as snakes, that are related to the devil, Doyle strongly seats the world of Holmes

within a space that involves definitive evil. Thus, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories aren't dealing with the likes of lesser themes such as “legal” and “illegal,” but if there is real “evil” within this fictional world, it begs the question, “Where is the good?”

In his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the poet John Keats writes, “'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” (Keats 462) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may not have been thinking about John Keats specifically when writing his adventures, but as an English author writing in an era in dialogue with the Romantic era, his texts involve a very close relationship between the ideals of truth and beauty. In the stories Doyle writes, Sherlock Holmes is always pursuing the truth. Most Sherlock Holmes mysteries portray Holmes as a character who takes satisfaction in revealing the stories behind those cases. However, unlike other characters who engage in attempting to help solve these cases because of a sense of morality, Holmes engages in these cases because it brings him pleasure. As he tells Watson in “The Adventure of the Red Circle,” he engages in solving these crimes for the sake of the art (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Vol. 2*, 387), demonstrating to the reader two aspects of Holmes' relationship to the role he performs in his cases: First, that the Holmes character identifies his activity in solving crimes as an art, and second, that he is devoted to this art for its own sake, suggesting that Holmes sees something beautiful in the work he does. Thus, for Holmes, the achievement of finding truth in beautiful, and the truth itself is beautiful. Though characters other than Holmes are intensely preoccupied with justice and solving any given mystery to bring someone to justice, Doyle has structured the adventures in such a way that the story simultaneously shapes itself as a mystery story with the goal of of the found truth leading to justice while using mechanisms and language related to the ideal of beauty. Within the world that

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle creates, flawless beauty seems to be an indicator of a true state of being, meaning that if a character or object is flawlessly beautiful, they also seem to be inherently pure. Meanwhile, those who are evil, since evil or imagery linked to evil is very present in this world, make attempts at being beautiful and use it as a facade to cover their true natures. However, for these villains, the facades are never permanent or without some sort of fault that is reflected in their physicality. For example, in “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client,” though Baron Gruner is described as handsome by Watson, he has one physical flaw that indicates the evil lurking beneath. This crack in the facade is a symptom of the the lie that these villains live behind, for if they were truly beautiful, then they would be living a truth. Thus, because their beauty is not real, their lie is reflected within their visage, and this lie is an indicator of evil. Where unflawed beauty exists in the world of Sherlock Holmes, the reader can feel assured that the beautiful being or the object, is also a source of truth simply because they are not putting up a facade. They can not help but show the truth on their faces. These false attempts at beauty that the villains in these adventures put on are fragile, and seem inevitably over the course of Doyle's stories to fall apart. In every case in which the villain lies about their true intentions, those true intentions and their true natures are revealed, which coincides with a change in their appearance. Not only do their appearances change with the revelation of their evil nature, but their transformation is always, and consistently repulsive. Their faces may be melted with acid (Doyle, Vol. II, 535), or in “The Adventure of the Copper Beaches,” when Mr. Rucastle is attacked by his own Mastiff (Doyle, Vol. I, 516) whom he intended to use to kill Holmes, Watson, and Miss Hunter. This conclusion leaves the villain in a state that resembles his own depravity inside, with Watson relaying to the reader, “With much labor we separated them and

carried him, living but horribly mangled, into the house.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 516) The conclusion allows for the release of Miss Violet and the hidden Alice Rucastle, both of which are woman who are considered pretty and innocent. Within the world that he creates, Doyle's Villains not only seek to disguise themselves through mimicking beauty, but seek to obtain and control pleasing objects as well, both seeking to possess it and taking perverse joy in depleting that source of innocence, removing it increasingly farther away from its original nature.

Since the villains are the source of evil in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, the reader may search for the opposing source of beauty and truth in the face of these devils. In this way, Doyle's writing reflects the structure of many other Gothic stories, for like in many Gothic stories, young women are both sources of beauty and innocence. In many ways they act as the opposing and sweet angels that need protection from the poisonous clutches of the devilish villains. Thus, many of the young woman that Holmes and Watson come across are mutually, largely defined two things: they are innocent and they need Holmes' protection. The character of Miss Violet Hunter in “The Adventure of the Copper Beaches” is a prime example of this type of character. In this adventure, Doyle makes it clear that Miss Hunter is pleasing to the eye, but the most beautiful aspect of her being is her hair. When recounting her experience with Mr. Rucastle's strange request at the job agency, Miss Hunter says, “As you may observe Mr. Holmes, my hair is somewhat luxuriant, and of a rather peculiar tint of chestnut. It has been considered artistic. I could not dream of sacrificing it in this offhand fashion.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 497) As if to further draw the reader's attention to the significance of Miss Hunter's hair as a thing of beauty, he employs the word “artistic,” which means that not only is her hair a thing of beauty, but it is also like a work of art, making it a thing of beauty on to itself, independent of

Miss Hunter's beauty. Thus, its destruction at the request of Rucastle is a prelude to what will happen to Miss Hunter and a glimpse of Mr. Rucastle's relationship to beautiful things. Despite the loss of her luxurious hair, Miss Hunter continues to be beautiful, reflecting that her beauty is not merely a product of her hair, but beauty is a part of her nature. Because she is a beautiful person, her body reflects that. When Violet Hunter first makes her appearance in the adventure, Doyle has Watson describe her character in a way that is very pleasant for the reader. Watson's description reads as follows, “She was plainly but neatly dressed, with a bright, quick face, freckled like a plover's egg, and with the brisk manner of a woman who has had her own way to make in the world.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 494) Miss Hunter's appearance isn't explicitly called “beautiful” in this passage. her attitude is admirable and her complexion is compared to a plover's egg, which can be described as very pretty and brings to mind the pleasant image of birds. Thus, through this description, Miss Hunter is set up as an admirable, pure, and innocent character, something that remains true throughout her entire role in the story. Not only is she a remarkably sweet and clever character, but clearly she is of unusual interest to Sherlock Holmes because Watson's description of Holmes' response to Miss Hunter's presence is quite unusual in relation to the responses he has towards his other clients. Watson relays to the reader, “I could see that Holmes was favorably impressed with the manner of speech of his new client. He looked her over in his searching fashion, and then composed himself, with his lids drooping and his finger-tips together, to listen to her story.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 495) In this moment, Doyle seems to have made Holmes show attraction towards Miss Hunter, though perhaps not romantic or sexual attraction. Rather, he is impressed with her presence and speech, if we choose to believe our narrator in this instance. However, Holmes' interest in her demonstrates how her appearance,

or in this case, her lack of a fake facade, attracts Holmes' attention, as Doyle uses Holmes and Watson to indicate something admirable about this character, and the pure and determined nature of this girl is reflected in her charming, and beautiful physical appearance. However, though she is considered charming, Doyle does not use the term “good” to describe her, bizarrely reserving the term when the reader would assume would employ it.

