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Fear of and Fascination with the Foreign in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes Adventures

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Fear of and Fascination with the Foreign
in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes Adventures

Mae Leigh Cooke

July 2010

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FEAR AND FASCINATION WITH THE FOREIGN
IN ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURES

Mae Leigh Cooke, M.A.

Grand Valley State University, 2010

Abstract:

Arthur Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes is infamous for his uncanny ability to detect and capture criminals from minimal clues. Doyle's inclusion of Victorian England's fascination with and fear of foreign elements within his detective stories made Holmes an instant success. By including Holmes's stories in *The Strand*, circulation doubled, resulting in the public's adoration of this eccentric hero spanning across decades. Doyle's inclusion of developments in science at the time captivated the audience even further. The character became timeless because of his dual nature; he, like his readers, had personal flaws and unhealthy habits, but was able to redeem himself by utilizing his extensive knowledge of racial anatomy, fingerprints, phrenology, and poisons to defeat threats against the empire. Ultimately, Sherlock Holmes was Doyle's greatest achievement. The character embodied the fascination with foreign entities masses of Victorians experienced and combated the accompanying fears so successfully he reassured the nation, single-handedly, that London could remain uncontaminated by colonial enterprises if enough precaution was used. Today, readers are still fascinated with the character, foreign in his own way, Doyle so brilliantly created.

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Introduction

The leftover ash and burning embers of my cigarette collided violently with the unforgiving pavement, scattered into a million pieces, and shrunk in the rear view mirror. This routine characterized the countless morning drives into school my senior year. Like any seemingly guiltless committer of a crime, I'd repeatedly and carelessly discard any indication of my rebellious habit by flicking the butt through my window. I never thought of my indiscretion as evidence...

My ever-smiling first hour teacher, Mrs. Maginis, called her course "Great Books" despite the fact that a great deal more than reading was required. She always justified her choice saying the novels were the most fascinating part. She was right. In her class, I read my first Sherlock Holmes adventure, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a tale of a supernatural murderous hound and the detective sent to catch him. The scene I still remember fifteen years later is the analysis of the ashes. The amount of ash, the shape and length of it, and the type of tobacco it derived from, all helped Holmes discover the next vital clue in his investigation. Ash was evidence. I've since learned one notable accomplishment Doyle assigned his famous fictional detective was the writing of an impressive article exploring 140 types of ash left over from cigars, pipes, and cigarettes, information he references regularly throughout the series to detect his criminals. I was fascinated that such an eccentric character from so long ago could observe and gain such extensive insight into the criminal's identity simply by inspecting some scattered ashes at a wooden gate.

Curiously, I could not remember if Holmes caught the hound or not, nor did I remember the presence of Watson, and I had no idea why the story didn't take place at

the infamous Baker Street location, but the ash stuck with me. The detective's uncanny ability to deduce countless facts from a single piece of evidence, especially one as small as tobacco ash, fascinated me then and continues to fascinate readers of all ages today. Peculiar but remarkable skills like this made the detective a timeless figure. In fact, Holmes, according to multiple critics such as Jon Thompson, E.J. Wagner, and Stephen Knight, is arguably the most famous detective to ever exist (despite being a fiction). Many readers admit to believing at least for a time that Holmes was a real person, not just a character. He seems much too grandiose to be contained only in the pages of his adventures.

The way Holmes embraces social values and imperialist notions makes the detective deceptively realistic. Like most of the important figures in literature able to capture the public imagination, Doyle's detective succeeds as fiction because he both reflected and influenced Victorian society. Holmes's early adventures focus on the public's fascination with and fear of foreign entities (such as poison, treasure, opiates, and the people themselves) despite England's presumed superiority and control over these more primitive cultures and substances. His later investigations highlight the consequences England's colonial exploits entailed. By embodying the public's ever-shifting fear of and fascination with crime and foreign influence, and simultaneously utilizing scientific philosophies of the Victorian era to detect and eliminate these intruders, the legacy of Sherlock Holmes spanned across decades. He became the public's representation of a trusted protector, ensuring a sense of security for Londoners living in a rapidly changing society, making him eventually an enduring hero of the Victorian era. Doyle could not have known the impact his character would have.

