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"I Listen to Their Story, They Listen to My Comments, and Then I Pocket My Fee:" Sherlock Holmes as Rhetorical Equipment for Living

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“I LISTEN TO THEIR STORY, THEY LISTEN TO MY COMMENTS, AND
THEN I POCKET MY FEE:” SHERLOCK HOLMES AS RHETORICAL
EQUIPMENT FOR LIVING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by

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For Charity

in pigritia victoria

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ABSTRACT

This study argues that Sherlock Holmes serves as rhetorical equipment for living. Using Kenneth Burke's theory of symbolic appeal and the critical tool proposed in the essay "Literature as Equipment for Living," I explore how Holmes responds to the rhetorical situation of early nineteenth century England and consider why the Holmes symbol continues to appeal to audiences. I conclude that rhetoric is a necessary component of the Sherlock Holmes symbol and suggest that Holmes's famous method is rhetorical rather than syllogistic.

CHAPTER ONE: “HE CAN BE COMMUNICATIVE ENOUGH WHEN THE FANCY SEIZES HIM,” AN INTRODUCTION

“What you do in this world is a matter of no consequence,” returned my companion, bitterly. “The question is, what can you make people believe that you have done? Never mind,” he continued, more brightly, after a pause. “I would not have missed the investigation for anything. There has been no better case within my recollection. Simple as it was, there were several most instructive points about it.”¹

Without rhetoric, Sherlock Holmes could not exist. Throughout the stories, Sherlock Holmes is constantly attempting to convince his companion, his clients, and the criminals he captures that his methods are sound and his proofs incontrovertible. From his first adventure with Watson, Holmes’s motivation is to prove to Watson that his methods are correct. In fact, *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes novel, begins as a gentlemen’s wager with Watson’s challenge that Holmes, clapped down in a third-class carriage on the Underground, could not give the trades of all his fellow travelers.² Thus, Holmes is satisfied with the “simple” case, and the proof of its intrinsic simplicity is his ability to lay hands on the criminal within three days. In the last Sherlock Holmes story published by Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place,” Holmes is still engaged in rhetoric, attempting to persuade Inspector Mackinnon—who takes all the credit for the solution of the case—that the smell of paint was used to cover the smell of gas, which had been used to commit a heartless murder.³

¹ Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 84.

² Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 13.

³ “A couple of days later my friend tossed across to me a copy of the bi-weekly *North Surrey Observer*. Under a series of flaming headlines which began with “The Haven of Horror” and ended with “Brilliant Police Investigation,” there was a packed column of print which gave the first consecutive account of the affair... ‘Well, well, MacKinnon is a good fellow,’ said Holmes with a tolerant smile, ‘You can file it in our archives. Watson. Some day the true story may be

Though John Watson describes his friend as “the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen,”⁴ it is what Sherlock Holmes *does* with his reasoning and observations that makes up the great detective. Having carefully observed his surroundings, noting traces that others have missed, and having collected eclectic criminal, scientific, and social knowledge through reading and experimentation, Sherlock Holmes uses logic to inductively infer a rule from data, deductively infer a result from a rule, or abductively identify a case by observing results. Then Holmes tests his conclusions through further observation, interrogation, or experimentation. Finally, Holmes arbitrates the case, either turning the accused over to the criminal justice system, pronouncing them justified in their actions, or allowing Providence to persecute them for their transgressions. Throughout this process, however, Holmes is constantly engaged in rhetoric. Though the most prominent feature of Sherlock Holmes’s rhetoric is his logical mind, as a symbol, Holmes is only complete when one also considers how Holmes employs his logic, along with his credibility and appeals to emotion, in order to persuade others.

Throughout all of his adventures, Holmes uses thoroughly Aristotelian methods of rhetorical persuasion. Aristotle defines rhetoric as “an ability in each particular case to see the available means of persuasion.”⁵ He then divides the means of persuasion into the atechnic, non-artistic means—empirical facts and observations and testimony—and the entechnic, artistic means—the use of credibility, the passions, metaphor, and the like. One might argue that Holmes

told.” Doyle, “The Adventure of the Shoscombe Old Place,” in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1322-3.

⁴ Doyle, “Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

⁵ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 37.

exclusively uses atechnic means of persuasion because he relies only on physical evidence and testimony. In exploring the adventures, however, one finds that Holmes does not merely point to evidence or testimony. He frames them through artistic means, that is, Holmes employs means of persuasion that he has to prepare for his listeners and readers. Holmes uses ethos, his character and reputation, pathos, the emotions of his audience, and logos, his arguments, to persuade Watson or a potential client or a criminal that he has solved a case correctly. Although there have been several studies of Holmes's logic, none have expanded to consider how Holmes reasons logically in order to make an argument. Though some Sherlockians have considered Sherlock Holmes's character, they have not considered how he uses his reputation. And while some studies have considered the role of emotion in the Sherlock Holmes canon, particularly the romanticism purportedly injected into the stories by Watson, they have not considered how Holmes attempts to understand each emotion, its qualities, where it comes from and how, in order to persuade his audience. In short, Holmes has been treated as a dialectician employing syllogisms rather than a rhetorician employing practical methods of persuasion.

If Holmes were a dialectician, then each of his arguments would be a syllogism, complete with major premise, minor premise, and conclusion. The discussion would be limited to his logical arguments, and no artistic proof of his reasoning would be required. Throughout the stories, however, Conan Doyle explains that people come to Holmes because of his reputation for being fair-minded and solving the most baffling cases. That is, Holmes is worthy of credence because, as Aristotle explains, "we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others], on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is

not exact knowledge but room for doubt.”⁶ Thus Holmes is not simply a dialectician using syllogisms, but a rhetor using ethos. In addition to ethos, Holmes uses logos to persuade his audience. Holmes uses logos when he uses paradigms and enthymemes, which for Aristotle are “concerned with things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are” and “drawing from few premises and often less than those of the primary syllogism.” Holmes’s logic is based in rhetoric, where premises are derived from probabilities and signs. Thus Holmes is not simply reasoning from necessary signs in syllogistic forms, but reasoning rhetorically through logos, which argues from paradigms and enthymemes about what is probable. Finally, Holmes persuades his audience through their emotions. When they come to him with fear, he alters their judgments by leading them to hope—hope that he can find a missing person or object, hope that he can clear their name, or even hope that he can protect them from danger. Were Holmes a dialectician, one would expect him to avoid appealing to an audience’s emotions; instead, he uses his audiences’s emotions to persuade them. Though Holmes may be famously emotionless and detached, he displays a thorough understanding of the emotions of others and how to use their emotions for his own ends.

The following dissertation attempts to explain how Sherlock Holmes uses rhetoric in his cases and how his use of rhetoric provides tools for readers of the Sherlock Holmes adventures by exploring two interconnected questions. First, how is rhetoric an essential component of Sherlock Holmes’s function as a symbol? Second, what rhetorical equipment for living does Sherlock Holmes provide for his readers? Sherlock Holmes is the most portrayed literary human

⁶ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 38.

character in film and television.⁷ For more than one hundred years, Conan Doyle's creation has argued for the solution of intractable cases. While his personal life has been scrutinized by his impressive fandom, and the literary merits of his adventures have been debated, his influence on persuasion and argumentation has been largely ignored. By exploring these two research questions, this dissertation argues that rhetoric is a necessary component of Sherlock Holmes and that part of Holmes's popularity is due to the rhetorical equipment he provides for his audience.

I address the first question, how is rhetoric an essential component to Sherlock Holmes's function as a symbol, through a close reading of the Holmes canon,⁸ arguing that Holmes uses rhetoric throughout the adventures. Holmes uses different modes of persuasion to address different audiences in the adventures. Holmes uses ethos with clients or Watson, typically in a situation where he is recruiting a new client. Holmes uses pathos when talking to the accused to elicit a confession or council a client. Holmes uses logos when talking to Watson, the police, the accused, or through the story as a medium to the reader. Thus Holmes uses rhetoric throughout his adventures. Critics, however, overlook his rhetoric when they emphasize his use logic without considering *why* he is using logic. This gap in the critical literature is a problem when considering how Holmes functions as a symbol because it neglects the fleshing out of the symbol in the stories. While it is undeniable that Holmes's use of logic is his most iconic feature, that feature is only truly understandable as it functions within a situation for the resolution of a case

⁷ Guinness World Record News, "Sherlock Holmes awarded title for most portrayed literary human character in film and TV," 14 May 2012.

⁸ By the Holmes canon, I refer to the 56 short stories and 4 novels composed by Conan Doyle. The canon was written by Doyle, protected by his estate, and religiously studied by Holmesians and Sherlockians.

through persuasion, persuasion that includes logic but also includes other means of persuasion, such as ethos and pathos.

I address the second question, what rhetorical equipment for living does Sherlock Holmes provide for his readers, by exploring how Sherlock Holmes appeals to audiences across six situations as identified by rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke. There are three general aspects of a symbol that make a symbol appealing, and there are six symbolic appeals to an audience. In its creation, a symbol appeals technically through its form, through the expertise of the author in presenting a pattern of experience, or through its practical use. Once created, a symbol appeals to an audience in six ways, depending on the audience's situational needs. Sherlock Holmes might appeal to an audience as the interpretation of a situation, by favoring the acceptance of a situation, as the corrective of a situation, as the exerciser of submerged experience, as an emancipator, or as a vehicle for artistic effect. These six appeals provide the audience with rhetorical equipment for living because they provide equipment for dealing with problematic situations through strategies that may be employed by agents on other agents who are influenced by symbols. In chapter two, I address Sherlock Holmes's rhetorical equipment for living by exploring how he appeals to audiences both as a symbol and as equipment for living.

Studying Sherlock Holmes as a symbol is important for three reasons. First, it is important because it has always been popular, second because the role of rhetoric in the Holmes symbol has not been addressed, and third because by studying the symbol's use as equipment for living, we come to a better understanding of Burke's critical tool and the theories which support it. As Pound points out, from his initial publication in *The Strand Magazine*, "One index of the popularity of Conan Doyle's stories was that they quickly doubled the circulation of *Strand*

Magazine from 200,000 to 400,000.”⁹ Holmes also holds the Guinness World Record for the most portrayed literary human character in film and TV.¹⁰ Furthermore, Holmes had the unique quality of appearing real to his audiences so that the nation mourned his reported death as the loss of a national hero. As T. S. Eliot notes, Holmes appears so real that attempts at criticism “invariably fall into the fancy of his existence.”¹¹ Indeed, the Baker Street Irregulars have created a world-wide cultish following of Holmes and his methods that holds conferences and publishes papers dedicated to the Sherlock Holmes mythos. Moreover, Holmes’s significance expands beyond the immediate context of Victorian London or the fans of his work who propagate his life history. Holmes also influences those who are indifferent to him or even dislike him. Edmund Wilson sparked a flurry of angry letters and inspired several critics to defend the detective story with the twin articles “Why do People Read Detective Stories?” and “Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?” Wilson dismissed the genre as “simply a kind of vice” like smoking or alcoholism read by “mystery fiends” looking for a fix.¹² Yet even Wilson, the detective story’s most prominent and most vocal critique, praises Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories:

The old stories of Conan Doyle had a wit and a fairytale poetry of hansom cab, gloomy London lodgings and lonely country estates that Rex Stout could hardly duplicate with his backgrounds of modern New York; and the surprises were

⁹ Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 61.

¹⁰ See Guinness World Record News, “Sherlock Holmes awarded title for most portrayed literary human character in film and TV,” 14 May 2012.

¹¹ Quoted in Herzinger, Kim, *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, “Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody,” 105-6.

¹² Wilson, “Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?” 59.

much more entertaining: you at least have a room with a descending ceiling or a snake trained to climb down the bell rope.¹³

Thus Holmes's popularity, as a symbol, transcends his original situation and the fanaticism of "mystery fiends" and makes use of the margin of persuasion to allure even his detractors.

Therefore, the popularity of the Sherlock Holmes symbol is worthy of study.

The Sherlock Holmes symbol is also significant for rhetorical analysis because previous studies have neglected the important role of rhetoric in its formation. As Accardo suggests in the afterward to *Diagnosis and Detection*:

The analytic technique proper to the study of Sherlock Holmes is neither detection nor logic but rhetoric. Holmes does not represent a disembodied abstract dialectic but a flexible humanist application of the reasoning sense to unique cases. The ancients referred to this forensic grammar as rhetoric. The next generation of Sherlockian studies will need to be linguistic.¹⁴

While many literary critics and logicians have puzzled over Holmes's logic, the method he purports to use in arriving at his conclusions, no one has considered that Holmes is using logoi as a means of persuasion, alongside ethos and pathos as means of persuasion, making his method rhetorical rather than dialectical.¹⁵ By exploring the rhetoric of Sherlock Holmes, this dissertation addresses this gap in the literature.

Finally, the Sherlock Holmes symbol is equipment for living, and his audiences have used him as such since his inception. By exploring Holmes's use as equipment for living, this study addresses a theoretical problem with the application of Burke's critical tool, "Literature as Equipment for Living," by grounding the tool in Burke's writings on symbols and their appeal

¹³ Wilson, "Why do People Read Detective Stories?" 78.

¹⁴ Accardo, *Diagnosis and Detection*, 112.

¹⁵ See Chapter Four for a discussion of the literature on Holmes's use of logic.

rather than grounding the tool in Burke's later writings on identification. In Chapter Two, I argue that Burke's work on symbols both better explains how discourse appeals to an audience as equipment for living and broadens the usefulness of Burke's tool by exploring Burke's argument that an artist might use the margin of persuasion—expert authority, ambiguity of experience, and formal appeal—to make a symbol appealing for reasons intrinsic to the author's intentions. That is, by theoretically grounding Burke's tool in his theory of symbols, this dissertation argues that a symbol can be appealing even when the audience does not closely identify with the symbol, a weak point in current uses of Burke's work. Therefore, this study not only increases our understanding of Sherlock Holmes and his popularity, but also increases our understanding of Burke's theoretical and critical work in rhetoric.

The Cult of Sherlock Holmes

The study of Sherlock Holmes started as a game. A young Christopher Morley gathered several of his friends, and they began piecing together the clues of Sherlock Holmes's life, not only the public life recorded by John H. Watson, M.D., but also the private life that is glimpsed only through allusions and ellipses. Morley grew up. But instead of forgetting his childish game, he expanded it. Famous as a writer, critic, and New York socialite, Morley used his connection with *Saturday Review of Literature* to continue his game. Initially he only published a few allusions to Sherlock Holmes, but after Conan Doyle's death in 1930 he began to play the game more seriously. Because Morley's game led to an extensive body of literature on Sherlock Holmes, the following paragraphs explore how the cult of Sherlock Holmes established the boundaries of the Holmes canon, the 56 short stories and 4 novels considered in this dissertation.

When Doubleday published their first single-volume edition of the Sherlock Holmes canon, Morley secured an invitation to write the preface, which he composed as an encomium

not for Sir Arthur but for Sherlock. Thus Morley inaugurated *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* with an invitation to the great game, or as it has come to be known amongst its players, the “higher criticism.” The rules of the game are simple. One embarks on a discussion of minor details from the canon as if they are real. “Perhaps no fiction character ever created has become so charmingly real to his readers,” Morley writes, “It is not that we take our blessed Sherlock too seriously; if we really want the painful oddities of criminology let us go to Bataille or Roughead. But Holmes is pure anesthesia.”¹⁶ In short, the game has two rules: first, take the higher criticism of Sherlock Holmes very seriously, but second, don’t take the game itself too seriously.

Morley was well known for starting clubs of friends, a near necessity for the dedicated drinker in the days immediately following Prohibition. While his early clubs were merely an excuse to drink (for example the eponymous “Three Hours for Lunch Club” which met at speakeasies around Manhattan), some of the clubs aspired to greater ends, like the “Gilpraizer’s Club,” which focused on discussions of contemporary literature and included such visionary members as Ogden Nash, H. G. Wells, and T. S. Eliot. Regardless of the purpose of the club, drinking was still a major component, and with “booze” under strict moral censure, if not strict legal censure, one needed a way to identify fellow travelers.¹⁷ The Holmes canon presented a convenient corpus of puzzles and quickly became a source of passcodes amongst Morley’s cadre of friends.

On January 6, 1934, Morley hosted a small cocktail party at Hotel Duane to celebrate Sherlock Holmes’s birthday and informally discuss several books of higher criticism published

¹⁶ Morley, “In Memoriam Sherlock Holmes,” *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, viii.

¹⁷ For a complete history see “BSI History — An Introduction.”

since Conan Doyle's death. A few weeks after the party, Morley casually inserted a reference to "the Baker Street Irregulars" in his column for the *Saturday Review of Literature*. The popularity of the idea quickly spread, with readers appending "Baker Street Irregular" to their names in letters for Morley. Concerned at the growth of his modest circle of friends, Morley turned to the idea of a passcode. His brother, Frank, suggested a fuller test of potential Irregulars' intelligence and dedication to the canon and designed a crossword puzzle with the initials S.H. in the center. Christopher Morley published the crossword and sent an announcement that "the Baker Street Irregulars" (hence, BSI) would hold its first formal dinner on June 5th, 1934, and everyone who successfully completed the puzzle would be invited.

Lest one think this club was merely social, Vincent Starrett, one of the original members of the BSI, compiled a collection of higher criticism, which Starrett calls "sane writings," that argues for Holmes's importance in a sick and dying world. Starrett borrows from Balzac and St. Luke and explains that Holmes is the great physician of modernity. Balzac famously murmured on his deathbed that only his fictional physician was powerful enough to save him, and the Apostle Luke alludes to the physic powers of the Christ who heals the broken hearted. Writing in the early days of World War II, hanging on the unfolding serial of death and destruction in Europe, Starrett notes in his introduction that he takes comfort in letters from Amsterdam asking about minutia from Sherlock Holmes. For the BSI, and for Sherlockians everywhere, studying "the Sacred Writings" draws us back to "the world of sanity," where we know "the difference between the false gods and the true."¹⁸ The collection of "sane writings" Starrett introduced in 1940 included an argument by Morley that Holmes was an American. An account of Holmes's

¹⁸ Morley, "In Memoriam Sherlock Holmes," *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, xiii

finances by Leavitt. Leavitt accuses Holmes of some underhanded dealings—including the running of a nobbled horse—and concludes with a line from Horace: “people may boo at me; but I applaud myself, and contemplate the money in the bank.” The emotional geology of Baker street is next traced, with some attention to the mysterious second Mrs. Watson who has only come into the public domain in the last year.¹⁹

As an organization, the BSI have continued to host an annual birthday celebration for Sherlock Holmes, induct new members, and publish volumes of higher criticism. Though it remains primarily a social club, and though their criticism of the canon maintains a reverential regard for the sacred writings, the collection of essays and books that have grown out of their great game provide detailed context for Holmes’s fictional life while concretizing the canon of Holmes works. Furthermore, as members have published work outside of the official BSI journals, the delineation between serious criticism and fan criticism erodes. Therefore, the following review of literature on Sherlock Holmes incorporates some BSI works of higher criticism in an attempt to understand Sherlock Holmes as a symbol, while maintaining the canonical boundaries they helped establish.

Review of Literature

There are two types of literature concerning Sherlock Holmes: Sherlockian (sometimes called Holmesian literature), which follows the tradition of Christopher Morley and the BSI, and the more traditional critical literature. Sherlockians treat the adventures of Sherlock Holmes hermeneutically, exploring the internal clues of the texts in order to explain the character and

¹⁹ See Starrett, *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*.

function of Sherlock Holmes,²⁰ while the more traditional critical literature explores themes of the texts, drawing in external theories and applying frameworks to make arguments about the text.²¹ Though Sherlockian criticism begins as a game, the close readings Sherlockians have compiled over the last century grant insight into Holmes's character, his arguments, and his appeals. Furthermore, the Sherlockians include many prominent critics who, despite playing a game, offer useful insight into the universality of Sherlock Holmes, his method, and his context. Therefore, instead of separating the literature according to its type, the following review uses the breadth of Sherlockian scholarship to address three questions: (1) who is Sherlock Holmes? (2) what does he do? and (3) why is he important?

Who is Sherlock Holmes?

There is one kind of journalism which directs the affairs of nations. It makes and unmakes Cabinets. It upsets governments, built up navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent. That is your journalism. There is another kind of journalism which has no such great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard working people craving for a little fun and amusement. It is quite humble and unpretentious. That is my journalism.²²

In the late 1890's George Newness wrote the above letter to his former partner, W. T. Stead, explaining why he was dissolving their partnership and starting *The Strand Magazine*. To understand Sherlock Holmes, Pound argues in *Mirror of the Century*, one must understand the magazine that launched his adventures. Holmes's adventures in the magazine began with two short stories submitted on foolscap in a stocky, plain handwriting to literary editor Greenhough

²⁰ For example, see Starrett, 221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes.

²¹ For example, see Frank Victorian Detective Fiction and the Nature of Evidence.

²² Quoted in Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 29.

Smith by Conan Doyle's literary agent in the late spring of 1891. Smith later reflected, "I at once realized that here was the greatest short story writer since Edgar Allan Poe. I remember rushing into Mr. Newnes's room and thrusting the stories before his eyes."²³ In answer to the question posed by this section, I argue that Sherlock Holmes is a popular hero by exploring his roots in Poe's Dupin stories, Conan Doyle's modification of the detective story genre, and finally his appeal to the middle class virtues of his audience.

Conan Doyle's success with Holmes was predicated on the success of the detective story form, pioneered by Poe in his Dupin stories. Thompson argues in *Fiction, Crime, Empire* that "to some extent, Conan Doyle's formal success was due to his refinement, following Poe, of a new, quintessentially popular genre, featuring a single detective hero within an open-ended, continuous form responsive to public fears, hopes, and anxieties."²⁴ But Thompson notes that Conan Doyle begins to depart from Poe almost immediately: "The success of this form, and of the Sherlock Holmes myth in general, depends on a particular use of language, a realistic style notable for its vivid, precise detail"²⁵ Whereas Poe set his stories in a single room of a decaying Parisian mansion and gives only the barest atmosphere of the room from which his hero rarely stirred, Holmes's apartments in 221B Baker Street are full of details about the hero's odd and eccentric habits. From his encyclopedias of crime to the heel-less Persian slipper full of tobacco, Holmes inhabits a place that appears real because of Conan Doyle's attention to detail.

²³ Quoted in Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 41.

²⁴ Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 61.

²⁵ Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 61.

Conan Doyle's stories were also different from Poe's in the manner of the detective's investigations. Whereas Poe wrote the Dupin stories as logical exercises, Conan Doyle wrote the Holmes adventures to correct a defect in the genre of detective fiction. As Pound elaborates, "they were written to correct what in his opinion was 'the greatest defect of most detective fiction, that the chief character arrived at his results without an obvious reason. That is not fair, it is not art.'"²⁶ Rather than arriving at his conclusions in a case through some accident on the part of the perpetrator, or through some fortuitous act of nature, Conan Doyle's detective would come to his conclusions through the patient application of reason to his imagination and so move the case to its conclusion. As Peterson notes in *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, "Sherlock Holmes represents a complete departure from the long tradition of English detectives—from the Bow Street Runners to the London Detective Police and their fictional counterparts."²⁷ Holmes is different from prior detectives because he does not find clues because of the ineptitude of low-class criminals; instead, he reaches his conclusions despite the cleverness of his opponents who seek to ingeniously mask their crime.

Sherlock Holmes synthesized two types that had emerged in the middle class during the early 1890's, the romantic egoist and the disciplined scientist. Van Dover argues in *We Must Have Certainty* that "his appearances in *The Strand* clearly struck a chord in an audience eager to be told again and again that the world's rubbish—cigarette ashes, abandoned hats, frayed bell cords—was meaningful, and could betray a nefarious plot, unmask a nefarious plotter, vindicate

²⁶ Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 41.

²⁷ Peterson, *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, 203.

the innocent.”²⁸ Where Poe’s Dupin rarely left his armchair and pronounced his conclusions to cases in strings of syllogistic premises and conclusions, Holmes rushed to the scene of the crime to observe the evidence for himself before positing hypotheses to test. That is, Holmes was a disciplined scientist, whereas Dupin was first and foremost a logical philosopher. Furthermore, Holmes—often through the help of Watson—was a romantic egoist. Though he chides Watson for adding sentimental details to his cases, one finds examples—such as “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty”—where Holmes actually stops to smell the roses.²⁹ As Van Dover concludes, “Holmes, in the course of his many cases and adventures, exposed some of the nooks and crannies of his own individual character. He remained essentially a detective, but he also began to emerge as a man, with a personal past and idiosyncratic tastes.”³⁰

One element that Conan Doyle wrote into the Holmes adventures which gave Holmes a sense of fullness was his individualism; which Knight argues is a key value of the middle class. Knight then argues that Conan Doyle avoided making Holmes a sort of one dimensional thinking machine (like Poe’s Dupin) by making “the second major value of his great detective that equally potent contemporary force—individualism: the essence of humanity as it seemed to many then, and now.”³¹ Conan Doyle emphasizes Holmes’s individuality through two humanizing aspects of

²⁸ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 26.

²⁹ Holmes remarks, “our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food are really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it.” Doyle, “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 313.

³⁰ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 26.

³¹ Knight, “The Case of the Great Detective,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 55.

Holmes, first through his oddities and second through his friendship. In the first case, Holmes's quirk of storing tobacco in the toe of a slipper, "sawing" at his violin at all hours, and his mood swings made him a slightly flawed hero and, in turn, made him approachable by everyone. Servants and kings brought their problems to Sherlock Holmes, although the majority of his clients were firmly ensconced in the middle class.³² Second, Knight explains, Holmes is narrated to us by his friend Watson: "Watson who represents so plainly the average respectable man, so often puzzled, so often in need of heroic assistance to explain crime and disorder."³³ The exotic qualities of Holmes's drug addiction, in-home target shooting, odd chemical experiments combined with his dearly devoted friend Watson made Sherlock Holmes "a lofty hero, but crucially a human one."³⁴

Holmes is a popular hero because he expands beyond his roots in the detective genre and reaffirms the values of his primary audience in monthly installments. Paul argues in *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes* that we can appreciate Holmes "precisely because Watson gave us a series of tales rather than a course of lectures that we have heard of Sherlock Holmes."³⁵ By presenting Holmes in serialized short stories, Conan Doyle is able to present the functional details of Victorian London with a realism that reaffirmed the values of his audience. Knight explains that, "Although Holmes's work centers on interiors (including his own famous rooms at

³² See Frost and Kynvin, "Sherlock Holmes: Examining the Evidence—in charts," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2015/jun/29/sherlock-holmes-examining-the-evidence-in-charts>

³³ Knight, "The Case of the Great Detective," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 56.

³⁴ Knight, "The Case of the Great Detective," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 55.

³⁵ Paul, *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, 53.

221B Baker Street, where the fable begins), Conan Doyle sent him ranging through various microenvironments of Victorian London and the surrounding countryside.”³⁶ As Holmes moved through that varied landscape, encountering “lascars and monarchs; artists and country squires; sadistic boys, victimized women, and old men who vainly pursue artificial rejuvenation,”³⁷ he brought with him the value system of his rooms at 221B. As a popular hero, Sherlock Holmes was a romantic egoist and disciplined scientist pursuing individualism.

What does Sherlock Holmes do?

Why Holmes has such appeal, why we love him so much and have for so long a time is, however, perhaps the greatest of the Holmes mysteries, as well as the most incalculable. Most of the traditional literary solutions just don’t seem to apply in the curious case of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes, after all, is cheap. We all know that, but we love Holmes for it. It is the kind of cheapness that lasts. As Bertolt Brecht once said of life in Weimar Berlin, ‘It’s trash, but of what quality.’³⁸

Sherlock Holmes investigates crimes as an unofficial, consulting detective for the people and police of Victorian England in about five or six thousand words. As Marshall McLuhan notes, “Every fact, every item of a situation, for Holmes, has total relevance. There are no irrelevant details for him.”³⁹ As Knight points out, the adventures “deal with disorders in the respectable bourgeois family. There are various threats to established middle-class order, but they

³⁶ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 29.

³⁷ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 29.

³⁸ Herzinger, “Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 104.

³⁹ McLuhan, quoted in Conroy, Peter “The Importance of Being Watson,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 50.

come from within the family and the class, not from enemy criminals.”⁴⁰ Holmes responds to these threats through a formula. He observes the evidence in a situation, and then formulates a rhetorical response fitting to the evidence, audience, and situation. That is, Holmes uses rhetoric to bring a difficult problem to a satisfactory conclusion.

There exist three phases in a Holmes adventure. First, in the preliminary phase, Holmes demonstrates his ability for the reader. Second, in the investigation phase, Holmes inspects the particulars of a new case, collecting data, testing hypotheses, and interviewing witnesses. Third, in the denouement phase, Holmes reveals his full argument, often overwhelming his reluctant interlocutor with the power of that argument.

In the preliminary phase, Holmes often builds his ethos by some demonstration. Conroy explains in the article “The Importance of Being Watson,” “Holmes and Watson are in conversation, usually in the Baker Street flat, when Holmes unexpectedly makes one of those penetratingly accurate statements which leaves Watson speechless in amazement.”⁴¹ Having overpowered Watson with his fair-mindedness, Holmes then “backtracks and explains the logical chain of observations, inferences, and conclusions which led him to make his original statement.”⁴² This segues into the next phase of the adventure as Holmes brings Watson’s attention to a telegram, or an interesting article in the paper, or a note is delivered, or a client rings the bell. Thus the first thing Holmes often does in a case is to establish his credibility by a demonstration of his ability or by referencing his past successes.

⁴⁰ Knight, “The Case of the Great Detective,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 57.

⁴¹ Conroy, “The Importance of Being Watson,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 38.

⁴² Conroy, “The Importance of Being Watson,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 38.

In the investigation phase of the adventure, Holmes collects and tests data. *A Study in Scarlet* sets the pattern Conan Doyle would later condense into the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. In addition to his armchair contemplation of the case, Holmes studies the first crime scene. As Conroy notes, “he studies the wheel marks of a hansom cab, examines elaborate patterns of footsteps, identifies cigar ash, and in the end engages in the detailed step-by-step summary of his methods that has become indispensable to the mystery format.”⁴³ Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok explain in their article “You Know my Method” that “Holmes’s powers of observation, his ‘extraordinary genius for minutiae,’ as Watson puts it, and of deduction are in most cases built on a complicated series of what Peirce would have called guesses.”⁴⁴ That is, Holmes looks at the available data and formulates a hypothesis which is easy to test and will yield the most valuable information. Next he conducts a test and proceeds to his next hypothesis either through revising the present hypothesis or making a subsequent hypothesis. This is the phase in Holmes’s process where Accardo accuses Holmes of lying. In *Diagnosis and Detection*, Accardo argues that “too much credibility has been assigned to Holmes’s account of what he did (his endlessly re-quoted maxims on facts, observation, and deduction), whereas too little attention has been paid to what he actually did.”⁴⁵ When one considers what Holmes actually did, one finds that Holmes, unlike his predecessors, both investigates crimes and streamlines his investigations through a process of reasoning.

⁴³ Peterson, *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, 205.

⁴⁴ Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok, “You Know my Method,” *The Sign of the Three*, 21.

⁴⁵ Accardo, *Diagnosis and Detection*, 14.

It is, however, unfair to say that Holmes simply lies about his process. Rather, Holmes is engaged in persuasion. He may minimize the importance of his physical exertion while emphasizing his mental acuity, but that is simply the adoption of a persona to better establish his ethos. Holmes's bravado increases his credibility as a fair-minded individual and prepares his audience to accept his arguments. It is in this phase that Holmes most often appeals to his audience's emotions. He might play on the emotions of witnesses to test their story, or he might evoke an angry reaction from suspects in order to test their mood. In "The Adventure of the Abby Grange," Holmes tests whether a known murderer is morally innocent by testing whether he will let an innocent person suffer in order to clear his name, and in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" Holmes provokes Dr. Grimsby Roylott to a show of strength—bending a poker—in order to demonstrate his own physical prowess—by straightening the poker again. The investigation phase is where Holmes formulates and tests hypotheses, building the arguments he will use in the denouement phase, and often appealing to the emotions of his audience.

In the denouement phase, Holmes explains how he arrived at a given conclusion, arguing that it is the most probable solution given the evidence at hand. Conroy explains that in this phase "initial disbelief changes to comprehension and enthusiastic support. Only after resolving the enigma and unmasking the culprit does Holmes share with Watson the whole deductive process, the chain of reasoning which led to the solution, and thereby restores Watson's faith in him."⁴⁶ The final revelation is made possible in part by Watson's craft as a story teller. "Were Watson to document the pedestrian minutiae of the investigation, Holmes's dramatic 'solutions,' his incisive conclusions drawn by sheer and seemingly unaided brain power, those climactic

⁴⁶ Conroy, "The Importance of Being Watson," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 42.

coups de théâtre which Watson prepares so carefully, sometimes gathering all the principles on the stage of the Baker Street flat where Holmes's monologue of deduction turns into a scene of recognition, unmasking the culprit as in *A Study in Scarlet*, all would necessarily be diminished."⁴⁷ That is, both the reader and Watson are kept in the dark about Holmes's conclusions during the investigative phase, though we are mostly privy to things Holmes observes and are invited to draw the same conclusions Holmes might draw.

The reader is like a patient who comes to the diagnostician aware of the symptoms but unable to identify or treat the disease. As Dr. Joseph Bell, Conan Doyle's mentor and possible model for Sherlock Holmes, notes in a letter: "The recognition [of disease] depends in great measure on the accurate and rapid appreciation of small points in which the diseased differs from the healthy state."⁴⁸ Dr. Bell explains that while teaching medical students it is useful to show them how much can be gained by careful observation by surprising them with seeming pre-cognizance about the patient's history. Dr. Bell continues, "The patient, too, is likely to be impressed by your ability to cure him in the future if he sees that you, at a glance, know much of his past. And the whole trick is much easier than it appears at first."⁴⁹ The groundwork for the reader's trust in Sherlock Holmes is established in the first phase of the adventure when Holmes establishes his ethos as a detective, thus, "in the absences of any real doubt as to whether Holmes will succeed or not, reader interest shifts to *how* he will succeed."⁵⁰ That is, the reader's attention

⁴⁷ Conroy, "The Importance of Being Watson," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 45.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Hall, *Sherlock Holmes and his Creator*, 83.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Hall, *Sherlock Holmes and his Creator*, 83.

⁵⁰ Conroy, "The Importance of Being Watson," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 42.

shifts from Holmes's ethos to his logos, from his ability to solve the case to his arguments in support of his solution. As Conroy explains, "suspense now involves the deductive process itself. Suspense becomes methodological: the question is not 'who-dun-it' but rather how Holmes can observe details and infer the truth from their mute testimony."⁵¹

Where Watson presents each fact as capable of only one interpretation, Holmes considers several possible interpretations of each piece of evidence. "Whereas Watson and the reader are content to accept the clues as possessing only readily apparent meaning, Holmes looks for additional non-apparent interpretations."⁵² Here, Conroy interprets Holmes as a "reader" deciphering a code and finding meaning in a text which remains incomprehensible to others, but Holmes goes beyond reading and explains his interpretation to Watson in the form of an argument. What makes Holmes different from other fictional detectives is that he does not rely on reasoning alone, as does Dupin, or good fortune, as does Cuff, but instead argues for his case theory through his reputation, an appeal to his audience's emotions, and his arguments. "Whereas C. Auguste Dupin was a disembodied intellect, and Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff a mere eccentric, Holmes is the first truly complex, fully rounded, psychologically interesting detective hero."⁵³ That is, Holmes is interesting because he is a scientific detective. As Clausen explains, "the important point, however, is that he is conceived—and conceives himself—as a man who applies scientific methods to the detection of crime, and that his success as a detective is due to

⁵¹ Conroy, "The Importance of Being Watson," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 42.

⁵² Conroy, "The Importance of Being Watson," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 49.

⁵³ Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 61.

those methods.”⁵⁴ As a scientific detective, Holmes’s seemingly impossible “deductions” can be replicated by any reader who will apply Holmes’s method, which is to determine in each case the available means of persuasion. In short, any audience member can use rhetoric to emulate Sherlock Holmes.

Why is Sherlock Holmes Important?

T. S. Eliot, in that forgotten review of 1929, noticed that ‘when we talk of [Holmes] we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence. Collins, after all is more real to his readers than Cuff; Poe is more real than Dupin; but Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the eminent spiritualist, the author of a number of exciting stories which we read years ago and have forgotten, what has he to do with Holmes?’ It should be obvious from this that never has a created character so completely gotten away from his creator as Holmes has gotten away from Conan Doyle. Not only did the irrepressible detective spring back to life after Conan Doyle tried to throw him off the Reichenbach Falls, but he has since—as I noted earlier—participated in a vast number of stories, novels, and movies which are as much a part of what we think we know about Holmes as anything in the Sacred Canon. It is surely not the literary value of Conan Doyle’s stories which commands our attention; what we admire is the figure Holmes cuts in the world of the imagination. And that figure far transcends the value of the texts themselves.⁵⁵

Sherlock Holmes is important because he has continually influenced perceptions of logic, criminology, and fiction since his introduction in 1887. As Peterson notes in *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, “For nearly a century the character of Sherlock Holmes has so enchanted readers that he has become a cult figure; he is the subject of literally hundreds of articles and books, the source for the sale of countless deerstalker caps and other paraphernalia, and is commemorated by a pub in London where his sitting room at 221B Baker Street is reproduced in every detail, down to the

⁵⁴ Clausen, “Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 70.

⁵⁵ Herzinger, *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, “Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody,” 105-6.

Persian slipper and the coal scuttle.”⁵⁶ As Peterson, Herzinger, and Eliot argue, Holmes is influential in part because he seems more alive than any other fictional character and in some cases, more alive than Conan Doyle himself. Holmes is more than a figure; he is a tool for understanding the hidden complexity of a pressing problem and for explaining that problem and its likely solution to an audience. That is, Holmes’s critics have argued for his importance in interpreting the world and facing it rhetorically in fields as diverse as psychology, semiology, and criminology.

Holmes’s contribution to psychology is an extension of his roots in the surgery at the University of Edinburgh. He aids in both the diagnosis of symptoms and in proposing a course of treatment. As Ginsburg notes in “Clues,” when someone suggested a parallel between Freud’s psychoanalytic method and Holmes’s method, “Freud replied expressing his admiration of Morelli’s technique as a connoisseur.”⁵⁷ Ginsburg explains that “in all three cases tiny details provide the key to deeper reality, inaccessible by other methods. These details may be symptoms, for Freud, or clues, for Holmes, or features of paintings, for Morelli.”⁵⁸ Ginsburg argues that the connection is that all three were doctors “Freud as a doctor; Morelli had a degree in medicine; Conan Doyle had been a doctor before settling down to write.”⁵⁹ Accardo, himself a physician by trade, argues that

the true value of both Sherlock Holmes and Don Quixote for the physician is their dramatic representation of a vast cross-section of human personalities and motivations set against the frequently confusing contrast between appearance and

⁵⁶ Peterson, *Victorian Masters of Mystery*, 200.