Sherlock Holmes is not the only character that takes special notice when presented with this type of character. The Villains also take notice of the beautiful young women, and when they discover them, they pursue them as a hunter after it's prey. Doyle invents the allegory of the cave-man and the angel with Holmes telling Watson in “The Adventure of the Illustrious,” “You may have noticed how extremes call to each other, the spiritual to the animal, the cave-man to the angel. You never saw a worse case than this.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 525) In this adventure the cave-man refers to Baron Gruner and the angel refers to the unspeakably beautiful Miss Violet de Merville. “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client” is a somewhat remarkable story in relation to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's other Sherlock Holmes stories because of how explicitly it defines its villian, Baron Gruner; its beauty, Miss Violet de Merville, and its tarnished beauty, Kitty Winter. As previously mentioned, the Baron Gruner is very strongly defined in relation to evil. Holmes describes him to Watson as, “He is an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as one of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra. He has breeding in him – a real aristocrat of crime, with a superficial suggestion of afternoon tea and all the cruelty of the grave behind it.” (Doyle Vol. II, 519) In this moment, not only does Doyle reintroduce the snake motif, but he also has Holmes identify Baron Gruner's most dangerous power, indicating his inviting facade paired with his devilish intentions. This handsome exterior hides the crude beast

underneath. In contrast, Miss Violet de Merville description compares her to the masterpieces of the masters. Doyle writes in the voice of Holmes,

> I don't quite know how to make her clear to you, Watson. Perhaps you may meet her before we are through, and you can use your gift of words. She is beautiful, but with the ethereal other-world beauty of some fanatic whose thoughts are set on high. I have seen such faces in the pictures of the old masters of the Middle Ages. (Doyle, Vol. II, 525)

The character of Miss Violet de Merville is not only remarkable because Holmes explicitly describes her as beautiful, but because she is also compared explicitly to paintings. She is not compared to just any art, but masterpieces, as if her beauty has reached its pinnacle. In a sense, she is as perfect as can exist in a human world, and that perfection is reflected in Holmes' struggle to describe her appearance to Watson. This speechlessness implies some sort of human sublimity in her beauty because though he suggests that as Watson is a writer, he might have a better chance of describing her, Holmes has never shown any weakness in describing objects or character in the past, and certainly if Doyle had wanted to write Holmes as describing Miss Merville without any struggle, that was well within his ability to write him that way. Thus, Holmes' feeling that he is unable to communicate a proper description of Miss Violet de Merville is a choice made by Doyle, a choice that elevates the character's beauty to a realm where words fail to communicate it. Thus, her beauty as Holmes says in his description is “other-wordly beauty.”

It is this incredible beauty that not only attracts the villains to the women, but in the case of “The Adventure of The Illustrious Client,” Miss Merville is also attracted to the villain because she refuses to look beyond the superficially beautiful facade that Baron Gruner has made for himself. Thus, it is not that Miss Merville, who is being treated as this beautiful object, wants to be mistreated by a villain, but that she refuses to see beyond the Baron's facade and believes

that he is beautiful like herself. It is this desire to believe in the beauty she sees and her resistance to see the evilness for what it is that allows the baron to retain his control of her. In her desperation to see the goodness in the villain that seduces her, she fails to see the evil for what it truly is. Miss Merville fails to see the flawed mouth that Watson focuses intensely on in his brief interview with the Baron under the disguise of an art dealer. John Watson describes the flawed mouth on Baron's otherwise bewitching face as, “If ever I saw a murderer's mouth it was there – a cruel, hard gash in the face, compressed, inexorable, and terrible. He was ill-advised to train his moustache away from it, for it was Nature's danger-signal, set as a warning to his victims. His voice was engaging and his manners perfect.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 533) Gruner's mouth is the fault in his facade, a fault that Watson instinctively notices and identifies as “Nature's danger-signal,” implying that Nature does not allow predatory animals to roam without giving some indication to their real nature, suggesting that the world itself is not on the side of evil, though it may not be on the side of the innocent either, but at least something about the nature of evil within the world of Doyle marks it as such. Doyle's choice to have the mouth be the identifying feature of the baron's true nature is rather appropriate as Baron Gruner's strongest weapon is the lies he tells the women he's with in order to retain them.

This “wordly” betrayal isn't limited to nature in Doyle's stories, but he extends it into other features of the world as well, features such as architecture. Not only do the flaws in their faces indicate their intentions, but the facades of the buildings they choose to act in do as well. As if to reflect their inhabitant, the building reflects the nature of the villain inside. For example, Watson describes Baron Gruner's house as both luxurious and discordant. He tells the reader,

> The beautiful house and grounds indicated that Baron Gruner was, as Sir James had said, a man of considerable wealth. A long winding drive, with banks of rare shrubs on

> either side, opened out into a great graveled square adorned with statues. The place had been built by a South African gold king in the days of the great boom, and the long, low house with the turrets at the corners, though an architectural nightmare, was imposing in size and solidity. (Doyle, Vol. II, 532)

Dr. John Watson approaches the house from its facade, so that he is faced with the imposing beauty of the superficial exterior. However, this image of superficial beauty also has flaws. For example, this facade is primarily created to impress the viewer with the wealth and power of its owner, rather than for the sake of its art. Rather than being associated with history, the Baron's house is associated with the wealth of a South African gold king, suggesting that the house is built on the exploitation of others and with a lack of honor, as it lacks the presence of a long-standing, noble family inside. The square is surrounded by statues which suggests that the Baron is trying to further demonstrate his wealth as power as well as perhaps lacking a sense of moderation, considering that a square surrounded with statues could function as both intimidating and tacky. Watson describes the house as a “architectural nightmare,” and it is this phrase that anchors the description of the facade of Baron Gruner's house to his own facade. The house is an architectural nightmare, suggesting that something about the architecture is off-putting or discordant. This relates to Baron Gruner's own appearance as his beautiful face very nearly hides his true nature, but his thin, snake-like mouth does not feel as though as it ought to belong to such a beautiful face, as the the turrets don't feel as though they ought to belong “long, low house.” In this way, Doyle makes the facade of the house mirror the falseness of Baron Gruner's facade. This is not the only way in which Doyle shapes the house to reflect Baron Gruner's character. The interior architecture, and the fact that the Baron has two studies, one for display, and one hidden behind, containing evidence of the Baron's crimes and the women he has ruined. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle further emphasizes this division between Baron Gruner's facade

and true nature. In his exterior study, the Baron keeps his collection of Chinese pottery. This exterior is all about a beautiful collection, however, this rooms exists outside the real study, concealing it from any visitors. The character of Miss Kitty Winter explains this strange dichotomy between the interior and exterior studies. She tells Holmes, “Maybe dear Adelbert has met his match this time. The outer study is the one with the Chinese crockery in it – big glass cupboard between the windows. Then behind his desk is the door that leads to the inner study – a small room where he keeps papers and things.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 523) While the exterior study appears grand and displays the baron's collection of pottery, the interior study is hidden and the door is positioned behind his desk, so that he can block it off. Not only is it hidden, but it is small and unimpressive, and because it is filled with documents, such as his lust book. By reading these documents, any of the other characters would know the truth about the Baron. Thus, the exterior and interior studies are yet another iteration of Baron Gruner's superficial facade and his hidden, evil nature.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's usage of architectural facades to express something about the nature of the villain or a connection to something larger about the world that Doyle has created. In “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” the house, also called the Copper Beeches reflects the nature of the villain. At the beginning of the “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” Mr. Rucastle initially seems like an eccentric but nice man, with Miss Violet Hunter claiming, “It seemed to me that I had never met so fascinating and thoughtful a man.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 496) However, over the course of the story, he is revealed to be quite evil as he uses Miss Hunter as a pawn and keeps his real daughter hidden away in an obscure part of the house. The house will also reflect the larger dangers of living in the country in Doyle's world. As they travel by train

through the country to meet the distressed Miss Hunter, Holmes tells Watson, “You look at these scattered houses, and you're impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 502) Not only does this passage reveal that Sherlock Holmes can not enjoy the beauty of the facades of the houses because they are only potential covers for the crimes that can be committed in secret inside. This also introduces the idea that though the surroundings may be beautiful, the houses themselves are places of danger because of their isolation. This idea elaborated on when Miss Violet Hunter describes the house to Holmes and Watson.