The Invention of Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle never set out to become famous for his detective stories; his first aim was a career in medicine. Doyle only began writing detective stories in order to bring in the money he was not earning through his medical practice, though the Sherlock Holmes pieces certainly did not pay a great deal at first either. The period Doyle spent in Edinburgh studying medicine was not a waste of time, however. It was there Doyle met Dr. Joseph Bell, a professor who was known for his ability to diagnose his patients within minutes simply from observing specific details in their appearance. Most critics agree that Sherlock Holmes is based on Dr. Joseph Bell, as both men were notorious for their “deductive powers in sizing up patients from their behavior, physiognomy, accent and clothing” (Ellis 42). Both were able to deduce within a minute or less the sanity, or lack thereof, of a particular client or case through observing something as seemingly insignificant as the mud on one’s boot, or the condition of one’s hat, or the ash of one’s cigar. Their mystifying abilities made them both famous and admired.

However, not everyone agrees that Dr. Bell was Doyle’s model for Holmes; a few critics insistently point out how analogous Sherlock Holmes is to his own creator. John A. Hodgson, the editor of *Sherlock Holmes: the Major Stories with Contemporary Critical Essays*, writes in his introduction, entitled “Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: Biographical and Critical Contexts,” that the author and his beloved character are similar in several ways. Both men exhibit “a sensitivity to significant detail, a ready imagination, a wide range of social and intellectual experience, and a flair for the dramatic” (3). Other critics agree, sometimes pointing out how Doyle’s detective fiction

often motivated him to help the police each time he discovered something new from his crime research. For example, plaster of Paris was invented two hundred years before the Victorian era, but Doyle is known to be the first to popularize the idea of using it to record and store the fingerprints of criminals. Doyle's son Adrian concurs with Hodgson, reporting the police chiefs knew Conan Doyle himself was Sherlock Holmes, and so did Dr. Joseph Bell. Adrian quotes Dr. Bell's accusatory statement in his introduction to his father's short stories. He claims Bell wrote to Conan Doyle in a letter: "You are yourself Sherlock Holmes" (A. Doyle xiv). The author's son goes on to say, "beneath the deerstalker of Baker Street and the cloth cap of Ashdown Forest [Doyle's home] there lived the same restless searching brain that wrought life out of fiction and fiction out of life" (A. Doyle xiv). Whether Doyle created the stories from observing the way Dr. Bell worked or from a more intimate understanding of the detective's motives and methods, his character spoke for his and the Victorian public's concerns with issues of crime, primitivism, and foreign influence. Through creating an eccentric hero prepared to confront these issues in unexpected and clever ways, he managed to effectively and consistently capture the hearts and minds of millions. No matter whom Holmes was modeled after, his life-like yet peculiar qualities and consistent agenda of keeping the nation secure made him beloved.

One particular point of controversy frequently mentioned among critics is the idea that Doyle not only despised writing about the detective, but even disliked the unconventional character himself. However, his son Adrian clarifies that it was not that his father had a genuine aversion to writing about Holmes; it was that he felt that "so much of his finer work tended to be obscured by his lesser" (xiii). Doyle, according to

his son, admitted that “writ[ing] a Holmes story required little or nothing from him,” and therefore they were not a source of pride for the writer. Once, when Doyle’s cricket match was interrupted by an hour and a half of rain, he sat inside and wrote an entire Holmes adventure and returned to his game without a second thought about it (xiii). The work came naturally to him, so he lacked the public’s vehement enthusiasm for the detective’s adventures. Doyle simply wished to be recognized first for his non-fiction texts, the texts that did require significant effort. Perhaps, a hundred years after he initiated the detective’s exploits, Doyle would be pleased to know we have come to recognize Holmes as a household name, or perhaps he would still harbor resentment that his great empirical work, *The Great Boer War*, continues to be overlooked, if not ignored completely, by his Holmes fans.