⁵⁷ Ginsburg, “Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes,” *The Sign of Three*, 87.

⁵⁸ Ginsburg, “Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes,” *The Sign of Three*, 87.

⁵⁹ Ginsburg, “Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes,” *The Sign of Three*, 90.

reality. One of the morals to both series of tales seems to be that a passionate commitment to justice may facilitate the perception of reality.⁶⁰

Holmes allows the doctor of medicine or the doctor of psychology to see through a facade in order to help a patient. The particular equipment Holmes offers the attending physician is the physic power of rhetoric. Truzzi argues that Holmes, as a social psychologist, shows how the methods of diagnosis can be turned to detective work. “The important point being made here is that the success of Dr. Bell and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle demonstrate the fact that the methods of scientific analysis exemplified and dramatized by Sherlock Holmes in his adventures have had their counterparts in the real world.”⁶¹ In other words, Holmes is important equipment for living because he teaches us to use his rhetorical tools to diagnose our situation.

In addition to diagnosing our situation, Holmes also contributes to psychology the means of proposing treatment. As Thompson argues in *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, “Conan Doyle’s detective fiction did not simply *reflect* a preferred, given, monolithic middle-class ideology; instead, his reworking of an ideology of empiricism in a popular form helped *produce* a comforting and reassuring image of society untroubled by sexual, economic, or social pressures. This image of late-Victorian society is itself ideological, and ultimately functions to produce consent to the existing socioeconomic order.”⁶² Though there are problems with the world Conan Doyle created through Sherlock Holmes, including the disenfranchisement of women and the perpetuation of a colonial empire, as equipment for living, Holmes was undeniably powerful. Kendrick argues that Holmes’s power begins in childhood, speaking to the primal fear of the

⁶⁰ Accardo, *Diagnosis and Detection*, 59.

⁶¹ Truzzi, “Sherlock Holmes: Applied Social Psychologist,” *The Sign of the Three*, 58.

⁶² Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 75.

unknown and the terror and exhilaration of mystery, before noting that Holmes answers our primal fears through science, proposing not only a diagnosis of our terror but also a treatment for our dread. Knight argues that we find in Holmes the same treatment plan one may find in religious doctrine, arguing that “we all desperately crave both internal order and cosmic understanding: a sense that there is a hidden force operating through and beneath us that makes life not only sensible and just but, more importantly, reveals compassion at the heart of creation.”⁶³ Thus the Sherlock Holmes adventures provide both a diagnosis and a treatment for the unknown.

Holmes is important to semiology because his method of detection makes the interpretation of signs accessible to his audience. Conroy suggests that approaching Holmes as a semiologist circumvents literary problems one confronts when treating Holmes as a criminologist or a doctor. “To consider Holmes’s method of detection as an exercise in semiotics rather than as a contribution to real police investigative techniques or as Doyle’s elaboration upon the medical examination as taught by his professor Dr. Joseph Bell, seems by far to be the most satisfactory and the most literary solution.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Ginzburg notes that Holmes is important to the subfield of medical semiotics because he brings the long tradition of sign reading in medicine into a scientific frame. Ginzburg notes that in medical semiotics one finds “a whole constellation of disciplines (and anachronistic terms, of course) with a common character”⁶⁵ and notes that, while it might be convenient to simply dismiss the “pseudosciences”

⁶³ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 13.

⁶⁴ Conroy, “The Importance of Being Watson,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 52.

⁶⁵ Ginzburg, “Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes,” in *The Sign of Three*, 90.

of divination and physiognomy while embracing the “science” of law and modern medicine by explaining the great distance between the old ways and the new, Sherlock Holmes models the bizarre contiguity of semiotics that persists across that time and space. As Ginzburg explains, Holmes is “the model of medical semiotics or symptomatology—the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of the layman, or even of Dr. Watson.”⁶⁶ The pseudosciences and the sciences all attempt to do what Holmes manages to accomplish in his adventures, the explanation of a symptoms through rhetoric.

Perhaps Holmes’s greatest, and most direct, contribution is to the field of criminology, where he suggests underlying causes of crime and proposes a means of identifying criminals. In addition to the direct interventions of Conan Doyle in the cases of George Edalji⁶⁷ and Oscar Slater,⁶⁸ which resulted in legal and judicial reform in England and Scotland, Sherlock Holmes represented a way of managing crime. Building off of Holmes’s medical pedigree, Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok argue, “Holmes was a brilliant physician to the body politic, the disease of which is crime.”⁶⁹ Holmes both diagnosed crime, and prescribed treatment. Knight elaborates, noting “The disorderly selfishness that Holmes unveils is the dark side of the acquisitive individualism which is basic to the economic world-view of the city workers, clerks and

⁶⁶ Ginzburg, “Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes,” in *The Sign of Three*, 87.

⁶⁷ For a brief description of the case see Boudicca Fox-Leonard, “How Conan Doyle Solved Real-Life Crimes that had Baffled Police—Just Like Sherlock Holmes,” *Mirror* (2016). <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/how-conan-doyle-solved-real-7109342>

⁶⁸ For a brief exploration of the case see Eilidh McLaughlin, “The Curious Case of Oscar Slater,” *BBC* (2011). http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/history/the_curious_case_of_oscar_slater.shtml

⁶⁹ Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok, “You Know my Method,” *The Sign of the Three*, 47.

businessmen who patronized *The Strand*.”⁷⁰ Although, as Thompson explains, Conan Doyle’s fictional political problems are sometimes merely a colorful background for “the observation of class conflict, the representation of which for most Victorians constituted a necessary part of any general view of society, becomes decorative, even quaint in Conan Doyle.”⁷¹ In Holmes’s investigations and adventures one sees an attempted explanation for why someone might commit a robbery or murder that transcends their supposed criminal inclinations and exposes underlying societal conflicts. Yet, as Clausen argues, “Holmes does more than simply satisfy his clients or uphold the abstractions of the law. He single-handedly defends an entire social order whose relatively fortunate members feel it to be deeply threatened by forces that only he is capable of overcoming.”⁷²

Holmes not only suggests a social component of crime, but also his method has a direct impact on the conduct of civil and criminal investigations. Berg, in “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Detection” traces the influence of Sherlock Holmes through criminology articles and books. Berg notes that criminologist Ashton-Wolfe credits Conan Doyle with inventing many of the methods used in scientific laboratories: “Sherlock Holmes made the study of tobacco ash his hobby...but the police at once realized the importance of such specialized knowledge, and now every laboratory has a complete set of tables giving the appearance and composition of the various ashes.”⁷³ Henry Morton Robinson traces the new scientific method detectives employ in

⁷⁰ Knight, “The Case of the Great Detective,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 58.

⁷¹ Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 73.

⁷² Clausen, “Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind,” *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 72.

⁷³ Berg, “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Crime Detection,” 446.

crime solving to Holmes: “The protean shadow that hovers over every age compelling it to think, act, write its stories and catch its criminals in a highly particularized manner.”⁷⁴ Sir Sydney Smith, a former professor of Forensic Medicine at Edinburgh University, credits the Holmes adventures with the change from plodding police work to the science of criminal investigation, noting “Conan Doyle had the rare, perhaps unique distinction of seeing life become true to his fiction.”⁷⁵ Luke May, another noted criminologist, argues that, while scientists like Bertillon discovered important methods of identification through individual measurements, Conan Doyle has “done more than any other one thing to stimulate active interest in the scientific and analytical investigation of crime.”⁷⁶ As Truzzi summarizes, “given the extraordinary popularity of the tales of his adventures—created for us through the genius of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—for many criminologists who recognized the merits of the detective’s methods, it is doubtful that Sherlock Holmes could have had a greater impact on the sciences of man had he actually lived.”⁷⁷

Sherlock Holmes’s most important influence is not in psychology or semiology or even criminology, but in the individuals who encounter his rhetoric and find his pattern of experience appealing for their own situation. As Herzinger notes, Holmes becomes all things to all persons:

He becomes simultaneously an aesthete, the protector of respectability, and a flawless—but not infallible—human being in the world. He is better than us, no doubt, but he is like us, too. It is this, our imaginative response to the Holmes Saga as a whole, which allows us to see him as very human indeed, but one who somehow manages to secure the rewards of the official culture while at the same

⁷⁴ Quoted in Berg, “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Crime Detection,” 446.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Berg, “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Crime Detection,” 446.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Berg, “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Crime Detection,” 446.

⁷⁷ Truzzi, “Sherlock Holmes: Applied Social Psychologist,” *The Sign of the Three*, 77.

time rejecting the very culture that bestows them. And, too, such flexibility allows Holmes to transcend his original time, his original place, and his original medium.⁷⁸

Kendrick argues that the Sherlock Holmes stories are like parables that allow us to see ourselves and realize what we are capable of. He explains, “there, in the mirror of the parables of detective fiction, we allow ourselves to realize we are capable of such acts, yet also, through the magic of fiction, as beings able to ‘solve’ and redeem the worst within ourselves.”⁷⁹ Thus when Holmes’s death was recorded in “The Adventure of the Final Problem,” young city men protested his fate for a month with mourning crepe on their silk hats. Pound poetically describes other mourners “for whom the death of a myth was akin to a national bereavement. From that hour a literary cult of exceptional vitality began stirring in the womb of time.”⁸⁰ What these sources describe is the profound appeal of Sherlock Holmes, an appeal this dissertation seeks to identify through Kenneth Burke’s theory of symbolic appeal. Furthermore, this dissertation seeks to explain how Holmes becomes useful for individuals as rhetorical equipment for living.

Outline of Chapters

The following study employs Burke’s understanding of literature as equipment for living as a methodology for exploring the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. I argue that Sherlock Holmes is a symbol, that he is defined by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle throughout the canon of 56 short stories and four novels, and that Sherlock Holmes continues to fit contemporary situations. In order to support this argument, I first explore Burke’s theory of symbols as it relates to his

⁷⁸ Herzinger, *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, “Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody,” 110.

⁷⁹ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 113.

⁸⁰ Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 45.

critical tool of “Literature as Equipment for Living.” Second, I explore the rhetorical situation Conan Doyle responds to through the Holmes symbol. Finally, I explore Holmes’s use of rhetoric in the adventures.

First, in chapter two, I argue that Burke’s theory of symbols explains how literature serves as equipment for living. In that chapter I first argue that Holmes is a symbol, and then explore how the Holmes symbol appeals to audiences. Next, I explore previous uses of Burke’s critical tool, addressing three problems they introduce. I then address these problems by grounding Burke’s critical tool in the appeal of symbols, and emphasizing the role of the “margin of persuasion” in a symbol’s ability to appeal to an audience for reasons intrinsic to the author’s intentions, even when there is little identification between an audience and a symbol. Finally, I explore the specific appeal of Sherlock Holmes, illustrating how audiences have used the Holmes symbol as equipment for living in accordance with Burke’s theory of symbolic appeal.

Second, in chapter three, I explore the rhetorical situation of Victorian Great Britain to argue that Sherlock Holmes’s rhetoric is shaped by changes to the environment of the mid-nineteenth century. First, I explore how the increase in rail travel, the prevalence of the telegraph, and education reform were crucial to Conan Doyle’s invention of a new literary form, the serialized short story, which satisfied desires aroused by the new media environment of trains, telegraphs, and public education. Second, I argue that Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes adventures helped shape the economics of reading and writing in response to the new media environment. Finally, I explore the sociological appeal of Sherlock Holmes, outside of his appeal as a symbol, which is covered in chapter two, in order to argue that Holmes’s rhetoric was shaped by his response to the exigencies of Victorian Great Britain. That is, Holmes’s rhetoric may be grounded in the particular social and economic problems of the 1890’s, but his pattern of

experience continues to serve as equipment for living because of the universality of Holmes's rhetorical response to that environment.

Third, in chapter four, I explore Sherlock Holmes's use of rhetoric in the adventures, arguing that he uses ethos, pathos, and logos as means of persuasion. First, I define the concepts according to Aristotle's classic text *On Rhetoric*. Second, I explore literature on Sherlock Holmes to argue that, while previous studies have considered Holmes's ethos or pathos or logos, they have not considered them as means of persuasion. Finally, I examine how Holmes uses different means of persuasion within different situations to obtain his goals, for example, his use of ethos to recruit new clients, his use of pathos to gather evidence, and his use of logos to adjudicate a case in the denouement of an adventure. Finally, I conclude with a suggestion for future research, both in the rhetoric of Sherlock Holmes and in the implications of Burke's theory of symbols for his critical tool of "Literature as Equipment for Living."

CHAPTER TWO: BURKING SHERLOCK HOLMES⁸¹

That is the way one feels about Sherlock Holmes. Let us be done with this talk of—anything you may happen to dislike in the daily headlines. Let us talk rather of those things that are permanent and secure, of high matters about which there can be no gibbering division of opinion. Let us talk of the realities that do not change, of that higher realism which is the only true romance. Let us talk again of Sherlock Holmes. For the plain fact is, gentlemen, that the imperishable detective is still a more commanding figure in the world than most of the warriors and statesmen in whose present existence we are invited to believe.⁸²

When Edmond Locard was looking for a model for forensic science and criminology, he turned to Sherlock Holmes: “Sherlock Holmes was the first to realize the importance of dust. I merely copied his methods.”⁸³ When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was attempting to explain the relative stability of inflation in the wake of the Great Recession (and pointed to the significance of the *lack* of inflation in advanced economies despite recession and unemployment) they turned to Sherlock Holmes: “This chapter seeks to grasp, in Sherlock Holmes’s words, ‘the significance of the silence of the dog, for one true inference invariably suggests others’.”⁸⁴ And when Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss were looking for a new series to capture the hearts and minds of television audiences, they turned to Sherlock Holmes: “The idea of making Sherlock modern again was one of these light bulb moments. We just looked at each other and went,

⁸¹ Burking is a reference to W. Burke who kept Edinburgh University medical students supplied with fresh corpses by suffocating inebriated patrons from the local pubs.

⁸² Starrett, “Explanation,” 221 B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes, xi.

⁸³ Quoted in Berg, “Sherlock Holmes: Father of Scientific Crime and Detection,” Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology Vol. 61 issue 3 (1971), 448.

⁸⁴ International Monetary Fund, “The Dog That Didn’t Bark: Has Inflation Been Muzzled or was it Just Sleeping?” in World Economic Outlook: Hopes, Realities, and Risks, April 2013, 2.

‘Someone should do that.’”⁸⁵ In each of these instances one sees Sherlock Holmes as both a symbol and a resource for what Kenneth Burke called “equipment for living.”

As one of the most widely recognized literary characters ever invented, Sherlock Holmes is a perfect example of what Burke, in his book *Counter-Statement*, defines as a symbol. Burke writes that “the symbol is the verbal parallel to a pattern of experience.”⁸⁶ A pattern of experience is simply the habitual adjustments of an organism to its environment, such as the domesticated pig that grows obese in an environment of confinement and plentiful feed. When a pattern is converted into a plot for a formula, it becomes a symbol. While some symbols are immediately obvious and immediately condense a pattern of experience into a single word (here Burke suggests Don Quixote, Tom Sawyer, and Hamlet, as examples) other symbols are more diffuse. More diffuse symbols occur throughout a work of art and present a “complex attitude which pervades the setting, plot, and characters” that Burke calls “a word invented by the artist to specify a particular grouping or pattern or emphasizing of experiences.”⁸⁷ While the obvious symbol is a formula, which condenses the habitual responses of an organism to its environment into a word, the diffuse symbol is a formula which so pervades the work of art that the word must be defined by reference to the setting, plot and characters of the work of art (rather than a single joust, as in Don Quixote, the painting of a fence, as in Tom Sawyer, or an indecisive soliloquy, as in Hamlet). Regardless of whether a symbol is an obvious word or a diffuse

⁸⁵ Mcalpine, “Mark Gatiss on ‘Sherlock’s First Collaborative Script,” *Anglophenia*.<http://www.bbcamerica.com/anglophenia/2015/04/mark-gatiss-on-sherlocks-first-collaborative-script/>

⁸⁶ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 152.

⁸⁷ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 153.

definition in a work of art, its function as a symbol is to communicate a pattern of experience that is potentially useful for an audience as equipment.

But Holmes is more than just a symbol; he also has proven time and again to be what Burke calls “equipment for living.” Burke introduces the idea of literature as equipment in *Counter-Statement* when he argues that eloquence leads to uplift, by which he means that a reader will convert a symbol for use in her own life. That is, reading literature is not a substitute for living, but “equipment, like any vocabulary, for handling the complexities of living.”⁸⁸ Unlike pamphlets, political tracts, and soapbox oratory, which are explicitly useful because they eradicate certain forms of social injustice by dealing with them specifically, literature of the imagination uses symbols to prepare the mind in a more general fashion.⁸⁹ He explains that “there must be a literature which upholds such an equipment in the abstract, if the social reformer is to find something in us to which he can appeal when advocating reforms in the particular.”⁹⁰ In his later book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke considers how literature serves as equipment for living in more detail. He argues that, like proverbs, literature is a strategy for dealing with a situation by the adoption of an attitude towards that situation: “In so far as situations are typical and recurrent in a given social structure, people develop names for them and strategies for handling them.”⁹¹ These names are the symbols which are either the obvious condensation of a work of art into a single word, or a word which refers to the complex

⁸⁸ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 183.

⁸⁹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 189.

⁹⁰ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 189-190.

⁹¹ Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 296-7.

attitude diffused throughout the plot, setting, and characters of a work of art. Moving from the specific to the general, he suggests that art forms like tragedy, comedy, or satire can be equipment for living, and that works within those categories would “size up situations in various ways and in keeping with correspondingly various attitudes.”⁹² Sherlock Holmes becomes “equipment” when he is thus used by both readers and rhetors to size up their own actual situations in certain ways by drawing from the patterns of experience that Holmes exemplifies in his fictional stories.

In the following chapter, I first argue that Sherlock Holmes appeals to audiences through form as a symbol. Second, I argue that the current use of Burke’s critical tool for analyzing literature as equipment for living in the field of rhetoric has introduced three problems that have not yet been addressed. Next, I use Burke’s explanation of symbol formation, use, and appeal in *Counter-Statement* to argue that grounding literature as equipment for living in Burke’s theory of symbols rather than in his later theories of dramatism or identification eliminates the problems identified in the literature. By focusing on symbols and their use as equipment, I contribute to our understanding of Burke’s critical tool of literature as equipment for living while addressing problems that have previously limited the use of Burke’s tool to texts with obvious and overwhelming symbols that have an immediate and explicit use for their audience. Finally, I conclude with an examination of how Sherlock Holmes has been used by audiences to address their rhetorical situations.

⁹² Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 304.

The Appeal of Symbolic Form

As with any symbol, we can understand the general appeal of Sherlock Holmes in one of three ways. Any symbol attracts us because of either its technical, its practical, or its artistic appeal. First, Burke argues that the technical aspect of the symbol “lies in the fact that it is a principle of logical guidance, and makes for the reputation of itself in changing details which preserve as a constant the original ratio.”⁹³ In other words, a symbol is appealing because of its recognizable, repetitive, and logical design. Thus the ratio of discrepancy between Sherlock and Watson is repeated throughout the stories, despite the changing details of the stories. One may return to the stories, or read any story for the first time, and find the comforting ratio of Holmes’s reason to Watson’s emotion. Burke explains that the creation of a symbol leads to the technical aspect of its formal appeal: an original emotion is channeled into a symbol, and then this symbol becomes a generative force through its persistence despite varying details. “From a few speeches of Falstaff,” Burke argues, “we advance unconsciously to a synthesis of Falstaff; and thereafter, each time he appears on the stage, we know what to expect of him in essence, or quality, and we enjoy the poet’s translation of this essence, or quality, into particulars, or quantity.”⁹⁴ An example from Holmes is the tripartite division of his power into seeing, knowing, and deducing, which Conan Doyle first develops in *A Study in Scarlet*, and then repeats in every further iteration of Sherlock Holmes. We expect, as soon as we enter the Baker Street apartments, a reasoning machine of exceptional power to find the solution to an intractable case through seeing

⁹³ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 60.

⁹⁴ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 61.

what we do not notice, connecting it to knowledge that we do not possess, and finally deducing a conclusion that we would not guess.

Simply understanding a symbol's technical appeal, however, only suggests why one might enjoy reading any novel that follows a general formula. Second, Burke argues that a symbol also is appealing because of a practical application to the life of the reader: "In addition to the technical form just mentioned (and "artistic" value) it also applies to life, serving here as a formula for our experiences, charming us by finding some more or less simple principle underlying our emotional complexities."⁹⁵ Thus, when we are baffled by seeming injustice, we read Holmes and find a simple solution (that the forces of justice may be inept) and through that solution we find solace. Or with an even more practical case, such as when we are missing our keys or wallet, Holmes serves the practical means of reminding us to notice the seemingly insignificant detail of the open refrigerator door, reminding us that we placed the item momentarily in the butter drawer.

Finally, Burke argues that symbols are appealing to audiences outside of their technical and practical uses through their beauty. "A person who does not avidly need the symbol can be led to it through the excellence of its presentation."⁹⁶ Furthermore, the person who did avidly need the symbol will gain the serendipity of the symbol on rediscovering it. In other words, it may lose its practical appeal, but if the symbol is excellently presented then the person may continue to find enjoyment in it through the excellence of its presentation. Thus, the Baker Street Irregulars, who make a game out of close readings from the Holmes canon, have long since lost

⁹⁵ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 61.

⁹⁶ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 62.

the practical appeal of Sherlock Holmes, but they find joy both in the technical presentation of the symbol and in the artistry of Conan Doyle's evocative writing.

But all of these uses are only possible insofar as any symbol embodies a certain type of *form*. By form, Burke means a successful arousing and fulfillment of desires. As Burke explains, "A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence."⁹⁷ This arousal and fulfillment is subdivided into five aspects, which work together in the Holmes canon, and justify Conan Doyle's reputation as a formulaic writer while also defending form as a desirable quality and not an artistic failing. The five aspects Burke identified are syllogistic progression, qualitative progression, repetitive form, conventional form, and minor or incidental form.⁹⁸ While it is possible for a single aspect of form to dominate a symbol, the symbol is significantly weakened.⁹⁹ The following paragraphs explore the Holmes canon through Burke's system for analyzing the formal appeal of symbols set out in *Counter-Statement* as a rhetorical lexicon. Following Burke's pattern from *Counter-Statement*, I explore the Holmes canon according to their form. Illustrating where each of Burke's five types of form occurs in the Holmes canon. Then I discuss the patterns of experience

⁹⁷ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.

⁹⁸ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.

⁹⁹ See Crick and Engles "Aesthetic Rhetoric of Randolph Bourne." Randolph Bourne may be a powerful symbol, yet he "remains as forgotten as ever" because he relies on the minor form of paradox, a single aspect of Burkean form. This is best illustrated in his famous pronouncement "war is the health of the state," but it is also in his paradoxical portrait of Fergus—wherein the next best thing to producing a work of art is not to become a work of art oneself. Bourne, as a symbol, merely arouses the satisfaction of a paradoxical realization thus he is forgettable, and his primary use is as a witticism within a larger context. This explains both Bourne's forgettability and the wildly disparate uses of Bourne by leftist radicals, progressives, and libertarians when discussing the state.

symbolized by Conan Doyle through Holmes, along with their appeal as formula, which is to say patterns of forms.

The most prominent form in any Sherlock Holmes story is syllogistic progression. This form is the perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step, where everything falls together. Burke calls this form syllogistic because “given certain things, certain things must follow, the premises forcing the conclusion. In so far as the audience, from its acquaintance with the premises, feels the rightness of the conclusion, the work is formal. The arrows of our desires are turned in a certain direction and the plot follows the direction of the arrows.”¹⁰⁰ Many Sherlock Holmes stories contain this aspect of form, even cases where Holmes ostensibly fails to deduce the solution, as in “The Five Orange Pips,” “The Yellow Face,” or “the Musgrave Ritual,” because we follow our desires, even when the fortunes of the character are reversed, provided that the reversal progresses syllogistically. To illustrate this aspect of form, however, I turn to one of Holmes’s success.

One of the best examples of syllogistic progression in the Holmes canon is “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches.” As Holmes himself remarks in the opening paragraph

It is pleasant for me to observe, Watson, that you have so far grasped the truth that in these little records of our cases which you have been good enough to draw up, and I am bound to say, occasionally to embellish, you have given prominence not so much to the many *causes célèbres* and sensational trials in which I have figured but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those values of deduction and of logical synthesis which I have made my special province.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.

¹⁰¹ Doyle, “Copper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 166.

In this story, a governess, Violet Hunter, who has been offered a position that is too good to be true, approaches Holmes. Jephro Rucastle, owner of the titular estate in Hampshire, offers Violet the exorbitant salary of £120 per year, but only if she agrees to cut her hair, wear an electric blue dress, and sit with her back to the windows in the front room of the house for several hours a week. Yet beneath the odd veneer of the case lies a simple problem of logical progression from observation to conclusion. The position is an odd one, so the arrow of our desire points to suspicion, and with Holmes we confess, “it is not the situation which I should like to see a sister of mine apply for.”¹⁰² But there isn’t enough evidence yet for us to reach a conclusion; we have the minor premise of a syllogism, but no major premise.¹⁰³

A fortnight later, Holmes and Watson are sent for by telegram, and our desire swells at the possibility of a major premise. But first Conan Doyle builds tension by reiterating the major premise through the cruelty of governess’s charge, the strange behavior of the servants, and a bizarre performance. Ms. Hunter describes the boy she governs as small for his age, with a disproportionately large head, and “his whole life appears to be spent in an alternation between savage fits of passion and gloomy intervals of sulking” so that “giving pain to any creature weaker than himself seems to be his one idea of amusement.”¹⁰⁴ Of the servants, one is nearly

¹⁰² Doyle, “Copper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 170.

¹⁰³ Burke also suggests that we find the incomplete syllogism as intriguing and bothersome as a chipped tooth. This is illustrated by Conan Doyle who notes that over the course of a fortnight, during which they have no news from Ms. Hunter, Holmes “sat frequently for half an hour on end, with knitted brows and an abstracted air, but he swept the matter away with a wave of his hand.... ‘Data! data! data!’ he cried impatiently. ‘I can’t make bricks without clay.’ And yet he would always wind up by muttering that no sister of his should ever have accepted such a situation.” Doyle, “Cooper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 171.

¹⁰⁴ Doyle, “Copper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 173.

perpetually drunk and the other is sour and silent, yet their employers issue no reprimands and seem to take no notice. Finally, Ms. Hunter tells Holmes and Watson that she has been asked to sit and read, wearing the electric blue dress, with her back to the front windows.

Each new point of datum contributes to the minor premise that Ms. Hunter's position is peculiar, but the major premise is still missing until she reveals that there is a forbidden chamber in an abandoned wing of the house, and that she has discovered a lock of hair identical to her own that could not possibly be her own. These last points of data form the major premise, and the arrow of our desire points to the only feasible conclusion. Holmes summarizes the case thus:

“Excellent! We shall then look thoroughly into the affair. Of course there is only one feasible explanation. You have been brought there to personate someone, and the real person is imprisoned in this chamber. That is obvious. As to who this prisoner is, I have no doubt that it is the daughter, Miss Alice Rucastle, if I remember right, who was said to have gone to America. You were chosen, doubtless, as resembling her in height, figure, and the color of your hair. Hers had been cut off, very possible in some illness through which she has passed, and so, of course, yours had to be sacrificed also. By a curious chance you came upon her tresses. The man in the road was undoubtedly some friend of hers—possibly her fiancé—and no doubt, as you wore the girl's dress and were so like her, he was convinced from your laughter, whenever he saw you, and afterwards from your gesture, that Miss Rucastle was perfectly happy, and that she no longer desired his attentions. The dog is let loose at night to prevent him from endeavoring to communicate with her. So much is fairly clear.”¹⁰⁵

While there is more romance in the case which follows Holmes's summary, what I quote above is the impersonal thing, the syllogistic progression of the story from one fact to another so that the conclusion flows neatly from the premises and the arrow of our desire points along the plot from major premise to conclusion without any inconvenience. Here, it is upon the logic, rather than the crime, which Burke encourages us to dwell. While there is a romantic plot to the story,

¹⁰⁵ Doyle, “Copper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 178.

Miss Rucastle's imprisonment is meant to stop her engagement to Mr. Fowler, that syllogistic progression is a mere counterpoint to Holmes's science of deduction.

Qualitative progression is the other aspect of progressive form identified by Burke. "Instead of one incident in the plot preparing us for some other possible incident of plot, the presence of one quality prepares us for the introduction of another."¹⁰⁶ Unlike the syllogistic progression, qualitative progressions lacks a pronounced anticipatory nature: "We are prepared less to demand a certain qualitative progression than to recognize its rightness after the event," Burke writes, "we are put into a state of mind which another state of mind can appropriately follow."¹⁰⁷ Thus, as seen in the story outlined above, Holmes's disinterested deductions prepare us for Miss Rucastle and Mr. Fowler's eventual elopement, not because Mr. Holmes's deductions were needed for the elopement, but because his disinterest needed to be counterbalanced eventually. To show that qualitative progression is at work throughout the canon, let us turn to an illustration from a different story.

Burke illustrates the principle of qualitative progression with Macbeth, arguing that the grotesque seriousness of Duncan's murder prepares an audience for the grotesque buffoonery of the porter scene, and we see the same thing in the second Holmes novel, *The Sign of the Four*. The grisly murder of Mr. Bartholomew Sholto is followed almost immediately by the buffoonery of Mr. Athelney Jones of Scotland Yard. Upon first viewing the scene through a keyhole, Holmes is more moved than Watson had ever seen him, and Watson recoils from the view in horror.

¹⁰⁶ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125.

Moonlight was streaming into the room, and it was bright with a vague and shifty radiance. Looked straight at me and suspended, as it were, in the air, for all beneath was shadow, there hung a face—the very face of our companion Thaddeus. There was the high, shinning head, the same circular bristle of red hair, the same bloodless countenance. The features were set, however, in a horrible smile, a fixed and unnatural grin, which in that still and moonlit room was more jarring to the nerves than any scowl or contortion. So like was the face to that of our little friend that I looked round at him to make sure that he was indeed with us. Then I recalled to mind that he had mentioned to us that his brother and he were twins.¹⁰⁸

They break down the door of the room, and after Holmes confirms that they are dealing with a murder, they send for Scotland Yard. After about half an hour, during which time Holmes inspects the crime scene, Athelney Jones arrives. Conan Doyle describes Athelney thus: “a very stout, portly man in a gray suit strode heavily into the room. He was red-faced, burly, and plethoric with a pair of very small twinkling eyes which looked keenly out from between swollen and puffy pouches.” Here Conan Doyle counters the horrific visage of the dead man with the fat face of the law man.

In addition to the juxtaposition of the two scenes, Conan Doyle also provides a qualitative progression from Holmes’s careful investigation to Jones’s sloppy investigation. In Holmes, one sees the careful investigator, taking stock of each potential clue, because “simple as the case seems now, there may be something deeper underlying it.”¹⁰⁹ First, Holmes looks to ingress and egress; because the door was barred, the culprit or culprits must have come in through the window: “Window is snibbed on the inner side. No hinges at the side. Let us open it. No water-pipe near. Roof quite out of reach. Yet a man has mounted by the window. It rained a little last night. Here is the print of a foot in the mould upon the sill. And here is a circular

¹⁰⁸ Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 114-5.

¹⁰⁹ Doyle, *Sign of the Four*, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 116.

muddy mark, and here again upon the floor, and here again by the table. See here, Watson! This is really a very pretty demonstration.” Holmes processes the scene like a computer running a program: “if var.door = lockedFromInside(‘check window’).” Each action is predicated on an observation and leads to a further observation and deduction. “How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth?”¹¹⁰ Thus Holmes walks Watson through the window and back again onto the roof where they determine by child-sized footprints in the plaster dust that there must have been two culprits involved in the murder, the first “a pygmy” who entered through the roof; the second, a man with a wooden leg, who was aided into the room by a stout rope lowered through the window. Thus Conan Doyle presents a tight case of observation, knowledge, and deduction.

By contrast, in qualitative progression from Holmes’s scientific investigation, Athelney Jones blusters about the scene looking for “Stern facts here—no room for theories.” When Jones is told that there were footprints on the inside of the fastened window, he refuses to investigate further: “Well, well, if it was fastened the steps could have nothing to do with the matter. That’s common sense.” But Athelney’s common sense is soon abandoned as he leaps into an unfounded assumption: “Man might have died in a fit; but then the jewels are missing, Ha! I have a theory.” But unlike Holmes’s theories, Jones’s theory is pure conjecture: “These flashes come upon me at times. —Just step outside, Sergeant, and you, Mr. Sholto. Your friend can remain. —What do you think of this, Holmes? Sholto was, on his own confession, with his brother last night. The brother died in a fit, on which Sholto walked off with the treasure? How’s that?” Of course Jones’s conclusions are preposterous in comparison to Holmes’s carefully traced arguments, and

¹¹⁰ Doyle, *Sign of the Four*, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 118.

Holmes points out as much by retorting “On which the dead man very considerably got up and locked the door on the inside.” But the effect Conan Doyle composes progresses qualitatively from the careful scientific investigation of his angular detective to the blustering boisterous investigation of the bulbous police investigator.

One subtly feels the rightness of Jones’s investigation as a follow-up to Holmes’s investigation because the careful examination of clues prepares us for the careless posturing of a public official. The presence of Holmes’s qualities prepares us for the presence of Jones’s qualities, not in syllogistic manner where we might demand a Jones to follow Holmes. Rather, we recognize the rightness after the event. Jones accentuates the qualities of Holmes, like a pinch of salt on caramel accentuating the flavor of the caramel. We recognize Holmes’s intellect even more acutely when we become aware of Jones’s idiocy.

Conan Doyle uses repetitive form by connecting the different short stories together. The Holmes canon is remarkable in its cross promotion, for example, “The Adventure of the Second Stein” is mentioned in “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty.” This was an important innovation for Conan Doyle, because it kept his character in constant demand, without his having to sustain a single narrative. Conan Doyle was able to accomplish this through what Burke defines as repetitive form, “the consistent maintaining of a principle under new guise.”¹¹¹ Instead of having Holmes face the same enemy across several stories, Conan Doyle maintains the core Sherlock Symbol, and repeats him in several different adventures. The only consistently recurring characters in the canon are Sherlock and Watson. Though some erroneously believe that Moriarty appears several times, he only actually appears in “The Adventure of the Final

¹¹¹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125.

Problem.” Moriarty is merely mentioned in “The Adventure of the Empty House” and in the novella *The Valley of Fear*.

Burke argues that repetitive form works because it is a restatement of the same thing in different ways. Thus, insofar as each detail of Holmes’s investigations in gas lighted London—his close observation, encyclopedic knowledge, and aptitude for deduction—persist in different stories, Conan Doyle is using repetitive form. As Burke writes, here we have “a succession of images, each of them reviving the same lyric mood; a character repeating his identity, his “number,” under changing situations.”¹¹² Despite the changing circumstances of each case, despite the little observations that differentiate “The Adventure of the Second Stein” from “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” Conan Doyle is still “talking on the same subject,” as Burke phrases it: “By a varying number of details, the reader is led to feel more or less consciously the principle underlying them—he then requires that this principle be observed in the giving of further details.”¹¹³ The restatement of a theme by new details is basic to any work of art, as when melody moves between instrument families in an orchestra, and this is what Burke means by “talking on the subject.” As an author repeats the same theme with different details, she reinforces the arousal and fulfillment of desires that makes up form in general.

The repeated theme in the Holmes canon may best be summarized as “justice will be done.” Notably absent from this formulation is the means of justice, but that will be addressed below in our discussion of patterns of experience. To see the theme in action, we’ll take the two linked stories mentioned above, “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty” and “The Adventure of the

¹¹² Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125.

¹¹³ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125.

Second Stein.”¹¹⁴ Conan Doyle links these two stories in their introductions. Both take place shortly after Watson’s first marriage, and both involve matters of grave national importance wherein state secrets have been stolen and must be recovered. Watson describes “The Adventure of the Second Stein” as Holmes’s most important case. However, because it deals with the first families of the kingdom, he declines to publish it at present even though, “No case...in which Holmes was engaged has ever illustrated the value of his analytical methods so clearly or has impressed those who were associated with him so deeply.” Thus, these two stories work particularly well to illustrate the repetitive form in Sherlock Holmes, as both highlight Holmes’s method.

In “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty” Conan Doyle introduces Holmes at work on a scientific problem, “‘If this paper remains blue, all is well. If it turns red, it means a man’s life.’ He dipped it into the test-tube and it flushed at once into a dull, dirty crimson. ‘Hum! I thought as much!’ He cried. ‘I will be at your service in an instant Watson. You will find tobacco in the Persian slipper.’”¹¹⁵ The importance of this passage is that it shows Holmes’s form. Careful, methodical, scientific, yet flashy, dramatic, and vivacious, Conan Doyle gives Holmes’s number in this brief exchange.

¹¹⁴ Conan Doyle didn’t write all of the adventures he mentions. Many of them are mere allusions that serve to give the impression that Sherlock and Watson have lives outside the covers of a magazine. And these allusions are not limited in the chronology of Conan Doyle’s composition either. Linking the stories wasn’t merely an early trick to drive up readership for future adventures, rather he includes these allusions throughout the canon. Of particular interest to Holmesians is Conan Doyle’s allusion to a tin box held in repository at an undisclosed location and containing adventures that Watson hasn’t embellished, or that Holmes has not released for publication.

¹¹⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 306.

The content of the case is a simple locked room mystery. Percy, an old school friend of Watson's, had been charged with copying an important treaty for the foreign office. In the midst of his work, he had been called away, and when he returned, he found the papers missing. The problem is that no one could have taken the papers because of the layout of the office, but because the papers have neither been found nor sold, it seems that there is the possibility they may yet be recovered. After Percy relates the facts of the case, Conan Doyle includes a humorous interchange between Percy's wife and Holmes that reasserts Holmes's form:

"Do you see any clues?"

"You have furnished me with seven, but of course I must test them before I can pronounce upon their value."

"You suspect someone?"

"I suspect myself."

"What!"

"Of coming to conclusions too rapidly."

"Then go to London and test your conclusions."

"Your advice is very excellent, Miss Harrison," said Holmes, rising.¹¹⁶

Here Holmes's normal method of observation, knowledge, and deduction would be remiss for he must rely upon Percy's observations, so Holmes must investigate the scene himself. Hence the comment that Holmes suspects himself of coming to conclusions too rapidly.