> It is, as he said, beautifully situated, but it is not beautiful in itself, for it is a large square block of a house, whitewashed, but all stained and streaked with damp bad weather. There are grounds round it, woods on three sides, and on the fourth a field which slopes down to the Southampton highroad, which curves past about a hundred yards from the front door. This ground in front belongs to the house, but the woods all round are part of Lord Southerton's preserves. A clump of copper beeches immediately in front of the hall door has given its name to the place. (Doyle, Vol. I, 504)

Thus, the house itself is a stained house which was once white, but is now dirtied. This resembles the story of the crime with the daughter, who had lead a happy life while her mother was alive, before her father attempted to destroy her life outside of the house to keep her wealth in the family. It is interesting to note that the beautiful position surrounding the house is not owned by the family. Because it is owned by a lord, praising the property is disingenuous, as the beauty does not belong to the Rucastles, though they still claim it as “beautifully situated.” The most notable feature of the the house, and the feature that gives both the house and the adventure its name is the clump of copper beeches in front of the hall door, obscuring the front of the house. This reflects Mr. Rucastle and the weakness of his facade. Trees can do an excellent job of

obscuring a view, but trees are not walls, and trees have gaps between branches which makes seeing what is hidden behind them possible. This is reflected is Rucastle's unstable facade. While his true nature isn't revealed until later in the story, there are movements through which the reader gets a glimpse of his real nature. One instance happens rather early in the story, during Miss Violet Hunter's interview with Mr. Rucastle, in which he expresses his pleasure at seeing his young son kill cockroaches. Mr. Rucastle proudly tells Miss Violet, “Oh, if you could see him killing cockroaches with a slipper! Smack! smack! smack! Three gone before you could wink!” (Doyle, Vol. I, 497) His perverse joy over the disturbing activity of his son reveals his true nature. Sherlock Holmes later comments on this when he tells Watson, “I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of the parents by studying their children. This child's disposition is abnormally cruel, merely for cruelty's sake, and whether he derives this from his smiling father, as I should suspect, or from his mother, it bodes evil for the poor girl who is in their power,” (Doyle, Vol. I, 513 – 514) Through emphasizing the abnormally cruel tendencies of the son and relating it to the father, Doyle is providing the reader with more clues, more gaps in the branches to see the the villain lying underneath. Throughout out the entire adventure, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's use of the facade of the house and the copper beeches as a condensed image, reflecting the secrets the will be discovered over the course of this adventure, all leading to the discovery of Mr. Rucastle's thinly veiled evil.

Until now, this chapter has treated the physical appearance of characters as indicators or superficial facades hiding their true nature. However, external appearance does act as the sole factor when in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. While beauty may be an indicator of something or someone precious and innocent, being ugly in the world of Sherlock Holmes, does not

necessarily make the character evil. In “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client,” after Baron Gruner's face has been ruined by Kitty Winter splashing him in acid, it feels to the reader, and to Watson, that the trouble is resolved as the outside of the Baron now matches the inside, but Doyle, through Holmes, makes an important distinction between the act of ruining the Baron's appearance and the act of revealing his true character. Holmes tells Watson that merely physically disfiguring the Baron would not remove his power over Violet De Merville. Holmes explains, “She would love him the more as a disfigured martyr. No, no. It is his moral side, not his physical, which we have to destroy. That book will bring her back to earth – and I know nothing else that could. It is in his own writing. She cannot get past it.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 537) Thus, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presents the relationship between the physical and the moral as two opposite “sides.” The moral is able to effect the physical. For example, as a villain is evil, their evil nature will lead to the ruining of their facade, revealing their true nature. However, a change in the physical does not determine a change of character. Thus, a change in appearance that does not reflect an internal change of character will not make that character change their nature. However, within the stories that Doyle has created, The physical transformation, in these cases of these villains, are representative of revealing their true selves. Just as with the character of Dorian Gray, in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the revealing of his painting, displaying all of his collected perversion, is all the reveal of how twisted his true nature has become. A similar type of event occurs in Doyle's writing as well, however Doyle sets that position of the painting, rather than being external to the corrupted character's physical being, Doyle places this embodiment of corruption within his characters. In a sense, the painting still exists as a metaphor for the soul, but exists concealed within the character. While revealing

Dorian Gray's true nature involves a physical finding of a painting, finding the hidden image within a character is far more difficult because it involves the revealing the true nature of a character through other means than finding a physical embodiment of their evil. Instead, their true nature is revealed through seeing past their appealing facades to the real souls underneath. While Wilde has externalized the soul outside of the character into a piece of art, Doyle has made the soul a piece of art that lies hidden within a character, waiting to be revealed. Thus, while in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Gray's true nature is revealed to all that see the painting, in Doyle's "The Illustrious Client," there exists an intermediary step, in which not only does the physical form of the villain need to be revealed, but the evil behind the transformation must also be revealed in the form of a story.

Contained within the discussions inside this chapter have been many different forms of art. There have been representations of paintings, pottery, photography, architectural facades, and artifice. Even the very soul of a character has been compared to a piece of art. Each of these art forms are united through the fact that they all can be defined within the category of "art." This category does not mean that the objects and practices within the stories are the same in the sense that they can be conflated with one another, but that they all have a similar power within these stories, a power to indicate something that would otherwise be hidden.

Chapter Three
"The Highest Possible Perfection": The Facade of Sherlock Holmes

Within the world that he creates, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle purposefully shrouds his character of Sherlock Holmes with mystery. The reader lives is an odd space of both loving a character that they feel they know yet are unable to say much about. Doyle teases the reader, giving suggestions towards things that could be a part of Holmes, but never actually comes to fruition. The reader is not even allowed to access this enigmatic character directly, relying on the imagined writing of Doctor John Watson in order to know that Holmes exists as all. Holmes does not write about himself, though he does write, but he only writes treatises and articles about his methods. The reader only sees Holmes through Watson's eyes. In a sense, Watson becomes necessary even to glimpse Sherlock Holmes' face. Otherwise, Holmes would be a hidden entity, invisible and unknowable to the reader as he secretly walks the streets of a fictional London. As Holmes says to Watson in "A Scandal in Bohemia," "Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell." (Doyle, Vol. I, 243) James Boswell was a famous biographer. (Turnbull) The notable word choice in this line is Doyle's choice of the word "lost." Holmes is lost without Watson. While this line from Holmes could casually be taken as joke and an exaggeration of Watson's importance to the literal solving of the case, Doyle may also be using this word to subtly indicate that Watson is essential to these stories, and essential for the existence of Sherlock Holmes.

What would Doyle accomplish by having Watson function as the narrating character? What does the reader gain by seeing the world through Watson's point of view? Dr. John Watson is as many parts normal as Sherlock Holmes is unusual. Watson holds a normal and steady job as a doctor, the reader sees him fall in love and marry Mary Morstan, he has friends and a life

outside of 221B Baker Street, including outside of solving crimes. Sherlock Holmes does not. Watson's presence in these adventures throws into the relief the oddness of Sherlock Holmes while leading the reader to desire Holmes to follow certain conventions such as falling in love or having a life outside of his work. Watson and the reader form an interlocking cycle, with Watson questioning why Sherlock Holmes is lacking some of the basic elements that would make him feel like a more human character, but still egging the reader on with the hope that Holmes will engage in these normal activities. For example, Watson is often perplexed by Holmes lack of interest in forming romantic relationships. In the ending passage of the "Adventure of the Copper Beeches," Watson tells the reader, "As to Miss Violet Hunter, my friend Holmes, rather to my disappointment, manifested no further interest in her when once she had ceased to be the centre of one of his problems, and she is now the head of a private school at Walsall, where I believe that she has met with considerable success." (Doyle, Vol. I, 518) Here, Doyle uses Watson's disappointment to create disappointment for the reader as well. When Watson mentions this gap in Holmes' life, the reader suddenly notices it and wants to fill it. The reader's imagination can go wild, and that is exactly how the author wants it to be. The reader is tempted by the emptiness of Sherlock Holmes.

Not only does Sir Arthur Conan Doyle use Watson for this effect, but he also uses Holmes' conditional language to tempt the reader into hoping for a possibility that will never come to fruition in any of Holmes' adventures. When talking about relationships or other aspects of life that involve human connection in a permanent and defining way, Holmes always speaks in the conditional. For example, in "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," Holmes tells Watson, "I have never loved, Watson, but if I did and if the woman I loved had met such an end, I might act

even as our lawless lionhunter has done." (Doyle, Vol. II, 491) Holmes speaks in the conditional, detailing what he would do if he were to love. Here, Doyle tempts the reader, providing them with the image of Holmes in love and avenging that love, but leaving it to the realm of imagination. This is not the only time that Doyle tempts the reader in this way. In "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client," Holmes says, "I thought of her for the moment as I would have thought of a daughter of my own." (Doyle, Vol. II, 525) Again, Doyle puts his reader in a situation where he provides the reader with an image of Sherlock Holmes engaging in an activity which would help him feel relatable to the reader in some way, or prove his humanity in some way, and then retracts it. The reader is further tempted by the idea that these situations are something that Sherlock Holmes desires. The sense that Sherlock Holmes himself also feels this temptation and would like to have a lover or a daughter compels the reader even further. The reader wants to feel some sort of resolution, and that resolution would come with knowing something concretely personal about Holmes. There are few things more disconcerting for a dedicated reader than realizing that they know almost nothing about their favorite character.