As noted above, Holmes has a flair for the dramatic, so at the end of this case he presents Percy with the stolen documents on a silver platter, having recovered them by arguing that it was Percy's soon to be brother-in-law, Joseph, who had snuck into the offices and made off with the papers. Furthermore, Joseph had secreted the papers in the very room that Percy had occupied for the past ten weeks, overcome with "brain-fever" on losing the documents. Holmes had laid a cunning trap for Joseph, and while he didn't turn Joseph over, he gave the authorities enough

¹¹⁶ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 313.

information to capture him. Importantly, Holmes also gave Joseph a chance to flee, because it would be worse for Percy should Joseph be tried and the whole affair brought into the open court.

Though the case is interesting, and one sees a few glimpses of Holmes's character, his number as Burke puts it, the formal repetition is more pronounced when one considers how it is repeated in a separate story. Watson begins "The Adventure of the Second Stain" by commenting that it is meant to be the final Sherlock Holmes story, not for lack of material, but because the great detective has retired and wishes to be left alone. It is only on account of a public promise that Watson has been able to move Holmes to allow the printing of "the most important international case which he has ever been called upon to handle."¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Watson also uses this case to reiterate that, while the case is true, some facts have been obscured to protect reputations. "If in telling the story I seem to be somewhat vague in certain details, the public will readily understand that there is an excellent reason for my reticence."¹¹⁸

Like "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty," this is a case of espionage. An important letter, which could plunge Europe into war, has been stolen from Mr. Trelawney Hope's home safe. No one in the household could have known the significance of the letter, and according to Mr. Hope, only the author of the letter and the cabinet of which Mr. Hope was a member could have known of the existence of the letter. When Holmes asks for more details, he is rebuffed, "Mr. Holmes, the envelope is a long, thin one of pale blue color. There is a seal of red wax

¹¹⁷ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Second Stain," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes* 622.

¹¹⁸ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Second Stain," 761.

stamped with a crouching lion. It is addressed in large, bold handwriting to——.”¹¹⁹ And when his clients refuse to give more details, Holmes politely refuses the case. Only when they relent does Holmes agree to help. One oddity of many of Watson’s cases is that he promises the utmost secrecy but then publishes them for general readership. This is an odd paradox, but an essentially unimportant one for the present study, except that it shows a repetitive formula of concealment and revelation. That is, Watson’s promises of discretion prepare us for Holmes’s revelations in a qualitative progression, and the repetition of this form in different contexts, either for the sake of a lady’s honor or for national security, give us Holmes and Watson’s numbers again.

The espionage case becomes further complicated when Watson notices a headline proclaiming “Murder in Westminster” that announces the untimely demise of one of three spies capable of handling the missing letter. At this point, Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope arrives, and while a number of studies have considered Holmes’s relations with women as the most important feature of his investigative life, they reflect more on Conan Doyle’s concern with divorce law reform and his unhappy childhood than on the thinking symbol he created. Lady Hope asks Holmes to explain the missing letter, but as he has been sworn to secrecy he painfully refuses. Lady Hope withdraws after Holmes refuses to divulge the information initially refused to him, and Conan Doyle subtly indicates that a bit more honesty and trust from Mr. Hope towards his wife would have saved the imbecile a great deal of trouble. Again, this seemingly inconsequential detail is unimportant, except that it reinforces Holmes’s number. As he notes:

“And yet the motives of women are so inscrutable. You remember the woman at Margate whom I suspected for the same reason. No powder on her nose—that proved to be the correct solution. How can you build on such quicksand? Their

¹¹⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Second Stain,” 763.

most trivial action may mean volumes, or their most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling tongs. Good-morning, Watson.”¹²⁰

Again, Conan Doyle shows us that Holmes is a character so tightly controlled by data that he misses the human element of many things until the end. Able to recognize a man by his tobacco ash in an instant, Holmes is baffled by simple Victorian etiquette.

All of the above, though, is rather commonplace. The important formal repetition is in Holmes’s titular discovery through his regular means. On showing Watson the crime scene, Lestrade comments that, though a great deal of blood spilled on the carpet, there are no corresponding stains on the white wooden floorboards. Holmes instantly recognizes the significance of this detail, and promptly dismisses Lestrade on a minor mission to uncover whom the police guard had dared to allow into the crime scene unattended. Once the inspector is gone, Holmes begins the investigation that Watson had praised so highly in “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty.”

“Now, Watson, now!” cried Holmes with frenzied eagerness. All the demoniacal force of the man masked behind that listless manner burst out in a paroxysm of energy. He tore the rug up from the floor, and in an instant was down on his hands and knees clawing at each of the squares of wood beneath it. One turned sideways as he dug his nails into the edge of it. It hinged back like the lid of a box. A small black cavity opened beneath it. Holmes plunged his eager hand into it and drew it out with a bitter glance of anger and disappointment. It was empty.¹²¹

Though Holmes doesn’t find the letter in this hiding place, he deduces that Lady Hope was the visitor who breached the policeman's duty, and privately confronts her with her transgression. The lady admits that she had taken the letter in order to pay off a blackmailer, who was murdered before he could profit by his acquisition. Holmes guides her full confession, and then urges her

¹²⁰ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Second Stain,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 628.

¹²¹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Second Stain,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 632.

to confess to her husband. This is another of the cases in which Holmes arbitrates justice, by replacing the letter in Mr. Hope's safe and convincing him that he overlooked it, thus preserving Lady Hope's secret. Here we see Holmes's form repeated. His deductions guided him through the crime, and Lady Hope through her confession, and most importantly his arbitration of the case guided his clients to satisfaction as he protected them from their seemingly intractable predicaments.

If the successful generation of form is the goal of literature as literature, however, it is the successful use of literary form as equipment for living that makes it rhetorical. Conan Doyle's success as a writer was that he effectively invented a new form of writing—the serial detective story—and a symbol—Sherlock Holmes—to inhabit this genre. But his enduring fame has come from the capacity for this symbolic form to be used as equipment for living for generations to follow.

Prior Uses of Burke's Critical Tool

The following literature review addresses three problems that arise when employing Burke's literature as equipment for living as a critical tool. First, some critics have followed Brummett's interpretation of literature as equipment for living, which grounds the tool theoretically in Burke's writing on identification rather than in Burke's writings on attitudes and symbols. While this broadens the uses of the tool, allowing critics to consider film, chants, and video games as equipment for living, it also restricts the explanatory power of the critical tool—equipment is limited to non-symbolic planning action. This leads to the second problem, namely, there is disagreement about whether literature serves as equipment for living by allowing an audience to play out alternative scenarios before taking action, or whether literature serves as equipment for living as a form of symbolic action—that is to say, in this interpretation, by

reading a book one has already taken symbolic action. Critics following Brummett's interpretation of the tool generally agree that literature serves as equipment for living by allowing audiences to play out alternatives, while others follow elements of Brummett's expansion but allow for symbolic action. Critics who interpret Burke's tool according to Burke's work with attitudes and symbols, however, still disagree about whether literature is limited to planning future action or whether the reading of literature is itself symbolic action. Finally, there is disagreement about whether one should focus primarily on the uses of literature as equipment for living when using Burke's critical tool to analyze a text, or whether one should focus on the author's creation of a symbol when using Burke's critical tool to analyze a text. The following paragraphs explore how critics have worked through these problems before suggesting how this dissertation will proceed.

In his essay, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living: Haunted House Films," Barry Brummett uses Burke's critical tool to explore film, particularly haunted house films. Brummett's purpose is to determine the "symbolic potential" of haunted house films while arguing "both content and medium subject the audience symbolically to paradoxical conjunctions of realms of time and space which do not ordinarily coincide."¹²² The viewing experience, Brummett argues, will then serve an audience as equipment for living. Though Brummett's primary purpose is to show how Burke's theories can be employed in media studies, his unique use of literature as equipment for living to accomplish this goal makes this essay an important text to consider when working with that critical tool.

¹²² Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 247.

In this essay Brummett explains literature as equipment for living within the context of media criticism, explores the formal composition of haunted house films in content and medium, and suggests how this particular sub-genre of film connects to an audiences' motives. First, Brummett interprets literature as equipment for living through the lens of dramatism, stating that "those who work with the critical theories of Kenneth Burke study film to determine how it helps people to confront their everyday, lived experiences."¹²³ Dramatism, for Burke, is the understanding of life as a literal drama with acts, actors, agency, purpose, and scenes. The point of dramatisitic analysis is to understand motives—namely by showing how our motives derive from placing two of the elements of the pentad into what he calls a "ratio" that explains the second part of the ratio with the first one. (For instance, in attempting to explain why a murderer would desire to commit a murder, an agent-purpose ratio would attribute the cause to the innate character of the murderer, whereas a scene-purpose ratio would say the cause is rooted in the circumstances). Therefore, by casting literature as equipment for living within the theoretical purview of dramatism, Brummett is suggesting that this critical tool is designed for discovering motives. Brummett goes on to explain that literature should be understood as discourse broadly conceived and argues that discourse serves people as equipment for living "(1) insofar as it articulates, explicitly or formally, the concerns, fears, and hopes of people" and "(2) insofar as the discourse provides explicit or formal resolution of situations or experiences similar to those which people actually confront, thus providing people with *motives* to address their dilemmas in life."¹²⁴ Brummett's narrow interpretation of equipment, requiring that it be explicit and formal,

¹²³ Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 247.

¹²⁴ Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 248.

is an extension of Burke's initial explanation that Brummett introduces in order to better analyze haunted house films. Brummett elaborates that a person who is worried about a particular event—such as nuclear holocaust—might watch an apocalyptic television series—such as *The Walking Dead*—and find in the articulation of her fears either salvation (with the salvation of the characters) or catastrophe (with the catastrophe of the characters), which would in turn provide the viewer with motives of acceptance or rejection of the television program as equipment for dealing with fear of nuclear holocaust.

Having interpreted Burke's critical tool, Brummett explains three tenets of Burkean criticism that illustrate how Burke fits within the larger system of media criticism. First, Brummett argues, "discourse serves as equipment for living insofar as it provides the public with *motives* appropriate to their situations."¹²⁵ Brummett equates this concern with motives to an underlying pragmatic attitude in Burke's work that goes beyond a strict attention to the text and considers the context of a discourse in order to examine how discourse is used for addressing the problems of life.¹²⁶ Second, "discourse does not reflect motives which people already have; it is the source of motives, the crucible in which motivations are formed in the act of symbolizing or articulating them."¹²⁷ Brummett explains this as a distinction from Freudian psychology, wherein the psychoanalyst creates a language for motives, and explains that from a Burkean perspective Freud invented motives through his vocabulary. That is, Burke argues, symbolic action such as the creation of a vocabulary *constitutes* the motives of the subject rather than *discovering* the

¹²⁵ Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 248.

¹²⁶ McGowan will elaborate on this underlying theme of pragmatism in in the article "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatists Project," which is discussed below.

¹²⁷ Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 249.

motives of the subject. Brummett also connects this second tenet to branches of Marxist media critique by suggesting that Burkean criticism is in keeping with some Marxist critics while opposed to the more fundamentalist Marxists because Burke insists that ideology is grounded in “discourse which may or may not be appropriate for the historical, material, conditions at hand.”¹²⁸ That is, rather than arguing that the ideology of a text comes from the historical, material conditions of existence, Burke understands discourse as giving or failing to give the public motives which equip them for living effectively in the prevailing historical conditions. The third tenet of Burkean criticism, Brummett argues, is that “motives may be generated by the properties of a medium such as its form or the logistics involved in experiencing it.”¹²⁹ Brummett supports this tenet by looking to Burke’s *Philosophy of Literary Form* in which Burke argues that because the words *God*, *guard*, and *guide* all sound alike to the reader, they tend to generate linked motivations in discourse. Brummett builds the rest of the essay on this third tenet, arguing that by extending this Burkean principle to other forms of mass media one discovers how the form and logistics of those media generate motives.

Brummett was the first critic to extend Burke’s critical tool to all forms of discourse as equipment for living and to explicitly argue that the form and logistics of encountering that discourse could engender motives within an audience. Brummett examines the disorientations in time and space in haunted house films by dividing his analysis of four films into an analysis of their content and an analysis of the medium through which one experiences them. He suggests that these films are equipment because they are popular, and that they are popular because of

¹²⁸ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 249.

¹²⁹ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 249.

their formal links. That is, the haunted house film sub-genre follows a formal pattern, which Brummett identifies as “paradoxical conjunctions of time and space which do not ordinarily coincide.”¹³⁰ Furthermore, Brummett argues, the way an audience experiences this sub-genre of film serves as a “formal bridge between the fictive, imaginary film content on the one hand, and the real world experience on the other.”¹³¹ In Brummett’s analysis, haunted house films paradoxically disorient characters in time within the films by showing “the present in uncomfortable conjunction with the past and future” through a relentlessly linear progression of plot that is paradoxically conjoined with the cyclical time in which the spirits and apparitions move. The medium of these films duplicate, to some extent, the disorientations of the characters within the films, as the film progresses through a linear time of two hours, but incorporates a paradoxical cycle of hauntings as “the big screen moves one reluctantly to the big screen.”¹³² Brummett concludes, “The audience is subjected to temporal paradoxes resulting from the conjunction of normally disjunctive realms.”¹³³ Because the audience may experience similar temporal paradoxes, or similar conjunctions of normally disjunctive realms in their everyday lives, Brummett concludes that haunted house films are equipment for living. Turning from time to space, Brummett explains that the haunted house’s peculiar horror in terms of its content is that of “a domestic space invaded by something from a space beyond” which is “reflected in the spatial/psychological identification of the house itself with troubled characters whose minds are

¹³⁰ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 247.

¹³¹ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 252.

¹³² Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 255.

¹³³ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 255.

invaded by emotional or physical torments.”¹³⁴ The effect of the medium in the haunted house film, Brummett argues, “is to subject the audience to spatial dislocations similar to those experienced by the characters.”¹³⁵ He explains that the theatre audience entering the two dimensional space of the film sees things which no character could, and are taken in and out of the space occupied by the ghosts themselves. Just as in the disorientations of time, when the audience sees and experiences these disorientations in space and they are experiencing formally similar disorientations of space in their everyday lives the haunted house films serve as equipment for living.

Brummett concludes that the motives given by haunted house films are either acceptance or rejection of spatial and temporal paradoxes in life. This solves disagreements about the universal motives suggested by ghost films by arguing “different films provide audiences with *different motives* for employment in real life.”¹³⁶ As Brummett explains, “some films exorcise the spirits (*The Uninvited*), some move the main characters away from chaos but leave the disorder intact (*The Shinning, The Amityville Horror*), some suggest that the main characters are trapped by their haunted houses and cannot escape or defeat anomie (*The Haunting, The Hearse*).”¹³⁷ Brummett then evaluates the motives supplied by the different films, arguing that critics should be on guard against films which further the public’s acceptance of impending disaster, and in

¹³⁴ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 258.

¹³⁵ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 258.

¹³⁶ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 259.

¹³⁷ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 259.

favor of those films which affirm that paradox is real and show that it is possible to live through paradox.

While Brummett's essay is generally useful in understanding how Burke's ideas have been used in the field of communication studies, two problems need to be addressed. The main problems with this essay are represented in Brummett's turn from a medicinal to a martial understanding of equipment and his assumption about the usefulness of literature. Throughout this essay Brummett relies on two Burkean metaphors in making his argument. First, he continually makes use of the medical metaphor Burke makes when he writes, "Everything is 'medicine.'"¹³⁸ Second, he draws from the military metaphor that Burke reluctantly employs in his discussion of strategy.¹³⁹ Using Burke's medicinal metaphor, Brummett argues that all forms of media, including literature and movies, are forms of discourse. Burke's theory is equally useful in analyzing both because "the critic treats discourse as symbolic medicine, and the essay should assay that medicine to discover how an audience might use the discourse."¹⁴⁰ Brummett, however, then interprets Burke's symbolic action through a combat metaphor, suggesting that an audience will confront life with the equipment gained from haunted house films. Brummett writes, "Burke argues that people find the symbolic resources they need to confront life by turning to discourse, and he argues that we find those resources in formal patterns (1931/1968), explicit themes (1935/1965), or classical discursive structures such as tragedy, comedy, satire,

¹³⁸ Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," 293.

¹³⁹ See Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," 297-8. Burke reluctantly admits that strategy is the best available term for the concept he is attempting to describe, but laments its militant overtones.

¹⁴⁰ Brummett, "Electric Literature as Equipment for Living," 247.

etc. (1937, Vol. I, pp. 41-118, 1941/1967).” Brummett’s use of the word “confront” is significant here because it suggests a shift from the medicinal metaphor he uses to summarize equipment for living earlier in the essay and towards a martial metaphor. Equipment covers a wide range of objects, but may be generally subdivided according to its use for construction or destruction. In translating Burke within the metaphor of conflict, Brummett turns away from the medicinal properties of healing a sick world and towards the martial properties of conquering an evil world. This shift towards confrontation belies an underlying assumption that one is in dire need of equipment for battling the evil forces of life, and that in this battle one must constantly assess the symbolic potential of each discursive weapon one can find.

Viewing literature as a potential weapon, Brummett makes two changes to Burke’s critical tool in this essay. He redefines “literature” as “discourse” then formalizes the interpretation of equipment for living by reducing it to two stages, articulation and resolution. First, Brummett argues, discourse serves as equipment for living when it explicitly or formally articulates the concerns, fears, and hopes of a people. Secondly, discourse provides explicit or formal resolution for the situation or experiences people actually experience. In meeting these criteria, discourse provides people with motives to address the dilemmas of life.¹⁴¹ In explaining that the public derives motives from discourse (and does not derive discourse from motives) Brummett is partially extending the unwritten dramatic underpinnings of Burke’s original argument about literature as equipment for living. Though Burke didn’t formalize his theory of dramatism until *A Grammar of Motives* in 1945, Brummett connects that later theory to antecedents in Burke’s 1941 *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. One sees this in Brummett’s

¹⁴¹ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 248.

emphasis on motive, or a dramatic understanding of criticism, over semiology, or a scientific understanding of criticism. Burke identifies the difference in his essay on terministic screens. Succinctly, scientific criticism is about definition, what something is and is not, whereas dramatic criticism is about motivation, what one shall and shall not do.¹⁴² Dramatic criticism focuses not on definitions of the external world, but on the relationship of humanity to the external world, creating a subjective critique with humanity at the center of experience. By expanding literature to discourse and formalizing the stages of equipment for living, Brummett makes Burke's theory broader, but also reduces its capacity to explain why some symbols persist despite social and cultural changes and assumes the explicit usefulness of discourse.

In moving to the analysis of film, Brummett argues that an audience attends a film *seeking* motivations. However, this contradicts Burke's explanation of equipment. Focusing on Burke's comment about self-help literature, "the reading of a book on the attaining of success is in itself the symbolic attaining of that success."¹⁴³ Brummett argues that haunted house films are implicitly useful. One does not merely read a self-help book for the fun of reading, but in order to equip oneself for eventual battle with the world; likewise, one does not go to see a haunted house film in a dark movie theatre for the fun of the fright—according to Brummett—but in order to equip oneself for dealing with a paradoxical world. And in Brummett's final speculation he suggests that "Future research might therefore address the issue whether films which really 'grab' an audience, affecting them right out of the theatre and onto the streets, do so for reasons

¹⁴² See Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, "Terministic Screens," 44-55.

¹⁴³ Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," 299.

of repetitive form.”¹⁴⁴ However, Burke explicitly rejects this overly utilitarian interpretation of equipment. He writes that “underlying the proletarian attitude is the assumption that literature must be ‘useful,’ that it must serve to eradicate certain forms of social injustice, and that it can eradicate these forms of injustice only by dealing with them specifically. It overlooks entirely the fact that there is the pamphlet, the political tract, the soap-box oration, to deal with the specific issues of the day, whereas the literature of the imagination may prepare the mind in a more general fashion.”¹⁴⁵ By limiting equipment to that which is explicitly useful, Brummett turns away from the artistic literature, which prepares the mind in a general way. Where Burke’s initial articulation of literature as equipment for living encompassed both practically useful and artistic literature, Brummett’s interpretation of Burke’s critical tool limits it to the discourse which audiences find *immediately* practically useful. Furthermore, Brummett suggests that audiences attend films or read books in order to acquire motives for dealing with their situations, whereas Burke argues that audiences both seek motivations and serendipitously come upon them. However, in extending Burke’s work to incorporate film as well as literature, Brummett proved the potential of Burke’s critical tool and paved the way for future critics to explore its applicability to media outside of literature.

In “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” John McGowan offers a sociological corrective to Brummett’s more utilitarian reading of Burke. McGowan argues that before the introduction of dramatism in the 1940’s, Kenneth Burke was a pragmatist—specifically a pragmatist very much interested in an inquiry into social psychology. Exploring Burke’s

¹⁴⁴ Brummett, “Electric Literature as Equipment for Living,” 260.

¹⁴⁵ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 189.

understanding of literature, McGowan argues that Burke's view of literature as equipment, his emphasis on situational rhetoric, his view of the relationship between beliefs and actions, and his ambiguous explanation of equipment "makes most sense if read through a pragmatist metaphysic and, especially in connection with the pragmatist emphasis on situated action."¹⁴⁶ In his essay, McGowan accomplishes three goals: (1) a re-examination of Burke's view of literature in light of "the pragmatist metaphysic of the interactive emergence of self and world," (2) a consideration of how pragmatism might influence our conception of literature, and (3) providing a lens for considering pragmatist themes of belief and action.

Unlike Brummett, McGowan's emphasizes the sociological component of Burke's essay on literature as equipment for living. That is, McGowan emphasizes the relation between *artist and situation* in Burke's writing, rather than emphasizing the relation between *discourse and audience*. McGowan notes that Burke initially conceived his critical tool as a sociological criticism of literature, by which he "does not mean how a work reflects or is determined by the social circumstances in which it is produced."¹⁴⁷ Instead, McGowan understands Burke's argument as explaining that the artwork "is a dynamic result of a self finding itself in a world (that also includes others) and responding to that fact." By emphasizing the active relation between the artist and the situation, McGowan argues, Burke has embedded literature in a set of circumstances. Rather than reading dramatism into Burke's understanding of literature as a storehouse of motives, McGowan explains literature as an active response to a situation. The work of art is the strategic naming of a situation, and it is active because it projects strategies for

¹⁴⁶ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 119.

¹⁴⁷ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 119.

dealing with situations. Though more than one name might fit a situation, in selecting a particular name, one indicates an attitude towards a particular situation. McGowan emphasizes the active nature of choosing to name a particular situation, writing, “our namings do not usually follow from a distanced scanning of the possible appropriate labels,” but that “acts of naming, instead, reflect our immersion in the situation.”¹⁴⁸ By interpreting Burke’s understanding of literature through attitudes, symbols, and naming McGowan situates literature as a way of “preparing us to act in relation to the specific worldly circumstances in which we find ourselves and to which we must respond.”¹⁴⁹ Although in many ways this sounds similar to Brummett, the key difference is that literature is equipment not because it is immediately and explicitly used to resolve a situation similar to our own, but that it provides a storehouse of resources that we might draw upon in the future to make sense of our circumstances. This not only places McGowan more in line with Burke’s original essay, but it also suggests why some literature persists despite changing circumstances. That is, McGowan’s interpretation of Burke argues that the naming of a situation pushes back against the world through the implicit program of action contained in the attitudes bound up in the symbol by which one names a situation.

In order to explain the relation between attitudes, symbols, and equipment McGowan turns to a pragmatist theory of action. Using William James and John Dewey, he outlines the pragmatist position in order to draw parallels to Burke’s ideas. McGowan argues that “Burke is most fully a pragmatist in his constant effort to clear a space among all the forces in the world for human action” because, for the pragmatist, “nothing exists in isolation and everything is

¹⁴⁸ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 120.

¹⁴⁹ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 120.

influenced by the relations in which it stands to other things and the interaction in which it is involved with other things.”¹⁵⁰ The two themes McGowan identifies that connect Burke to pragmatism are *action* and *belief*. McGowan defines action as “work done in and upon this plastic world to maintain, transform, or add to it and the possibilities it affords the agent (and others whom the agent’s actions will affect).”¹⁵¹ The picture McGowan returns to is that of an organism constantly changing in adaptation to its environment, a picture Burke also uses when illustrating attitudes. The organism in McGowan’s illustration is motivated by melioration, the attempt to make the present situation better in some way by acting upon it in accordance with certain beliefs about the world. McGowan defines beliefs as “fundamental commitments that play a crucial role in laying out just what world it is that I find myself in.”¹⁵² However, he clarifies that because the believer cannot unilaterally change the circumstances that would lead to a change in beliefs, they are less like commitments and more like orientations: “Who I am and what I can do only emerge from the backdrops of beliefs that are my entanglement in a world.”¹⁵³ By combining these themes of action and belief McGowan concludes that “action seems worthy of our attention and commitment only to the extent that it rests on a twin belief in possibility and in the capacity of human doing to move from that possibility to actuality.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 121.

¹⁵¹ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 122.

¹⁵² McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 126.

¹⁵³ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 126.

¹⁵⁴ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 131.

This interpretation brings him to a parallel move in Burke's approach to literature. Burke's parallel move is to open a space for literature by eliding belief and motive. "All designations of situations are motivated or, as Burke more usually puts it, *strategic*,"¹⁵⁵ writes McGowan. This strategic naming opens for the moment prior to action, but is marked by style and *agon* rather than deliberation. That is, literature dramatizes possibilities: "for Burke, literature allows us to play out the options, to set them in contract to each other, and to project their development."¹⁵⁶ McGowan then identifies three key qualities of literature which allow for this strategic naming: "Imagination is crucial because the possible only exists as an image; narrative is crucial because we strive to imagine the act and its upshot; realistic accuracy is crucial because we want our imaginings to be relevant to the situation we actually face; and the battle is crucial because there is more than one realistically accurate naming of the situation."¹⁵⁷ This leads McGowan to define rhetoric as how actors name situations and offer alternative namings for consideration. That is, literature is equipment for living because it is rhetorical, and it is rhetorical because it offers various possible namings and projected narratives. The difference between literature as equipment for living and deliberative oratory is that in literature nothing is constant, "any and all aspects of the situation are liable to shift in relation to namings that reorient our relations to that situation."¹⁵⁸ That is, the gods may slip out from behind the

¹⁵⁵ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 131.

¹⁵⁶ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 134.

¹⁵⁷ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 134.

¹⁵⁸ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 135.

machinery at any moment and alter some fact, or some seemingly benign piece of rubbish may turn out to hold a vital clue to the mystery.

Finally, McGowan concludes his essay by returning to Burke's ambiguous definition of equipment. McGowan summarizes Burke's pragmatism by explaining that "literature is a social act through and through, best understood as rhetorical, that is, as an act that intervenes and contributes to the ongoing elaboration of the available vocabulary and available repertoire of attitudes."¹⁵⁹ But then he explains that Burke's definition of equipment hovers between two alternatives. First, literature might be a thought experiment, a hypothetical playing out of possible alternatives "that helps us—through imaginative projection—decide on a course of action in the real world."¹⁶⁰ In this interpretation literature helps to form and reform attitudes as a service to living. In the second alternative literature is a form of symbolic action. McGowan writes, "If the formation and explicit enunciation of an attitude is, itself, already an action in the world, we get the second version, in which literature is 'symbolic action.'"¹⁶¹ To explain symbolic action devoid of physical action McGowan turns to James, whose pragmatist metaphysics would not allow for a distinction between symbolic and material action. "Physical transformations will be accompanied by changes in the names and conception of the things transformed; changed names and conceptions will alert us to new ways to act physically upon things."¹⁶² McGowan then concludes that literature is equipment for living, not because it steps

¹⁵⁹ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 137-8.

¹⁶⁰ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 138.

¹⁶¹ McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 139.

¹⁶² McGowan, "Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project," 140.

out of the flux of relations and prepares attitudes for addressing situations, but “because it is direct effective action upon the terms and the relations in which they stand to one another.”¹⁶³

McGowan prefers this second view of literature as a form of symbolic action in which the formation and explicit enunciation of an attitude is already an action because “it is direct, effective action upon the terms and the relations in which they stand to one another.”¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, it is most consistent with McGowan’s interpretation of Burke as a pragmatist.

Quoting James, McGowan concludes that “the process of finding ourselves in situations, naming them, and adjusting to them offers few resting places” but we should gratefully embrace “any idea that helps us to *deal*, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn’t entangle our progress in frustrations.”¹⁶⁵ As symbolic action, one puts an author or critic’s ideas immediately to work, which makes this the more pragmatic interpretation of Burke’s theory in McGowan’s estimation.

In “Pragmatism by Incongruity,” Anders furthers the pragmatic inquiry into Burke’s critical tool by advancing the notion that equipment for living is not how art immediately is put to use in our circumstances but rather how it provides a resource for experimenting with possibilities in the future. Anders explores the connection between Burke’s understanding of equipment for living and perspective by incongruity, William James’s work with individual psychology and philosophy, and Deleuze’s work with radical empiricism and post structuralism. Anders argues that the underlying medical metaphor of Burke’s sociological criticism of

¹⁶³ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 142.

¹⁶⁴ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 142.

¹⁶⁵ McGowan, “Literature as Equipment for Living: A Pragmatist Project,” 145.

literature and Deleuze's critical essays combine with an understanding of pragmatism from James thus yielding an impious reading of all three authors. The usefulness of this impiety is in its exploration of perspectives. Anders adopts the perspective that literature allows one to act out possibilities for action before undertaking them, Both Deleuze and Burke, Anders argues, treat literature as a pragmatic tool for creating a potential future radically different from the present.

Like McGowan, Anders' essay links Burke's arguments to James's conception of belief, writing that "our beliefs are inherited through out the processes of socialization and to a degree they preconfigure the lens through which we will view the world and they frame the ways in which we will act."¹⁶⁶ Like McGowan, Anders links Burke's writing with James's work on belief. One of the most helpful arguments Anders makes is in his summation of Burke's view of criminality. Anders explains "we may focus on individual responsibility and the psychological development of the criminal; however, this would blind us to the structural social factors that produce criminality in society."¹⁶⁷ This ties into Burke's notion of terministic screens, as it suggests that any way of seeing is also a way of not seeing, that any view of reality is a selection of reality. He also furthers the idea that symbolic action is more of a planning tool than a means of direct action in the world. Anders then brings this back around to symbolic action in the conclusion: "Burke's innovation is to recognize that if belief or orientation is a matter of socialization, then we must consider language as a force that has an impact on the way we experience and act in the world."¹⁶⁸ By this Anders means that symbolic action takes place in

¹⁶⁶ Anders, "Pragmatism by Incongruity," n.pag. (PDF 5).

¹⁶⁷ Anders, "Pragmatism by Incongruity," n.pag. (PDF 5).

¹⁶⁸ Anders, "Pragmatism by Incongruity," n.pag. (PDF 9).

literature and in orientation, and it is through these that symbols act. For him, the preparation to act is itself the action. The orientation is the action that it symbolizes.

Greene and Greene then challenge the notion that all equipment is good equipment in their article “Early Disaster Cinema as Dysfunctional ‘Equipment for Living’.” There, they suggest that while it is the form, or underlying patterns of experience in creative works, that allow them to function as equipment for living, not all equipment is good and useful for our lives. The most interesting addition the authors make to an understanding of Burke’s theory is in their argument that form and equipment are different variables when considering a text. That is, a text may be formally compelling but poor equipment, or excellent equipment but poor in form.¹⁶⁹ The authors explain that Brummett’s understanding of literature as equipment for living is based on identification. That is, an audience sees itself in a text by identifying with a character that acts out a scene on behalf of the audience member. The situation in the text is essentially the same as the situation in which the audience is enmeshed. Burke writes about this type of identification as “consubstantial identification,” because the audience sees themselves as being of one substance with the character with whom they identify.¹⁷⁰

However, while basing equipment for living on identification rather than symbolic appeal allows the authors to distinguish between good and bad equipment, and good and bad form, it undercuts Burke’s explanation for symbolic appeal. Thus, for example, they assume that acid jazz has no content and a great deal of form, where some might argue that it is part of a larger

¹⁶⁹ See also Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 91.

¹⁷⁰ See Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 19-29.

context within which it is content.¹⁷¹ For example, a letter in the alphabet has content and form, but it is only within a larger context of a word that the content and form of the letter becomes meaningful. Furthermore, the authors use the example of “jump cuts” without naming them, “if a filmmaker creates a film based on completely random images with no connection to each other, she may not be providing audiences with any information or advice aside from visual formal appeals,” yet this is the shot structure common to many films.¹⁷² A particularly vivid example of this is *Un Chien Andalou*, the 1929 collaboration between Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali in which several completely random images are juxtaposed and create connections to each other because of their juxtaposition. That is, film audiences are able to decode montages by creating content where none exists because we place the disconnected shots into a larger context. One may assume that there is content, and thus create it.

Greene and Greene argue that equipment for living is equivalent to advice. This places the authors squarely within the realm of those who see equipment for living as preparation for action in the world and not as symbolic action. Greene and Greene argue that

for texts to be considered formally dysfunctional, we must consider them in their entire contexts and take into account the cultural, social, and political milieu in which they operate. In other words, texts can be formally strong and offer incorrect or dysfunctional strategies, but not be considered formally dysfunctional because of the larger cultural, social, and/or political contexts in which they operate.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ See Greene and Greene, “Early Disaster Cinema as Equipment for Living,” n.pag. (PDF 5).

¹⁷² This shot structure is credited to George Méliès, and Sergei Eisenstein’s uses the technique in *The Battleship Potemkin* in a manner which suggests a debt to Brecht’s alienating effect and Meyerhold’s constructivism phase.

¹⁷³ Greene and Greene, “Early Disaster Cinema as ‘Equipment for Living’,” n.pag. (pdf 6)

This argument further justifies exploring the content of the literature and the larger context that content draws from. Though steeped in the language of religious scapegoating, Greene and Greene's argument does not invoke Burke's theory of scapegoating to explain how literature functions as equipment for living. Thus it is a model for how to work around the edges of Burke's ideas, but not a useful explanation or application of Burke's ideas. Overall, this article is ambivalent about how literature, or disaster cinema, functions as equipment for living. Though the authors reject homology alone, they seem to embrace a form of identification as the means by which a film influences an audience.

The remaining literature on equipment for living largely follows similar arguments, focusing on how audiences identify with certain characters in works of art and using this identification to prepare for future action. Stephen Dine Young's article "Movies as Equipment for Living: A Developmental Analysis of the Importance of Film in Everyday Life" synthesizes McGowan and Brummett's interpretations of equipment for living by arguing that movies serve as a thought experiment in which one plays out alternatives while also altering reality through symbolic manipulation. Young incorporates Burke's notion of perspective by incongruity when arguing that we use movies to comfort ourselves by explaining a situation over which we seemingly have no control through the exertion of symbolic control. As Burke notes in his essay "Comic Correctives," by renaming one's reaction to a situation from "I am afraid" to "I am in an unfamiliar situation" one alters the potential routes of action.¹⁷⁴ If one is afraid, there is little to be done; but if one is in an unfamiliar situation, then one can reduce unfamiliarity through exploration. Using an interdisciplinary approach based on interviews and close textual analysis,

¹⁷⁴ See Burke, *Attitudes Towards History*, "Comic Correctives," 166-75.

Young seeks to understand how viewers incorporate movies into their understanding of everyday life. Young draws together textual analysis, viewer-effects research, cultural studies, and gratifications research by conducting open-ended interviews with movie viewers. A primary problem with this study is that it asked participants to reflect on the role of movies in their lives in general by asking “Have there ever been any movies that you would say have been important to you, have had a significant influence on you, or have served a particular function in your life?”¹⁷⁵ By asking participants to think of a film that had been useful in the ways outlined in the question above, researchers cast the film as playing a specific role—of preparing the mind in a particular way—instead of treating the film as imaginatively preparing the mind in a more general fashion. Thus we have participants divided into three levels: “Level 1—Undifferentiated Viewer/Film Relationships,” in which viewers did not clearly distinguish between the actions in the movie and the actions in their lives; “Level 2—Differentiated Viewer/Film Relationships,” in which viewers made a clear distinction between actions in the movie and actions in their lives; and “Level 3—Integrated Self/Other Relationships,” wherein viewers saw a clear distinction between the realities of their lives and the actions of a film but were able to see that a film had a specific function in their lives.

Jeff Parker Knight, in “Literature as Equipment for Killing” argues that performances can act as socializing equipment for living, that is, in participating in a performance one comes to rely on the content of the performance to provide attitudinal adjustments. “Jody performances,” the author maintains, “reflect martial attitudes, and, as symbolic action, help to induce attitude

¹⁷⁵ Young, “Movies as Equipment for Living,” 455.

changes in initiates.”¹⁷⁶ Knight follows a traditional understanding of Burke’s essay, that imaginative works provide strategies for dealing with recurring situations, without offering a more detailed explanation for how these strategies are used. Knight suggests that there may be some connection to unconscious influence, repeating the argument that drama influences society because its mode of influence is undercover, but this is a tautology, essentially arguing that covert influence is influential because it is covert. Likewise, Knight’s allusions to Ong suggests that orality is influential because it is oral, and media instills and preserves social mores by instilling and preserving social mores.¹⁷⁷ While an interesting examination of how one might acquire imaginative work for providing strategies to deal with recurring situations, Knight’s article does not explain how literature works as equipment for living but only asserts that it does.

Equipment for living as coping mechanism then appears in two more articles. In the article “Video Games as Equipment for Living” the authors argue that gamers create worlds and construct meaning and sense thorough playing video games. They use their article to prove that video games can be analyzed through rhetorical and anthropological tools, specifically, the sociological criticism of literature proposed by Burke. The authors use literature as equipment for living in a manner similar to Young, maintaining that symbolic action is preparatory to further, non-symbolic action. Thus a video game affords its audience a means of testing out an action in a low-consequence environment before employing that action in a high consequence environment.¹⁷⁸ And in the Article “Who Are You Working For,” Herrman suggests that Burke’s

¹⁷⁶ Knight, “Literature as Equipment for Killing,” 158. “Jody performances” are a type of cadence song commonly used in military training camps.

¹⁷⁷ Knight, “Literature as Equipment for Killing,” 162.

¹⁷⁸ Soetaert, Bourgonon, and Rutten, “Video Games as Equipment for Living” 4.

theories are connected to coping mechanisms for victims of trauma. Referencing Burke's conflation of strategies and attitudes, Herrman reiterates that literature serves as equipment for living as it picks up representative patterns of experience and gives us a name for something which happens a lot and we need to have an attitude or strategy towards. Thus, works of art provide stylized answers to new situations. Hermann also argues "it is a helpful resource to link identification to the concept of equipment for living, since one concept could not work without the other."¹⁷⁹ Ultimately, he concludes that through identification with artistic representations one comes to manage traumatic events, both those past and those anticipated for the future.