Ever since his first moment in *A Study in Scarlet*, the character of Sherlock Holmes has captivated the minds of thousands of readers. He is a character that has outlived his creator with writers and filmmakers making their own films and stories about the consulting detective, each taking their unique approach when addressing this remarkable character. This begs the question, "Why are we all so obsessed with Sherlock Holmes?" What about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character continues to intrigue his audience? This character, who is being seen through the eyes of Watson, is the force the reader follows spellboundedly through these cases, waiting for Holmes to reveal all in the last few pages as if he had conjured some sort of miracle. And so the

reader follows each short adventure, carried through the stories of other short lived characters in order to reach Holmes, the only character that can give the reader what they want: a resolution. However, the reader must continue to follow him, because despite his demonstrating his miraculous power again and again, revealing the human element in many other character's stories, Holmes himself stays closed to his readers. Thus, Doyle never allows Holmes to solve the true mystery of the series, the question that leads readers to continue on from adventure to adventure, leading them to write their own stories or create their own films in attempt to desperately answer the desire to know the answer to the unspoken question, “Who is Sherlock Holmes?”

When reading the Sherlock Holmes stories and novels, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sets the reader up to expect the presence of certain tropes. He provides the reader with the frame of a mystery story, with Watson's introductions and conclusions frequently framing the beginning and the end. He provides us with villains and innocent damsels in distress, but then everything begins to slip out of place. If this were a generic Gothic adventure following generic Gothic tropes, we would then expect the emergence of the good hero character. This hero would generally come in the form of a young man and a lover of the innocent lady. However, the explicit labeling of someone as good is largely lost in these adventures, and though there are lovers who appear in the form of husbands and fiancées, they find themselves unable to save their own loved ones, and instead turn to someone who does hold that power. This powerful character would be Sherlock Holmes, but he does not fulfill the trope of the gallant hero either. Rather, Doyle creates a character who feels closer to being one of the villains than becoming a hero. Doyle presents his readers with a character who acknowledges the presence of morality but prefers to focus on his

own art, feels active temptation to commit crimes himself which he never overcomes, and never falls in love with any of the young women he rescues. Simply put, Sherlock Holmes is not the hero the reader is lead to want or expect, and Doyle allows the reader to see that Sherlock Holmes teeters on the edge of being a hero at all. Thus, the reader is left pining for a hero character, and is instead presented with the contrary Sherlock Holmes. His presence in the story breaks the structure of an expected Gothic adventure, with the potentially “good” lover being powerless, and the powerful being neither a source of love or a source of good.

Sherlock Holmes is not the only poorly defined characters within the world Sir Arthur Conan Doyle creates. As the boundaries shift between hero and villain, innocent and corrupted, all tropes become insufficient to properly define any one given character in a way that brings this schism between “good” and “hero” back in to balance. Beyond this is the presence of incredibly powerful characters, which during their brief existences in the text, fail to be visibly defined. In a text that centers around the visual and “deducing” the interior character from their exterior appearance, having characters who play important roles in a given adventure, but fail to appear in a physical way that reveals something about their identities in Watson's retellings can be quite mysterious and jarring. One instance of this occurs in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” in which the villain, Charles Augustus Milverton is killed by a mysterious, woman figure. Watson writes,

> There was the gentle rustle of a woman's dress. I had closed the slit between the curtains as Milverton's face had turned in our direction, but now I ventured very carefully to open it once more. He had resumed his seat, the cigar still projecting at an insolent angle from the corner of his mouth. In front of him, in the full glare of the electric light, there stood a tall, slim, dark woman, a veil over her face, a mantle drawn round her chin. Her breath came quick and fast, and every inch of the lithe figure was quivering with strong emotion. (Doyle, Vol. I, 919)

In the first moments of her appearance, this mysterious character stands in the full light, yet she is unidentifiable because she has concealed her identity with her veil and mantle. She is in disguise. Even when she does reveal her face to Milverton, her “dark, handsome, clear-cut face,” (Doyle, Vol. I, 920) it still does not reveal her identity because her face means nothing to the reader or to Watson. She may have a face, but not an identity. This character, who lacks an identity for the reader, commits the act of murdering Charles Augustus Milverton, an act that is understood by both Holmes and Watson as an act of justice. Watson writes, “I understood the whole argument of that firm, restraining grip – that it was no affair of ours, that justice had overtaken a villain, that we had our own duties and our own objects, which were not to be lost sight of.” (Doyle,Vol. I, 921) Both Holmes and Watson understand that what they have just witnessed was an act of justice. It is this mysterious character's action, punishing Milverton for ruining her life and ending the suffering of all the victims Milverton had under his power, she is able to accomplish what both the police and Holmes had failed to do, yet she remains unnamed to the reader. At the very end of “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” Holmes and Watson get to glimpse the identity of this unknowable bringer of Justice. Watson writes,

> Here, on the left hand, there stands a shop window filled with photographs of the celebrities and beauties of the day. Holmes's eyes fixed themselves upon one of them, and following his gaze I saw the picture of a regal and stately lady in Court dress, with a high diamond tiara upon her noble head. I looked at that delicately curved nose, at the marked eyebrows, at the straight mouth, and the strong little chin beneath it. Then I caught my breath as I read the time-honoured title of the great nobleman and statesman whose wife she had been. My eyes met those of Holmes, and he put his finger to his lips as we turned away from the window.
> (Doyle, Vol. I, 924)

Though Sherlock Holmes and John Watson learn the identity of Milverton's killer, the reader is never made privy to this information. Rather, the reader gets an abstract sense of who the woman

is through the picture. The reader learns that she is beautiful and that she lives in a position of very elevated status. Thus, the reader never learns her identity, only that she is lofty and revered.

The reader is put in this situation of being denied the identity of a character again in “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client.” Despite never directly appearing in the adventure, this adventure is named after the character of the illustrious client. Not only does Sir Arthur Conan Doyle shape his title around this character, but uses Sherlock Holmes' reactions to draw further attention to the illustrious client's absence in the story. Though initially believing that Sir James Damery is his client, it is quickly revealed that Sir James is working as an intermediary between Holmes and an unknown client. Despite Sir James' assurances that the mysterious client is honorable, Sherlock Holmes initially declines the case, telling Sir James, “I am accustomed to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing. I fear, Sir James, that I must decline to act.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 515) By making Sherlock Holmes do something very unusual like decline a case, Doyle is drawing the reader's attention to the fact that the identity of the client is missing. Though he has Holmes initially decline the case Holmes accepts it once he hears about the caliber of the villain. At the end of the adventure, after finishing their role in the case, Holmes and Watson discover the identity of the client, but the the identity of the illustrious client is never revealed to the reader. Just as Watson is about to reveal who it is, Holmes stops him. “'It is a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman,' said Holmes, holding up a restraining hand. 'Let that now and forever be enough for us.'” (Doyle, Vol. II, 538) The reader will never know to whom Holmes is referring to, or why this gentleman sought him out for this case. Rather the reader is left again in a position of not knowing but wanting a resolution.

In these two cases, the reader is presented with two characters who lack identity. The character of Sherlock Holmes, in some ways, can be considered similar to these two characters. This may seem kind if odd, because between reading Watson's descriptions of him and approximately a hundred years of popular culture providing with a very concrete image of what Holmes ought to look like according to our culture. We imagine some variation of the Paget illustrations with Holmes wearing a dramatic cloak and a deerstalker hat. Though this is the form that the reader feels used to imagining, Sherlock Holmes changes his appearance many times, in the form of disguises. Through out the series, Sherlock Holmes appears in many different disguises. He disguises himself as a a vicar in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” a sea captain in “The Adventure of Black Peter,” and assumes many other disguises over the course of his adventures. Thus, while popular culture has constructed a very specific image of Holmes, the fact is that Doyle has this character change forms quite quickly and uncannily in many of his adventures. In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Watson tells the reader, “It as not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 255) It's interesting to note that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle chooses to speak about Holmes' transformation into a vicar in terms of him changing “his very soul.” (Doyle Vol. I, 255) It is rather notable that Doyle would mention Holmes' soul in relation to his disguises. It implies a sort of malleability about his entire existence. The idea that Holmes is not really just wearing a disguise, but that he becomes a new person calls into question how stable Sherlock Holmes' identity is to begin with. The reader may feel that they have a clear feeling of his identity, or at least his physical appearance, for instance they might picture him as

Watson describes in *A Study in Scarlet:* “In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave a his whole expression an air of alertness and decision.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 11) Perhaps, they might envision something closer to any of the many film renditions that have come out recently. Though some of these films might show Holmes in disguise, they do not or can not portray a transformation of Holmes' soul. Thus, when Doyle has Watson say that “his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed,” (Doyle, Vol. I, 11) it suggests that Holmes' disguises leave the realm of the realistic, because even to suggest that his soul is transforming suggests that his soul isn't something constant. If Sherlock Holmes' soul is somehow changed by the disguises he puts on, it brings into doubt the constancy of the identity that the reader imagines Holmes as. If this is so, then the Holmes that hid readership imagines might not exist as all, or really only exist as much as his other disguises. Thus, the character that thousands of readers feel that they can picture so well, may be just as faceless as the illustrious client or lack an identity like the mysterious woman in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton.”

In this type of conjecture, there is an element of the fantastical that may initially feel out of place in a Sherlock Holmes story. On one hand, the main character, Sherlock Holmes, pretends to be a man dedicated to logic and science. On the other hand, there are moments when the magical slip through, briefly making appearances before being denied to the reader. One example of this mystical appearances is the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles in the novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The legend has a definite presence in the novel despite the solution to the case not being supernatural. The story of the legend does not seem to be undone

by the fact that the crime is caused by mortal hands than by the ghastly hound. Though the reader might assume that the mortal and “realistic” solution to the case nullifies the legend, but this is not necessarily true. Though it is true that the hound in the legend is not present in the adventure, the influences of the ancient, evil Lord Baskerville still runs through the story. This is the evil that is first presented to the reader in the legend and that Lord Baskerville is punished for by the hound. This evil character enters into the case through his portrait. The evil nature of the Baskerville in the legend is what reveals Stapleton to be the real villain behind the case. Because the evil Baskerville and Dr. Stapleton share the same evil face, Holmes is able to identify Stapleton as a Baskerville through the portrait of the legendary Lord Baskerville. Thus, the legend does exist is some capacity because the Lord Baskerville of the legend does appear to be as evil as the character of Dr. Stapleton who proves to be his descendant and the true villain of the case. Though the real Hound of the Baskervilles does not appear, the possibility of its existence is never settled in the text, making it possible for the hound to still exist within the world that Doyle creates, but it is never seen or confirmed. It just exists within the world in legend, possibly lurking just beneath the surface of the world of Sherlock Holmes.

The hound is not the only example of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle introducing the spiritual into the world of Sherlock Holmes and retracting it. In “The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire,” Holmes, in passing, mentions the case of the Giant Rat of Sumutra. This is a case that the reader will never get to read because Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never writes it. Rather, he teases the reader with it, with Holmes briefly mentioning it to Watson and not even telling him what the case was about. Holmes does tell Watson this: “'*Matilda Briggs* was not the name of a young woman, Watson,' said Holmes in a reminiscent voice. 'It was a ship which is associated with the

giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not prepared.'" (Doyle, Vol. II, 593) Here Doyle includes another reference to the mystical, suggesting the existence of a giant rat in the world of Sherlock Holmes and then retracting it. This retraction is made more jarring with the inclusion of the phrase "a story for which the world in not prepared," not only does this further frustrate the reader but also further implies the existence of the supernatural. Not only does this reference in itself invoke the supernatural, but it also references another work that Doyle would have been familiar with that contains the supernatural explicitly. This passage, and "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" seems to be a reaction to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, with the references to a ship and the presence of rats both reflecting moments in Stoker's novel. Thus, Doyle works to reference a novel that contains the supernatural, in this case vampires, and then chooses to acknowledge some possibility of their presence in the world he has created before dispelling these supernatural as the cause of any crime. Thus, Doyle courts the presence of the supernatural without allowing it to enter the realm of human darkness.

This "courting" does further work to undermine the "logic" of the adventures. Though none of the cases end with the possible supernatural explanation as the solution, the contemplation of it as a possible solution begins to suggest that the impossible could indeed be possible. In "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," in reaction to the death of Mr. Mortimer Tregennis, the clergyman exclaims, "We are devil-ridden, Mr. Holmes! My poor parish is devil-ridden! […] Satan himself is loose in it! We are given over into his hands!" (Doyle, Vol. II, 478) Though this does not turn out to be the cause of the crime in Doyle's story, the idea of the presence of devils or the potential presence of devils haunts the reader. This haunting isn't by accident as Doyle presents the reader with an alternative course of action if the spiritual realm

were to enter the world of the stories. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when it suggested that the curse of the Baskervilles is the cause of the late Lord Baskerville's death and the spectral hound from the legend could be responsible, Holmes responds, “I have hitherto confined my investigations to this world […] In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 22) By association, with evil existing in the world of Sherlock Holmes, though that evil always comes from a natural source, its existence in the stories makes the presence of a “Father of Evil” possible. Thus, though the devil does not appear in any of Sherlock Holmes' adventures, the possibility of a devil existing in the world is never denied and is made plausible by the presence of evil in the text and that Sherlock Holmes choses to face this human-based evil. Thus, Holmes' resistance to face the Father of Evil briefly suggests that a figure such as the Father of Evil exists in the world of Sherlock Holmes but will never be witnessed by the reader because Holmes will never face evil that does not have a natural explanation. This limitation is established when Holmes says a little earlier on in his conversation with Dr. Mortimer, “There is a realm in which the most acute and most experienced of detectives is helpless.” (Doyle, Vol. II, 21) This realm he is referring to is the realm of the supernatural. With the realm of the supernatural not being the central focus or the cause of evil in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, its subtle presence starts to erode the illusion that all solutions can be logically explained. Famously, in *The Sign of Four*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has Holmes say the line, “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth,” (Doyle, Vol. I, 160) At first, this like a perfectly rational statement. However, the sense of logic that this statement brings begins to breakdown as the supernatural enters the realm of the “logical.” Suddenly, it becomes possible

for the supernatural to become that implausible but true solution, and though the reader may not be aware of it, it expands what can be considered possible in the world of the stories. By introducing the supernatural, even in its absence, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has expanded the possibilities of his stories while choosing consciously to only write stories that have humanity at its center while suggesting to the reader that there could be supernatural adventures that will never be told because the reader isn't ready for them or that they do not fall within the purview of Holmes. This adds further complications to attempting to defining Doyle's consulting detective because he exists in a world in which the supernatural must logically be considered as possible.

Another author who chooses to include a falling away of the illusion of a logically ordered world in favor of the supernatural is Bram Stoker in his Gothic novel, *Dracula*. Despite the powerful yet subtle presence of vampires throughout this text, it isn't until the death of Lucy that the characters finally abandon attempts at describe the effects of the vampires in terms of rationality and embrace the existence of a darker and more animalistic force. In the novel, the reader primarily experiences the decline and transformation of Lucy into a vampire through the voice of Dr. Seward in his diary entries. This transformation is dealt with and described in very medical terms Stoker employs through Dr. Seward in this part of the novel. This can be sensed in the language Stoker has him use and the use of the term “operations” to describe the transferrals of blood of the fresh blood from the men to Lucy. By using this language, Stoker presents the reader, who understands the dangerous and supernatural nature of Count Dracula from very early on in the story, with a thin a glimmer of hope that the power of science and reason will be able to overcome this force, but inevitably this scientific approach fails to explain what is happening to Lucy and it ultimately fails to be the method through which they are able to overcome Dracula.