Three problems arise when employing Burke's critical tool of literature as equipment for living. However, I argue that by considering the rhetorical situation which shapes the attitudes an author incorporates into a symbol, and then considering how that symbol both could serve and has served as equipment for living since its inception, these three problems dissipate. First, by connecting Burke's critical tool to his writings on symbols instead of his writings on identification, one expands the scope and power of the tool. That is, Burke's theory of symbolic appeal better explains why literature becomes equipment for living than does his theory of identification. Identification limits the critical tool to those instances wherein an audience sees themselves as the protagonist in a plot, whereas a symbol can be employed by anyone to whom the symbol appeals. Second, connecting Burke's critical tool to his theory of symbols better explains how literature serves as both a means of planning future action and as a means of symbolic action. Finally, rather than focusing primarily on either the audience or the author, Burke's theory of symbols suggests that one should focus on the situation which gives rise to a

¹⁷⁹ Hermann, "Who Are You Working for?" n.pag. (pdf 4)

symbol and then consider how a symbol might appeal to an audience before considering how that symbol becomes equipment for the audience. This interpretation explains how useful literature, such as a political pamphlet or a stump speech, serves as equipment for living, as well as how literature of the imagination, such as a novel or an adventure story, serves as equipment for living.

Equipment for Living

The literature reviewed above has contributed to our understanding of literature as equipment for living by expanding this tool to consider other forms of mediated discourse serve as equipment for living. However, they have introduced several unnecessary problems by limiting their application of Burke's tool to the most overwhelming effect of discourse. That is, they only consider how discourse effects an audience when the pattern of experience of an author closely coincides with the pattern of experience of the audience. This limits the usefulness of Burke's tool by eliminating the margin of persuasion, the means by which an author can reduce a recalcitrant reader to accept a symbol and its ramifications. What is important with respect to understanding literature as equipment for living, then, is to take into account how many people are able to relate to symbols even if they might not have a direct identification with them. There is always a "margin of persuasion" whereby symbols that seem remote from our modes of experience or our structures of identification can nonetheless be useful to naming or sizing up situations in a way that evokes useful attitudes.

What I wish to suggest is that in any circumstance in which a literary symbol actually becomes a resource for understanding situations in such a way that it influences our behaviors, feelings, or judgments in our present situation, it becomes equipment for living. In saying that literature is equipment for living, Burke is arguing that literature is a strategy of classifying

situations and arousing or calling forth a pattern of experience. Literature is active. It is designed to console us, to move us to vengeance, to admonish us, to exhort us, to tell the future, or to name typical recurrent situations. It is the last category that most interests Burke, because in naming a situation literature steps outside of itself and implies a command. Where consolation, vengeance, admonition and the rest may be symbolically attained within the pages of a novel or self-help book, the naming of a situation tells us what to expect and what to look out for when our situation outside of a text fits the situation within a text. For example, a reader of George Orwell's *1984* may find symbolic attainment of foretelling by reading Orwell's grim projection of a future totalitarian state, but when one realizes that one is living out Winston Smith's dystopian adventure, the novel takes on new significance as it tells one what to do. In other words, literature becomes equipment for living when it moves beyond description and diagnosis and becomes a strategy for dealing with a situation. Literature thus becomes an incipient form of action that may not immediately impact us when we first encounter it as a work of art, but which leaves habitual connections and attitudes in our mind that may be activated in certain situations that we find analogous to the work of fiction.¹⁸⁰

In contrast with traditional rhetoric or political pamphleteering, which deals with "specific issues of the day," literature "of the imagination may prepare the mind in a more general fashion."¹⁸¹ For example "the political speaker may profit by this equipment when he shows his hearers that some particular situation in his particular precinct is unjust" based on a

¹⁸⁰ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 185.

¹⁸¹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 189.

reference to some literary or artistic symbol familiar to the audience.¹⁸² Thus, reading Sherlock Holmes's adventures prepares our minds in a general way for unspecified future situations that fit within our readings. Four key terms from Burke's work intersect in the idea of literature as equipment for living: strategies, attitudes, patterns of experience, and their verbal equivalent symbols. For Burke, a strategy is concerned with realistically martialing one's thoughts. Burke elaborates, "surely, the most highly alembicated and sophisticated work of art, arising in complex civilizations, could be considered as designed to organize and command the army of one's thoughts and images, and to so organize them that one 'imposes upon the enemy the time and place and conditions for fighting preferred by oneself.' One seeks to 'direct the larger movements and operations' in one's campaign of living. One 'maneuvers,' and the maneuvering is an 'art.'"¹⁸³ This strategizing is initially done by the artist, who captures the strategy in some form of artistic expression. Thus, Conan Doyle creates the Sherlock Holmes adventures as a strategy for dealing with his experiences. It is important to note that strategies are active responses to a situation, because, as Burke points out, these strategies must be realistic—they must size things up properly. Thus a strategy is both deeply embedded in a situation, and it is invested in action that responds to a situation.

Burke also connects strategies to attitudes, suggesting that attitudes might be another name for strategies. Attitudes, Burke elaborates in his essay on semantic and poetic meaning, contain an implicit program of action, "an attitude may be reasonable or unreasonable; it may contain an adequate meaning or an inadequate meaning—but in either case, it would contain

¹⁸² Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 189.

¹⁸³ Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," 298.

meaning.”¹⁸⁴ Whether or not a meaning fits one’s situation is then determined by the filling out of an attitude. Thus, in literature, an author fills out an attitude by having a character participate in some action. This filling out of an attitude tests its meaning “stressing the role of the participant, who in the course of his participation, it is hoped, will define the situation with sufficient realistic accuracy to prepare an *image* for action.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, the meat of Burke’s explanation of attitudes is his definition of an attitude as an incipient form of action. In the introduction to *A Grammar of Motives* Burke writes, “Where would attitude fall within our pattern? Often it is the *preparation* for an act, which would make it a kind of symbolic act, or incipient act. But in the character as a state of *mind* that may or may not lead to an act, it is quite clearly to be classed under the head of *agent*.”¹⁸⁶ This means that an attitude is the bridge between a situation and an action, because it is the preparation of an agent for an act. The formation of attitudes takes place when one both identifies the fit between one’s present situation and a fictional situation and when one adopts the attitude of a fictional character as a strategy for acting in the world.

The rhetorical component of literature as equipment for living becomes more explicit as one moves from strategies and attitudes to patterns of experience and symbols. Burke defines an experience as the adjustment of an organism to its environment, and then argues that these adjustments begin to define a pattern.¹⁸⁷ That is, one becomes habituated to a particular

¹⁸⁴ Burke, “Semantic and Poetic Meaning,” 138.

¹⁸⁵ Burke, “Semantic and Poetic Meaning,” 149-50.

¹⁸⁶ Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 20.

¹⁸⁷ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 150.

environmental adjustment, a particular experience, by its frequent repetition. However, Burke is uninterested in the genesis of the pattern, what matters to him is that the pattern becomes creative, “The method of adjustment (the particular selection of universal experiences) which the organism has developed to face specific environmental conditions is subsequently applied to other environmental conditions.”¹⁸⁸ Some adjustments are so powerfully creative that they dominate all other experiences, for example, in *The Merchant of Venice* Shylock’s adjustment to the environmental conditions of Antonio’s berating early in the play are so powerful that he is unable to adjust to the new environmental condition of Antonio’s pleading at the end of the play. In fact, Shylock’s pattern of experience is so powerful, that his name becomes shorthand for one who is so bitter that they are unable to show mercy, thus “Shylock” becomes a symbol, the verbal equivalent for a pattern of experience.

Because the symbol is equivalent to a pattern of experience, it is also a formula for an adjustment to an environment. Burke explains that, “essentially it is a complex attitude which pervades the setting, plot, and characters.”¹⁸⁹ As discussed above, an attitude is an implicit action that an author defines and formalizes by having a character participate in some action. Thus Burke continues, “The Symbol might be called a word invented by the artist to specify a particular grouping or pattern or emphasizing of experiences—and the work of art in which the Symbol figures might be called a definition of this work.”¹⁹⁰ Therefore, ensconced in literature, symbols are rhetorical in two ways, first one may simply read a literary work, and being

¹⁸⁸ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 152.

¹⁸⁹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 152.

¹⁹⁰ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 152.

convinced of the symbols fit, adopt the formula for one's one life. Second, one may be convinced by someone else that a symbol is a good fit for one's situation, and then adopt the formula. Either way, it becomes equipment for living.

Symbolic Appeal

What I wish to argue is that there are six specific ways that a symbol like Sherlock Holmes can be used as equipment for living. Using the generic aspects of a symbol's appeal, Burke explains six specific ways that a symbol appeals to an audience: (1) as the interpretation of a situation, (2) to favor the acceptance of a situation, (3) as the corrective of a situation, (4) as the exerciser of submerged experience, (5) as an emancipator, and (6) as a vehicle for artistic effects.

As the interpretation of a situation, a symbol names and defines a situation whose character is unclear or in doubt. "It provides a terminology of thoughts, actions, emotions, attitudes, for codifying a pattern of experience."¹⁹¹ Here the writer uses his expertise as an authority in a pattern of experience to lend clarity and order to an otherwise confused situation. As Burke writes, "it can, by its function as name and definition, give simplicity and order to an otherwise unclarified complexity."¹⁹² The function here is not necessarily to advocate any form of action or behavior. It is simply to clarify the nature of the situation that one might be facing. This usually happens though "idealization," which eliminates "irrelevancies" and presents a "pure" form of a situation that helps bring clarity to chaos.¹⁹³ Its purpose is purely to name the situation, not necessarily to then say what to do.

¹⁹¹ Burke, Kenneth, *Counter-Statement*, 154.

¹⁹² Burke, Kenneth, *Counter-Statement*, 154.

¹⁹³ Burke, Kenneth, *Counter-Statement*, 154.

In April of 2013, the IMF titled the third chapter of the *World Economic Outlook* “The Dog That Didn’t Bark: Has Inflation Been Muzzled or Was It Just Sleeping?” The title was a reference to “The Adventure of Silver Blaze,” and an attempt to clarify a complex situation. During periods of economic turmoil, such as “the Great Recession,” economists expect to see inflation fluctuate dramatically as a market seeks normality. This chapter was an attempt to explain that the lack of inflation, an expected consequent of world economic improvement, was actually a sign of economic recovery. The report argued that inflation had been “muzzled” because it was “anchored to central bank targets” and because of “resistance to nominal wage cuts.”¹⁹⁴ Because the situation was complex, the IMF sought a symbol that would bring clarity, though not necessarily imply a course of action. The organization’s reference to Sherlock Holmes as the interpretation of a situation was not made to accuse central banks of nobbling a racehorse—sabotaging economic recovery—but to suggest that the lack of expected evidence of economic recovery was actually evidence of steady and sustainable recovery.

In “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” Sherlock Holmes’s appeals to the reader as the interpretation of a situation by lending clarity to the type of situation in which the lack of evidence is itself evidence. In the story, a prized racehorse has been stolen, and Holmes is called in to consult. While reviewing the witness’s statements, Holmes draws attention “to the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime,” and Holmes’s puzzled interlocutor responds “the dog did nothing in the nighttime,” which was, for Holmes, the curious incident.¹⁹⁵ In the denouement of

¹⁹⁴ Simon, John, Troy Matheson, and Damiano Sandri, “Press Points for Chapter 3 of the World Economic Outlook,” IMF.org, April 2013.
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/pdf/3sum.pdf>

¹⁹⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 197.

the story Holmes explains that, though the stable boy was drugged, the dog was not, and because someone had been in and out of the stables without the dog's barking the dog must have known that person. This ultimately led Holmes to investigate the horse's own trainer, and to discover that the trainer had stolen the horse.

A symbol appeals to the audience by favoring the acceptance of a situation when the situation is not necessarily complex, but our minds have been closed to accepting the situation because we do not desire to see it this way. Here, "the symbol can enable us to admit, for instance, the existence of a certain danger which we had emotionally denied."¹⁹⁶ The authority of the writer as an expert may allow a symbol to appeal to us in this way, as the thoroughness of the writer's presentation makes the situation, as perceived through the symbol, undeniable. For instance, Burke notes that "a humorous Symbol enables us to admit the situation by belittling it; a satirical Symbol enables us to admit the situation by permitting us to feel aloof from it; a tragic Symbol enables us to admit the situation by making us feel the dignity of being in such a situation; the comic Symbol enables us to admit the situation by making us feel our power to surmount it."¹⁹⁷ The important function of this symbol is thus not to interpret complexity but to overcome fear or recalcitrance.

At the end of the 1986 cult hit "Little Shop of Horrors" Audrey II, the antagonist of the film, sarcastically replies "No shit Sherlock" when Seymour, the film's protagonist, belatedly uncovers Audrey II's plot for world domination. Audrey II is using Sherlock Holmes's symbolic appeal for favoring the acceptance of a situation. Seymour had been suppressing Audrey II's

¹⁹⁶ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 154.

¹⁹⁷ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 155.

megalomaniacal and homicidal tendencies, but when Audrey II refers to Holmes's symbolic appeal for favoring the acceptance of a situation, Seymour is no longer able to suppress or deny the alien plant's evil plot to take over the world. Though the situation of the film is satirical, it is a good example of how the Sherlock Holmes symbol can be used by a rhetor. Seymour is "enmeshed in some nodus of events" and by providing a diagnosis through a reference to Sherlock Holmes Audrey II charms Seymour by the sudden illumination the formula throws on his life.¹⁹⁸ What allows Audrey II to use Sherlock Holmes to diagnose Seymour's situation is Holmes's appeal for favoring the acceptance of a situation in stories like "The Man with the Twisted Lip."

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip" Sherlock Holmes appeals to the reader by favoring the acceptance of a situation when the truth is unpleasant or embarrassing. In this story Holmes is investigating the disappearance of Mr. Neville St. Clair. A "professional beggar," who is reported to be the last man to see Neville St. Clair, is being held in police custody because the missing man's clothes were found in his rooms, there was blood on his window sill, and yet he refuses to explain himself. Having exhausted all other possible explanations, Holmes concludes that the beggar and the missing gentleman must be one and the same. Holmes then rushed to the prison, "stooped to the water jug, moistened his sponge, and then rubbed it twice vigorously across and down the prisoner's face"¹⁹⁹ revealing the missing man behind a formidable disguise. When Holmes reaches the conclusion that the man found in the room must be the missing man,

¹⁹⁸ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 58.

¹⁹⁹ Doyle, "The Man with the Twisted Lip," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 92.

he encourages the reader to accept similar improbable conclusions when all impossible conclusions have been eliminated.

A symbol appeals to the audience as the corrective of a situation when the symbol enables them to overcome the emotional restraints of their situation by living vicariously through the actions of the symbol. Burke notes “life in the city arouses a compensatory in life on the farm, with the result that symbols of farm life become appealing; or a dull life in the city arouses a compensatory interest in symbols depicting a brilliant life in the city; etc.”²⁰⁰ What is crucial to understand here is that compensatory symbols need not be practical or motivational; they simply serve to satisfy emotional needs unmet in the current situation. That is why “stories of romantic love are probably in this class.”²⁰¹ They do not speak to our current problems. Indeed, “the actual situation to which the symbol is adapted remains unformulated.”²⁰² One seeks corrective symbols not to remind oneself of one’s current situation but, as with modern video games, to simply escape into another world not one’s own.

The producers of BBC’s miniseries “Sherlock” used Sherlock Holmes’s appeal as the corrective of a situation when they wanted to announce the return of the show for a new series. They hired a hearse, put the name of the program and the transmission date in wreaths, a hash tag—#sherlocklives—on the driver’s window and drove around London. The producers were using Holmes’s appeal as the corrective of a situation to encourage viewers to escape again into the fictional world of Sherlock Holmes. The hash tag was popular on Twitter, Facebook, and

²⁰⁰ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 155.

²⁰¹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 155.

²⁰² Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 156.

other social networking sites, inspiring audiences to speculate about how Holmes could have survived, or what direction the show runners might take with the continuation of the modern remake of Holmes's adventures. As the corrective of a situation Holmes provides viewers the opportunity to escape from their "dull life in the city" through the compensatory gain of a "brilliant life in the city."²⁰³ Likewise, by reading about Holmes's adventures, an audience is able to correct their situation, if only for a while.

In "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty" Sherlock Holmes appeals to the reader as the corrective of a situation as he allows the audience to escape their circumstances through his adventure. When Holmes is asked to consult on an issue of national security, we are able to escape our ordinary lives through his extraordinary adventure. In the months before his second marriage, Watson receives a note from an old school friend's fiancé asking him to bring Holmes to Woking, in the country. Holmes leaves his tedious chemical experiments in London and escapes to "the firwoods and the heather of Woking" where they embark on an adventure in espionage. An important treaty draft was stolen from Watson's friend while he was copying it, the sensitive nature of the agreements could, in the wrong hands, plunge the nation into war. After the treaty was taken, the grounds and everyone with access to them were thoroughly searched, but no sign of the document was found. The adventure drifts between the idyllic setting of the country house and the brash pace of London, with Holmes admiring the beauty of roses in the one setting, "Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the

²⁰³ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 155.

flowers.”²⁰⁴ And admiring the Board schools in London in the other setting, “Lighthouses, my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules, with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser better England of the future.”²⁰⁵ Holmes discovers that it was the man’s future brother in law who stole the treaty, and Holmes is able to catch the culprit when he attempts to retrieve the papers to sell them. The focus of the adventure, however, is on Holmes’s ability to rush from city to suburb chasing leads. The pace of the adventure, and its various settings, may compensate the reader for a too dull life in the country, or a too cramped life in the city.

A symbol appeals to the reader as the exerciser of submerged experience when it awakens old patterns of experience and allows the reader to practice them in a safe and socially acceptable context. Burke argues that, simply because a universal experience is slighted by our pattern of experience, does not mean that universal experience does not demand employment, “a capacity to function in a certain way (as we have pointed out in the discussion of form) is not merely something which lay on a shelf until used—a capacity to function in a certain way is an obligation so to function.”²⁰⁶ Thus a symbol may stir up submerged universal experiences, such as hatred, fear, revenge, and bring them into play. Here the writer may use form or even expertise to make the symbol compelling to a reluctant audience. As noted above, the pattern conveyed in the symbol may only last as long as the story, thereby allowing the reader to safely

²⁰⁴ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 313.

²⁰⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 314. The Board schools were paid for by local taxes, and Watson notes that he initially thought Holmes was joking about their beauty, “for the view was sordid enough.”

²⁰⁶ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 155.

exercise submerged experiences. In this case, one might simply go to horror films to “exercise” being frightened and for no other reason than to feel the emotion.

In 2007, Cultural Dialogue/One World commemorated Holmes’s appeal as an exerciser of submerged experience when they unveiled a statue of Moscow’s greatest actor, Vasily Levanov, in his greatest role, Sherlock Holmes, near the British embassy in Moscow. The statue commemorated Levanov’s performance in six Sherlock Holmes films produced in the then Soviet Union between 1979 and 1986, but more importantly they commemorated “Holmes’s appeal to a sense of security.”²⁰⁷ Igor Maslennikov, who directed the series of film, commented that Holmes “is reliable. Whereas the police are to punish someone, Holmes wants to help the victims. He is the personification of gentlemanly behavior. Audiences are always in need of someone with those qualities.”²⁰⁸ Maslennikov’s comment reinforces Holmes’s appeal as an exerciser of submerged experience, because he points towards the feelings of comfort an audience might get from encountering the Sherlock Holmes symbol. Holmes does not change the experience of the audience in the then Soviet Union; he simply allows them to experience a sense of security.

In “The Adventure of the Final Problem” Sherlock Holmes appeals to the reader as the exerciser of submerged experience when he allows us to feel avenged on an enemy or sad over his death. When Holmes grapples with Professor Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls he awakens our desire for revenge and allows us to exercise that old pattern by hurling Moriarty off the edge of

²⁰⁷ “Moscow Honours Legendary Holmes,” *BBC News*, 30 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6607249.stm>

²⁰⁸ Quoted in “Moscow Honours Legendary Holmes,” *BBC News*, 30 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6607249.stm>

the falls. The story begins two years after Holmes's supposed death, with Watson reluctantly revealing the details that brought about Holmes's demise. After "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty," Holmes had appeared more tired and haggard looking and one night he calls on Watson late in the evening and invites his old companion on a continental walking tour. He explains that an assassin is trying to murder him, and he must hide out while police carry out his plan to take down the largest criminal enterprise in the world. Holmes then explains that he has been working as a consulting detective for the police and populace of England, his counterpart—his nemesis—has been working as a consulting criminal, "He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and nearly all that is undetected in this great city."²⁰⁹ They escape to the German Alps, and all seems well to Watson, but Holmes senses that his enemy is near, and while they are hiking to Reichenbach Falls, Watson is called away and Holmes comes face to face with Moriarty. Though Watson does not describe the fateful struggle, Holmes records the impetus for his revenge in a final note to his friend: "I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of [Professor Moriarty's] presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you. I have already explained to you, however, that my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this."²¹⁰ In his final struggle with Moriarty, Holmes may allow his audience to exercise their own battle to the death with their own nemeses,

²⁰⁹ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Final Problem," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 330.

²¹⁰ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Final Problem," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 339.

and in the reports of Holmes's death Watson allows us to relive the sadness of Holmes's apparent loss.

A symbol appeals to the reader as an emancipator by shifting our perspective on virtue and vice—as when we re-conceptualize a “murder” as “punishment” or condemn “love” as “weakness.” Burke argues that symbols of emancipation are most appealing when “the situation in which the reader happens to be placed requires of him an adjustment which certain of his moral values prohibit...the symbol, by appealing to certain other of his moral values...may make the attitude ‘morally’ acceptable.”²¹¹ The symbol simply shifts terms, so that what was once forbidden as “lying” may now be permissible as “protecting the innocent from evil doers.” In this way the writer emancipates the reader by pitting moral assumptions against each other, and through the ambiguity implicit in modes of experience, expertise, or technique overwhelms the reluctant reader with a symbol that presents a practical mode of experience. Emancipation symbols thus come into play when one has to rationalize an action that might be socially frowned upon or, inversely, to condemn socially accepted actions as unworthy of praise.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar used Sherlock Holmes as an emancipator when launched his new career as an author. The former N.B.A. center's recent book, *Mycroft Holmes*, earned him a coveted place at the Baker Street Irregular's annual dinner, and Sherlock Holmes allowed Abdul-Jabbar to swap the relative virtue of action for the vice of reflection on the court. In a game where physical prowess is revered, Abdul-Jabbar remembers imitating Sherlock Holmes's famous intellectual prowess to win. “Holmes saw clues where other people saw nothing” he is quoted as saying in Blitzer's editorial for *The New Yorker*. Blitzer then notes, “One time [Abdul-

²¹¹ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 156.

Jabbar] heard [the ball boys] complaining about how Bob Lanier—the six-foot-eleven Moriarty of the Detroit Pistons—would sneak cigarettes during halftime. ‘I knew, if Lanier was smoking, if I made him run in the second half he’d be in pain.’”²¹² Using Holmes as equipment, Abdul-Jabbar exchanges the normal virtue of action for the implied vice of intellection. That is, Abdul-Jabbar emancipates his love of reading through Sherlock Holmes.

In “The Adventure of the Abby Grange” Sherlock Holmes appeals to the reader as an emancipator when he shifts terms for virtue and vice at the end of the story. When Holmes adjudicates the murder of Sir Eustace and pronounces Croker innocent because Sir Eustace was an abusive drunk, he allows the reader to re-conceptualize “murder” as “punishment,” or possibly “revenge” as “justice.” The story opens with one of Holmes’s most famous lines, “Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot.”²¹³ Inspector Stanley Hopkins has invited the two to assist on a most remarkable case, though when they arrive Hopkins appears to have resolved the murder of Sir Eustace. Upon arriving at the Abby Grange, Holmes deduces signs of domestic abuse, and upon further investigation discovers several clues which belie Hopkins’s theory of the case. Holmes notes several clues to the identity of the murderer, and returns later in an attempt to force a confession from Lady Brackenstall, Sir Eustace’s widow. Having uncovered the truth of the case despite Lady Brackenstall’s silence, Holmes discovers the identity of the murderer. However, instead of giving the murderer, Croker, over to Hopkins, Holmes decides to try the case himself. By adjudicating the case himself, Holmes paves the way for a reader to take justice into her own hands. By clearing Croker, and shielding him from prosecution, Holmes is

²¹² Blitzer, “Elementary,” *The New Yorker*, February 2, 2015.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/02/elementary>

²¹³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 607.

technically guilty of aiding a fugitive, but Conan Doyle has weighted the story so that aiding a criminal is morally acceptable in this case.

Finally, a symbol appeals to the reader as a vehicle for artistic effects because of its sheer value as an artistic creation. Burke suggests that this might be the most poignant appeal of the symbol because, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, "their appeal is in their sheer value as inventions. They are a nimble running of the scales; they display the poet's farthest reaches of virtuosity."²¹⁴ Here the writer will use all aspects of the symbol to make it effective, and through thoroughness break down the resistance of the reader. In this case, the symbol appeals, as explained earlier, simply because it is an example of artistic excellence and can serve as a model for future creation.

When Wilson decried the detective genre in his 1944 editorial, he still acknowledged the artistic value of Sherlock Holmes's adventures. Comparing Holmes's adventures to the adventures of Nero Wolfe, Rex Stout's famous detective, Wilson writes:

Here was simply the old Sherlock Holmes formula reproduced with a fidelity even more complete than it had been by Jacques Futrelle almost forty years ago. Here was the incomparable private detective, ironic and ceremonious, with a superior mind and eccentric habits, addicted to overeating and orchid-raising, as Holmes had his enervated indulgence in his cocaine and his violin, yet always prepared to revive for prodigies of intellectual alertness; and here were the admiring stooge, adoring and slightly dense, and Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard, energetic but entirely at sea, under the new name of Inspector Cramer of Police Headquarters. Almost the only difference was that Nero Wolfe was fat and lethargic instead of lean and active like Holmes, and that he liked to make the villains commit suicide instead of handing them over to justice.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 156.

²¹⁵ Wilson, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" 59.

Wilson's complaint is that contemporary detective stories were merely poor imitations of Sherlock Holmes. That is, the value of Sherlock Holmes, for Wilson, is the artistry exhibited in Conan Doyle's creation. Though Wilson dislikes detective stories as a genre, complaining that they are a vice similar to smoking or filling in crosswords, he acknowledges that Conan Doyle's work is thorough.

"The Adventure of the Speckled Band" is perhaps the best known of Holmes's adventures, and is one of the most artistic. In 1927 *The Strand Magazine* held a competition for its readers to decide the 12 best Sherlock Holmes stories, and the winner would be the reader who composed a list closest to Conan Doyle's own selection of the best Sherlock Holmes stories. At the top of the list was "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," as this story displayed the furthest reaches of Conan Doyle's virtuosity in composing detective stories. In this story, a distraught young woman comes to Holmes in fear for her life and asks for his assistance. Holmes first surprises his guest by telling her several things about herself, deduced through certain clues about her person. She then tells him her story. Helen is engaged to be married, against the wishes of her stepfather, and fears that the same terrible and mysterious death awaits her that took her sister two years earlier. Her sister, also engaged against the stepfather's wishes, awoke in the middle of the night screaming about a speckled band and in a few minutes was dead. Helen explains how her step-father's anger and brutality have isolated them from the town, and how he benefits from keeping her at home and unwed through the use of her allowance. Holmes and Watson take the case, but before they can depart to begin their investigation Dr. Grimsby Roylott, the stepfather, barges into their chambers and demands that they stay out of his private affairs. Holmes and Watson proceed with the investigation undaunted. First Holmes proves that Dr. Roylott has motive by investigating his deceased wife's will. Then Holmes and Watson take

a train to the countryside to inspect Stoke Moran, the home of Dr. Roylott and Miss Stoner. There Holmes discovers that Dr. Roylott has collected a dangerous menagerie of Indian animals, and inside the house he discovers an odd bell pull and vent in Helen's chambers. That night Holmes and Watson sneak into Miss Stoner's chamber to keep vigil. Early in the morning, a few hours past midnight, they see a light from the next room, and then Holmes shouts and strikes wildly at the false bell pull. They rush to the next room where they find Dr. Grimsby Roylott, "clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers...his chin was cocked upwards, and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head."²¹⁶ Watson identifies the band as a swamp adder, "the deadliest snake in India," and after removing the snake from the corpse Holmes instructs Watson to alert the police. Not only is this story one of Conan Doyle's favorites,²¹⁷ but Sherlockians also regularly rank it as one of the best adventures because it exemplifies the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.²¹⁸

Though each story may appeal to different readers for different reasons, the above discussion suggests how these particular stories might overwhelm the credulous reader with their pattern of experience. Each appeal is possible, not certain, that is, one could enjoy the story in

²¹⁶ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 121-2.

²¹⁷ Doyle notes in a 1927 article for *The Strand Magazine* that his fans from all over the world have written commending this story, and he is sure that "The Speckled Band" will be on everyone's list of the top 12 Sherlock Holmes stories. see Doyle, "How I Made my List," <http://www.sherlock-holmes.co.uk/library/doyle.html>

²¹⁸ See "The Best Sherlock Holmes Stories," <http://www.bestofsherlock.com/story/storyhm.htm>

this way, but unlike Brummett or McGowan's interpretation of equipment, one is not limited to interpreting any story in one particular way. Holmes, as a symbol, is potential equipment that runs the gamut of possible applications.

Conclusion

In the summer of 2014 I just missed holding the original manuscript of "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" in my hands. When I called for it at the National Library of Scotland the curator of the John Murray Archive told me they were preparing to ship it to the Museum of London as part of the exhibition "Sherlock Holmes: The Man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die." As the title of the exhibit suggests, Holmes has had a powerful effect on the public imagination. Scott Brown calls Sherlockians "the dawn of fandom as we know it—zealous, fractious, hydra-headed, and participatory."²¹⁹ When Conan Doyle wrote of the death of Holmes, all of London was famously filled with black armbands as mourners took to the streets following the publication of "The Final Problem." Conan Doyle's publisher had to shield him from the inflammatory letters that poured in, lest Conan Doyle do something rash and anger the mob. Sherlock changed something in us, or—more precisely—he summed up the adjustments necessary for life in modernity. In the following chapter I outline environmental changes that shaped the mode and pattern of Conan Doyle's experiences, including the introduction of the railway, telegraph, and education reform. Then in the fourth chapter I argue that rhetoric, the discovery of the available means of persuasion in a given situation, is Sherlock Holmes's primary pattern of experience, that is, in every situation Holmes emphasizes the identification of the available means of persuading his audience that he is correct.

²¹⁹ Scott Brown, "Scott Brown on Sherlock Holmes, Obsessed Nerds, and Fan Fiction," *Wired* (Apr. 2009). http://archive.wired.com/techbiz/people/magazine/17-05/pl_brown

CHAPTER THREE: "I LISTEN TO THEIR STORIES," SHERLOCK HOLMES'S RHETORICAL SITUATION

Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation I had tossed aside the barren paper and, leaning back in my chair, I fell into a ground study. Suddenly my companion's voice broke in upon my thoughts.

"You are right Watson," said he. "It does seem a most preposterous way of settling a dispute."

"Most preposterous!" I exclaimed, and then suddenly realizing how he echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

"What is this, Holmes?" I cried. "This is beyond anything which I could have imagined."

He laughed heartily at my perplexity.

"You remember," said he, "that some little time ago when I read you the passage in one of Poe's sketches in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere *tour-de-force* of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing you expressed incredulity."

"Oh, no!"

"Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows. So when I saw you throw down your paper and enter upon a train of thought, I was very happy to have the opportunity of reading it off, and eventually breaking into it, as a proof that I have been in rapport with you."²²⁰

Conan Doyle begins "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," with a brief *homage* to Edgar Allan Poe, inventor of the analytic detective story. Borrowing a scene from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," in which Monsieur C. August Dupin reads the innermost thoughts of his companion, Conan Doyle has Holmes intrude upon Watson's silent reverie during a sultry August day. In the explanation which follows, Holmes tells how he is able to trace the course of Watson's thoughts from the movement of his eyes, the clenching of his fists, and the tightening of his lips. In this way, Holmes "reads" his companion's thoughts. But this brief vignette also introduces us to the typical reader of a Sherlock Holmes adventure—Watson himself. For

²²⁰ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 201-2.

Watson is both a foil to Holmes and a stand in for the Victorian Everyman to whom Conan Doyle is writing. As a foil to Holmes, Watson's inmost thoughts are an open book which Holmes may leaf through at ease: "It was very superficial, my dear Watson, I assure you. I should not have intruded it upon your attention had you not shown some incredulity the other day."²²¹ As a stand in for the reader, Watson allows Conan Doyle to disguise some facts while revealing others and provides the reader with a point of identification. Watson's desires are the audience's desires, and his eventual enlightenment through the application of Holmes's method is the reader's enlightenment as well.

To understand Watson's role as Victorian Everyman, one should look back to the first Sherlock Holmes short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia." In 1891, when Conan Doyle reintroduced the world to Sherlock Holmes in the pages of *The Strand Magazine*, Conan Doyle also reintroduced Dr. Watson. Watson is a perfect picture of the British bourgeoisie. He is well educated, married, earns enough money to employ a servant, and occasionally takes a hansom cab. Sherlock observes all of these things, seemingly by magic, when Watson stops by to 221b Baker Street for a visit. "Wedlock suites you," Sherlock greets Watson. "I think that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you."²²² Watson corrects him: "Seven." Sherlock playfully insists "Indeed, I should have through a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness."²²³ Watson, having been absent from his friend for some time and forgotten his powers, exclaims

²²¹ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 202.

²²² Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

²²³ Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

“Then how did you know?” Sherlock explains: “I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?”²²⁴ An amused Watson accuses Sherlock of witchcraft, and Sherlock explains what he has observed:

It is simplicity itself, my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right fore-finger, and a bulge on the side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.²²⁵

There is more going on here than simply “deduction,” however. Notably, all of Sherlock’s inferences rely upon presumptions of bourgeois society that not only provide the premises for his reasonings but serve to reinforce those premises in the reader. As Sherlock describes the traces of his companion’s life he also proscribes a way of being for the audience of his adventures that is consistent with the new type of readership that was arising at the time of Conan Doyle’s writing. In *Holmes*, the detective was then turned into a literary symbol that spoke directly to this new class.

In order to sketch at least some of the contours of the social context in which Conan Doyle creates the symbol of Holmes, this chapter will focus on three representative changes in the environment of the mid-nineteenth century that helped produce a unique bourgeois readership for Conan Doyle’s stories—the increase in rail travel, the prevalence of the telegraph,

²²⁴ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11-12.

²²⁵ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 12.

and the establishment of the education reform acts of the 1860's. These three factors are chosen because they directly speak to the changes in the media environment that were crucial to the creation of the serialized short story. From the creation of a nation-wide rail network between 1820 and 1850 to the laying of the transatlantic telegraph cable between 1857 and 1866, to the mass education of the public made possible by a series of reform acts between 1855 and 1867, the desires of the public were turning to new quarters directed largely by changing media. But to understand how those changes in media affected changes in individuals, one must first consider the message of each medium. That is, each medium is itself a message, or as Marshall McLuhan explains, "the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension, or by any new technology."²²⁶ Thus, the creation of a rail network, by extending our feet and allowing us to travel from Manchester to Leeds more quickly than ever before, fundamentally changed how British citizens interacted with their environment and identify themselves. That is, a change in scale both implies a change of pace and requires a change of pattern. The message of each medium, the railroad, telegraph, and mass education, was the announcement of the large-scale changes in consciousness and habits which produced the type of audience whose desires were aroused and satisfied by the characters and adventures of Holmes and Watson—and still are today.

The following pages examine each medium through "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," as originally published in the Strand Magazine in 1892.²²⁷ First, I explore the message of

²²⁶ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.

²²⁷ After its initial publication in *The Strand*, this story was suppressed by Conan Doyle when the second series of Holmes adventures were collectively published as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* because of its "sensational" content, namely the shipment of a pair of severed ears

the national rail network and its cultivation of a desire for power at a distance. Second, I explore the message of the telegraph and its creation of a desire for information at a distance. In the third section, I argue that the desires evoked by trains and telegraphs not only created an expanded middle class, but also led to a series of reform acts that expanded the reading public. I conclude the chapter by arguing that the combination of trains, telegraphs, and education reform created the audience for the serialized short story, a brand-new format of publication which Conan Doyle invented by submitting a series of self-contained short stories featuring Sherlock Holmes to the editors of *The Strand Magazine*. Understanding how the desires communicated through the new media of trains, telegraphs, and education reform shaped the British reading public one can better understand the audience reflected in Dr. Watson and explain its continued appeal today.

Railroads: The Desire for Power from a Distance

“So much for the *Daily Chronicle*,” said Holmes, as I finished reading. “Now for our friend Lestrade. I had a note from him this morning, in which he says: ‘I think that this case is very much in your line. We have every hope of clearing the matter up, but we find a little difficulty in getting anything to work upon. We have, of course, wired to the Belfast post-office, but a large number of parcels were handed in upon that day, and they have no means of identifying this particular one, or of remembering the sender. The box is a half-pound box of honeydew tobacco, and does not help us in any way. The medical student theory still appears to me to be the most feasible, but if you should have a few hours to spare, I should be very happy to see you out here. I shall be either at the house or in the police-station all day.’ What say you Watson? Can you rise superior to the heat, and run down to Croydon with me on the off chance of a case for your annals?”

through the post. Conan Doyle later allowed its publication—though slightly altered—in the final collection of Holmes stories, *His Last Bow*, however, some American editions of *Memoirs* included “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” against Conan Doyle’s wishes. Because of the possibility for confusion, I am using the version of the story originally published in *The Strand Magazine*, as collected in *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*.

“I was longing for something to do.”²²⁸

At first glance, this passage seems to have nothing to do with the establishment of a national rail network. On closer examination, however, Conan Doyle has actually captured the central desire communicated by the railroad as a medium. By connecting the far flung corners of the British Empire, the rail network—and the steamships between national rail networks—create a desire for power at a distance. The message of a nation-wide rail network is an expansion of scale and an increase in pace, which alters the patterns of people’s lives. As McLuhan explains, “The steam railroad as an accelerator proved to be one of the most revolutionary of all extensions of our physical bodies, creating a new political centralism a new kind of urban shape and size. It is to the railroad that the American city owes its abstract grid layout, and the nonorganic separation of production, consumption, and residence.”²²⁹ What McLuhan is arguing is that the railroad allows a central seat of power to control distant locations, making the entire country easily accessible and therefore easily controlled. Thus, Holmes in London, the center of the British Empire, is accessible to Lestrade in Croydon, even though Croydon is miles away. And with Holmes’s assertion of centralized power the case is solved in a single day; all that remains for Lestrade is to capture the murderer. Holmes doesn’t merely effect the development of the case, he also controls the suspect pool, the means of investigation, the entire theory of the case, and he is able to do all of this because he can fly from Baker Street to Cross Street at a moment’s notice. Furthermore, Holmes doesn’t need to stay to see the murderer arrested. He can return by

²²⁸ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 203.