One moment in which the reader sees the use of scientific language before it is undermined by the force of the irrational is during the scene in which the first blood transfusion is given to the blood-drained Lucy. Stoker writes in the voice of Dr. Seward,

> Then with swiftness, but with absolute method, Van Helsing performed the operation. As the transfusion went on something like life seemed to come back to poor Lucy's cheeks, and through Arthur's growing pallor the joy of his face seemed absolutely to shine. After a bit I began to grow anxious, for the loss of blood was telling on Arthur, strong man that he was. It gave me an idea of what a terrible strain Lucy's system must have undergone that what weakened Arthur only partially restored her. *(Stoker, 115 – 116)*

Thus, Bram Stoker bombards the reader with terms like “method,” “operation,” and “transfusion” and uses a narrator with an inherently clinical view of the world in the form of a doctor, a man of science. This moment feels like a triumph for Dr. Seward and Dr. Van Helsing over the supernatural powers of Dracula, but as the novel progresses this progress is undermined repeatedly by Dracula's powers, and they perform many transfusions on Lucy before Dracula ultimately succeeds in killing the poor woman and turning her into a vampire. Not only is their natural and scientific knowledge defeated by the supernatural, but even in the moments of their triumph, such as their first successful transfusion on Lucy, Stoker chooses to undermine thus success with a hint of the supernatural. Just after finishing the transfusion, Dr. Seward writes in his diary, “Van Helsing spoke without turning round – the man seems to have eyes in the back of his head.” (Stoker 116) This moment suggests that despite all the very scientific language and activity in this moment in the story, that there is something about Dr. Van Helsing that can not be accounted for in terms of science because he able to see things that he should naturally not be able to notice. Bram Stoker has Dr. Sewald comment on this. In fact, Stoker makes the main power of the Dr. Van Helsing character his knowledge about how to treat the supernatural. For example, it is Helsing that suspects that Lucy's condition is caused by her becoming the prey of a

vampire and part of his prescribed “treatment” for her is the use of garlic flowers, something that resides within the realm of the superstitious and though it rationally should not hold any power, yet it is effective against the supernatural threat that these characters face. Lucy's decline and death acts as the symbolic breakdown of the rational world in Stoker's novel. Even Lucy's name ties her life with the existence of rationality in the novel. The fact that her name is Lucy, a name that is tied with light, purity, and rationality. Her last name, Westenra, invokes the west, suggesting that Lucy Westenra may be the embodiment, and the decline, of western Enlightenment logic within the text. Her death is the moment in which the text pivots, shifting from attempting to deal with the supernatural in terms of rationality to embracing the presence of supernatural and magic in the world as the characters come together to defeat Dracula and his vampiric sisters. The rise of the use of the term “Un-Dead” marks this shift in the story with Van Helsing using the term as he attempts to convince the young men of the importance of opening Lucy's tomb, and cutting of her head and filling her mouth with garlic. He tells the distressed Arthur, “I gave to her my nights and days – before death, after death; and if my death can do her good even now, when she is the dead Un-Dead, she shall have it freely.” (Stoker 293) Lucy's death brings the existence of the Un-Dead unavoidably into the text, and therefor rationality is demonstrated as not being sufficient for understanding the events within the world of the text. Both Bram Stoker and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, either explicitly or more subtly, begin with a fiction that pretends to be entirely rational, but is eroded by the author's deliberate insertion of the supernatural into the text.

In light of this consideration that Doyle chooses to include supernatural illusions in a natural world and that this process, which is a process seen in other Gothic novels such as

Dracula, this makes the task of defining Doyle's Sherlock Holmes character even more difficult. The Sherlock Holmes character can not be defined. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has worked hard to prevent the reader from labeling him or finding one concrete term that properly defines him as something other than what he does. The reader could try to define Holmes as a drug user, an actor, a philosopher, or a chemist, but none of these terms can define Sherlock Holmes in any complete or meaningful way, just as defining Dr. Mortimer as a doctor does not account for his amiability or his love of his dog. However, Doyle never lets the reader see Holmes as anything other than what he does. Doyle makes Holmes' entire life revolve around his work. When discussing subjects such as love or family, Doyle writes Holmes' responses in the conditional tense. If he did have a lover, he would avenge her. If he had a daughter, he would care for her as he cared in that moment for Violet de Merville. Holmes never has a connection that is solidified. Many characters are introduced and concluded in these adventures and Holmes pursues the companionship of none of these characters after they become irrelevant to the case. In a way, Sherlock Holmes ought to feel like a very mechanical character. All of his activities relate exclusively to solving the case, and he functional purpose in the story is to practice his art of deduction and reveal the story behind this case. Thus, his physical role in the adventures is actually quite repetitious and predictable. If Doyle left this process as bare as he could, the reader might soon lose interest in Holmes and likely the stories altogether since the story centers around his adventures with Watson. To protect the reader against the realization that character of Holmes is actually rather empty in terms of definition, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle uses the very reader-like narrator of Watson to familiarize or disassociate the adventure when necessary and to keep the reader hoping for the possibility that Holmes will reveal his own story just as dramatically and

personally as he reveals the stories of his clients. Thus, Doyle leaves a void for the reader, making Holmes tempting because of how undefined he is, but ultimately impossible to define in a way that takes a positive form.

Though Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has left the reader with a character that can never be fully defined, this does not mean that an attempt at further analysis of this character would be made in vain. While Doyle has made his character rather nebulous and hard to define as an individual character, this does not mean that Holmes' nature can not be defined by his work and his similarities to other characters. As Doyle has opened up the realm of possibilities in his story by hinting towards the supernatural, he has also opened up a new realm of identities for Holmes. As previously discussed, Sherlock Holmes is able to assume new identities when he chooses. Doyle has had Watson state that Holmes' very soul seems malleable. Holmes' ability to shift from one identity to another brings the reader's very perception of the character of Sherlock Holmes into question as the character that Doyle has created for us may only be one of Holmes' many forms. Sherlock Holmes is not the only character to have a nebulous presence in the adventures. The mysterious woman avenger in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus” Milverton and the unseen illustrious client who never appears in *The Illustrious Client* both have very strong effects in the story without ever having their identities made known to the reader. In a sense, they intervene from a higher position in the world, reaching in to rectify an evil in the world. The unknown woman is the only character to have the power to end the evil blackmailer's hold on unknown numbers of victims. Thus, Doyle uses this character to perform a d*eus ex machina*, bringing the villain to justice via intervention by a higher power. In “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client,” this intervention is presented as being a bit more complicated as Sherlock

Holmes is used as a conduit through which the will of the illustrious client is realized. Thus, employing Holmes' abilities for solving cases is the motion that the illustrious client makes in order to see the murderous baron's murderous reign over the lives of women ended. Holmes has important differences from these two characters. First, he is not invested in justice but with his art. Rather his art is a means to finding the truth of the case which can then lead to justice being done. However, all three of these characters do have this connecting feature which is that none of their identities are defined or fixed.

If the reader accepts that the supernatural can exist within the world of Sherlock Holmes, it becomes possible to see the unknown woman and the illustrious client as being supernatural entities. In “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” the unknown woman takes on a role that would ordinarily be ascribed to a god-like figure in classical literature. She, in one action, shooting Milverton, ends the entire conflict of the story. Doyle's choice to resolve the crisis this way isn't coincidental, as he accompanies this action with imagery that references god-like power. Not only does her action bring otherwise unattainable justice to the story, but Doyle accompanies this action with a burst of light. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has Watson narrate, “I could not have believed that an alarm could have spread so swiftly. Looking back, the huge house was one blaze of light.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 922) This use of light suggests that the woman's power is somehow ethereal and heavenly. Not only is there light, but this character is never caught and never seen again, meaning that Doyle chose to have this force of justice escape without necessitating that she be in any way punished or under judgment for her action. This may be that Doyle has chosen to make this character representative of a more elusive and ethereal type of justice, something more powerful than can be enacted by men. Thus, this woman being

depicted as being one the noblest characters in society within the world of the adventures is accurate, because she is meant to a god-like force of justice, absolving the world from the demonic presence of Charles Augustus Milverton when no mortal force can.

The illustrious client also has god-like attributes. For example, he never appears in the story, but sends a messenger to confer with Sherlock Holmes. This can be related to depictions of the Christian God, who sends angels as messengers to chosen individuals. Thus, the case that Holmes almost refuses to accept because he can not know the identity of his client is also the case in which he is being employed by a god-like character to prevent a villain from further ruining the lives of innocent women. In a sense, Holmes is called upon to crusade. Though the reader never learns the identity of the illustrious client, it is clear that Holmes already knows the identity of the client before the adventure ends, for he is not surprised by his identity when Watson is about to exclaim it in surprise. This brings an element of faith into the Sherlock Holmes stories. With the supernatural now existing as a realized force in these adventures, it is possible that a character such as Holmes, who has faced scenes which the world and the reader are not ready for, such as the Giant Rat of Sumatra, then Holmes may be aware of other supernatural forces that the reader is not ready for, such as the real identity of the illustrious client.

With the unnamed woman in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton” and the illustrious client from is his respective adventure being or acting as god-like supernatural forces in these stories, it would be expected that Holmes would also hold something of this supernatural nature as he too has a nebulous identity. However, Holmes' power differs from that of the unknown woman or the illustrious client. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle does not give Sherlock

Holmes the same connotations of heavenliness that he gives to the other two characters. This is appropriate because while the unnamed woman and the illustrious client in their respective stories appear to both be actors of divine justice. Holmes, as established previously, is not concerned with justice, but with his art. Thus, it would be improper to surround him with imagery that relates to divine judgment. Rather his powers are rather different from the unnamed woman or the illustrious client. Consider Sherlock Holmes' uncanny ability to assume disguises. It is an odd choice for Doyle to have Watson indicate Holmes' soul as the center of this ability. The idea that his very soul is shifting so that he may take on new forms is very reminiscent of magic. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes could very well be a shapeshifter. Rather than simply wearing a costume, his very body and soul shifts to become a new person. Doyle choice to give this incredible ability to take on new forms makes Holmes rather unique in the text. Choosing this trait connects Holmes to the supernatural, though it defines him that makes him possibly malicious, but more accurately mischievous. In keeping with his previous work, Doyle continues to bring Holmes' interests and abilities dangerously close to those that my be associated with villains. While many of the villains in the adventures are also able to change their visible form to hide their true nature, they are not the most striking example of evil shifting its shape. Shapeshifting is also one of the powers utilized by the evil Dracula in Bram Stoker's novel. Dracula demonstrates many powers, and the vampire changes his appearance many times, but one of the most popularly remembered, and repeatedly dangerous power of penetrating into spaces to do his evil his transformation into different kinds of animals associated with wickedness and darkness, such as a bat. Both Holmes and Dracula have this similarity that they can change form, making their powers similar, thus bringing Holmes, in comparison, close to

having powers that match the abilities of the cruel and irrational Dracula. The power to shifting shape is not the only part of his art that brings closer to Dracula in terms of power. Throughout the novel, Dracula uses his powers to manipulating the minds of others, and with his bite, makes his victims an extension of himself, erasing their existences of being individuals and their bodies perverted shells of what they used to be. In a way, Holmes has very similar powers, but chooses to use them to opposite ends. While Dracula uses his powers to erase personhood of other characters and keep them bound, In contrast, Sherlock Holmes' abilities are meant to reveal the stories and identities of characters, using his powers to release their stories out into the world and free those who find themselves unable to free themselves on their own. Not only does Holmes use his ability to see the inner souls of the characters around him in a way that is not malicious, but the forms he chooses to take on are human rather than animalistic. In *Dracula*, Count Dracula shifts into animals such as bats and dogs. However, in the Sherlock Holmes stories, Sherlock Holmes always disguises himself as a person, and never an animal. However, even in his form in which he attempts to appear human, Dracula fails to hide his monstrous attributes. With his hairy palms and claw-like nails, it appears as though his nature is too evil and animal-like to even pass as human. In contrast, despite his astonishing height, Holmes appears human all the time. Thus, though Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has granted his character with powers that would likely be associated with evil, but because Holmes in not invested in the moral but a lover of his art, Doyle has Holmes' powers exist as neither a tool for judgmental or a source of ruinous evil. In terms of morality, Holmes' powers do not define him as good or evil.

As previously established, labeling the Sherlock Holmes character with one term runs contrary to the way that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle shapes this character. Because Sherlock Holmes

is fundamentally undefinable, it would be somewhat misguided to attempt to define him in a literal way. However, though Sherlock Holmes can not be defined in a classical sense, by comparing him to other past literary characters, a reader might get a sense of the role that Sherlock Holmes plays in his own text. Thus, when Sherlock Holmes is compared to other characters that are supernatural or could be interpreted as supernatural, the statement isn't being made that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made Sherlock Holmes explicitly supernatural, because that simply isn't the case as Doyle spends intentional energy on referencing the supernatural and then retracting its presence from the adventures. Thus, discussing this character in terms of the supernatural is meant to connect this character to a larger literary tradition of characters.

Throughout the text, Sherlock Holmes has one primary task. This task is to reveal the true story behind each mystery. Other characters seek the consulting detective out because they know that he will tell them the truth. Previously, this text explored the imagery surrounding the illustrious client and and the mysterious woman, and how these two characters have heavenly imagery surrounding them. Sherlock Holmes doesn't have the same imagery around him nor does he serve the same purpose in the text. This being acknowledged, Holmes does have other elements that bring this character in conversation with other supernatural beings. One of the images that would be productive to compare Holmes to the trope of the god in disguise. In Classical literature, it is not uncommon for gods to disguise themselves in order to impart valuable knowledge to mortals. In Louise Ropes Loomis' introduction to Samuel Butler's translation of Homer's *The Iliad*, she puts this phenomenon in rather poetic and concise language, writing,

The gods of whom the minstrels sang were immortal and joyous. The food on which they

> feasted on Olympus was ambrosia and nectar. For entertainment they watched the human spectacle below, as men might watch a game or a race, and were furious partisans of one hero or one side against another. In a crisis they would hardly refrain from darting down to earth, invisible or in some human disguise, to interfere and protect their favorites from harm. (Loomis xv)

At first, it may feel like a stretch to compare Sherlock Holmes to the Greek gods, yet it is important to examine his methods. In many ways, Sherlock Holmes is like a disguised god in the way that he chooses clients that he finds worthy to serve and then provides them with the secrets that they seek. He is also, potentially, always in disguise. As his soul shifts and changes, there is no way for the reader to know who the true Sherlock Holmes is. Indeed, his entire persona might be a disguise. So, he functions very mechanically in the stories, serving always as an entity through which the truth behind the mystery is revealed. Without Doyle's withholding of Holmes' past as he reveals the pasts of other character in all of the adventures and his use of Watson's narration to remind the reader that Holmes fails to act in a way that would be expected as natural for a person, the reader may not have found themselves as nearly as infatuated with Holmes as readers have been for decades. Thus, his lack of his existence in a “human” way, his role as a truthteller, his choosing of clients, and his use of disguise until his own humanity may be a disguise, makes this character rather similar to the portrayals of Greek gods in works such as the *Iliad*. How Doyle has Holmes act in his adventures is not the only reason that this comparison between Sherlock Holmes and immortal beings are valid.