²²⁹ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 104.

train to Baker Street and merely leave Lestrade with a slip of paper containing the name of the culprit. Thus to understand the message of the railroad medium is to understand the type of power for which it creates desire, power over a distance, by an expansion of scale.

One of the most important effects of the railway that is relevant to the Holmes short stories is the separation of the individual from an intimate enclosed social circle—the creation of individuals alone on a train wrapped up in their own affairs. That is to say, the first effect of the railroad is to decentralize the family while establishing a centralist society, thus expanding the scale of one's immediate relations to encompass an entire nation. McLuhan writes, "When the railway train first came into our land, its first effect was to take people off the land and to break up families. It was a tremendous disruptor of family life. Anybody could get on the train and go off to the big town. Most of the folklore and literature of the past sixty or seventy years is concerned with just that—families breaking up, people leaving for the big town."²³⁰ One sees this in "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," through the dispersion of the Cushing sisters. Susan, the eldest, lives in Croydon while Sarah, the middle sister, had lived in Liverpool with Mary, the youngest, until a falling out led Sarah to move in with Susan. But because of Sarah's temper, the two Miss S. Curchings separated, forcing Sarah to live in Wallington.

Indeed, this familial dispersal as a result of centralization is the key to Holmes's theory of the case. When Miss S. Cushing receives a pair of severed ears from Belfast in the morning post, Lestrade can only surmise that disgruntled former lodgers, who happened to be medical students, must be playing a prank on their former landlady. Holmes, however, recognizes the familial resemblance in one of the ears. Holmes then explains to Watson, "In the first place, her sister's

²³⁰ McLuhan, *Understanding Me*, 128.

name was Sarah, and her address had, until recently, been the same, so that it was quite obvious how the mistake had occurred, and whom the packet was meant for.”²³¹ Having explained why severed ears might be sent to Susan Cushing as a mistake, Holmes goes on to explain why ears should be sent through the post at all: “And why should these proofs of the deed be sent to Miss Sarah Cushing? Probably because during her residence in Liverpool she had some hand in bringing about the events which led to the tragedy.”²³² The tragedy was the supposed murder of Mrs. Mary Browner, nee Cushing, by her jealous alcoholic husband Jim Browner, who served aboard the steamship the *May Day*. As Holmes explains, “You will observe that this line of boats calls at Belfast, Dublin, and Waterford: so that, presuming that Browner had committed the deed, and had embarked at once upon his steamer, the *May Day*, Belfast would be the first place at which he could post his terrible packet.”²³³ Holmes’s theory of the case illustrates the breakup of the family through the expansion of scale as well as the ability to predict the movement of individuals according to the schedules of steamships and trains.

Drawing an example from Conan Doyle’s own life, one sees the expansion of scale, increase of pace, and alteration of pattern in young Arthur’s education—first at Hodder House, then at Stony Hurst, and finally to Feldkirch—before becoming a medical student at Edinburgh University. The expansion of scale, the message of the nation-wide rail network, meant that young Arthur, when he was only eight years old, could be shipped to England for his education.

²³¹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 208.

²³² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 209.

²³³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 209.

From his first letter in, which begins “dear mama I am getting on nicely” and ends “my love to everybody except Mrs. Russel,”²³⁴ Conan Doyle sends home reports of life in his preparatory school. Owing to a life-long habit of keeping up a tender correspondence with his mother, Mary Doyle, there is ample evidence of the expanded scale that made a school in the heart of England, some two hundred miles away, close by. Conan Doyle writes home for groceries and thanks his mother not only for tea, coffee, and jam, but also for perishable goods like turkey, goose, and chicken. In short, it was easier to send young Arthur, in Preston, a fat Christmas Goose from 200 miles away in Edinburgh than to send him to the local butcher. The pattern of life for the Doyle family was fundamentally altered by the message of the train as it made Preston into Edinburgh’s back yard. Arthur was not, in this new pattern of family life, in a different country, but a mere train-ride away.

Holmes’s contribution to “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” also accelerated the pace of the investigation. What may have taken Lestrade weeks to uncover, Holmes was able to figure out in a few hours. After inspecting the package and interviewing Miss Susan Cushing, Holmes takes a cab to visit Miss Sarah Cushing, stopping along the way to send a telegraph. Holmes finds Sarah Cushing unavailable due to “brain symptoms of great severity,”²³⁵ so he and Watson enjoy a leisurely meal. When they return to the police station they are met by Lestrade with a telegram for Holmes. Upon reading the telegram, Holmes exclaims, “I have

²³⁴ Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, 20-21.

²³⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 207.

everything!”²³⁶ He scribbles the name of the criminal on the back of one of his visiting cards. Watson records: “We strode off together to the station, leaving Lestrade still staring with a delighted face at the card which Holmes had thrown him.”²³⁷ The expanded scale, which turns Croydon into London’s backyard, also accelerated the pace of the case, turning what would have been a weeks-long Scotland Yard investigation into a day-trip.

A second example from Conan Doyle’s autobiography may further illustrate the expansion of scale which turns Edinburgh into the backyard of London and regulates the pace of Victorian life through the timetable of the train. Throughout his life, Conan Doyle received interesting correspondences asking him to address some little problem or other, but he was particularly proud of the case in which he applied Holmes’s method with “complete success.”

Conan Doyle writes in his autobiography:

The case was as follows: A gentleman had disappeared. He had drawn down a bank balance of £40 which was known to be on him. It was feared that he had been murdered for the sake of the money. He had last been heard of stopping at a large hotel in London, having come from the country that day. In the evening he went to a music-hall performance, came out of it about ten o’clock, retired to his hotel, changed his evening clothes, which were found in his room the next day, and disappeared utterly. No one saw him leave the hotel, but a man occupying a neighboring room declared that he had heard him moving during the night. A week had elapsed at the time that I was consulted, but the police had discovered nothing. Where was the man?²³⁸

Before explaining how he went about applying his famous sleuth’s method of abduction, Conan Doyle wryly sent a return letter to his perplexed correspondent that the missing man was

²³⁶ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 207.

²³⁷ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 207.

²³⁸ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 110-111.

“evidently either in Glasgow or in Edinburgh.”²³⁹ The key to the mystery is found in the train timetable. After separating what was certain from what was merely conjecture, Conan Doyle reasoned that the man had intended to disappear. He had withdrawn his money and left behind his evening clothes. But, Conan Doyle reasons, it would be easier to disappear in London as a man of the crowd; the reason for checking into a hotel was to catch a train. From there it was simple matter to determine that the only time in the evening when a man could leave the hotel without being noticed would be between eleven and eleven-thirty when guests returning from the theatre would crowd the lobby. Finally, because disembarkation at a rural station would be remembered when the alarm was raised, the final destination of the missing man must be at a large terminus where several passengers would all leave the train together. Therefore, when Conan Doyle looked at the timetables and saw that the great Scotch express departed London for Edinburgh and Glasgow at about midnight, the conclusion that the gentleman had traveled to one of those cities was obvious. In this example, one sees how the expanded scale of the railroad makes it impossible for the gentleman to disappear simply by leaving the country, because even the capital of Scotland is within the reach of a consulting detective in the capital of England.

The message of the railways also impacted the British social structure as it allowed for the physical separation of the classes, not just in different class carriages, but also across the geography of London’s new suburban estates. McLuhan makes the following observation about the change of pattern in American cities, but the same is also true of British cities, “with the coming of the horse-drawn bus and streetcar, American towns developed housing that was no longer within sight of shop or factory. The railroad next took over the development of the

²³⁹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 111.

suburbs, with housing kept within walking distance of the railroad stop. Shops and hotels around the railroad gave some concentration form to the suburb.”²⁴⁰ As inter-city rail service improved in the mid 1800’s the upper middle class, families earning upwards of £500, began purchasing 20-30 acre plots outside of London’s immediate environs and building detached homes. This was, “in effect a single-class life, cut off from the inferior classes left behind in the cities, and cut off too from the old society of the surrounding countryside.”²⁴¹ The main delimiter of this class was their ability to spend both the money and the time to commute to work in a city center. Where the working class couldn’t afford the 1/2d. fare of the workman’s train (indeed these trains were more likely to serve artisans and clerks)²⁴² they certainly couldn’t afford to wake up early enough to catch a 6am train that would deposit them at a worksite too late to earn a full days wage.

Unlike the lower classes they left behind in London, the middle class commuters were able to afford both the financial cost of a £7 subscription fare and the time cost of a rail journey to and from the city center. Kellett describes the range of middle class commuters this way:

Although the gentleman in question might travel to his professional or commercial work in town, he left behind him not merely his numerous family—wife, unmarried daughters, younger children—but also a considerable retinue of local, or locally resident, servants. If he wished to ‘keep a station in accordance with his income’, as the Victorian’s books on domestic economy put it, he would,

²⁴⁰ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 180.

²⁴¹ Perkin, *The Age of the Railway*, 262.

²⁴² Course in *London Railways* explains that “the people who benefited from the workman’s trains were the artisans and clerks who were in regular employment and could afford about 1s. per week on fares” and not the displaced workmen for whom the trains were originally named (201).

at £1000 per year, employ three female servants, a coachman, a footman, and keep stables with two horses and a coach, or at any rate a phaeton.²⁴³

According to Kellett, the middle class suburban family ranged in income from £5,000—with a comparable increase in servants and horses and coaches—to £400, the retiring pension of a middle rank army officer, who would usually employ two maid servants and a single groom and horse. Furthermore, these accoutrements were not merely luxuries, but required by the complex codes and mores that underwrote suburban life. These were the first-class passengers on the local railways, which, as early as 1875, were carrying 400 million passengers and by 1896 were serving 600 million passengers.

Ironically, of course, this increase in pace had the effect of increasing a nostalgia for the peacefulness of one's own private home—albeit one that could now control action from a distance. This effect was consistent with a rear-view mirror orientation by which we translate new technologies back into old familiar ones. As McLuhan explains, "When the railway was new in the nineteenth century, people formed an image not of the railway and the new world it was creating, the new cities. They formed an image of an Arcadian retreat, a pastoral, innocent world, a Jeffersonian paradise... This is a normal human reaction to novelty and innovation. Its inappropriateness as a reaction in no way deters people from this strategy."²⁴⁴ Thus, the railway compartment resembles the interior of the cab, as seen in Sydney Paget's illustration from "The Boscome Valley Mystery," captioned "We had the carriage to ourselves." However, the compartment's resemblance to the interior of a cab merely disguises the disruption to a pattern of life the train creates. Here is Holmes, whisked away to the site of his investigation, ensconced

²⁴³ Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, 370.

²⁴⁴ McLuhan, *Understanding Me*, 86.

amidst newspapers on a comfortable couch, flying across the country as though never having left his study at Baker Street. And as we shall see in a later section of this chapter, the ability to enact one's power at a remote location was, in some instances, sufficient satisfaction for the desire to assert power over the scale of an empire at a pace of up to 70-miles per hour. The changing pattern of Victorian life, accelerated by the national railroad expansion, required new means of determining friends and foes, of fitting into the center margin structure of power, and as a consequence, created a desire for the power Sherlock Holmes represented in Conan Doyle's stories and Paget's illustrations, the power to transport the consulting rooms of 221b Baker Street to the furthest reaches of the British Empire.

Telegraphs: The Desire for Information from a Distance

Lestrade was waiting for us at the door.

"A telegram for you, Mr. Holmes," said he.

"Ha! It is the answer!" He tore it open, glanced his eyes over it, and crumpled it into his pocket. "That's all right," said he.

"Have you found out anything?"

"I have found out everything!"

"What!" Lestrade stared at him in amazement. "You are joking."

"I was never more serious in my life. A shocking crime has been committed, and I think that I have now laid bare every detail of it."

"And the criminal?"

Holmes scribbled a few words upon the back of one of his visiting cards and threw it over to Lestrade.

"That is it, he said; "you cannot effect an arrest until to-morrow night at the earliest. I should prefer that you would not mention my name at all in connection with the case, as I choose to be associated only with those crimes which present some difficulty in their solution. Come on, Watson." We strode off together to the station, leaving Lestrade still staring with a delighted face at the card which Holmes had thrown him.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 207.

The message of the telegraph is the human interest story, the candid insight into life at home and the sordid details that transpire behind closed doors and bolted shutters. In the passage excerpted above, Holmes receives information from a distant source which confirms his suspicions about the fate of Mrs. Mary Browner, nee Cushing, who has not been seen in some days. Holmes tells Watson, “I therefore sent off a telegram to my friend Algar of the Liverpool force, and asked him to find out if Mrs. Browner were at home, and if Browner had departed in the *May Day*.”²⁴⁶ Though Holmes merely sought confirmation or disconfirmation of a theory, his use of the telegraph brings up a world of bizarre new desires attached to that instrument, desires to know who, what, when, why, and how something took place hundreds of miles away at the speed of electricity, which was faster than even the railways were able to run. The importance of the telegraph in evoking a desire for information is evident in the elation Algar’s response elicits from Holmes and Lestrade. Even though Holmes dismisses the case as unworthy of his professional attention, he is still excited by the news that Mrs. Browner is not at home and that Mr. Browner did depart on the *May Day*. Indeed, Holmes is so excited that he exclaims “I have found out everything!” and cockily scribbles his solution on a piece of paper for Lestrade to decipher. Lestrade is likewise elated over the solution, as Watson notes the delight on Lestrade’s face as he too stares into the home life of Mr. and Mrs. Browner. Like the railroad, the message of the telegraph was one of an expanded scale, an increased pace, and a new pattern of life, but instead of extending our feet—allowing for fast travel to distant places—the telegraph extends our neural network, creating within its audience a desire for information from the farthest reaches of the world.

²⁴⁶ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 209.

If railroads increased the scale of Holmes's investigations by allowing him to travel across the country at fifty plus miles per hour, then the telegraph increased the scale of his investigations by allowing him instantaneous access to private information from every corner of the globe. This is a result of the electricity harnessed by the telegraph, as McLuhan explains, "whereas all previous technology (save speech, itself) had, in effect, extended some part of our bodies, electricity may be said to have outered the central nervous system itself, including the brain."²⁴⁷ The effect of "outering" our central nervous system was twofold. First it allows us to gather information along the electric conduit of the telegraph lines. Second it makes the consciousness and experience of each individual instantaneously accessible. Thus, Holmes can gather data from Belfast, Dublin, or Liverpool as though his sensorial apparatus were actually there, and he can leave the case in Lestrade's hands because he can always be reached by wire. Furthermore, the outering of our central nervous system creates a desire for information from afar as an interpretation of present conditions.

What this means for Holmes is that the case can be solved faster than it can be brought to a resolution. The telegraph plays an important role in solving "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box." It begins with Holmes's accepting the case by wire, then progresses through his use of sending a wire to Liverpool, and finally closes with the response he receives from his agent in the police. Though he needed a few contextual clues to know what to look for in Liverpool, it is the telegraph that allows Holmes to exclaim "I have found out everything!" Thus Holmes provides Lestrade with a slip of paper naming the murderer, but quips, "You cannot effect an

²⁴⁷ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 247.

arrest until to-morrow night at the earliest.”²⁴⁸ The case is solved so quickly that Holmes and Watson’s escape from the oppressive heat of London is merely a day trip to Croydon. It is even possible that Holmes could have avoided leaving Baker Street altogether, since the crime was so unremarkable that he asked not to be associated with it.

One can therefore see the Sherlock Holmes stories as building off of and transforming the new genre of the human interest story that had developed alongside the telegraph. As McLuhan says, “the outering or extension of our bodies and senses in a ‘new invention’ compels the whole of our bodies and senses to shift into new positions in order to maintain equilibrium... with the telegraph, the entire method, both of gathering and presenting news, was revolutionized.”²⁴⁹ Prior to the telegraph, that is to say, there existed only what McLuhan calls the “literary” press in which news takes on the form of a literary exercise in which the writer attempts to provide a broad perspective on events both recent and distant. However, with the telegraph comes the capacity to be immediately involved in events all around the globe. According to McLuhan, “the ‘human interest’ dimension is simply that of immediacy of participation in the experience of others that occurs with instant information,” such that “people become instant, too, in their response of pity and fury when they must share the common extension of the central nervous system with the whole of mankind.”²⁵⁰ This sudden rise in the human interest story, which makes even the trivial actions of otherwise unremarkable individuals the topic of “news,” thus set the stage for Sherlock Holmes who makes a living delving into the private lives of his clients.

²⁴⁸ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 207.

²⁴⁹ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 252.

²⁵⁰ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 254.

An example drawn from Conan Doyle's own war correspondences also illustrates how the mosaic press created by the telegraph presents human interest stories instead of mere facts or analytic essays that made up the press before the telegraph. The following excerpt, taken from Conan Doyle's autobiography, was written while he was a surgeon during the Boar War in South Africa.

Our road is through maize fields and then out on to the veldt. By Jove, what's that! There *is* a single black motionless figure in the middle of that clearing. We gallop up and spring from our horses. A short, muscular, dark man is lying there with a yellow, waxen face, and a blood-clot over his mouth. A handsome man, black-haired, black moustached, his expression serene—No. 410 New South Wales Mounted Infantry—shot, overlooked and abandoned. There are evident signs that he was not alive when the Kaffir saw him. Rifle and horse are gone. His watch lies in front of him, dial upwards, run down at one in the morning. Poor chap, he had counted the hours until he could see them no longer.

We examine him for injuries. Obviously he had bled to death. There is a horrible wound in his stomach. His arm is shot through. Beside him lies his water-bottle—a little water still in it, so he was not tortured by thirst. And there is a singular point. On the water-bottle is balanced a red chess pawn. Has he died playing with it? It looks like it. Where are the other chessmen? We find them in a haversack out of his reach. A singular trooper this, who carries chessmen on a campaign. Or is it loot from a farmhouse? I shrewdly suspect it.

We collect the poor little effects of No. 410—a bandolier, a stylographic pen, a silk handkerchief, a clasp-knife, a Waterbury watch, 2£ 6s. 6d. in a frayed purse. Then we lift him, our hands sticky with his blood, and get him over my saddle—horrible to see how the flies swarm instantly on the the saddle-flaps. His head hangs down on one side and his heels on the other. We lead the horse, and when from time to time he gives a horrid dive we clutch at his ankles. Thank Heaven, he never fell. It is two miles to the road, and there we lay our burden under a telegraph post. A convoy is coming up, and we can ask them to give him decent burial. No. 410 holds one rigid arm and clenched fist in the air. We lower it, but up it springs, menacing, aggressive. I put his mantle over him; but still, as we look back, we see the projection of that raised arm. So he met his end—somebody's boy. Fair fight, open air, and a great cause—I know no better death.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 177. Conan Doyle was eventually knighted for his service both as a surgeon during the Boar War and for his defense of that war through a propagandistic pamphlet, "The Cause and Conduct of the War."

The focus of Conan Doyle's report is on the human interest surrounding this dying soldier. Despite identifying the young man solely by serial number, No. 410, Conan Doyle paints a humane portrait of his final hours. How he played with a pawn from his chess set, how he wound his watch to count down his final hours, how his finances ran—down to the last penny—each detail builds upon the last to bring this singular soldier before the senses and make the war and its cost more real to the “gentlemen of England.”

Returning to “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” the human interest story is the key to Holmes's investigation. Where Lestrade is distracted by the sensationalism of the box's contents, Holmes asks Miss Cushing for details about her sister who lives far away in Liverpool. Holmes studies the lady's profile, and instead of further trying her patience with direct questions about the case, he merely observes, “You have two sisters, I believe.”²⁵² Miss Cushing opens to Holmes's interest in her family, and shares that her youngest has married “Jim” who “came down here to see me once” but “that was before he broke the pledge; but afterwards he would always take drink where he was ashore, and a little drink would send him stark, staring mad.”²⁵³ Watson observes that Holmes listened attentively to everything Miss Cushing said about her sisters, her brother-in-law, and her former lodgers, thus extracting all of the details he could possibly need in order to understand why one of the ears in the box would closely resemble a Cushing woman's ear. The details he gathers paint an intimate portrait of Miss Cushing and her extended family, turning the sensational story into a picture of domestic strife, which in turn

²⁵² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 206.

²⁵³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 206.

leads Holmes to consider Mr. Browning the culprit, rather than the medical students Lestrade had fixated upon. The expanded scale and increased pace communicated by the telegraph resulted in a new pattern of living. In this new pattern, remote occurrences and the private lives of others shared space on the mosaic newspaper page, brought together by the telegraph. As an extension of our neural network, the copper lines of the telegraph put Holmes in touch with the most distant parts of the British Empire.

Education Reform: The Desire for Vicarious Experience

Parliament had risen. Everybody was out of town, and I yearned for the glades of the New Forest or the shingle of Southsea. A depleted bank account had caused me to postpone my holiday, and as to my companion, neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumor or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of Nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.²⁵⁴

The education reform acts of the 1870's mark the beginning of universal education in England. This trend was, for McLuhan, simply a natural part of the development of the printing press. Mass education was a message of the printed word. As McLuhan argues, "socially, the typographic extension of man brought in nationalism, industrialism, mass markets, and universal literary and education."²⁵⁵ For Conan Doyle, the most important result of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was the creation of a new reading public made up almost entirely of boys between the ages of 10 and 14—who would desire to live vicariously through the pages of Sherlock Holmes in 30 years' time. Provisions in the Act not only imposed penalties for factories

²⁵⁴ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 201.

²⁵⁵ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 172.

employing school-aged children, but also imposed penalties for employing children who did not have a certificate showing they had completed their required education. This meant that the number of readers in the nation swelled over the course of a few years, consequentially increasing the demand for reading material. A need which was uniquely suited for adventure stories that held a bit of a puzzle for their readers to unravel, because of the demographic, which is to say that the boys educated by the reform acts of the 1870's wanted adventure stories and in the 1890's Conan Doyle provided them. One could live out the part of a detective in response to the expose of the criminal justice system that *The Strand* had just run, so that even the lowliest clerk was able to take direct, if imagined, social action against the corrupt powers of the court through the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.²⁵⁶

A series of education reforms around the 1870's massively increased the reading public by making primary education for boys universal, compulsory, and free. While the extent of the impact of the education reform acts is often exaggerated, "the number of children who attended inspected day schools, and thereby received efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, rose from 2,000,000 to 3,500,000 in only six years."²⁵⁷ As the number of common readers swelled, so did the demand for cheap printed material. However, a series of protective taxes limited the availability of leisure reading material, which led to the creation of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge that spearheaded the repeal of advertisement taxes, newspaper stamp acts, and paper duties so that "the organization

²⁵⁶ The year Sherlock Holmes was introduced, *The Strand* ran an anonymous three installment expose of the criminal justice system. See "The State of the Law Courts," *The Strand Magazine* 1 (1891): 402, 531, 638.

²⁵⁷ Orel, *The Victorian Short Story*, 184.

of the press was freed of fiscal distortion for the first time since the reign of Queen Anne.²⁵⁸

With the advent of a free press, common readers were no longer interested in the utilitarian and evangelical weeklies that had dominated the cheap press since the 1830's, and the combined purchasing power represented in millions of new readers created an insatiable demand for interesting reading material, but the presses literarily couldn't keep up.

Just as middle class passengers had the time and finances to enjoy a commuter train from the suburbs to the city center, they were also able to afford entertainment for their journey. Where the lower classes might be satisfied with tit bits from *Tit Bits*,²⁵⁹ middle class passengers in first class carriages were the target market for George Newnes's new *Strand Magazine*. These passengers were looking for something posher to read than the decidedly lower class fare that made up Mr. Newnes's garishly advertised penny weekly, but they were still seeking value for their money, so the appearance of a 120 page, fully illustrated, 6d magazine was the perfect blend of class and value to take the middle class passengers by storm.

The Economics of Writing and Reading

I made £154 the first year, and £250 the second, rising slowly to £300, which in eight years I never passed, so far as the medical practice went. In the first year the Income Tax paper arrived and I filled it up to show that I was not liable. They returned the paper with "Most unsatisfactory" scrawled across it. I wrote "I entirely agree" under the words, and returned it once more. For this little bit of cheek I was had up before the assessors, and duly appeared with my ledger under

²⁵⁸ Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, 30.

²⁵⁹ Though more likely they purchased the paper for it's life insurance policy against railway accidents before crowding onto the wooden slat benches of an early morning train hurtling into the city at up to 50 miles per hour. McDonald supports the assertion that *Tit Bits* was connected to the workman's trains, paraphrasing a letter to the *Scots Observer*, "the archetypal reading of the 'real general public': the 'millions' who 'weakened their brains' on this kind of 'weekly drivel' ... chiefly read by men who could often be seen cramming 'such fare' in the 'railway carriage' and on the 'bus'" (*British Literary Culture and Publishing Practices*, 148).

my arm. They could make nothing, however, out of me or my ledger, and we parted with mutual laughter and compliments.²⁶⁰

Anyone who has enjoyed a television show with recurrent characters owes a debt of gratitude to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Through the invention of the serial short story—a serialized story following a single character—Conan Doyle revolutionized the publishing industry at the end of the 19th century.²⁶¹ Unlike the serialized novel, which was a single work presented, if not written, one installment at a time, each short story was self-contained. But unlike the typical short story of the time, the serialized short story carries characters across several installments in the same publication.²⁶² As Conan Doyle writes in his autobiography:

Considering these various journals with their disconnected stories it had struck me that a single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather than a help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet installments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazine.²⁶³

With the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle—with the help of *The Strand Magazine*—created a mass market for cheap fiction that furthered the division between so-called serious novelists, like George Meredith and Henry James, and professional writers, like Conan Doyle

²⁶⁰ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 70.

²⁶¹ See Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 41 and Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 95.

²⁶² The Dupin stories were published by different magazines and “The Mystery of Marie Roget” was published as a serial, and the form of that story is more like the Holmes novellas *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four*.

²⁶³ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 95-6.

and J. M. Barrie.²⁶⁴ But to understand how completely Conan Doyle's work changed the publishing industry, one must first consider the two forms Conan Doyle combined when he submitted "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Red Headed League" to *The Strand Magazine* in 1891. Thus, the following paragraphs contextualize the Sherlock Holmes stories within the publishing industry of the late Victorian era by considering serial publication, writing and reading.

Serial Publication

When John Murray republished Conan Doyle's authorized canon in a uniform edition, Conan Doyle insisted that they promote him as "Conan Doyle, teller of tales." The John Murray archive in the National Library of Scotland chronicles Conan Doyle's commitment to the project, and his insistence that the common thread that links his corpus is his identity as a storyteller. Serial publication, whether of novels or of short stories, evokes the oral tradition of storytelling thereby excusing inconsistencies and encouraging the use of the serialized work as equipment for living. In the essay "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin argues that storytelling is the art of *repeating* stories, and this art is lost when "there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to."²⁶⁵ Though Conan Doyle's manuscripts indicate that he composed his stories as one continuous narrative, rarely going back to emend errors or inconsistencies, this is consistent with an oral composition form in which, Benjamin argues, "the more self-forgetful the

²⁶⁴ For more on the distinction between serious and professional novelists see Carlisle, *The Sense of an Audience*, 221.

²⁶⁵ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 91.

listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory.”²⁶⁶ In this self-forgetful state, the listener forgives inconsistencies as the tale continues to unfold, focusing more on the rhythm and flow of the story than the details, “when the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself.”²⁶⁷ Using this explanation of the art of the storyteller, Benjamin argues that the novel is the antithesis of the story, because the novel “neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it.”²⁶⁸ However, the serialized novel, the form Conan Doyle emulated when learning to write, is deeply rooted in the oral tradition.²⁶⁹ Not only were the novels episodic, but they also caused listeners to so forget themselves that they would—successfully—appeal to novelists for changes to the characterization, or even the plot, of a novel.²⁷⁰ Therefore the following paragraphs argue that serial novels perpetuated narrative elements of oral form that shaped reader desires, desires

²⁶⁶ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 91. For the lack of emendations in Conan Doyle’s manuscripts, see Own Dudley Edwards introduction to *The Haunted Grange of Goresthorpe*.

²⁶⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 91.

²⁶⁸ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 87.

²⁶⁹ For more on Conan Doyle’s early inspirations and models see “Through the Magic Door,” a short essay on his library. Though Conan Doyle writes about purchasing many of these texts in single volume bargain editions when an apprentice, he writes in his autobiography that his first exposure to many of them was through the periodicals his mother would read to him as a young boy.

²⁷⁰ Dickens, the preeminent Victorian novelist, published all of his novels in installments, the nature of which is discussed in more detail below. Johnson notes at least three times where Dickens made changes in his stories radically at odds with their initial design. See Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*.

which Conan Doyle would meet by writing Sherlock Holmes as a series of short stories for *The Strand Magazine*.²⁷¹

Publishing novels in serial form effects reading in three ways. First, it is impossible to skip ahead and impractical to review. Second, serial novels dictate a reading time through the length of their installments. And third, it is necessary to keep the principle characters alive in the reader's imagination across installments.²⁷² While some novels were written in advance and then submitted to a syndication service for dissemination, so that the author had no control over the production of the novel's parts, it was far more common for an author to compose a Victorian novel for serialization.²⁷³ That is, the author would plan installments to keep readers engaged (and the author employed). Because serialization was both imposed upon the writer and integral to the craft of writing, serialization shaped the craft of writing during Conan Doyle's early career and contributed to his success with Sherlock Holmes.

The first impact of serialization on reading is inherent in the publishing process. Because a novel was published in parts, it was impossible for a reader to skip ahead and impractical for a reader to review previous installments. This made "magazine day," the first of the month when new issues appeared in bookstalls across the country, a national event akin to a holiday. As

²⁷¹ Though Sherlock Holmes was first introduced in novellas, his greatest success was as in serialized short stories, see Law, *Mirror of the Century*.

²⁷² Another important consideration was the inclusion of illustrations. Law notes that Dickens's preferred mode of initial serial publication was 20 monthly installments of 32 octavo pages with two illustrations inside a distinctive duck-green paper wrapper. See Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, 15-17. I mention this because a strong selling point of *The Strand Magazine* was its inclusion of "a picture on every page," see Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 30, and because Sidney Paget's illustrations of Sherlock Holmes have shaped our perception of the great detective, see Klinefelter, *Sherlock Holmes in Portrait and Profile*.

²⁷³ see Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*.

Hughes and Lund explain, “Once they had purchased or borrowed the latest installment, a Victorian might read it aloud. This practice, in a family or neighborhood, enhanced the sense that literature in nineteenth-century England was a national event, that response was public as well as private.”²⁷⁴ Much as a motel might advertise cable television, boarding houses used to offer monthly readings of the latest serial as a form of guest entertainment. One of Dickens’s biographers recounts that a man named Douglass would host a tea on the first of every month and read the latest installment of *Dombey*, much to the delight of his illiterate tenants.²⁷⁵

Magazine day kept readers in a state of expectation, wherein each new installment diminished the value of previous installments and heightened the value of forthcoming issues. This led publishers to adapt the factory models of their counterparts in commodity manufacturing. Hughes and Lund argue that the “assumption of continuing growth and the confidence that an investment (whether time or money) in the present would reap greater rewards in the future were shared features of middle class capitalism and of serial reading.”²⁷⁶ Where readers of a work published in single volume format can binge read and discover the conclusion of a work within a few hours or days, or even cheat by skipping to the end and unmasking the culprit, serialization required readers to persevere and delay gratification, necessary components of middle class economic success.

Even after the conclusion of its serial run, a work was unlikely to appear in a single volume. In the mid nineteenth-century, Charles Edward Mudie had a hegemony on the

²⁷⁴ Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 10.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Johnson, *Charles Dickens*, 63-4.

²⁷⁶ Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 4.

aftermarket of serial novels through Mudie's Select Library and used his power to insist that novels be printed in "triple decker" format. Forcing publishers to print novels in three volumes ensured that more of Mudie's subscribers would purchase his more expensive membership scheme. Much like the original Netflix model, Mudie charged a small annual subscription in return for access to a curated library of novels. The basic subscription, one guinea annually, would allow members to borrow a single volume at a time, but the more popular two-guinea subscription would allow members to borrow up to four volumes simultaneously. Thus, a basic subscription patron would never be able to borrow an entire novel at time. Though Conan Doyle only published his earliest novels in "triple decker," he saw the value in spreading a single work across several volumes, not only in its original publication, but also in its aftermarket. Hence *Sherlock's Adventures, Memories, and Return* appear in separate volumes.

The second impact of serialization on reading is the constraint of reading time. Here we transition from a focus on the reciprocal impact of the means of publishing on the reader—and the reader on the means of publication—and begin considering the oral qualities of the Victorian serial publication. Unlike its modern counterpart, the Victorian novel was more indebted to the oral form than the print form. Though Victorian culture is clearly not primarily oral, and the very concept of plot or story line are part of the shift to literacy from orality, yet the episodic nature of serial publication, its adaptation to a responsive audience, and its reliance on memory make it beholden to the critiques of oral narrative.

Serial novels are episodic perforce. Dickens's *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* exemplifies the monthly serial. What started as a disconnected series of sketches became "perhaps the most popular of early nineteenth century books," increasing the circulation of the

magazine from 1,000 to 40,000 during its one year run.²⁷⁷ Thus, while a writer may be “encouraged to think of his work as a self-contained, discrete unit, defined by closure,”²⁷⁸ the serial novel was open to expansion, as illustrated in the expansion of Dickens’s few sketches into a 600 page novel, and contraction, as illustrated by truncation of Richard Dowling’s “Tempest-Tossed.”²⁷⁹ Perhaps the best illustration of the emerging episodic nature of the serialized novel is the work of Wilkie Collins. Unlike Dickens, Collins wrote in weekly installments. This often meant that he was only one issue—or less—ahead of his audience.²⁸⁰

Rather than thinking of the novel in terms of a self-contained, discrete unit, novelists writing in serial were more likely to think of the effect of each episode. Edgar Allan Poe, the father of the detective genre, argues that the work of art should be limited to that which can be read in a single sitting.²⁸¹ Poe writes: “It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting.”²⁸² Although Poe is

²⁷⁷ Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, 15

²⁷⁸ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 145.

²⁷⁹ Law records the incident in *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, 135. “after reaching chapter 22, readers were abruptly informed that: ‘the demands upon our space, owing to the ensuing Elections, make it impossible to give the rest of this story in the *South London Press*. It is appearing in the *Weekly Budget*, particulars concerning which are to be found on page 15.’”

²⁸⁰ For example, see Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, 268 n14.

²⁸¹ see McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 52. “The method of invention, as Edgar Poe demonstrated in his ‘Philosophy of Composition,’ is simply to begin with the solution the problem or with the effect intended. Then one backtracks, step by step, to the point from which one must begin in order to reach the solution effect. Such is the method of the detective story, of the symbolist poem, and of modern science.”

²⁸² Poe, *The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe*, “The Philosophy of Composition,” 1081. The remainder of the quotation is, “—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such

speaking specifically about poetry, and names *Robinson Crusoe* as an example of where unity may be disregarded, Poe's translators and champions took his advice as universal and applicable to all art. Furthermore, Poe begins the essay by framing it as a response to a note he received from Charles Dickens. Therefore, a brief analysis of Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" provides a useful tool for understanding the dynamics of serialization from the inventor of the modern detective story.

As noted above, Poe begins this essay by referencing Dickens. In seeming agreement with Ong and Benjamin's arguments that the novel is self-contained, Poe posits that "nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before any thing be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention."²⁸³ However, in the context of Poe's claim that the definite limit of literary composition is the single sitting, Poe's philosophical argument is not that the novelist must always know the end of the novel from the beginning of the novel, but that the novelist must know the emotional effect an installment is intended to effect before setting pen to paper. Thus, Dickens should not begin by endearing an audience to Little Nell so that he can evoke pity by killing her off; rather he should begin to tell a story that will evoke pity in his audience and then work backwards to endear his audience to that character. And this, indeed, was Dickens's approach to composing his serialized work.²⁸⁴

as *Robinson Crusoe* (demanding no unity,) this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem."

²⁸³ Poe, *The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe*, "The Philosophy of Composition," 1079.

²⁸⁴ see Johnson, *Charles Dickens*, 69-71. Johnson also quotes a review from Ruskin, who claims "Nell was simply killed for the market, as a butcher kills a lamb." Which is, to some extent, true.

Dickens's audiences were anything but passive in their reading of his serialized novels. As noted above, hundreds of readers wrote to him pleading for little Nell's life when they saw that he planned to slay her for the market as a butcher kills a lamb, to paraphrase John Ruskin.²⁸⁵ Yet, while these appeals did not sway Dickens's plan for the installment, other appeals from his audience caused Dickens to make significant changes to his plots and characterizations. In *David Copperfield*, he re-characterized Miss Mowcher in a later installment, in *Our Mutual Friend*, he created a character to make amends for the latent anti-Semitism in *Oliver Twist*'s Fagin, he saved Walter Gay in *Dombey* and killed Richard Carstone in *Bleak House*, and at the end of *Great Expectations* he revised the ending to allow Pip and Estella to be united.²⁸⁶ Thus, Dickens's readers were not "isolated, more so than any other reader" but were "in the company of the storyteller" as seen in the reader's interjections and the authors emendations.²⁸⁷

This leads to the third major impact of serial publication on the reading of fiction: the author's need to keep a story alive in the memory of an audience across several installments. A book that can be read in a single sitting, or over the course of a few weeks, need not remind

As a "hoard of correspondents" sensing that Nell was going to die, wrote to Dickens, pleading with him to spare her life.

²⁸⁵ see Ruskin, "Fiction Fair and Foul," n154 "Nell, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, was simply killed for the market, as a butcher kills a lamb (see Forster's *Life*), and Paul was written under the same conditions of illness which affected Scott—a part of the ominous palsies, grasping alike author and subject, both in *Dombey*, and *Little Dorrit*."

²⁸⁶ Several of Dickens's biographers chronicle his accommodation of audience requests, including Forster and Gissing. For an exploration of Dickens's relationship with his readers, see the chapter "Dickens and His Readers" in Johnson, *Charles Dickens*.