Throughout the adventures, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle makes sure that the readers feel that it is Dr. John Watson who is writing these stories within the realm on the stories. In this way, Doyle has the reader become very familiar with the idea of Watson being a writer and it is not at all unusual to for Watson to be dictating to the reader. The voice that is conspicuously missing in its directness is Holmes. The reader very rarely ever see instances of Holmes writing directly,

aside from telegrams. Thus, the reader nearly never gets a direct dictation from Holmes. This is largely true aside from one instance in the very beginning of the canon of Doyle's writings on Sherlock Holmes. In *A Study In Scarlet,* John Watson reads a passage from one of Holmes' treatises on deduction, which he instantly dismisses as impossible. This rejection is later illustrated to be foolish as Holmes' methods prove to be perfectly effective within the world of the stories. In this early part, the reader does get to sample some of Holmes' writing about his own methods. As part of the passage Watson shares with the reader, Holmes writes, “Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study, nor is life long enough to allow any mortal to attain the highest possible perfection in it.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 16) This first element of note in this passage, is Doyle meticulous work through the voice of Holmes to define what he does as an art. It is “like all other arts,” making it as itself, an art. The other notable moment in this passage is its reference to mortality. Holmes writes that it would be impossible for a mortal to perfect his art, and yet, as far as the reader sees, Sherlock Holmes is perfect at his art. There are moments in the stories that reference adventures in which Holmes' abilities have failed him and he was unable to solve a case, but Doyle never provides the reader with any of these cases. As far as the experiences of the readers are concerned, Sherlock Holmes is perfect. In this way, Holmes appears immortal to the reader because he has mastered this art. In this way, Holmes feels supernatural and superhuman, for he is the master of the unmasterable and he is undefined when he ought to feel human. Thus, he exhibits a space in which it is suggested that his talents are mortal and flawed, but those flaws are never experienced by the reader. Sherlock Holmes feels as if he could be immortal based upon his own writing.

Previously, this text discussed how it would counterproductive to label Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle works hard to make this possible, denying the reader exactly the information that they are seeking. This makes it nearly impossible to label Sherlock Holmes with any concrete term, though comparisons between Holmes and other types of characters are possible. However, defining Sherlock Holmes as “supernatural” would not be a contrary as it necessarily appears. While Holmes can not be defined, the term “supernatural,” rather than contradicting Holmes' nature, the term reinforces it. To be “supernatural,” it must be undefinable within the natural laws of the world. In this sense, Holmes is supernatural. He is not understandable or relatable within the world of the story, nor is he definable in classical terms what he does, for Doyle creates a new career for him, “the consulting detective.” Nor does his past ever emerge in any concrete way. The reader is nearly never allowed to access Sherlock Holmes directly, always seeing the world through Watson's narration. Sherlock Holmes is mysterious, powerful, undefinable, and illusive, making him practically supernatural.

If the reader were to consider Holmes a supernatural being, it would give Holmes' art, and other art in the adventures a new type of definition and power. Art is generally not considered to be able to act upon the world in a direct way. However, in the realm of the supernatural, there is a type of art that can. When dealing with the intrusion, despite how limited it may be, of the supernatural, magic itself can be considered an art. Originally, when discussion Holmes' powers of deduction in chapter one, this thesis discussed the lack of actual logic, preferring to consider Holmes' process as more of an imaginative art than any form of concretely logical process. The text later supported this decision of defining Holmes' “deductions” as a form of art, with Holmes himself calling his passion the art of the science of deduction. Thus, with no formal logic to

making it exclusively scientific, Holmes' method of discovering the true identity of any individual makes this both incredibly powerful and free from adhering to any set of limitations. In this way Holmes' powers of deduction differ little from a witch's power of divination. In his article, *The Detective and the Witch: Local Knowledge and the Aesthetic Pre-History of Detection*, Kenneth S. Calhoon argues that Sherlock Holmes' powers are based in the same center of power as other witch characters are given in other stories. While Calhoon focuses more on the role of logic and the interiors and exteriors of both space and society, his writing does cast a some light on the relationship of the magical arts and Holmes' art. On page 310, he writes "Poised before the horrors of the night, and himself eager for the cover of darkness, Holmes describes an architecture in which detection follows a path of mythic descent..." (Calhoon 310) In this way, Calhoon argues that Holmes' powers come from the same literary tradition of witchcraft. Thus, there is only an superficial difference between deduction and divination, with both arts being used to discover something about a character or place that would remain hidden to those who do not practice the art. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has chosen to put Holmes within a mythical tradition with art at its core, both in how his powers function and in the way that works of art have a supernatural power of their own to reveal something otherwise unknowable such as the painting in the Hound of the Baskervilles or the facades of the houses of villains such as Baron Gruner. In these stories, The very structure of the adventures center around Holmes' art, and all of the fictional structures containing art and the art itself makes these relics instrumental to revealing hidden truths, secrets hidden by those who seek to conceal the evil residing within their own forms.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and novels wear their own facades.

Doyle pretends to shape them around “logic” and “science,” setting it in a supposedly “realistic” world. However, upon investigation, this all turns out to be a lie. Holmes' method is not logical, science plays no significant role in solving any of the cases, and Holmes' world contains traces of the supernatural, making it unrealistic in the sense that it is not governed by the rules of the real world and unrealistic in the sense that these stories are, by definition, fiction. The moments in which the text pretends to be scientific is a lie, meant to draw attention away from the real nature of the texts, exploring the power of art. This choice to hide the true nature of the text behind a facade of its own reflects the larger power of the art of storytelling to tell a truth disguised in lies. However, fiction is not this simple. In many ways, the genre of fiction is like Sherlock Holmes. Works of fiction, just like all forms of art, come in many forms, making the genre as a whole largely undefinable in terms of form, as many of the texts have their own forms, just as Holmes has many forms. Fiction, just like Holmes, and including the texts he's included in, also provide truths hidden in lies, telling the reader a story that is not real in order to reveal something far more true about the nature of experience. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has not just created a character that practices an art, but is also a representation of art. Art has an uncanny power in the stories Doyle writes. Paintings, the artistic facades of houses, even the details in a character's face are respected as forms of art, and because there is art present, it can not help but reveal truth, even if is an image of something aesthetically grotesque. Holmes' ability is to read the truth in art, for even when the story, the painting, the facade, or the face presents the viewer with something that could never have been literal, hidden within it rest some unmutable truths. Art in Holmes has the remarkable power of revealing truths hidden behind lies, also known as secrets or mysteries. Holmes as the unique power to see art in everything and to interpret that art. In a sense both

Holmes and the art contained in Doyle's stories are supernatural, both being undefinable as neither takes one individual, static form, and both having their powers exaggerated, making both Holmes' art of interpretation and the presence of the art itself necessary to the discovery of the meaningful truth, discovering meanings and not labels, a character's amiability and not simply their career. Therefor, art is the method of divination, revealing what could not be known with any other approach. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Doyle writes, “Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study, nor is life long enough to allow any mortal to attain the highest possible perfection in it.” (Doyle, Vol. I, 16) Previously, this text focused on the mortality aspect this passage in relation to Holmes, but this text also has an interesting relationship with the reader. It paints Holmes' method, his incredible, interpretive method as something that all mortals can aspire towards. Though this passage keeps true perfection impossible, it creates a noble determination within the reader to attempt to master this art of communing with art, in order to understand the world in ways that could not be achieved otherwise. This is the supernatural power of art within Doyle's world, to define what could not be defined, either by its presence or by its absence, and never be defined itself.

In his *Preface to the Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde writes, “The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium.” (Wilde 3) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and novels grapple with this relationship between morality and art. In this way, Doyle aligns himself closely with Wilde's passage. While many characters are invested in morality, and Doyle creates space for conversation about morality directly, most of his effort is placed in Holmes and centering the

text around him, making the most potent character in the text the character the least interested in morality and the most interested in art. These stories center around to parallel pursuits for perfection, with the reader seeking to master Holmes and his art, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle attempting, story after story, to perfect his own art, aspiring to reach something just below the surface.

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