²⁸⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 100. Also 90, "For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to."

audiences who the characters are and what they are doing; but when the novel is spread out over a year or two the author must keep characters alive in the memories of the audience. For Victorian novelists, and for Conan Doyle, this was accomplished through epic narrative. Benjamin writes, “Memory is the epic faculty *par excellence*. Only by virtue of a comprehensive memory can epic writing absorb the course of events on the one hand and, with the passing of these, make its peace with the power of death on the other.”²⁸⁸ As the Victorian writer’s story is spread across time through its appearance in installments, the serialized story tells not merely of one odyssey or one battle; but of many diffuse occurrences which contain the same cast of characters and provides something useful for the audience. Thus Dickens and Conan Doyle weave diffuse occurrences together in order to convey, openly or covertly, a moral, some practical advice, a proverb or maxim, which will be remembered by the audience and linked up with the other events of the serial.²⁸⁹

The usefulness of the serialized form is greater than that of a single volume novel, or even a “triple decker,” because of the community criticism that sprang up around each new installment. Not only was magazine day a national event when the new installment of a serial was read, often aloud, but also the day was an opportunity to discuss the experiences in the latest installment of an epic—and to debate the usefulness of that installment’s epic wisdom. As Hughes and Lund argue, “reactions to the latest part could be shared and intensified. The time between installments in serial literature gave people the opportunity to review events with each

²⁸⁸ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 97.

²⁸⁹ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 86-7.

other, to speculate about plot and characters, and to deepen ties to their imagined world.”²⁹⁰ This made the story a participatory experience, which is the main value Benjamin sees in the artisan communication of the storyteller. Audiences make sense of the author’s shared experiences, even if the author has culled them from the experiences of others. This is the wisdom of the epic, it collects and preserves the experiences of a people, and when they reminisce about these diffuse experiences, they remember the usefulness of their morals, practical advice, and proverbs.

The intervals between installments and the necessity to keep characters and events in an audience’s memory led authors to compose in the mode of realism. Hughes and Lund argue that, “reading one installment, then pausing in that story, the Victorian audience turned to their own world with much the same set of critical faculties they had used to understand the literature. And then a week or month or more later, they picked up again a continuing story to be apprehended in much the same way they had been interpreting the reality presented in newspapers and letters and by word of mouth.”²⁹¹ Thus, the story becomes instantly useful as a means of making sense of the audience’s life. In a speech during his tour of Boston, Dickens alludes to this when he recounted the dozens of letters he received from American fans of his work, telling him how their own dearly departed were like little Nell in his story, and how the story had comforted them in their loss.²⁹² The comments of Conan Doyle’s fans were primarily published in *Tit Bits*, where, for example, “an experienced and able officer” at Scotland Yard praised Holmes as both

²⁹⁰ Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 10.

²⁹¹ Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 11.

²⁹² For an excerpt of this speech see Johnson, *Charles Dickens*, 70.

practical and inventive.²⁹³ “Public Safety Partick” writes, “would it not be possible to apply [Holmes’s] methods to the many mysterious crimes committed, the authors of which are never discovered?”²⁹⁴ And also notes that an advertisement in a Scotch newspaper proposes just such a scheme. A London detective claimed to be the original Sherlock Holmes, and offered his services to anyone in need of them, but Tit-Bitite followed up with the report of “a recent trial, in which a detective who advertised himself as the original Sherlock Holmes was the prosecutor. He was coming back from the races, and allowed himself to be victimized to the extent of ten pounds by the three-card trick.”²⁹⁵ Thus the stories became immediately useful as a means of making sense of the audience’s life, though some audiences made better use of them than others.

Writing

In the late 1800’s the reading public desired a new form of entertainment that could be digested in the time it took a commuter train to reach the heart of the city. The three key qualities for this new entertainment were that it must be portable, self-contained, and disposable. These qualities, or the lack thereof, are the literary exigence to which Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories respond. However, to understand how Conan Doyle managed to meet these exigencies with Sherlock Holmes in *The Strand Magazine*, one should first understand how a new class of reading public lead to the decline of the novel and the rise of the short story.²⁹⁶

²⁹³ Green, ed., *The Sherlock Holmes Letters*, 66.

²⁹⁴ Green, ed., *The Sherlock Holmes Letters*, 67.

²⁹⁵ Green, ed., *The Sherlock Holmes Letters*, 69.

²⁹⁶ The following discussion of Conan Doyle’s impact on the publishing industry is significant because his contribution to the rise of the serial short story is largely ignored. While he does appear in notes and asides, a detailed analysis of his contribution to the shift away from serialized novels and towards serialized short stories has not yet been written.

The novel, the most popular literary form in the mid 1800's, could not meet these demands because it required study. While one might read a novel at home, relaxing in a sitting room before a cozy fire or in the kitchen while the lamb roasts, the dedicated attention needed to understand the train of a novelist's thought made the form unsuitable for quick reading. Even the publication in installments still required dedicated attention for the duration of the installment. Further, the capacity of memory, which Benjamin argued was diminishing as the modern novel rose to prominence, would not abide the frequent taking up and putting down of a novel by someone like Meredith, who wrote in arcane metaphors and grand allusions. As Janice Carlisle argues in *The Sense of an Audience*, where the novel had been capable of breaking down social, intellectual, and aesthetic distinctions in the 1850's, by the 1880's it was involved in creating new distinctions. "A constantly expanding reading public, the result of compulsory education acts, divided the merely literature popular audience from the more highly educated critical reader."²⁹⁷ Where the critical reader might be satisfied with a later novel of Meredith, whom Carlisle claims completely broke with the common reader by his 1879 novel *The Egoist*, such a novel would not satisfy the demands for portability, self-containment, or disposability of the popular audience. Even Wilkie Collins novel *Woman in White*—one of the finest detective novels ever written, according to Benjamin—proves unsatisfying for the commuter, who must wait for the publication of the next installment to find out another piece of the puzzle. To be sure, "Collin's apparently complex, interconnected narratives are imaginatively unchallenging; the reader knows that without much effort on his part the mystery will inevitably reveal itself."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Carlisle, *The Sense of an Audience*, 220.

²⁹⁸ Carlisle, *The Sense of an Audience*, 222.

However, it is still an encumbrance to miss an installment. Thus the work is not self-contained, and it is not portable because it stretches over several issues.

The Cornhill Magazine was one of the early challengers of the novel's preeminence, as it included short stories along with its serialized novel. However, the short stories in *Cornhill* were unattributed, which was a serious problem for an unknown and aspiring author, and ultimately for the magazine, because it could only promote the editor's taste for the miscellany that filled out pages not taken up with the main novel. As Conan Doyle wrote in his autobiography, "I had a reverence for this splendid magazine with its traditions from Thackeray to Stevenson and the thought that I had won my way into it pleased me even more than the cheque for £30, which came duly to hand. It was, of course, anonymous,—such was the law of the magazine—which protects the author from abuse as well as prevents his winning fame."²⁹⁹ The two problems for Conan Doyle were the anonymity of short story writers, and the publisher's preference for novels.

As Conan Doyle suggests in the quotation above, the problem of anonymity did not hinder the amateur author, who would be protected from bad reviews, but for Conan Doyle, who was coming to rely on his writing as a necessary supplement to his annual income, writing without a byline was a serious impediment. Conan Doyle's initial solution was to simply write a novel, which he did. Because Holmes is Conan Doyle's most prominent work, *A Study in Scarlet* eclipses his other early work, but to understand how Conan Doyle responds to the exigencies of the reading public through Holmes, one must consider the context created by the other novels.

²⁹⁹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 73.

Conan Doyle developed his detective as a response to the literary exigencies of his day and Holmes was not born fully formed like Athena from the mind of Zeus.

In fact, Conan Doyle wrote five before finding any success. The first, *The Narrative of John Smith*, written in 1884, was lost in the mail.³⁰⁰ The second, *The Firm of Gilderstern*, written in 1885, was eventually published in 1890, though Conan Doyle regretted publishing it and later had it suppressed.³⁰¹ He then took a brief hiatus and dashed off his dissertation, “An essay Upon the Vasomotor Changes in *Tabes Dorsalis* and on the Influence Which is Exerted by the Sympathetic Nervous System in that Disease.” The third novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, written in 1886, was eventually accepted by Ward, Lock & Co, who claimed to be pleased with the story, though they insultingly added, “We could not publish it this year as the market is flooded at present with cheap fiction, but if you do not object to its being held over till next year, we will give you £25 for the copyright.”³⁰² While waiting for the first Holmes novel’s publication, Conan Doyle began writing his fourth novel, *Micah Clarke*, written in 1887, which eventually succeeded in securing Conan Doyle’s literary position amongst editors and publishers, but before its publication in 1889 Conan Doyle wrote another novel which found publication first. Conan Doyle’s fifth novel, *The Mystery of Cloomber*, which was written and published in 1888, was also later suppressed by the author.

³⁰⁰ He reconstructed it from memory, and that reconstruction has now been published by the British Library. See Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, 224-5.

³⁰¹ Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, 415, April 10, 1899 letter to Mary Doyle and 512, undated letter to Mary Doyle.

³⁰² Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 75.

Thus, Conan Doyle did not find instant success with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. Rather, he wrote five novels between 1884 and 1888: *The Narrative of John Smith*, *The Firm of Girdlestone*, *A Study in Scarlet*, *Micah Clarke*, and *The Mystery of Cloomber*.³⁰³ One of those novels was lost, two were so bad they were later suppressed by the author, *A Study in Scarlet* was relegated to a holiday pulp magazine with an infinitesimal circulation, but *Micah Clarke* was successful. *Micah Clarke* was so successful, in fact, that it assured the success of Sherlock Holmes. When Conan Doyle was invited to a dinner put on by an American publisher, it was *Micah Clarke* that his table companion—Oscar Wilde—praised to the publisher as proof of Conan Doyle’s literary prowess. This in turn procured space for Conan Doyle to write a second Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Sign of the Four*, which appeared in serial alongside Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Reading

In addition to the means of transportation which dictated a new time for reading as one passed from one place to another, education reform created an entirely new audience, comprised mostly of boys. Carlisle explains that compulsory education acts created a divide between “the merely literature popular audience” and the “more highly educated critical reader.”³⁰⁴ The former desiring escapist literature, nothing more than a commodity offered for sale, while the later desired “serious novels,” which might challenge prurient morals, but also exclude the common reader.

³⁰³ The publication order does not follow the order of composition, which is important because Conan Doyle was involved simultaneously in writing, revising, and submitting these novels.

³⁰⁴ Carlisle, *The Sense of an Audience*, 220.

However, for Conan Doyle, the most important result of the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was the creation of a new reading public made up almost entirely of boys between the ages of 10 and 14. As Orel argues, “Though the extent of the revolution in literacy created by the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was much exaggerated by champions of that Act, it was clear, within less than a decade after its passage, that the concept of a truly national education, based on compulsory attendance, and with provisions made for paying the way of needy students out of the rates, had taken hold.”³⁰⁵ Provisions in the Act not only imposed penalties for factories employing school-aged children, but also imposed penalties for employing children who did not have a certificate showing they had completed their required education. This meant that the number of readers in the nation swelled over the course of a few years, consequentially increasing the demand for reading material—a demand which was uniquely suited for adventure stories that held a bit of a puzzle for their readers to unravel—which is to say that boys wanted adventure stories and Conan Doyle provided them.

As the city of London continued to grow, becoming the largest metropolitan center in the world by the end of the 1800’s, the desires of her reading public became the mission of her publishers and magazines alike, so when Conan Doyle proposed a new form of serial for the second volume of *The Strand Magazine*, George Newnes was ready to invest in the idea. Newnes was well aware of three elements which would ultimately make Sherlock Holmes a success, he understood the advantage of short segments, as seen in his first literary venture *Tit Bits*, he understood the value of the railroad audience, and he foresaw how serialized short fiction could bind an audience to a fledgling magazine.

³⁰⁵ Orel, *The Victorian Short Story*, 184.

Tit Bits was a product of the railroad and the printing revolution. One evening, Newness was reading an article about a train crash, from *The Manchester Evening News*, to his wife when he was struck by the idea that a paper filled with such tit-bits would be phenomenally popular. Recent innovations in printing, resulting from cheaper paper, speed the rate of printing from hundreds of sheets per day to thousands of sheets per hour. Pound comments that “cheaper paper meant more newspapers and more periodicals. They in turn incited the demand for faster printing, which led to the rotary press.”³⁰⁶ Orel provides a more technical analysis of the change: “Perhaps only individuals professionally concerned can appreciate the fact that the printing industry did not advance much for its first three and one half centuries; one criterion is the production-rate—no more than several hundred sheets a day—of a late eighteenth-century printer working with a screw press. But hot-metal composing machines that printed reading matter, and photo-engraving techniques that speeded-up the reproduction of pictures, moved printers into a new universe of production values.”³⁰⁷ Additionally, the transition from steam, gas, and water powered presses to new electric presses decreased the costs of production. New electric rotary printers meant that a newspaper could be conceived and produced in a single building in a single day.

Tit Bits was the epitome of McLuhan’s mosaic form. Cobbled together from interesting bits of other newspapers, interspersed with snippets of stories, and sold for a penny. The first printing of 5,000 copies was sold out within two hours, and within two years *Tit Bits* boasted a circulation of over 200,000. The main cause of Newnes’s success was his marketing. He knew

³⁰⁶ Pound, *The Mirror of the Century*, 12.

³⁰⁷ Orel, *Victorian Short Story*, 185.

his target audience, the middle-class family made up of husband, wife, and two daughters, and he claimed to be a member of their station. Two schemes stand out as signs of Newnes's innovation and daring. The first was a railroad insurance scheme, and the second was a nation-wide treasure hunt. Since the first deals with the close relationship between publishers and the railroad and the second forecasts Newnes's love of mystery and detection, a few lines will be dedicated to each.

In 1885 Newnes devised a plan whereby every person who subscribed to *Tit Bits* for a certain period of time would receive £100, but one morning he received a letter from a poor woman asking if she might have a portion of the £100 as her husband, the subscriber, had been killed in a railway accident “and when his body was extracted from under the ruined train a copy of *Tit-Bits* was found upon him.”³⁰⁸ This gave Newnes the idea of offering a policy of insurance against railway accidents, “securing for the friends of any one killed in such an accident the sum of £100.”³⁰⁹ The idea was so successful, and so well advertised, both in the policy which was printed in every edition of the newspaper and in jokes and jibes about the policy printed in rival publications, that the circulation of the paper increased to 700,000. Thus the newspaper and the railroad became inseparable allies in the expansion of the nation. The newspapers were sold in railway shops, and with them a guarantee of the railroad's safety.

A second scheme involved a national treasure hunt. One evening Newnes sent his son Frank and a reporter named Morrison into the country with a shovel and two iron tubes full of gold. Morrison remembers going out to a crossroads near Hatfield to bury the 500 sovereigns,

³⁰⁸ Friederichs, *The Life of Sir George Newnes*, 84.

³⁰⁹ Friederichs, *The Life of Sir George Newnes*, 84.

“They were hidden in two iron tubes, which we drove into the verge close to the high road.”³¹⁰

Morrison was then tasked with writing a serial that contained clues about the location of the gold. The scheme was moderately successful at drumming up subscriptions, though “a man named Hubbard, from Leicester, rode straight to the spot on his bicycle and recovered the sovereigns ahead of everyone else.”³¹¹ The significance of this scheme is not that Newnes managed to sell a few more subscriptions, but that he was interested in getting people talking about what was inside of his paper. That Newnes would use a puzzle mystery for this was almost as prescient as his third scheme, which introduced Conan Doyle and Newnes, albeit in a less than cordial manner.

In a letter to his mother, Mary Doyle, from December 1883, Conan Doyle writes, “I have been working hard at the seven roomed house—offered as a prize by *Tit Bits* for the best Xmas story. The story which I have sent up is a very good one & may have a good chance if the thing is fairly conducted. The prize is equal to about £300.”³¹² One morning, Newnes and a friend had been out for a walk when they noticed a villa for sale and, on a whim, bought it. A little later in his walk, while discussing the stagnation of *Tit Bits*’s circulation, Newnes exclaimed “I’ve got it!” and outlined a scheme whereby the author of the best Christmas short story would win the seven roomed house, on the condition that the winner should call it “Tit-Bits Villa.” Conan Doyle did not win. In fact, the whole episode was quite controversial for two reasons. First, the

³¹⁰ Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 39.

³¹¹ Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 39. see also Friederichs, *The Life of Sir George Newnes*, 93-7. The initial scheme was so successful that Newnes buried over £2,500 in gold around the the United Kingdom, though later deposits were not as easily collected as the first.

³¹² Doyle, *Arthur Conan Doyle*, 214. The prize was actually worth £400, according to Newnes’s biography.

soldier whose story had won was found to have plagiarized the entry. Second, Conan Doyle challenged the winner to a rematch. “*Tit Bits* awarded the big prize to a very inferior thing, so I have written to the Editor offering to post £25 if he will do ditto. The two m.s.s. (mine & the sinner’s) are then to be submitted to an impartial judge (such as the Editor of *Cornhill*)—his decision to be final & the stakes to go to the winner, with the exception of an appropriate fee to the Judge. If they do not accede to this I shall publish the correspondence in another paper.”³¹³ Ultimately, Conan Doyle did not follow up on his threat, perhaps because he received several favorable reviews for a piece anonymously published in *Cornhill* that same month.³¹⁴ Whatever the reason, Conan Doyle would have a long and prosperous relationship with Newnes in a few years when his new project, *The Strand Magazine*, began publishing Sherlock Holmes adventures.

Before publishing *The Strand*, however, Newnes had gone into an arrangement with W. T. Stead in order to publish *The Review of Reviews*, a more serious-minded collection of essays and articles than were found in *Tit Bits*, but as Newnes’s oft quoted letter explaining the dissolution of the partnership shows, Newnes was not interested in serious-minded journalism. “There is one kind of journalism which directs the affairs of nations; it makes and unmakes Cabinets; it upsets governments, builds up Navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent. This is your journalism. There is another kind of journalism which has no such great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard-working people, craving for a little fun and amusement. It is

³¹³ Doyle, *A Life in Letters*, “Letter to Mary Doyle, Southsea, January 1884,” 217.

³¹⁴ Doyle quotes the reviewer in a letter to Mary Doyle.

quite humble and unpretentious. That is my journalism.”³¹⁵ Newnes’s departure from *The Review of Reviews* not only forced him to clarify his editorial policies, it also left him with a surplus staff, £3,000, and a backlog of ideas that would not fit in his current publication. So he started a new magazine.

The advent of *The Strand* is even more closely tied to the railroads than *Tit Bits*. When W. H. Smith, the newsagent with a near monopoly on British railroad terminals, saw the plan, he immediately began promoting the new magazine at his stalls. Newnes made three bold moves in designing *The Strand*, first he planned to put an illustration on every page, second he planned to only publish short stories, and third he planned to push the new magazine as a self-contained book. Though he had to cut back from his original plan of “a picture on every page” to a picture on every opening of the magazine, the sheer volume of illustrations was impressive.³¹⁶ No other magazine was so fully illustrated, and therefore no other magazine was so easily readable. The next two parts of Newnes’s plan fit together well. At the time, though other magazines published short stories, they used them simply as filler and, as in the case of *Cornhill*, they didn’t even attribute the stories to an author. This meant that periodicals were an investment in time; one had to follow a story from issue to issue in order to keep up with the plot. Newnes was already aware from his experience with *Tit Bits* that his readers wanted something short that could be consumed in a single sitting, of about the length of an average train journey. Heavily illustrated short

³¹⁵ Friederichs, *The Life of Sir George Newnes*, 116-7. see also Pound, *Mirror of the Century*, 29; MacDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880-1914*, 150; and Doyle, *Arthur Conan Doyle*, 218.

³¹⁶ When *The Strand* published a complete edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* there were over 100 pages of illustration for 300 pages of text.

stories, pushed at train stations, were the ideal reading material for the new suburban reading public.

With the introduction of Sherlock Holmes in *The Strand Magazine*, Conan Doyle took advantage of all of these aspects of serial publication but turned them to a new effect by serializing the characters through self-contained short stories. This was a marked departure from the Victorian Serial, epitomized by Dickens's novels, and the self-contained short story, pioneered by Robert Louis Stevenson. On the one hand, Conan Doyle's stories were radically individual, so much so that he could allude to stories he would never tell, such as the adventure involving a giant rat of Sumatra.³¹⁷ On the other hand, Conan Doyle's characters become more fully fleshed out with each appearance. For instance, Holmes overcomes his cocaine habit,³¹⁸ and Watson gains a pet name³¹⁹ and new bullet holes,³²⁰ which dedicated Sherlockians have seen as further characterization of the stalwart companion and not a mere slip of the author's mind.

³¹⁷ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1219.

³¹⁸ Holmes only uses cocaine once, in *The Sign of the Four*, and his habit is mentioned in "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Adventure of the Yellow Face," but by "The Adventure of the Missing Three Quarter" Watson claims to have weaned Holmes of his habit, see *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 727.

³¹⁹ In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Mrs. Mary Watson calls John Watson "James," see *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 259.

³²⁰ In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson records that he was "struck in the shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery," see Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 3. But in *The Sign of the Four* Watson nurses his wounded leg, noting "I had had a Jezail bullet through it some time before, and though it did not prevent me from walking it ached wearily at every change of the weather" see Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 93. Watson's wound becomes a vague topic in the later stories, and by "The Adventure of the Nobel Bachelor" Watson merely comments, "the weather had taken a sudden turn to rain, with high autumnal winds, and the jezail bullet which I had brought back in one of my limbs as a relic of my Afghan campaign throbbed with dull persistency" see Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 327.

The Detective as Bourgeois Hero

[Holmes's] career has been a long one—though it is possible to exaggerate it; decrepit gentlemen who approach me and declare that his adventures formed the reading of their boyhood do not meet the response from me which they seem to expect. One is not anxious to have one's personal dates handled so unkindly. As a matter of cold fact, Holmes made his debut in *A Study in Scarlet* and in *The Sign of Four*, two small booklets which appeared between 1887 and 1889. It was in 1891 that "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first of the long series of short stories, appeared in *The Strand Magazine*. The public seemed appreciative and desirous of more, so that from that date, thirty-nine years ago, they have been produced in a broken series which now contains no fewer than fifty-six stories, republished in *The Adventures*, *The Memoirs*, *The Return*, and *His Last Bow*, and there remain these twelve published during the last few years which are here produced under the title of *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*. He began his adventures in the very heart of the later Victorian era, carried it through the all-too-short reign of Edward, and has managed to hold his own little niche even in these feverish days. Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him, as young men, have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine. It is a striking example of the patience and loyalty of the British public.³²¹

However, whereas Conan Doyle attributes Holmes's popularity to the loyalty and patience of his reading public, contemporary theorists like Foucault or Benjamin offer a more sociological account that is perhaps less flattering. Although previous studies have applied Foucault's work to Sherlock Holmes, those studies focused narrowly on the implications of panopticism without considering how Foucault theorized the rhetorical appeal of the detective to an audience called forth from the pages of the story.³²² As Clarke points out, "this type of assessment of Victorian detective fiction...blindly overlooks the occasions when the burgeoning

³²¹ Doyle, "Preface to The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes," *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1159.

³²² For examples see Jim Barloon, "The Case for Identity: Sherlock Holmes and the Singular Find," *Clues* 25, no. 1 (2006): 33-44. Ed Wiltse, "'So Constant an Expectation': Sherlock Holmes and Seriality," *Narrative* 6, no. 2(1998): 105-122. Rosemary Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," *ELH* 57 (1990): 685-708.

genre ‘transgresses a number of these conventions.’”³²³ By applying Foucault in this way, these arguments misread the stories themselves. An example is the argument that Holmes is conducive to discipline, where in the stories Holmes is subversive of authority, as in “The Abby Grange” where Holmes misleads the police, adjudicates the case on his own, not only allowing the murderer to go free but also aiding in his flight.³²⁴ Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that Vidocq held almost mythical importance in the development of the detective, because “in him, delinquency visibly assumed its ambiguous status as an object and instrument for police apparatus that worked both against it and with it.”³²⁵ Some have then argued that the exigence to which detectives stories respond is the need for internalizing discipline in bourgeois society.³²⁶ However, Foucault explains that Vidocq represents the institutional coupling of police and delinquency with criminality as a mechanism for power. Therefore, this critique would only apply to Holmes if he worked from within Scotland Yard. Because Holmes is a consulting detective, he operates outside of the police force, that is, outside of the institution and its delinquent officers—such as Athelney Jones and Lestrade who both employ delinquency in securing power, as when Athelney Jones wrongfully imprisons James Sholto in *The Sign of the*

³²³ Clarke, *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock*, 78.

³²⁴ For a detailed breakdown of the times Holmes subverts authority, see Frost and Kynvin, “Sherlock Holmes: Examining the Evidence—in Charts,” *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2015/jun/29/sherlock-holmes-examining-the-evidence-in-charts>

³²⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 283.

³²⁶ for a detailed critique of these arguments, see Clarke, *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock*, 77-9.

Four, or Lestrade gives false witness in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

However, if one begins with Foucault’s analysis of the detective story genre, instead of forcing the stories into a framework of panopticism, one finds a tool useful for understanding the audience constituted by the stories. Edwin Black, for instance, in his essay on the “second persona,” argues that rhetoric calls its ideal audience into being, so that one may understand an author’s ideal audience by looking at clues within the rhetorical artifact.³²⁷ This rhetorical approach better fits both the stories and Foucault’s method, and it provides a theoretical groundwork for understanding both Conan Doyle’s audience and the appeal of the Holmes stories. Take, for example, Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, which ends with an analysis of the 1840’s and the beginning of the “long cohabitation of the police and criminality” by profiling Vidocq and Lacenaire.³²⁸ Foucault argues that Vidocq is an example of the criminal perpetuating the need for the police by revealing the sprawl of criminality.³²⁹ Lacenaire, however, is a criminal who is celebrated as a criminal, initiating what Foucault calls “the aesthetic cult of crime.”³³⁰ Foucault argues that “around 1849, there appears the figure of the criminal hero who is a hero because he is a criminal, and is neither aristocratic nor plebeian.”³³¹ This creation coincides with the separation of the criminal and the popular classes, so the criminal is not a

³²⁷ See Black, “The Second Persona,” 111.

³²⁸ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 45.

³²⁹ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 47.

³³⁰ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 45.

³³¹ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 46.

working class hero but an enemy of the poor, “the bourgeoisie constitutes for itself an aesthetic in which crime no longer belongs to the people, but is one of those fine arts of which the bourgeoisie is capable.”³³² However, the detective is not the criminal hero, and the private (or as Conan Doyle phrases it “consulting”) detective is not like Vidocq—a criminal used as a criminal by the apparatus of power. The detective is a bourgeoisie hero.

But to explain why the symbol of the detective appeals to bourgeois sensibilities, one must turn from Foucault to Benjamin. Benjamin identifies the bourgeoisie with the idea of interior space. He writes “for the private person, living space becomes, for the first time, antithetical to the place of work.”³³³ If at work the private person squares away with reality, in interior space the person represses both commercial and social relations, crafting a universe in interior space in which is gathered remote places and the past. Thus the private person is a collector of mementos and trinkets. By collecting things and transfiguring them through his ownership of them, the collector becomes a prisoner of his collection. “The collector is the true inmate of the interior” Benjamin writes, “he makes the transfiguration of things his business. To him falls the Sisyphean task of obliterating the commodity-like character of things through his ownership of them. But he merely confers connoisseur value on them, instead of intrinsic value. The collector dreams that he is not only in a distant or past world but also, at the same time, in a better one, in which, although men are as unprovided for with what they need as in the everyday world, things are free of the drudgery of being useful.”³³⁴ Benjamin’s argument is an echo of

³³² Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 46.

³³³ Benjamin, *Reflections*, 154.

³³⁴ Benjamin, *Reflections*, 155.

Holmes's observation that a private person cannot hold an object in possession without leaving behind evidence of ownership. In Watson's possession, for example, a mass-manufactured pocket watch becomes more than a mere timepiece; on it and in it is written the tragic family history of the Watson's—the death of a patriarch, the gradual fall of a sibling into penury, alcoholism, ruin, and death. While these are the dreams of a better world, as Benjamin optimistically suggests, they are dreams of the past.

Benjamin goes on to suggest that the interior is not only the universe of the private person, but also their *etui*—a small ornate box for personal effects. The private person thus carries an interior around with them. For the bourgeoisie class of Conan Doyle's day, this meant the detritus of pockets, purses, and attache cases as well as mantel pieces, picture frames, hidden cupboards, and bell pulls held the imprint of their inhabitants. "To live means to leave traces" Benjamin claims, "In the interior these are emphasized. An abundance of covers and protectors, liners and cases is devised, on which the traces of objects of everyday use are imprinted. The traces of the occupant also leave their impression on the interior."³³⁵ Thus the detective is a hero for the bourgeoisie because he appreciates the connoisseur value placed on commodity-like objects by the bourgeoisie. The detective follows the traces of the occupant of interiors, both the interiors of rooms and the interiors of *etui*, in order to solve a case. And in doing so, the detective legitimates the value with which the private individual imbues an object.

In "The Storyteller" Benjamin claims that while a man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller, "The reader of a novel...is isolated, more so than any other

³³⁵ Benjamin, *Reflections*, 155.

reader.”³³⁶ The reader of a novel pounces upon the material he is reading and devours it like a flame, because “The reader of a novel actually does look for human beings from whom he derives the ‘meaning of life.’”³³⁷ This meaning derives, Benjamin argues, from the death of the characters in the novel, either their figurative death in the conclusion of the novel, or their actual death in the novel. “The novel is significant, therefore, not because it presents someone else’s fate to us, perhaps didactically, but because this stranger’s fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about.”³³⁸ What Benjamin’s novel reader desires is meaning, and this Conan Doyle supplies. Conan Doyle’s readers receive an understanding that “death is already waiting for them—a very definite death and at a very definite place.”³³⁹ But they also receive the assurance from Holmes that this death is part of the regular mechanical process of bourgeoisie life in the city that is marked by the presence of the “crowd.” Benjamin argues that the motif of the crowd is marked by peculiarities which “reveal aspects of social forces of such power and hidden depth that we may count them among those which alone are capable of exerting both a subtle and a profound effect upon artistic production.”³⁴⁰ The social forces Benjamin alludes to are those which mechanize modern life. Benjamin writes that the crowd of the city—particularly London—is a barbaric

³³⁶ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 100.

³³⁷ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 101.

³³⁸ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 101.

³³⁹ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 101.

³⁴⁰ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 170.

crowd. “Fear, revulsion, and horror” writes Benjamin “were the emotions which the big-city aroused in those who first observed it.”³⁴¹ Discipline is just barely able to contain the big-city, and the police share a common cause with the looters in a prototype of totalitarianism.³⁴² In the face of these threats stands the detective, who promises order without totalitarian violence.

In summary, Holmes enters into this modern chaos with his skeptical inquiries that turn the havoc of the city into the operation of a well-ordered machine. Whereas mechanization had dominated the work life and the interior home life, there remained a chaotic intermediary on the gas-lit streets in which one must plunge into the crowd as into a reservoir of electricity.

“Whereas Poe’s passers-by cast glances in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today’s pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training.”³⁴³ What Holmes supplies to the deaths, both actual and figurative, in his cases were the traffic signals of the material universe. Holmes unraveled the causal links invisible to his clients and Conan Doyle’s audience. Holmes, in showing how one event inexorably leads to another and each successive event leaves its indelible trace on the material world showed Conan Doyle’s bourgeoisie readers how to account for their days. They could look at the trivial markings on their interior spaces and find meaning that made their collections both unique from other mass produced commodities, and gave meaning to their lives as they went about inscribing their traces onto the contents of their *etui*.

³⁴¹ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 174.

³⁴² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 174.

³⁴³ Benjamin *Illuminations*, 175.

Conclusion

“What is the meaning of it, Watson?” said Holmes, solemnly, as he laid down the paper. “What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.”

Conan Doyle concludes “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” with a series of rhetorical questions that lament the seeming senselessness of the world, but through these questions he also shows that rhetoric is the answer. In Sherlock Holmes, the detective was turned into a literary symbol that persuades the new bourgeois class to use rhetoric as a tool for coping with their new media environment. Though this case, Holmes has suggested a discernible pattern to the circle of misery, violence, and fear, and thereby offered a rhetorical solution. Though it may be too late for the Cushings and Browners, Holmes, as a symbol, shows that through rhetoric it is possible to distinguish enemies from friends, even though the scale, pace and pattern of life have been extended through the railroads, telegraphs, and schools. This is not to say that one must directly adopt Holmes’s methods; rather, as argued in the previous chapter, that Holmes may appeal to an audience as equipment for interpreting, accepting, or correcting a situation; for exercising submerged experience; for emancipation; or for artistic effect. In sum, Sherlock Holmes serves as equipment for living.

Holmes responds to the message of the railroad—the expansion of scale and increase of pace, which alters the patterns of people’s lives—through rhetoric when he persuades Lestrade to arrest Jim Browner, and then leaves for home. By exercising power from a distance, Holmes is satiating the desire aroused by the railroad. The national rail network, which extended Holmes’s feet and allowed him to travel from Croydon to London more quickly than ever before, fundamentally changed how British citizens interacted with their environment and identified themselves. The change in scale implied both a change of pace and required a change of pattern,

particularly the dispersal of the Cushings across Great Britain that allowed them to remain paradoxically isolated yet accessible. Holmes models a response to these changes, and incorporates the desire for power over a distance into his rhetoric by making use of the national rail network to conduct his affairs in the margins of the empire, Croydon, from his central location at 221B Baker Street.

Holmes responds to the message of the telegraph—the expansion of scale and increase of pace, which alters the pattern's of people's lives—through rhetoric when he persuades Lestrade that he has uncovered the true criminal, his crime, and his victims. By gathering the human interest story of Mary and Jim Browner, Holmes is satiating the desire aroused by the telegraph. The telegraph network, which extended Holmes's neural network allowing him to observe the home-life of Mary and Jim Browner, fundamentally changed how British citizens interacted with their environment and identified themselves. The change in scale implied both a change of pace and required a change of pattern, particularly the news from Liverpool that Jim Browner had reported to the *May Day* and Mary Browner was not at home. Holmes models a response to these changes, and incorporates the desire for information over a distance into his rhetoric by making use of wires to learn the private affairs of two people in Liverpool hundreds of miles away in Croydon.

Finally, Sherlock Holmes responds to the desire for vicarious experience aroused by mass education by providing equipment for living. Holmes represents a compelling pattern of experience as he uses rhetoric to solve problems. The following chapter will consider in more detail how Holmes uses ethos to establish his reputation, pathos to elicit testimony, and logos to argue for his case theory, but for now it is sufficient to note that Holmes does these things. As a symbol, Holmes provides rhetorical equipment for living for an audience that desires the

interpretation of situations, needs to accept situations, needs a corrective for a situation, needs to exercise submerged experiences, needs emancipation, or desires an aesthetic experience. Even if one never employs Holmes's rhetorical methods, their presence in the form of a serialized short story about a singular detective equips a bourgeois audience for living.

CHAPTER FOUR: “THEY LISTEN TO MY COMMENTS,” THE ARISTOTELIAN RHETORIC OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Rhetoric is an *antistrophos* to dialectic; for both are concerned with such things as are, to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people and belong to no separately defined science. A result is that all people, in some way, share in both; for all, up to a point, try both to test and uphold an argument [as in dialectic] and to defend themselves and attack [others, as in rhetoric]. Now among the general public, some do these things at random and other through an ability acquired by habit, but since both ways are possible, it is clear that it would also be possible to do the same by [following] a path; for it is possible to observe the cause why some succeed by habit and other accidentally, and all would at once agree that such observation is the activity of an art [*tekhne*].³⁴⁴

Sherlock Holmes’s method reflects Aristotle’s rhetoric. Aristotle defines rhetoric as both the *antistrophos*, counterpart, of dialectic and as the ability in each particular case to see the available means of persuasion. He argues that it does not belong to another science, but is itself an art that may be improved through observation and practice. Likewise, Holmes uses his method as a counterpart to dialectic when he both defends his conclusions and attacks the conclusions of others. More importantly, Holmes’s method is not a part of another science, but is itself an art that makes use of other sciences. For example, when Watson is attempting to discover Holmes’s profession in *A Study in Scarlet*, he inventories Holmes’s knowledge in the following chart:

Sherlock Holmes—his limits

1. Knowledge of Literature. —Nil.
2. “ “ Philosophy. —Nil.
3. “ “ Astronomy. —Nil.
4. “ “ Politics. —Feeble.
5. “ “ Botany. Variable. Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally. Knows nothing of practical gardening.
6. “ “ Geology. —Practical, but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them.

³⁴⁴ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 30-31.

7. “ “ Chemistry. —Profound.
8. “ “ Anatomy. —Accurate, but unsystematic.
9. “ “ Sensational Literature. —Immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.
10. Plays the violin well.
11. Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.
12. Has a good practical knowledge of British law.³⁴⁵

From his list, Watson is unable to discover what Holmes is about, because each item of knowledge is taken from some other science and turned towards a practical end in Sherlock Holmes’s rhetoric. Previous detectives like Poe’s Dupin or Collins’s Cuff had done these things at random—that is, they had happened to read about orangoutangs in an encyclopedia, or noticed the color in a splotch of mud, and by these coincidences they solved “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” or *The Moonstone*. Holmes, by contrast, has acquired his ability by patient study and observation in the sciences listed by Watson above, thus Holmes’s method is an art—just like rhetoric.

I argue that Holmes provides rhetorical equipment and seek to demonstrate this by exploring Holmes’s method through the lens of Aristotelian rhetoric. The pattern of experience Holmes symbolizes is rhetorical because he uses ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade others. He discovers the available means of persuasion³⁴⁶ in each situation and then applies them when addressing his audience. By exploring Holmes’s method as Aristotelian rhetoric, I address Accardo’s assertion that “despite numerous ancestors and progeny, the problem of [Holmes’s] continued preeminent status has never been adequately addressed” by arguing that Holmes’s

³⁴⁵ Doyle, A Study in Scarlet, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

³⁴⁶ By persuasion I mean both the artistic and inartistic means of crafting an argument, which differs from some contemporary studies of persuasion that focus on the effect of a message. See Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 31 n12.

status is inexorably linked to his rhetorical method, which supplies audiences with equipment for living.³⁴⁷ As Van Dover explains, Holmes “intervenes and restores the light; he assimilates the anomalies into a reasonable, irrefutable narrative of quotidian causes and effects. He does not alter objects, but he reinterprets them, assimilating them back into a narrative normalcy. He picks up fragments (bits of testimony as well as things), examines them closely, and uses them as touchstones to expose false narratives and as foundation stones for his own, true narrative, a narrative that restores the cosmos.”³⁴⁸ That is, Holmes is using rhetoric because he is altering the world through indirect action. As Bitzer argues, “In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.”³⁴⁹ As a rhetorician, Holmes alters perceptions through persuasion and returns order to a chaotic situation. Holmes’s rhetoric is central to his function as a symbol.

The following chapter argues that Holmes uses ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade his audiences. In the first section, I define ethos through Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric, then I explore how critics have discussed Holmes’s character and reputation to argue that they have not connected these attributes to Holmes’s rhetoric. Next I argue that Holmes uses ethos to persuade clients to trust him with delicate cases by analyzing “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” and “The Adventure of the Three Students.” In the second section, I define pathos through Aristotle’s treatise, then explore how critics have discussed Holmes’s

³⁴⁷ Accardo, *Diagnosis and Detection*, 14.

³⁴⁸ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 131.

³⁴⁹ Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 4.

understanding of emotions to argue that they have not connected his understanding of emotion to his method of persuasion. Next, I argue that Holmes frequently uses pathos to persuade others to give him evidence by analyzing “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” and “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.” In the final section I argue that Holmes uses logos by defining the term through Aristotle’s treatise. Then I explore how critics have discussed Holmes’s use of logic, debated the type of logic he uses, and questioned the soundness of his syllogisms, but have not considered that Holmes was using rhetorical logos as a means of persuasion. Finally, I argue that Holmes frequently uses logos in the denouement of his adventures to adjudicate a case or persuade Watson that the case is satisfactorily closed. I support my argument through an analysis of “A Case of Identity,” “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” and “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons.”

Ethos

“You don’t know Sherlock Holmes yet,” he said; “perhaps you would not care for him as a constant companion.”

“Why, what is there against him?”

“Oh, I didn’t say there was anything against him. He is a little queer in his ideas—an enthusiast in some branches of science. As far as I know he is a decent fellow enough.”

“A medical student, I suppose?” said I.

“No—I have no idea what he intends to go in for. I believe he is well up in anatomy, and he is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes. His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge which would astonish his professors.”

“Did you never ask him what he was going in for?” I asked.

“No; he is not a man that is easy to draw out, though he can be communicative enough when the fancy seizes him.”³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet, The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 4-5.

Holmes uses ethos in the preliminary phase of his adventures, often to persuade a new client to trust him with a sensitive case. For the reader, Conan Doyle has Holmes demonstrate his powers of observation, his knowledge of useful subjects, and his reasoning skills through some interaction with Watson. Though Holmes does not often take public credit for his solutions, as in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” where he encourages Lestrade to take credit for the case, Holmes’s reputation does precede him. Ethos as a means of persuasion, however, must be established in the moment; it is not enough to have a reputation, one must also be able to demonstrate the validity of one’s reputation. As the passage above—in which Watson is first introduced to Holmes—indicates, it is not sufficient for Holmes to claim that he is a man of character, someone must attest to it, or he must demonstrate it in some way. Thus, when a client comes to Holmes with a sensitive matter, he must show them his practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill as proof of his character. Holmes’s ethos is typically the first method of persuasion employed in his adventures.

Holmes’s ability to use ethos is derived from his reputation and the perception of his character and skills established in the preliminary phase of the story. Aristotle explains that “there is persuasion thorough character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence,” because audiences believe those they perceive to be fair-minded.³⁵¹ Ethos as a means of persuasion is particularly important when there is no exact knowledge about a situation. When someone comes to Holmes with a matter that is outside of the law, as when a person has gone missing but is not presumed dead, Holmes faces a situation full of doubt. However, Holmes must first establish his credibility for his new clients, because

³⁵¹ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 39.

even those who come to Holmes as their last hope will often refuse to give him all of the information he needs in order to solve their cases. The future king of Bavaria initially refuses to identify himself to Holmes, the banker holding the Beryl Coronet holds some information back from Holmes, and the professor in “The Adventure of the Three Students” initially doesn’t want to involve Holmes. In these cases, Holmes uses ethos as a means of persuasion.

Aristotle argues that ethos is, in many instances, the most authoritative means of persuasion. He notes, however, that actual *persuasion* through character is not accomplished through a pre-existing reputation; rather it is established in the moment through speech. While Holmes might have a reputation for being able to solve difficult problems, he must also establish a relationship with each new client, which he accomplishes by demonstrating his ethos. Aristotle explains that one establishes ethos by forging a bond of trust between speaker and audience. He explains that there are three ways a speaker can establish this bond, namely “practical wisdom [*phronēsis*] and virtue [*aretē*] and good will [*eunois*].”³⁵² That is, Holmes establishes ethos with his audience by showing practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill in the preliminary phase of the investigation, thereby establishing his authority for consulting on a case. That Holmes’s reputation and character are important to the adventures is noted by several scholars; however, they have not connected his reputation and character to his use of ethos as a means of persuasion.

Herzinger, Pointer, Accardo, Kendrick, and Paul all individually note the importance of Holmes’s reputation, but do not connect it to his use of ethos as a means of persuasion. In “Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes,” Herzinger argues that Holmes is irresistible because of his separate and unmistakable identity—this despite what he sees as the mediocrity of Conan

³⁵² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 112.

Doyle's writing. As Herzinger writes, "What is interesting, of course, is that we usually don't give Conan Doyle's prose a close reading; more interesting yet is that we don't *want* to give it a close reading."³⁵³ The reader bypasses the text itself in order to focus on the character of Sherlock Holmes. Herzinger then argues that a return to the textual Sherlock Holmes is impossible, because he has evolved and the Sherlock Holmes of Conan Doyle is unrecognizable; yet to support this argument, Herzinger continually returns to the canon of Sherlock Holmes stories. While claiming that "Sherlock Holmes walks up and down in the world like a god, and, as so commonly happens with gods, he has evoked a vast industry of believers who keep busy tidying up the inconsistencies on his career,"³⁵⁴ Herzinger uses the "mediocre" text composed by Conan Doyle to flesh out the divine dilettante aesthete of detection—Sherlock Holmes—his joke of a city—London—and his mission to "protect us from what threatens to fragment our universe."³⁵⁵ Herzinger's rejection and embrace of a textual Sherlock Holmes is paradoxical unless one considers Holmes's use of ethos to persuade his audience. Once considered, the apparent divinity of Holmes as a character becomes the intention of the text, rather than an inexplicable fluke. By considering Holmes's use of ethos as a means of persuasion, one is able to reconcile the Holmes of our cultural imagination with the Holmes of Conan Doyle's work, because it is through Conan Doyle's work that we come to trust Holmes's practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill.

³⁵³ Herzinger, Kim, "Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 105.

³⁵⁴ Herzinger, Kim, "Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 106.

³⁵⁵ Herzinger, Kim, "Inside and Outside Sherlock Holmes: A Rhapsody," *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 114.

Like Herzinger, Pointer argues that Holmes's immortality is due to his character, but in *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes* Pointer argues that Holmes's immortality is due to his *humanity* rather than his *divinity*. Borrowing from Rex Stout, creator of Nero Wolfe, Pointer explains that "Sherlock Holmes is the embodiment of man's dearest and most stubborn conceit: that he is the *reasoning animal*, homo sapiens."³⁵⁶ That is, Holmes is the ideal human being because he is able to reason and to act based upon that reasoning. Pointer argues that "unlike Dupin, Sherlock Holmes is a combination of intellect and action, and the actions arresting from his intellectual exercises have to be explained to the willing but less perspicacious Dr. Watson."³⁵⁷ Yet while Pointer acknowledges Holmes's explanations to Watson, he does not grasp their significance. It is not that Holmes merely explains things to Watson and thereby proves his ultimate humanity; rather it is through Holmes's explanations to Watson, or others, that we see Holmes's practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill and also establish a relationship to Holmes. This relationship allows Watson (and the audience) to trust that Sherlock Holmes is what he claims to be, a reasoning animal. That is, Holmes persuades us that he is the wise man [*homo sapiens*] we are looking for to solve our human [*homo*] problems through wisdom [*sapiens*].

Accardo, by contrast, is a harsh critic of Conan Doyle while being a loyal fan of Sherlock Holmes, which one sees in Accardo's praise of Holmes's character even through his accusations of deception. Accardo explains the abuses of logic in Conan Doyle's stories by arguing that the absurdities observed in other critics "are all perpetrated in deference to a rigorous application of Holmes's own stated method" but "what is overlooked is the fact that Holmes lied." Accardo

³⁵⁶ Pointer, *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 113.

³⁵⁷ Pointer, *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 13.

accuses other Holmes critics of twisting the facts of the cases to fit their theories, and claims that he alone follows the facts to their obvious conclusion, which is that Holmes has lied to Watson, Scotland Yard, his clients, and to us. However, what Accardo perceives as lying is actually the use of persuasion. For example, Accardo points to the apparent discrepancy in Holmes's supposed methods and actual actions, writing that "the Holmes canon is itself filled with an attitude of wonder at the ability of the simplest and smallest things to be clues to the deepest secrets. Although Holmes will refer to the use of chemical reagents, he will solve a case by the enigmatic clue of the curious failure of a dog to bark."³⁵⁸ Holmes's scientific experiments, however, grant him a reputation for practical wisdom which he uses to argue for his case theory. We trust in Holmes's goodwill, so that we perceive his deceptions as harmless, as when he deceives a butcher into thinking that he has made a wager with Watson in order to gain valuable information in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." More importantly, Holmes shows his virtue through his forgiveness at the end of that story, when he explains "I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul." This is so because the man who stole the gem is too frightened to ever commit another robbery, but "send him to gaol now, and you make him a gaol-bird for life."³⁵⁹ Holmes does lie during the course of his investigations, but he does not lie to *us*. Rather, he uses every available means of persuasion, including our perception of his character, to persuade us that his course of action is best, particularly in the mysterious world we inhabit.

³⁵⁸ Accardo, *Diagnosis and Detection*, 80.

³⁵⁹ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102.

Kendrick takes a vastly different approach and argues that Holmes is the same as Socrates or Jesus in their roles as teachers. Holmes is trusted because he teaches us to *see*. Kendrick argues that we are devoted to Holmes “because there are qualities about this seeker that make him eternally fascinating. He teaches us to *see*, to truly observe the world.”³⁶⁰ But if Accardo exaggerates in his accusation that Holmes is a liar, Kendrick overemphasizes Holmes’s truthfulness by making him a fountain of inerrant knowledge. Kendrick describes Holmes as so powerful in his truth that Watson, an otherwise astute representative of the middle class, becomes nothing more than a silly pupil. “In fact, it is an old narrative trick, as old as the easily awed questioners of Socrates and the inability of Jesus’ disciples to understand the message of their teacher, highlighting genius with an ordinary soul standing in for you and me. Besides, Holmes cannot be a teacher without a dutiful student.”³⁶¹ Again, if one takes Holmes as a rhetorician and not a demigod, his methods of persuasion become apparent. Watson is not cowed into submission by Holmes’s celestial reasoning, but persuaded through a combination of methods, the first of which is Holmes’s demonstrated character.

Finally, Paul comes closest to articulating the importance of Holmes’s ethos as a means of persuasion by blending the supernatural and human perceptions of Holmes. Paul explains, “Yet Holmes always gives the *impression* of omniscience and infallibility, and that is what he handed on to his successors. In spite of having listed the areas in which Holmes was ignorant, Watson invariably spoke of his friend’s abilities in terms of amazement mingled with awe.”³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 8.

³⁶¹ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 24.

³⁶² Paul, *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, 56-7.

That is, Holmes made an impression on Watson, and through that impression persuaded Watson to trust his conclusions. However, Paul relies too heavily on authority in explaining Holmes's method. While Watson is awed, he is not tricked into believing that Holmes is omniscient. By arguing that the public accepted Holmes's abilities as fictional, Paul categorizes Holmes as a super hero, granting the "vicarious assurance that later generations might get from Spiderman and Superman."³⁶³ Though Paul is correct that Holmes gives an impression, he does not explain how Holmes creates or uses that impression beyond suggesting that Holmes appears as a demigod who comforts us by assuring us of the continuance and stability of society and the triumph of justice because of the "One (or Those) whose universal surveillance and unflinching rightness ensure that all will be well in this best of all possible worlds!"³⁶⁴ I argue, however, that if Holmes is using rhetoric, then his abilities are imitable. He does not merely provide comfort, though that is one of the appeals of the Holmes symbol; he also serves as equipment for gaining clarity, for correction, and for emancipation.

Though critics of the Sherlock Holmes adventures recognize the importance of Holmes's reputation and character, by failing to connect these attributes to Holmes's method of persuasion they misinterpret them as signs of divinity. By examining three stories, I argue that Holmes first establishes and then uses his ethos to persuade his audience that he has practical wisdom, virtue, and good will towards them. That is, by exploring the first phase of "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet," and "The Adventure of the Three Students," I argue that Holmes uses his reputation and character to establish a relationship with his audience, and then

³⁶³ Paul, *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, 58.

³⁶⁴ Paul, *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, 53-4.

uses his credibility based on that trust to persuade them that he can solve their problems. Holmes is not an infallible omniscient being; he is merely a good rhetorician making use of every available means of persuasion.

In “A Scandal in Bohemia” Holmes established his practical wisdom through his deductions about Watson and a mysterious letter. When Watson arrives back at 221B Baker Street, after a long absence due to his recent marriage, Holmes greets his old friend by telling him he has gained weight, gone back to work, and hired a lazy servant. Holmes explains how he reached his conclusions, but the cumulative effect of Holmes’s observations is to impress Watson with his breadth of useful knowledge by showing how he can connect seemingly unrelated details into an intimate portrait of his friend’s life. Likewise, when Holmes shows Watson a mysterious letter that arrived in the post, Watson is not able to discern anything about it other than that the sender was “presumably well to do.” Holmes again establishes his ability to turn knowledge into useful assumptions by pointing out that it is not English paper, and from that he guesses that it is from a German speaking country, owing to the letters “Eg PGt” woven into the texture of the paper. Holmes tests his hypothesis by consulting a reference work to narrow the paper’s origins to a German-speaking country in Bohemia, not far from Carlsbad. Holmes then observes that the sentence structure of the note, “This account of you we have from all quarters received,” suggests a German speaker. Again, Holmes shows Watson that the knowledge catalogued in *A Study in Scarlet* is not a random assortment but a wealth of practical knowledge, which Holmes has the wisdom to employ.

Holmes establishes his virtue in the first phase of the story when he sees through the disguise of the King of Bohemia but promises discretion. After determining that the letter has come from a Bohemian nobleman, and hearing his brougham on the street below, Holmes

comments, “There’s money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else.”³⁶⁵ When the king enters he is wearing a mask and asks to be known only as “Count Von Kramm, a Bohemian nobleman,” though as Holmes later tells him, “Your Majesty had not spoken before I was aware that I was addressing Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia.”³⁶⁶ The significance of Holmes’s discovery, and announcement, is that he has the king at a disadvantage, but instead of pressing his advantage Holmes displays virtue by offering to help. That is, though Holmes could have demanded money from the king, he instead offered to solve the king’s problems first. The king chooses to trust Holmes in part because of Holmes’s reputation, as the king’s note mentioned, “your recent service to one of the Royal Houses of Europe have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters which are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated.”³⁶⁷ Yet Holmes also needed to prove his virtue to the king himself, which he did by offering his service before demanding his fee. That is, Holmes has proved his excellence in handling sensitive matters thus embodying the cultural values of professionalism, discretion, and aptitude.

Holmes establishes his goodwill, despite his nonchalance, by suggesting that his services might not be needed. Holmes shows that he has the king’s own best interests at heart by questioning the need for discretion:

“Your Majesty, as I understand, became entangled with this young person, wrote her some compromising letters, and is now desirous of getting those letters back.”

“Precisely so. But how—.”

“Was there a secret marriage?”

³⁶⁵ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 14.

³⁶⁶ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 15.

³⁶⁷ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 13.

“None.”

“No legal papers or certificates?”

“None.”

“Then I fail to follow your Majesty. If this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?”

“There is the writing.”

“Pooh, pooh! Forgery.”

“My private notepaper.”

“Stolen.”

“My own seal.”

“Imitated.”

“My photograph.”

“Bought.”

“We were both in the photograph.”

“Oh dear! That is very bad! Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion.”³⁶⁸

Holmes’s promise to settle everything later in this first phase of the investigation would have rung hollow had he not established the situation and his goodwill towards the king through this rapid cross examination. Through this exchange, Holmes directs the king’s attention towards their common problem, the case, and in so doing establishes himself as a trustworthy ally.

Holmes established himself as a trustworthy ally by foregrounding the king’s concerns. Holmes operates under the assumption that the king is in the right and deserves to be protected from a blackmailer. Holmes positions himself as a protector of the King of Bohemia against the libelous slur of Irene Adler. Notably, however, at the end of the story, Holmes will drop this pretense—as illustrated in his refusal to shake the king’s hand on the last page of the adventure; but in the first phase of the story, Holmes establishes his goodwill by taking the king’s side.

Through his demonstration of practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill Holmes persuades the King of Bohemia to trust him with resolving a potential scandal that threatened the peace and

³⁶⁸ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Complete Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 16.

security of Europe. By demonstrating his powers of observation and reasoning with Watson and the letter, Holmes demonstrated his practical wisdom, which he then proved to the king by revealing that he knew who his illustrious client was, and the general facts of the case. By unmasking the king but promising discretion and demonstrating professionalism, Holmes established his virtue. Finally, by siding with the king in the first phase of the adventure, Holmes establishes his goodwill towards the king. The result of all this is that Holmes takes the case, a purse full of money, and the promise of an adventure. In the phases which follow, Holmes will then employ other means of persuasion in the course of the investigation. He will use pathos to persuade grooms to give him information, both the keepers of horses and the betrothed of Ms. Adler; he will use pathos to reveal the secret hiding place of the incriminating photograph, and he will be manipulated by Ms. Adler into giving away his identity thereby allowing her to escape his plans. In the denouement phase of the story, Holmes will use logos to persuade the king that his secret is safe with Mrs. Norton, *nēe* Adler, and bring the case to an almost satisfactory conclusion. *Almost* satisfactory in that the case is closed, but Holmes will always consider it a loss, or as Watson records, “And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman’s wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of *the* woman.” Thus it is that Holmes comes to respect the *ethos* of one who matches his wit with her own.

Turning to another story, Holmes establishes his practical wisdom in “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” by cross examining his client, Mr. Alexander Holder. Though Holmes initially displays his skills for the reader before Mr. Holder enters the apartments, it is not until

the very end of the first phase of the adventure that Holmes proves his practical wisdom to Mr. Holder. In the opening scene Watson describes “a madman” rushing up the street, but Holmes recognizes the symptoms of a new client coming to consult him professionally. For the next four or five pages Holder tells his story, explaining that he is the manager of a bank, that he has given a loan secured by a national treasure, and that to secure this treasure he has been in the habit of carrying it with him at all times. Holder’s story culminates in the disappearance of one of the irreplaceable beryls set into the coronet. He explains that he was awakened by a loud noise in the middle of the night and discovered that his son, Arthur, “dressed only in his shirt and trousers, was standing beside the light, holding the coronet in his hands.”³⁶⁹ Arthur refused to explain himself, and the beryl could not be found, so Holder had rushed to the police and then directly to see Holmes. After sitting in silence for some time, Holmes cross-examines Holder about his family, their social habits, and the household as a whole. Finally, Holmes connects the story and questions by pointing out the implausibility of the son’s guilt:

Consider what is involved in your theory. You suppose that your son came down from his bed, went, at great risk, to your dressing-room, opened your bureau, took out your coronet, broke off by main force a small portion of it, went off to some other place, concealed three gems out of the thirty-nine, with such skill that nobody can find them, and then returned with the other thirty-six into the room in which he exposed himself to the greatest danger of being discovered. I ask you now, is such a theory tenable?³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 157.

³⁷⁰ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 157.

By pointing out the implausibility of the case theory adopted by both Scotland Yard and Mr. Holder, Holmes displays his practical wisdom, his ability to accurately size up the situation and make a prudent judgment despite the biased opinions and prejudices of others.

Holmes establishes virtue in this story by pursuing the truth instead of accepting an easy conclusion. It would have been easy for Holmes to merely accept Holder's own conclusion, that the son was guilty; instead, Holmes holds to the virtue of being committed to the truth. While this does garner some goodwill from his client, Holmes's has already secured Holder's goodwill by calming the frantic man down and agreeing to hear his case. When Holder responds to Holmes's questioning of Arthur's guilt, "God bless you! You are doing what you can for him and for me. But it is too heavy a task. What was he doing there at all? If his purpose were so innocent, why did he not say so?" Holmes points out every reason why Arthur is innocent, as noted above. Here Holmes is not primarily establishing goodwill, as Holder accuses, but establishing his virtue by showing a dogged determination to find the truth, no matter how it may be disguised.

Holmes establishes his goodwill towards Mr. Holder by calming him down at the beginning of the adventure. When Alexander Holder first arrives at 221B Baker Street he collapses into a chair unable to move, "with so fixed a look of grief and despair in his eyes that our smiles were turned in an instant to horror and pity."³⁷¹ When he was able to move, he suddenly sprang to his feet and "beat his head against the wall with such force that we both

³⁷¹ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 151.

rushed upon him, and tore him away to the center of the room.”³⁷² But instead of casting the frazzled man into the street, Holmes demonstrated his goodwill by sitting beside him, patting his knee, and chatting with him until he calmed down. Holmes demonstrates goodwill when he says, “You have come to me to tell your story, have you not...you are fatigued with your haste. Pray wait until you have recovered yourself, and then I shall be most happy to look into any little problem which you may submit to me.”³⁷³ Though Holmes belittles Holder’s problem, by comforting Holder and showing concern for his wellbeing Holmes establishes goodwill with Holder, which allows Holder to tell the facts of his case.

Though Holder initially came to Holmes based upon his reputation, it was through Holmes’s display of ethos that Holmes secured Holder as a client. In the first phase of the adventure, Holmes proves his goodwill by preventing Holder from harming himself. Then he displays his virtue by refusing to accept the guilt of Holder’s son on merely circumstantial evidence. Finally, Holmes proves his goodwill by pointing out all of the flaws in the official theory of the case. The first phase of the story lasts from Watson’s observation of a “madman” in the street to Holmes’s departure for Streatham to inspect the scene of the crime himself. Using his ethos, Holmes builds a trusting relationship with Holder, which allows him to persuade Holder that his son Arthur might be innocent and accept Holmes’s help in the delicate matter of the missing gems. As Holmes continues the investigation, he employs pathos to uncover the deceit of Mary, Holder’s ward, and ultimately the location of the stolen gems. He then uses logos

³⁷² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 152.

³⁷³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 152.

to persuade the knave who had received the stolen gems to return them. But it is through ethos in the first phase of the adventure that Holmes secures Alexander Holder as a client.

Holmes displays practical wisdom by interpreting clues the client thought were meaningless. When Mr. Hilton Soames, tutor and lecturer at the College of St. Luke's, brings his case to Holmes, Holmes is unimpressed. Soames complains that someone has broken into his apartments and had been riffling through proof sheets from a competitive scholarship examination, but only when he mentions that "the proof was in three long slips. I had left them all together. Now I found that one of them was lying on the floor, one was on the side table near the window, and the third was where I had left it"³⁷⁴ that Holmes began to show an interest. Then Holmes establishes his practical wisdom by telling Soames which paper was in which position, "The first page on the floor, the second in the window, the third where you left it."³⁷⁵ By supplying this detail, Holmes not only surprises Soames, but also shows his remarkable power for reasoning. Holmes later explains that the cheater must have taken the slips of paper one-by-one to a nearby window so that he could keep a lookout, which would explain why the third piece would be on the table, the first on the floor, and the second by the window. Holmes's guess secured his reputation for practical wisdom with Soames, and established a trust between them.

Holmes shows his virtue through the anonymity Watson grants to the college, and through his reluctance to accept the case. There is a strange paradox in each of Holmes's adventures, wherein Holmes promises to protect the secrecy of his clients, while Watson is

³⁷⁴ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Three Students," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 567.

³⁷⁵ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Three Students," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 567.

actively belying that promise. Conan Doyle handles this paradox in a number of ways. For example, he has the King of Bohemia allow the publication of the adventure after two years, because by then the matter will have been settled one way or another. In “The Adventure of the Three Students,” Conan Doyle manages the paradox of secrecy by having Watson promise to disguise the location of the adventure. Watson notes, “It will be obvious that any details which would help the reader to exactly identify the college or the criminal would be injudicious and offensive. So painful a scandal may well be allowed to die out. With due discretion the incident itself may, however, be described, since it serves to illustrate some of those qualities for which my friend was remarkable.”³⁷⁶ That is, the adventure is an advertisement of Holmes’s skills, but the names and locations have been changed to protect the innocent. In the adventure, Holmes proves his virtue by initially refusing to take the case. In this way Holmes shows that he sticks doggedly to his work, finishing the most important or most pressing task, without allowing himself to be distracted on a whim. It is only when Soames is able to convince Holmes that there is something important and pressing in the case that Holmes agrees to help. Holmes shows Soames that he has the virtue of persistence and determination.

After initially making Soames beg for assistance, Holmes shows goodwill by relenting and taking the case. When Soames first approaches Holmes, Holmes replies “I am very busy just now, and I desire no distractions.”³⁷⁷ Soames then pleads, “your discretion is as well known as

³⁷⁶ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 566. One point of interest for this particular story is that Conan Doyle felt he had been cheated out of a lucrative scholarship when someone else claimed a prize that was due him. See Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 23.

³⁷⁷ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 566.

your powers, and you are the one man in the world who can help me. I beg you, Mr. Holmes, to do what you can.”³⁷⁸ Holmes merely shrugs in reply to Soames’s begging, and Soames tells his story. After he has heard all of the details, Holmes changes his mind and announces, “I shall be happy to look into it and to give you such advice as I can...the case is not entirely devoid of interest.”³⁷⁹ By initially refusing his request, and then changing his mind, Holmes shows goodwill towards Soames and the case. He displays an interest in the case, and a willingness to work for the good of his client, even though it is a distraction from his other work.

Soames initially came to Holmes because of his reputation, but in the first phase of the story Holmes establishes his ethos with Soames in such a way that ultimately allows Holmes to solve the case. Holmes happened to be in one of the great university towns researching a matter of great importance, which Watson promises to write about in a later adventure, when Soames disrupts them, claiming that Holmes is the only one who can help with his unique problem. Someone appears to have stolen the answers to an important examination, and Holmes is identified as the only one who can help. Though Soames needs no convincing of Holmes’s powers, by establishing his ethos with the tutor in the first phase of the story, Holmes is later able to persuade Soames to take steps that lead to the resolution of the case. Holmes persuades Soames to proceed with the examination, even though Holmes does not reveal the identity of the thief. Watson records Soames agitation, “The unfortunate tutor was certainly in a state of pitiable agitation when we found him in his chambers...he could hardly stand still, so great was his

³⁷⁸ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 566.

³⁷⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 568.

mental agitation, and he ran towards Holmes with two eager hands outstretched.”³⁸⁰ Despite his pitiable agitation, Holmes is able to persuade Soames to follow his plan, because Holmes established his ethos in the first phase of the adventure.

In all three short stories, Holmes establishes his ethos in the first phase of the adventure and uses his ethos as a means of persuasion. In “A Scandal in Bohemia” Holmes establishes his ethos by proving his practical wisdom in unmasking the king, his virtue in maintaining the secret, and his goodwill in cross-examining his client. Having established his ethos, Holmes uses it to persuade the king to follow his plans and ultimately to solve the case. In “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet,” Holmes first establishes his goodwill by calming his client down, then he shows his virtue by pursuing the truth rather than accepting an easy explanation, and he shows his practical wisdom by cross examining Holder about the details of the case. Once he has established his ethos, Holmes uses his credibility to persuade Holder to trust Holmes to solve the case. Finally, in “The Adventure of the Three Students,” Holmes establishes his virtue by refusing distractions, his goodwill by agreeing to help, and his practical wisdom by identifying a clue Soames thought was an irrelevant detail. Holmes is then able to solve the case, by persuading his client to trust in the trap they set for the offending student. In each story, Holmes establishes his ethos and then uses it as a tool of persuasion to solve the case, or prove to his client that the case is resolved.

Pathos

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but

³⁸⁰ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Three Students,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 574.

admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has ever seen; but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men’s motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.³⁸¹

Whereas Sherlock Holmes relies on ethos to establish relationships at the beginning of a case, he typically uses pathos in the second phase of his adventure to persuade others to give him information. In “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” Holmes uses pathos to provoke Dr. Grimesby Roylott, which allows Holmes to gather some information about the man and his likely motivations. In “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” Holmes uses pathos to persuade Captain Croker to reveal his character and motivations for a murder. In “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” Holmes uses pathos to persuade a reluctant butcher to reveal a vital clue about a jewel thief. In each instance Holmes played on the emotions of his audience, making use of the state of someone’s emotions, the direction or target of their emotion, and the reason for their emotions. That is, Holmes persuaded them by producing an emotional response in them that made one action or thing favorable and another action or thing unfavorable.

Aristotle argues that pathos is used as a means of persuasion when hearers are led to feel an emotion by a rhetor. He explains that there is persuasion “through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved

³⁸¹ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile.”³⁸² Because there are many different emotions, he recommends that a rhetor should be observant about three things that are common to all emotions, “what each of the emotions is and what are its qualities and from what it comes to be and how.”³⁸³ Because, in general, people want to seek pleasure and avoid pain, the positive emotions will direct one towards some object or action, and the negative emotions will direct one away from some object or action.

Holmes’s ability to use pathos as a means of persuasion is based on his understanding of his audience’s state of mind, the direction of their emotions, and the reason behind their emotions. Aristotle identifies these through the example of anger, arguing that there are three headings which a rhetor should know when attempting to employ pathos, “I mean, for example, in speaking of anger, what is their *state of mind* when people are angry and against *whom* are they usually angry and for what sort of *reasons*; for if we understood one or two of these but not all, it would be impossible to create anger [in someone].”³⁸⁴ Aristotle then explains several of the strong emotions, identifying for each the state of mind for the person feeling the emotion, the target of the emotion, and the reasons for the emotion. By looking at these three headings for each emotion, he argues, one can arouse an audience to feel an emotion and guide that emotional response towards a particular end. Continuing with Aristotle’s example of anger, he argues, “Let anger be [defined as] desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself

³⁸² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 39.

³⁸³ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 39.

³⁸⁴ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 113.

or those near to one.”³⁸⁵ That is, anger occurs when one is in a *distressed* state of mind, and anger is directed towards *a person or persons*, and the reason for anger is an undeserved slight.

Aristotle then suggests that there is a kind of pleasure that results from feeling anger, because it alleviates distress by clarifying one’s desire, which is “the hope of getting retaliation.” Thus one can use an appeal to anger in order to persuade someone to act out against the cause of their distress. By understanding these three qualities of emotions, Holmes is able to persuade his audience to adopt an attitude toward some course of action.

Although most famous as a reasoning machine, Holmes does use emotions in his adventures. Because Watson introduced Holmes as “the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has ever seen” who “never spoke of the passions, save with a gibe and sneer,” critics mostly ignore Holmes’s appeal to emotions.³⁸⁶ Instead they focus on the rare occasions when Holmes himself shows emotion, as in “The Adventure of the Navel Treaty,” or “The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger,” both of which are discussed below. In these cases, grit was thrown into the reasoning machine, but it did not reveal as much about Holmes’s method as it revealed about Holmes’s personality. By focusing on Holmes’s emotions instead of Holmes’s manipulation of emotions, the following critics lend some insight into Holmes’s inner workings; but I argue that understanding how Holmes used the emotions of others “drawing the veil from men’s motives and actions”³⁸⁷ is more useful in understanding how Holmes functions as a symbol.

³⁸⁵ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 116.

³⁸⁶ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

³⁸⁷ Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

For instance, Kendrick and Paul both focus on the spiritual aspects of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Kendrick sees Holmes as a companion in a holy quest to find God or the gods, while Paul seeks to apply the methods of Sherlock Holmes as a form of popular theology. Both, then, are more interested in the *emotions of Holmes* rather than Holmes's *use of emotions*. This is unfortunate, because looking at how Holmes uses emotions would have lent their studies a deeper understanding of what emotions Holmes thought were important, what state of mind they derived from, to whom they were directed, and for what reasons. That is, they would have gained a more complete understanding of how Holmes saw the role of emotions in persuading us about holy things, which is an under explored theme of both texts.

In *Holy Clues*, Kendrick argues that Holmes's emotions lend him a secret identity. Kendrick identifies Holmes's emotions in "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty," a story in which Holmes reveals his sentimentality more than in any other story. Kendrick notes that at the beginning of the adventure, "We think we know exactly who he is, this omnipresent and mythical figure: angular, intense, eyes fiercely aglow with the excitement of the chase."³⁸⁸ Holmes's persona is well known, and he has established his ethos by displaying his practical knowledge, virtue, and goodwill in the first phase of the adventure, but Kendrick notes a change in Holmes in this adventure: "He is somehow known to all of us, the primal pleasure of disguised truth. Yet there is so much in Holmes that we have never noticed before—almost a secret identity."³⁸⁹ Kendrick then argues that Holmes's secret identity is that of a powerful spiritual sage, who brings truth to the reader through the odd packaging of the detective story.

³⁸⁸ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 5.

³⁸⁹ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 5.

Kendrick next argues that Holmes's secret identity gives his adventures the power of parables. In explaining our love for the Sherlock Holmes stories, he writes, "We love the stories of Sherlock Holmes because these tales are more than detective stories—they are humble parables for our instruction, the clarifying of our inner vision."³⁹⁰ In part, Kendrick sees in Sherlock Holmes the promise of the enlightenment, that through scientific reasoning one may come to know the full mind of God through the external world. Holmes seems to both plumb the depths of the human heart and find out what an individual is thinking, but if "the omnipresent detective can plumb the heart of evil and read these spiritual fingerprints, so we wonder—can God's mystery be far behind?"³⁹¹ Though Holmes's secret identity explains the parable-like quality of his adventures, however, reading Holmes as a spiritual sage reduces his symbol to a single dimension, his appeal as the clarifying of a situation, and misses the vital element of his rhetoric, which allows him to persuade others within his adventures. Furthermore, Kendrick's Holmes—the spiritual sage—is supremely detached from any connection to human suffering. He is more of a Greek god, bored by mundane problems and only intervening to amuse himself, than a comfort to those who seek any comfort from a rational and meaningful universe.

Paul, by contrast, points to Holmes's compassion in "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger," as the primary evidence of Holmes's emotions. Whereas Holmes was captivated by natural beauty in "The Adventure of the Navel Treaty," and presents himself as a spiritual sage in order to persuade his client—and his client's wife—to trust him with a delicate matter, in the adventure Paul analyses Holmes uses the bravery of his client to persuade her to persevere in this

³⁹⁰ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 20.

³⁹¹ Kendrick, *Holy Clues*, 20.

life and hope for a better life to come. Paul notes, “Holmes was extremely sensitive to the problem of human suffering. To a woman who had been badly scarred by life he exclaimed, ‘the ways of fate are indeed hard to understand. If there is not some compensation hereafter, then the world is a cruel jest.’”³⁹² In the adventure, a landlady has requested Holmes’s assistance in learning the identity of her lodger. Holmes discovers that the woman behind the heavy veil had been a circus performer who was mauled by a lion. She had been married to an abusive husband, and when she conspired to murder him and blame his tame lion, she was attacked and mauled by the lion. After revealing herself, Holmes fears that she intends to kill herself. Holmes stops her, however, by using her own bravery and anger to persuade her to persist for the good of the world: “The example of patient suffering is in itself the most precious of all lessons to an impatient world.”³⁹³ The adventure ends when Holmes receives a small blue bottle in the post containing some pills and a note promising that she will not attempt to take her life again. While Paul notes Holmes’s sensitivity to human suffering, both he and Kendrick fail to take into account how Holmes uses his understanding of emotions to persuade others. That is, Holmes’s own emotions tell us something of his character, but his use of the emotions of others tells us more about his method, and his usefulness as a symbol.

While the literature reviewed above illustrates Holmes’s usefulness as equipment for living, it does not explain how Holmes operates as a symbol. Kendrick’s explanation of Holmes’s emotions suggests that he appeals to his audience as a bored deity looking at the problems of humanity for his amusement. Paul’s explanation of Holmes’s emotions suggests that he is deeply

³⁹² Paul, *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes*, 48.

³⁹³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger,” *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1298.

concerned with human affairs, but it does not give Holmes's emotions any meaning beyond their commentary on his character. That is, Paul analyzes this episode from "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger," and concludes that Holmes cares for others. While this certainly demonstrates Holmes's goodwill, it misses the more important fact that Holmes has used his client's emotions to persuade her to continue living. The important emotions in the story belong to Holmes's client, not to Holmes. The following paragraphs, by contrast, will focus on how Holmes uses pathos to persuade his clients to reveal clues vital to the resolution of a case. As Holmes quipped in "A Scandal in Bohemia," "They [the emotions] were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions."³⁹⁴

In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," Holmes uses Dr. Roylott's anger to persuade him to reveal his intentions towards his step-daughter. Holmes is preparing to leave for Stoke Moran in order to determine whether Roylott's intentions are fatal or merely curious when Roylott bursts into Holmes's apartments. By rousing Roylott's anger, Holmes is able to determine that the man plans to harm his ward. In this phase of the investigation, Holmes attempts to gather clues that will allow him to solve the case, to determine whether Helen is in danger, and possibly to solve the mystery of her older sister, Julia's, death. By evoking Roylott's anger, Holmes is able to determine the relative safety of Helen and the direction his investigation should take. As a result of Roylott's outburst, Holmes looks into the family's finances and discovers a motive for Roylott's crimes.

In this adventure, Holmes plays upon Roylott's distress to rouse his anger. When Roylott bursts into 221B Baker Street, Holmes notices the signs of distress, which Watson records: "A

³⁹⁴ Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 11.

large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set bile-shot eyes, and his high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce bird of prey.”³⁹⁵ Roylott further proves his distress when he refuses to take a seat, shakes his hunting crop, and bends a poker into a curve. Holmes then aggravates Roylott’s distress in order to persuade him to reveal his intentions towards his step-daughter and to direct some of Roylott’s anger away from his step-daughter and towards himself.

Holmes uses Roylott’s distressed state of mind to persuade him to direct his anger at Holmes rather than his step daughter. Once Holmes determines that Roylott is a danger and that he will be easily aroused to anger, Holmes uses his understanding of anger to persuade Roylott to be angry with Holmes rather than Helen. Aristotle explains that the emotions “are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure.”³⁹⁶ By arousing Roylott’s anger, Holmes changes general distress that may have surged into anger at any moment into a focused anger directed at himself. Holmes is able to withstand the relative stranger’s onslaught, where Helen might not have survived such an outburst.

Holmes evokes Roylott’s anger by belittling him. As Aristotle explains, anger is aroused when one is denied something, and since belittling “is an actualization of opinion about what seems worthless”³⁹⁷ and since “people think they are entitled to be treated with respect by those

³⁹⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 114.

³⁹⁶ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 113.

³⁹⁷ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 116.

inferior in birth, in power, in virtue, and generally in whatever they themselves have much of,” Holmes was able to arouse Roylott’s anger by denying him respect.³⁹⁸ When Roylott bursts into Holmes’s apartments, Holmes refuses to acknowledge the power of the intruder and instead offers him a seat. When Roylott asks Holmes a direct question, “What has she been saying to you?” Holmes replies, “It is a little cold for this time of the year.” And when Roylott repeats his question, Holmes continues, “But I have heard that the crocuses promise well.”³⁹⁹ By denying Roylott the power to question him, Holmes actualizes the opinion that Roylott is impotent, thus directing Roylott’s anger at Holmes.

By arousing Roylott’s anger, Holmes directs and channels Roylott’s distress towards himself, in part to persuade Roylott to direct his anger away from his step-daughter, Helen. After Holmes’s digression about the crocuses, Roylott shakes his fist and calls Holmes names in a final effort to elicit respect, but Holmes simply laughs and quips, “Your conversation is most entertaining...when you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught.”⁴⁰⁰ This exchange spurs Holmes to action to protect his client. After Roylott leaves, Holmes straightens his poker, and tells Watson, “This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her.”⁴⁰¹ By directing Roylott’s anger, Holmes may have saved Helen from immediate reprisal for her

³⁹⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 117.

³⁹⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 114.

⁴⁰⁰ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 115.

⁴⁰¹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 115.

imprudence, but later that night Roylott attempts to gain his revenge by sending a “swamp adder” into her bed. Holmes and Watson are standing guard though, and they turn the worm back on its master, saving their client and avenging her sister’s death.

In “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” Holmes uses the emotion of shame to persuade Captain Croker reveal his character. Aristotle defines shame as “a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect.” In this case, Croker’s character is a mitigating circumstance that makes the difference between whether Holmes will turn him over to the police, or let him go free. That is, Croker’s character is a key piece of evidence in how Holmes will resolve the murder of Sir Eustace Brackenstall. Though Aristotle gives no specific examples of why a rhetor should arouse a specific emotion in an audience, Holmes demonstrates that arousing shame spurs Croker to reveal his character, thus serving as a test of Holmes’s suspicion that Croker is an honorable man and worthy of pardon. After hearing Croker’s testimony, Holmes offers to let Croker leave, promising that he will keep the matter quiet for 24 hours, and then let the whole thing come out once Croker is safely away. Croker responds, “What sort of proposal is that to make to a man? I know enough of law to understand that Mary [Lady Brackenstall] would be had as accomplice. Do you think I would leave her alone to face the music while I slunk away? No, sir; let them do their worst to me, but for Heaven’s sake, Mr. Holmes, find some way of keeping my poor Mary out of the courts.”⁴⁰² After this outburst, Holmes shakes Croker’s hand and explains that he was merely testing the man’s virtue.

⁴⁰² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 620.

The state of mind Holmes brings about in Croker is shame, a fear that Mary would find out that he has betrayed her. Aristotle argues that we would feel shame if we fear that those we admire or by whom we wish to be admired were going to learn about what is going on. That is, in this case, if the woman Croker loves were to learn that he saved himself by allowing her to stand trial as his accomplice, he should feel shame. By setting up this scenario, Holmes forces Croker to either prove his character by feeling ashamed and avoiding the action which would lead to shame, or by embracing the action despite the implications for the woman he loves, thereby proving his lack of character. When Croker feels ashamed and says that he is willing to sacrifice himself to save Mary, Holmes gains evidence of the man's character.

Holmes directs Croker's shame primarily towards Mary. Aristotle argues that "a person feels shame toward those whose opinion he takes account of."⁴⁰³ While Croker may take account of Watson and Holmes's opinion of him, his primary concern is what Mary will think of him if he leaves her to stand trial as his accomplice. Croker has already declared his secret love for her when he tells Holmes, "But it's the lady, Mary—Mary Fraser—for never will I call her by that accursed name. When I think of getting her into trouble, I who would give my life just to bring one smile to her dear face, it's that that turns my soul into water." Croker then explains that he met Lady Brackenstall, whom he calls Mary Fraser, when she was a passenger and he was first officer on the *Rock of Gibraltar*. He never told her of his love because, "Next time I came back from sea I heard of her marriage" and he claims to have been happy for her presumed happiness. But when Croker heard of the abuses she suffered at the hands of her husband, Croker went to

⁴⁰³ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 134.

investigate for himself. His great affection for Mary led him to feel shame towards her when he realized that Holmes's suggestion would leave her responsible for his actions.

Holmes uses shame to prove that Croker is worth protecting. That is, Holmes knows that by shielding Croker from the Scotland Yard he becomes an accomplice in the murder of Sir Eustace Brackenstall. Therefore, in testing Croker's character Holmes is not only testing the man's virtue but also determining how he will proceed with the case. Holmes had already supplied Stanley Hopkins of Scotland Yard with all of the evidence Holmes had used in arriving at his conclusions, but as Holmes tells Croker "I have given Hopkins an excellent hint, and if he can't avail himself of it I can do no more."⁴⁰⁴ By bringing Croker to shame, through presenting the imagined consequence of Mary standing trial in Croker's place, Holmes persuades the man to reveal his character. With the evidence of Croker's character Holmes decides to conduct a trial in his apartment, and announces him clear of all charges, "Vox populi, vox Dei. You are acquitted, Captain Croker. So long as the law does not find some other victim you are safe from me."⁴⁰⁵ The case ends with Holmes suggests that the captain return in a year, and a final blessing, "may her future and yours justify us in the judgment which we have pronounced this night."⁴⁰⁶

One of the most interesting examples of Holmes's use of pathos comes from "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," wherein Holmes uses confidence to trick a butcher into revealing a key piece of evidence. Confidence, as Aristotle defines the emotion, is the opposite of fear. He writes, "Those experiencing, and thinking they experience good fortune do not think

⁴⁰⁴ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Abby Grange," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 620.

⁴⁰⁵ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Abby Grange," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 620.

⁴⁰⁶ Doyle, "The Adventure of the Abby Grange," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 620.

they might suffer; therefore, they are insolent and belittlers and rash.”⁴⁰⁷ In this adventure, Holmes is trying to find out who had stuffed a blue carbuncle into the gullet of a goose. The trail appears to run cold, however, when Holmes confronts a butcher who refuses to tell him how the goose came into his hands. To get this information, Holmes plays on the emotion of confidence in the Butcher by placing a wager.

The state of mind of the butcher is certainty of success in the wager that Holmes lays out. Initially, when Holmes asks where the birds came from, the butcher replies “Now, then, mister,” cocks his head and stands with arms akimbo and retorts, “what are you driving at? Let’s have it straight, now.”⁴⁰⁸ When Holmes responds that he simply wants to know where the bird came from, the butcher sneers, “I sha’n’t tell you. So now!”⁴⁰⁹ As Holmes tells Watson later, “I daresay that if I had put a hundred pounds down in front of him that man would not have given me such complete information as was drawn from him by the idea that he was doing me on a wager.”⁴¹⁰ That is, Holmes realized that nothing would budge the butcher to tell him the information, not money or brute force, save an appeal to the man’s emotions by placing him in a state of mind where he felt sure of success.

The butcher’s confidence is directed towards Holmes, and the reason for the butcher’s confidence is his hope of safety and his imagining that it is near. In this instance, the hope is not

⁴⁰⁷ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 130.

⁴⁰⁸ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102.

⁴⁰⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102.

⁴¹⁰ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102.

for physical safety, but for the safety of success over an opponent in a wager. As Holmes explains, “When you see a man with whiskers of that cut and the ‘pink ‘un’ protruding out of his pocket, you can always draw him by a bet.”⁴¹¹ Holmes guesses that the butcher is fond of betting and introduces a wager in which the butcher has the resources necessary to win the bet. Holmes then uses the butcher’s confidence, appealing to that emotion in order to persuade him to reveal the origins of the bird. When the butcher refuses to tell where he got the goose, Holmes casually remarks, “If you won’t tell us the bet is off, that is all. But I’m always ready to back my opinion on a matter of fowls, and I have a fiver on it that the bird I ate is country bred.”⁴¹² The butcher’s confidence soars and he replies that Holmes would have lost his bet, and Holmes eggs him into a further bet, a sovereign, that the bird was city bred. He then uses his resources and secures his safety with a ledger that shows where the bird came from. By understanding the appeal to confidence, and how it can be used to gather information, Holmes learns that the bird came from a poultry supplier on Brixton Road. With this information Holmes quickly discovers that the poultry supplier’s brother had hidden the gem in the bird’s mouth after stealing the gem from the hotel where he worked. Much as in the case of Captain Croker, Holmes shows mercy to the criminal and chooses not to reveal to Scotland Yard how the gem came into the bird’s gullet.

While Holmes does occasionally reveal his own emotions, I argue that the more important use of emotions in the stories is when Holmes uses other’s emotions to gather evidence. In these three cases, Holmes uses emotions to persuade suspects to reveal their

⁴¹¹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102. The “pink ‘un’” refers to The Sporting Times, a football paper printed on pink paper.

⁴¹² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 102.

character, as in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” and “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” or to elicit a vital clue, as in “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.” Through appeals to the emotions of his audience, Holmes persuades others to give him the information he needs to solve a case. He is able to appeal to these emotions because he understands the state of mind, towards whom the emotions are directed, and the reasons for them. Thus, for Holmes, the emotions allow the veil to be drawn back from people’s motives and actions.

Logos

“To the man who loves art for its own sake,” remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of *The Daily Telegraph*, “it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to observe, Watson, that you have so grasped this truth that in these little records of our cases which you have been good enough to draw up, and I am bound to say, occasionally to embellish, you have given prominence not so much to the many *causes célèbres* and sensational trials in which I have figured, but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those faculties of deduction and of logical synthesis which I have made my special province.”⁴¹³

Sherlock Holmes is most well known for his logic, but ironically his use of logos as means of persuasion is often ignored. Holmes typically uses logos to persuade his audience that the case is closed, but studies of Holmes’s logic look at the entire case and attempt to show the inevitability of Holmes’s conclusion. That is, whereas Holmes uses rhetoric to argue for the probability of his case theory, his fans attempt to turn Holmes’s enthymemes and paradigms into primary syllogisms. But in the stories, Holmes uses logic rhetorically. When accusing someone, Holmes uses logos to persuade them that he has figured out their every move and that defeat is inevitable. Whether Holmes then sends them to jail, frees them, gets a written confession for

⁴¹³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” *The Original illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 166.

later use, or gives them a stern lecture, he must first convince them that he has figured out enough details to solve the case, which he does through logos. That is, by showing the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case, Holmes traps them.

Logic is often hailed as Holmes's most identifiable attribute, though the type of logic Holmes's uses is hotly debated. What Holmes refers to as deduction, some call induction, and others call abduction. Truzzi distinguishes between these three with the following example:

Deduction

<i>Case</i>	All serious knife wounds result in bleeding.
<i>Result</i>	This was a serious knife wound.
<i>∴Rule</i>	There was bleeding.

Induction

<i>Case</i>	This was a serious knife wound.
<i>Result</i>	There was bleeding.
<i>∴Rule</i>	All serious knife wounds result in bleeding

Abduction

<i>Rule</i>	All serious knife wounds result in bleeding.
<i>Result</i>	There was bleeding.
<i>∴Case</i>	This was a serious knife wound. ⁴¹⁴

I argue that the type of logic Holmes used is not as important as the rhetorical motive behind his use of logic. Rather than using logic to compose elegant syllogisms, Holmes was using logic to

⁴¹⁴ Truzzi, Marcello, "Sherlock Holmes: Applied Social Psychologist," *The Sign of the Three*, 69.

persuade his audience that he had found a probable solution to a doubtful case. By considering how and why Holmes used logic rhetorically, the type of logic he uses becomes clear.

It is clear from the stories that Holmes used rhetorical rather than dialectical logic. In Aristotelian terms, that means Holmes used paradigms and enthymemes rather than induction and deduction. Aristotle explains the difference, writing “to show on the basis of many similar instances that something is so is in dialectic induction, in rhetoric paradigm; but to show that if some premises are true, something else [the conclusion] beyond them results from these because they are true, either universally or for the most part, in dialectic is called syllogism and in rhetoric enthymeme.”⁴¹⁵ One might extend Aristotle’s comparisons, and argue that if induction is the rhetorical equivalent of paradigm, and deduction is the rhetorical equivalent of enthymeme, then abduction is equivalent to the sort of guessing Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok will describe below. Guessing is when one shows that something is likely the case based through the most easily tested hypothesis. All three involve probability rather than certainty, as Aristotle explains, “Thus, it is necessary for an enthymeme and a paradigm to be concerned with things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are—and drawn from few premises and often less than those of the primary syllogism.”⁴¹⁶ Even abduction should lead eventually to certainty, where guessing is simply the selection of a most probable hypothesis given limited data.

Aristotle discusses three types of arguments under the heading of *logos*: paradigms, maxims, and enthymemes. To this I add guessing, as defined by C. S. Peirce through Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok. A paradigm speaks of things that have happened before, or is an illustration of

⁴¹⁵ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 40.

⁴¹⁶ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 41.

what might happen in the future, though “examples from history are more useful in deliberation; for future events will generally be like those of the past.”⁴¹⁷ Aristotle argues that paradigms are most persuasive when used with enthymemes as a witness to the enthymeme, though several paradigms can be used together as a form of rhetorical induction. Maxims are a form of enthymeme, “the conclusion of enthymemes and [either of] the premises (with the [full] syllogism omitted) are maxims.”⁴¹⁸ For example, “Data! data! data!...I can’t make bricks without clay,”⁴¹⁹ is a maxim because it is the conclusion of an enthymeme without either of the premises. Aristotle explains that enthymemes come from four sources and deal with 28 topics. The sources of enthymemes are “probability [*eikos*], paradigm, *tekmērion* [or necessary sign], and *sēmeion* [or fallible sign],”⁴²⁰ and the topics come from the facts belonging to the subject. Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok define guessing as the breaking down of a hypothesis into its smallest logical components and risking them one at a time. That is, one takes the smallest logical elements of a hypothesis and tests it through further observation, thus reducing the number of possible conclusions.⁴²¹ However, since the breaking down of a hypothesis and the testing by further observation are invisible to an audience, the rhetorical element of guessing is the asking of prescient questions either directly, as a question, or indirectly, as a statement.

⁴¹⁷ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 163.

⁴¹⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 165.

⁴¹⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 171.

⁴²⁰ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 190.

⁴²¹ See Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok, “You Know My Method,” *The Sign of the Three*, 22.

Unlike syllogisms, which seek to express universal truths, rhetoric uses enthymemes which appeal to a particular audience. Aristotle writes, “Since the persuasive is persuasive to someone (and is either immediately plausible and believable in itself or seems to be shown by statements that are so), and since no art examines the particular...neither does rhetoric theorize about each opinion...but about what seems true to people of a certain sort.”⁴²² Logos deals with these particular instances because it focuses on things that are generally debated. Holmes’s arguments deal with cases that are capable of admitting multiple possibilities, and he argues for one of those possibilities through short arguments that are easy for his audience to believe. As Watson frequently remarks to Holmes, “When I hear you give your reasons...the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain your process.” The reason Watson is baffled is not because his eyes are not sharp enough to see what Holmes sees; rather it is because Holmes has made an argument, using logos, which makes his conclusions seem irrefutable. And Watson is not alone in his bafflement, as demonstrated by the following review of literature.

Sherlock Holmes’s critics focus on his use of logic as an end in itself, rather than exploring his use of logos as a means of persuasion. Because of this, critics like Truzzi, Van Dover, Caprettini, and Hintikka and Hintikka get bogged down in debates about how Holmes constructs his arguments, or what type of logic Holmes is really using, and miss the usefulness of Holmes’s persuasion as rhetorical equipment for living. By exploring some of the criticisms that

⁴²² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 41.

explicitly deal with Holmes's logic, the following review argues that an analysis of Holmes's rhetorical logos is needed.

Truzzi argues that Holmes's method, though central to his character, is never systematically stated in the canon. Central to Truzzi's argument is the notion that Holmes has a singular logical method which explains every facet of each adventure. This holy grail of Sherlockian criticism has been missed because, "Most Sherlockians have been more concerned with their own application of Holmes's techniques to the clues available in the canon than upon an examination of the methods themselves."⁴²³ Holmes's method, however, deserves to be studied better, because it is the source of Holmes's appeal. Holmes is popular, Truzzi argues, because he "epitomizes the attempted application of man's highest faculty—his rationality—in the solution of the problematic situations of everyday life."⁴²⁴ That is, Holmes's science astounds and gratifies the reader because of its applicability to everyday life. Ultimately, Truzzi abandons the quest for Holmes's method explaining that, upon close inspection of the texts, the basic reasoning process described by Watson is logically inadequate, if not invalid. As explained above, and as argued in my analysis of several Holmes stories, Truzzi's inability to find a systematic statement of Holmes's method is due to a flaw in the search itself. Truzzi was searching for a dialectical method, while Holmes was employing a rhetorical method.

Van Dover explains the supposed flaws in Holmes's logic by turning the detective into an emblem of a method. Holmes is "the emblem of the power of methodical thinking

⁴²³ Truzzi, "Sherlock Holmes: Applied Social Psychologist," *The Sign of the Three*, 59.

⁴²⁴ Truzzi, "Sherlock Holmes: Applied Social Psychologist," *The Sign of the Three*, 56-7.

(analysis/ratiocination/science/Catholicism/dream detection)⁴²⁵” and his power is the true protagonist of the adventure. Van Dover does discuss the detective’s logos, but the term is in reference to the Gospel of John. Unlike the creative utterance of God, however, the detective’s divine word re-creates through naming the villain and naming a cause and effect relationship. Van Dover explains, “The detective’s logos does, indeed, name the villain, and by naming him, in a sense it creates him: he was the butler; now he is the murderer, but the real re-creation of the detective is the chain of causes and effects that make the butler the murder; merely naming the killer would be inadequate in any form of the detective story.”⁴²⁶ Van Dover acknowledges that the detective’s word must be persuasion in order to re-create the butler as villain, but argues that this persuasion must be more than persuasive, it must be conclusive. By moving beyond persuasion, Van Dover moves beyond rhetorical logos and into dialectical syllogism, arguing that the detective’s persuasion is absolute because it derives from the indubitable moral logic that with the detective’s pronouncement on a case, the case is concluded. I argue that the detective’s argument is persuasive, but there is always an alternative, and the cases in which Holmes is wrong—“The Adventure of the Yellow Face,” “The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual,” “The Five Orange Pips”—support my argument.⁴²⁷

Carettini compares Holmes’s method to the method Holmes prescribes for the police, and argues that Holmes operates by limiting imagination and isolating elements in the story which hold symptomatic value. That is, Holmes is constantly redefining the frames that structure an

⁴²⁵ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 27-8.

⁴²⁶ Van Dover, *We Must Have Certainty*, 131-2.

⁴²⁷ In the first, Holmes wrongly concludes that his client’s wife is having an affair, in the second and third Holmes fails to prevent a murder.

event. Carettini argues that “the transmission of truth in a detective story is achieved through details, apparently trivial fragments, odd things on which our attention concentrates only with hesitation. In fact, we are distracted by other details and, most of all, by the story’s general aspects. The most revealing details are but those which break the frame, showing its incoherence. They are the ‘missing acts.’”⁴²⁸ While the reader is distracted, Holmes reframes the case, and while I argue that Holmes reframes the case through arguments with enthymemes, Carettini suggests that Holmes uses “hypothetical reconstructions” that “cannot be correctly called ‘deduction.’”⁴²⁹ However, Carettini does not name these hypothetical reconstructions, or describe them in any more detail than Conan Doyle had already presented in the adventures. I suggest that Holmes’s method is to reframe the story through rhetorical *logos*, and through that means he persuades us that his case theory is as correct as syllogistic deduction.

The single underlying problem in criticisms of Holmes’s logic is the assumption that Holmes constructs dialectical syllogisms in order to solve a case, and while Hintikka and Hintikka look to modern logic to explain Sherlock Holmes, they still argue that his primary reason for using logic is to create syllogisms rather than argue persuasively. Though they begin by observing that Holmes is not drawing explicit inferences from explicit premises, but is instead “eliciting from an enormous mass of undigested background information the suitable additional premises, over and above what has perhaps been announced as such, from which the apparently surprising conclusion can be drawn by our familiar commonplace deductive logic,”⁴³⁰ they do

⁴²⁸ Carettini, “Peirce, Holmes, Popper,” *The Sign of Three*, 139.

⁴²⁹ Carettini, “Peirce, Holmes, Popper,” *The Sign of Three*, 141.

⁴³⁰ Hintikka and Hintikka, “Sherlock Holmes Confronts Modern Logic,” *The Sign of Three*, 156.

not identify this as a practice of rhetorical persuasion. That is, they have described the process of creating an enthymeme, but have not identified the process as such. Thus, when they suggest that the primary task of the Holmesian logician is “*to elicit or to make explicit tacit information*” they also argue that this task is unacknowledged in “virtually all philosophical expositions of logical reasoning, of deductive heuristic, and of the methodology of logic and mathematics.”⁴³¹ While, like Aristotle, they suggest that the rule of Holmes’s process might be rationally discussed and evaluated, given a suitable conceptual framework, the framework they suggest is to treat Holmes’s method as answers to tacit questions. That is, Holmes’s art of deduction is essentially tantamount to the art of asking questions. I argue that this task is explicitly described by Aristotle as the role of logos in the creation of arguments as a means of persuasion.

In sum, I argue that Holmes uses paradigms when he compares the present case to his files, he uses maxims when he commands action, he uses guesses to narrow his hypotheses, and he uses enthymemes to make his case appear irrefutable. First, through paradigms Holmes references similar cases while he is working, suggesting that the present case is similar to cases which have come before. In this way he uses paradigms to argue inductively that the present case will follow the pattern of past cases. Second, Holmes’s most iconic sayings are maxims. For example, “Come, Watson, come...the game is afoot,” begins with the conclusion, “Come Watson,” and then supplies one of the premises as support, “the game is afoot.”⁴³² Third, Holmes guesses when he uses a direct question or a statement to elicit information while appearing prescient to his audience. For example, when he states, “Beyond the obvious facts that he has at

⁴³¹ Hintikka and Hintikka, “Sherlock Holmes Confronts Modern Logic,” *The Sign of Three*, 156.

⁴³² Doyle, “The Adventure of the Abby Grange,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 607.

some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else,” in “The Adventure of the Red-Headed League,” Holmes is testing a guess by framing a question as an assertion.⁴³³ Finally, Holmes uses enthymemes when he attempts to make his case theory appear irrefutable by drawing from probability, paradigm, necessary signs, or fallible signs to make an argument from common topics. I will explore each of these persuasive strategies of logos through specific examples.

In “A Case of Identity” Holmes argues from paradigm when he tells Watson that the case is quite common, though the client is unique. Holmes explains, “I found her more interesting than her little problem, which, by the way, is rather a trite one. You will find parallel cases, if you consult my index, in Andover in ’77, and there was something of the sort at The Hague last year. Old as is the idea, however, there were one or two details which were new to me. But the maiden herself was most instructive.”⁴³⁴ While Holmes’s allusion to other cases is often simply an assertion that he can solve the present case because he has solved other cases, in this instance Holmes refers to, “the old trick of stepping in at one door of a four-wheeler, and out at the other.”⁴³⁵ That is, the case Helen Sutherland brought to Holmes is simple, her fiancée was not missing but had simply stepped in at one side of a cab and stepped out at another, but the distinguishing elements of the case were interesting. Those distinguishing elements all had to do with the identity of the supposedly missing fiancée, and his motivations for securing her pledge

⁴³³ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Red-Headed League,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 26.

⁴³⁴ Doyle, “A Case of Identity,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 47.

⁴³⁵ Doyle, “A Case of Identity,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 51.

of fidelity. Using an argument from paradigm, Holmes persuades his audience that this case is similar to other missing persons cases in which the missing party stepped in at one door, and slipped out through another.

Holmes uses a maxim to persuade Watson that Miss Sutherland is more important than the case she has brought. Holmes's maxim, as delivered to Watson is, "Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details."⁴³⁶ This is a maxim because it presents the premise of an enthymeme and leaves Watson to fill in the conclusion, which might be stated as "because the details provide valuable evidence for understanding a person's character and habits." Holmes delivers this maxim after sarcastically praising Watson, "Pon my word, Watson you are coming along wonderfully. You have really done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method, and you have a quick eye for colour."⁴³⁷ Thus, the maxim is a call to action. Holmes is instructing Watson to take an action with regard to the application of Holmes's method, and as Aristotle explains, "A maxim is an assertion...about things that involve actions and are to be chosen or avoided in regard to action."⁴³⁸ This maxim is important within the case, because it draws our attention to Miss Sutherland, and Holmes's ability to persuade us that his solution to the case is correct hinges on the central importance of Miss Sutherland. Her singularity explains the irregularities of the rest of the case. That is, her short sightedness and her affections explain how she could mistake her step-father in disguise for a completely different person. Through this maxim,

⁴³⁶ Doyle, "A Case of Identity," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 47.

⁴³⁷ Doyle, "A Case of Identity," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 47.

⁴³⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 165.

Holmes persuades Watson to act on the details of Miss Sutherland's habits and dress, rather than the general impression of her fiancée's mysterious disappearance.

Meanwhile, Holmes uses the enthymeme from probability and the topic of cause and effect to make Windibank feel trapped by an irrefutable argument. Holmes guesses that Hosmer Angel and Mr. Windibank are the same person. When interviewing Mr. Windibank, Holmes frames his guess as a statement, indirectly outlining what he believes Windibank and his wife have done without actually accusing anyone of anything. By outlining his guess as a narrative, Holmes is able to test his hypothesis without actually positing a hypothesis, yielding the most information while risking the least logical effort. Holmes later explains his chain of thinking, arguing to Watson that he first thought the fiancée must have a reason to behave oddly, and that the step-father benefited from the jilted lover, and that the two were never seen together. Holmes then concocts a guess which can easily be tested by asking if Mr. Windibank's firm employs anyone matching Mr. Angel's description, and when they reply that Mr. Windibank meets the description, by outlining the case in front of Mr. Windibank.

The typewritten letters are the source of Holmes's enthymemes in this case. Holmes has made an extensive study of the unique identifiers of typewriters, and from this knowledge he makes the argument that Hosmer Angel and James Windibank are the same person, because they used the same typewriter. "It is a curious thing" Holmes remarks "that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting. Unless they are quite new, no two of them write exactly alike."⁴³⁹ Holmes then points out the unique characteristics of a note written by Mr. Windibank, and then shows that the same characteristics are present in Mr. Angel's letters. If the

⁴³⁹ Doyle, "A Case of Identity," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 49.

characteristics are the same, then the typewriter must be the same, and if the typewriter is the same, then the typist must be the same. Though this is not a proper syllogism, it is an enthymeme from probability which makes use of the topic of cause and effect, which is to say that the same effects are likely brought about by the same cause. While there are myriad explanations for how the letters may appear to have the same typographical characteristics, the argument from probability wins the day. Holmes's method does not provide the reader with a foolproof means of identifying a villain by his typewriter, but he does present us with a rhetorical method of solving the case. Holmes's logos, combined with the ethos he defends in the opening phase of the story, and the pathos he uses when he rouses Windibank to fear, persuade Watson that the case has been solved. And when Watson tells the story to us through the pages of the Strand Magazine, we are convinced of the rightness of Holmes's solution as well. Even though it may not be logical, Holmes's method is rhetorically satisfying.

Though Holmes does not compare "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" to a specific case, he does argue that it fits in with a case paradigm. On the train to inspect the scene of a murder, Holmes comments to Watson, "It seems, from what I gather, to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult."⁴⁴⁰ Watson objects to this paradoxical assertion, and Holmes explains the type of case he is referring to, "Singularity is almost invariably a clue. The more featureless and commonplace a crime is, the more difficult is it to bring it home."⁴⁴¹ The paradigm, then, is a comparison to between the featureless parts of cases, which make them appear simple to solve, but which are actually difficult because of a dearth of evidence. The

⁴⁴⁰ Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 53.

⁴⁴¹ Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 54.

maxim Holmes gives to Watson again relates to evidence and the action of investigation. Holmes instructs Watson to look beyond the surface explanation when he states, “There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact.”⁴⁴² This maxim urges action, because it urges one to seek non-obvious facts when presented with obvious facts. The fuller enthymeme of which this is a part might be stated, “There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact, because an obvious fact prevents us from seeking alternative explanations.”

Holmes’s enthymeme in this story is refutative rather than demonstrative. Holmes has admitted that the circumstantial evidence which persuaded Watson to side with the official police case theory is powerful, but he cautions that circumstantial evidence is tricky because, “it may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.”⁴⁴³ In this statement, Holmes uses an enthymeme to refute the official case theory. Aristotle argues that refutative enthymemes are better liked by audiences, and suggests that this is because the audience enjoys having the two arguments brought side by side. Indeed, this early statement of Holmes’s foreshadows his later reinterpretation of Lestrade’s evidence in support of Holmes’s case against John Turner.

Holmes refutes Lestrade's case by reinterpreting all of the circumstantial evidence Lestrade had used against McCarthy and confronting John Turner with them. Actually, Holmes uses a single statement, a guess, to bring Turner to a confession of his own. Holmes invites Turner to a meeting, and when the man arrives, Holmes simply states, “It is so. I know all about

⁴⁴² Doyle, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 55.

⁴⁴³ Doyle, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 55.

McCarthy.”⁴⁴⁴ Holmes has guessed that Turner was a famous Australian bandit, that McCarthy had been blackmailing him, and that Turner and McCarthy had exchanged heated words where McCarthy’s body was later found. By stating “It is so. I know all about McCarthy,” Holmes risks a small question for a large potential reward, the confirmation of his hypotheses. With this guess, Holmes argues that he knows the entire case, and there is no escape for Turner. The case ends with Holmes taking a sworn statement from Turner, but not having to use it since Lestrade’s circumstantial case ultimately fell apart.

“The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” begins with Lestrade stopping by to inconspicuously ask for Holmes’s help with a case, and ends with the solution to three mysteries. The initial case is about a supposed monomaniac who is burglarizing London in order to destroy busts of Napoleon. The second case is the murder of Pietro Venucci. And the third was the case of the missing black pearl of the Borgias. All three cases are intertwined, and Holmes argues for a solution to one, which solves all three.

Holmes uses an argument from paradigm when he argues that the present case is like one of his previous cases. When Watson suggests that this case is simply an instance of extreme monomania, Holmes counters that the case is more like “the dreadful business of the Abernethy family,” which was first brought to Holmes’s attention by “the depth which the parsley had sunk into the butter upon a hot day.”⁴⁴⁵ Holmes’s argument is that one should not take a case lightly simply because it seems trivial on the surface, and he makes this argument by comparing the seemingly trivial case of a burglar with an aversion to Napoleon to an apparently dark case

⁴⁴⁴ Doyle, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 66.

⁴⁴⁵ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 554.

which also began with a seemingly trivial occurrence. Holmes is proved correct when, after the fourth burglary, Pietro Venucci is murdered.

The maxim Holmes gives in this case is, “The press, Watson, is a most valuable institution if you only know how to use it.”⁴⁴⁶ The maxim is humorous in this context, because Holmes has just read a false report he caused to be included in the daily paper. The story claimed that there was no difference of opinion between Lestrade and Holmes, and that both agreed “no explanation save mental aberration can cover the facts.”⁴⁴⁷ However, Holmes and Lestrade completely disagreed about the case. Lestrade felt, as the paper claimed, that the cause of the crime was “mental aberration,” while Holmes pretended to agree in order to lure the criminal into a trap. The maxim Holmes gives might be filled out by adding “they will print anything you give to them.” Holmes’s argument is that one should use the press for one’s own ends, and be careful not to be tricked by what the papers contain.

Holmes’s most entertaining guess in this adventure is his guess about why someone is smashing busts of Napoleon. After Beppo has been captured, Holmes guesses that he had been smashing the busts because he had hidden some loot from a robbery in one of them. Knowing that Beppo had recently served time in prison in connection with a robbery, and knowing that before going to prison Beppo had worked at a plaster factory which manufactured various busts, Holmes guessed that Beppo had hidden a valuable black pearl in one of the busts. The easiest way to test this hypothesis was for Holmes to purchase the last remaining bust from that

⁴⁴⁶ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 559.

⁴⁴⁷ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 559.

collection and smash it himself. Holmes had already learned the owners of the six busts, so the part of his hypothesis that would be easiest to test and would offer the greatest reward was to smash the final bust. His guess yielded confirmation of his hypothesis, and he found the missing pearl of the Borgias in the sixth bust.

An oddity of this case is that Holmes solves the case after capturing the murder. Typically, Holmes traps his suspect and uses every available rhetorical means to persuade them that he has cut off all means of escape or excuse, and then the suspect confesses. However, in this case Beppo is less interesting than his crimes, and he refuses to explain his motives because he hopes to be able to escape and find the pearl later. So in this case, Holmes must persuade Lestrade that Beppo is not merely a “madman” with a compulsion to destroy busts, rather he is a dangerous criminal seeking a stolen gem. After discovering the pearl, Holmes argues that the reason Beppo destroyed the busts was to find the pearl, “The main fact is that he *had* the pearl, and at that moment, when it was on his person, he was pursued by the police,” Holmes argues, “In an instant Beppo, a skillful workman, made a small hole in the wet plaster [bust], dropped in the pearl, and with a few touches covered over the aperture once more.”⁴⁴⁸ Here Holmes uses an enthymeme from probability, arguing that the existence of the pearl gives Beppo a motive, other than monomania, for destroying the busts. Lestrade thanks Holmes for supplying the motive, and departs.

Conclusion

Holmes’s use of rhetoric is the defining feature of the Sherlock Holmes symbol. At the conclusion of *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes tells Watson that it doesn’t matter what you do, it only

⁴⁴⁸ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 564.

matters what you can prove that you have done. At the end of “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” Lestrade tells Holmes, “We’re not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down tomorrow there’s not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn’t be glade to shake you by the hand.”⁴⁴⁹ Over the course of his adventures Holmes has persuaded Lestrade of the solutions to innumerable cases, not only the ones purportedly recorded by Watson, but also the one’s merely alluded to in asides, and through these adventures Holmes has proven the power of his rhetoric to trap criminals and elicit confessions. His method, though approached differently in each case, is to use every available means of persuasion to close the case.

Though interest in Sherlock Holmes centers around his method, fans and critics have not agreed about what that method is. By exploring the literature on Sherlock Holmes, and examining nine of his adventures, I have argued that Holmes uses rhetoric, rather than dialectic, to prove what he has done. By exploring Holmes’s adventures through the lens of Aristotle’s treatise on rhetoric, I have argued that Holmes uses ethos to establish his character in the first phase of an adventure. Second I argued that Holmes uses pathos during the second phase of his adventure in order to collect vital evidence in a case. Finally, I argued that Holmes uses logos, rhetorical forms of logic, to argue for his solution to a case.

Holmes’s rhetoric, however, is not the only equipment for living he provides to an audience. Though Holmes’s arguments may be replicable by readers, it is sometimes his symbolic appeal that provides us with equipment for living. That is, one may feel the disorder of the world spinning out of control, and read a story and feel comforted by the fictional world that

⁴⁴⁹ Doyle, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” *The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes*, 564.

Holmes has restored to order. In that instance Holmes serves as rhetorical equipment for living by acting as the corrective of one's situation. Chaos is soothed by the fictional order of London in the 1890's.

CONCLUSION: “AND I POCKET MY FEE”

And so reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes! I thank you for your past constancy, and can but hope that some return has been made in the shape of that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating change of thought which can only be found in the fairy kingdom or romance.⁴⁵⁰

In conclusion, Sherlock Holmes serves as rhetorical equipment for living because he appeals to an audience in their situation. As a symbol, Holmes appeals to audiences as the interpretation of a situation, by favoring the acceptance of a situation, as the corrective of a situation, as the exerciser of submerged experience, as an emancipator, and as a vehicle for artistic effect. Finally, he is rhetorical because rhetoric is a necessary component of the Sherlock Holmes symbol. Rhetoric is integral the symbol itself, because Holmes’s method is not dialectical but rhetorical.

While I might not go as far as Accardo and say that Holmes lies, he does discover the available means of persuasion in a given situation, and adapt those means to his own ends. When confronted with a reluctant client, or simply with a new client, Holmes establishes his ethos in order to command authority. In the midst of an investigation, Holmes uses his knowledge of the emotions to persuade others to give him evidence vital to the case. Finally, at the end of an adventure, Holmes uses logos to persuade others that his case theory is not only sound, but irrefutable. Though Holmes does not lie when describing his method to Watson, he does persuade Watson of his authority and of the soundness of his conclusions through ethos, pathos, and logos.

Audiences have not, however, merely adopted Holmes’s rhetoric as their own. As a symbol, Holmes may merely appeal to an audience as art, they may find compensatory gains for

⁴⁵⁰ Doyle, “Preface: The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes,” *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1159.

their untenable situation, or, they may use Holmes as self-help literature—wherein the reading of a book on overcoming some personal affliction is itself sufficient and the reader has no intention of “following through” on the advice contained in the book. That is, one may simply crave the world of order Conan Doyle presents and having read an adventure found satisfaction. Holmes still provides rhetorical equipment for living for these audiences, because his symbol is essentially rhetorical. Therefore, by reading a Holmes adventure one reads about rhetoric solving a problem.

Holmes assumes a rational knowable universe. Unlike the noir detectives created by Dashiell Hammett, Rex Stout, and others, Holmes could only function in a world that made sense. While the noir detectives thrived in chaos and were able to solve crimes by disrupting lines of power, relying on subjective internal sense of justice, Holmes would not have been able to function if, to borrow a line from the classic Jack Nicholson film, “it’s just Chinatown.”

This study has been limited to the original Sherlock Holmes as created by Conan Doyle, though some mention of later developments in the character were used to illustrate how the Holmes symbol appeals to audiences. Future research could explore how the symbol continued to evolve while remaining essentially rhetorical. Other future work might make use of the archives at Southsea to explore the explicitly persuasive work of Conan Doyle, his stump speeches, political tracts, and editorials. A comparison of Conan Doyle’s rhetoric and Holmes’s rhetoric may yield insight into both the author and his creation. Some critics, including Conan Doyle’s son, have claimed that Conan Doyle modeled Sherlock Holmes on himself, comparing their rhetorical style through their use of ethos, pathos, and logos might advance this argument.

Finally, future study could continue to explore Burke’s work on symbols and literature as equipment for living. One aspect of Burke’s work which has been largely neglected is his work

on the “margins of persuasion,” which is first introduced in *Counter-Statement*. While this study has made use of the concept, it deserves further attention and further exploration as a tool for understanding how audiences are compelled to take on an authorial point of view despite their resistance.

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