Still, Adrian is certain “Holmes must have afforded him a considerable amount of enjoyment and interest, otherwise the atmosphere of the stories would lack that absolutely clear-cut lucidity that has given them the freshness of Immortality” (xiii). I quite agree. Doyle did not create a man he disliked, but rather an eccentric hero, a man like himself and his old professor, one who used his brilliance to deal with crime and detection and safety. Doyle often commented that the most effective way to influence the public’s perspective on ideological issues was through fiction, despite the genre being less impressive in his opinion. In this way however, his non-fiction texts are not completely lost, as several of the same themes exist in his detective novels and short stories. Through his fiction and non-fiction, one popular subject Doyle came to recognize and write about was that imperial motives have two sides--on one hand they

can empower Victorian society, and on the other, they can corrupt it. This recurring message is apparent throughout the Holmes series.

Doyle's Agenda Depicted through Themes

Drawing from his own experiences and philosophies, Doyle wanted to entertain readers with a hero like Poe's character Dupin, (whom Holmes critiques as inferior), but simultaneously used his accounts of war abroad and, a bit later, his Sherlock Holmes stories, to warn them of the dangers that lay outside their civilized London home. Lesli Favor's article, "The Foreign and the Female in Arthur Conan Doyle: Beneath the Candy Coating," argues that Doyle believed social and political changes could be shaped most efficaciously through the medium of fiction. Favor quotes Doyle, who said, "To get an idea to penetrate the masses of the people, you must put fiction around it, like sugar round a pill" (398). British imperial attitudes are clearly evident to varying extents in all of Doyle's texts, but especially within the earlier pieces in which he fervently defends Britain's management of their expanding empire. His dedication to his country was so great that Doyle not only wrote about it, but went so far as to serve voluntarily as a doctor in South Africa during the Boer War. Because Doyle was too old to serve as a soldier, he went as a medic instead and defended Britain's actions in his book *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct*; this patriotic action eventually earned the physician/writer knighthood from King Edward VII, naming him from then on *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*.

Despite his patriotism, in his autobiography, Doyle often contrasts the excitement of the battlefield to the depressing scene of the medical tents. He could see both sides of

the war--the heroic efforts of his countrymen, and the devastating consequences that accompanied their desire to rule--but maintained loyalty to England and its pursuits. Still, Doyle warned his readers of the risk of severe consequences, primarily a development of insatiable greed and murderous madness that would overcome the greedy and overly-involved participant in English endeavors. This is a clear theme in the Sherlock Holmes adventures. While the stories encourage a strong patriotic attitude, they also warn the public of the negative side-effects suffered by those who spent too much among primitive cultures while serving the empire abroad. The ultimate sacrifice the stories depict is of a man who eventually becomes one of the professed savages he was meant to civilize.

Arthur Conan Doyle's patriotic attitude derived from his mother, Mary Doyle. Mary "raised Arthur on a strong diet of national pride, genealogy, heraldry and tales of chivalric valor and virtue" (Hodgson, ed. 6). There is no lack of these attributes in Doyle's detective fiction. The first two Holmes pieces Doyle wrote, *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*, both focus on crimes that began abroad in two of England's colonies, America and Afghanistan. The criminals only find themselves in England because what they seek--revenge or wealth--has led them there. They both have been contaminated by the Other, and are consequently consumed with their own form of madness, relentless about accomplishing their criminal goal, which included even the murdering their own countrymen, despite all consequences. Following the publication of these first two novels, Doyle wrote the Holmes adventures in a series of short stories simply because that is what *The Strand*, the most popular magazine in Victorian London, required. Each story could stand alone, but the intrigue of the character and his fight

against criminals, almost always from or associated with England's colonies, drew readers back for the next installment. Several years passed before Doyle wrote two more novels, *The Valley of Fear*, and finally, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. However, the fear of foreign influence and the ensuing madness apparent in his criminals is a consistent theme in almost all the tales.

Criticism Focused on Foreign Influence

Ironically, more criticism of the Sherlock Holmes adventures exists than tales themselves. This is saying a great deal considering that Doyle wrote a total of fifty-six short stories and four novels about this beloved detective; Leslie Klinger's annotated Holmes collection amounts to over 3000 pages of the detective's adventures, not including the edited remarks and essays interspersed throughout. While some scholarship is focused on Doyle's exploits with the Boer War and his aversion to Holmes, much more of the criticism I have encountered deals primarily with Doyle's use of Holmes to assuage the anxieties of the public concerning England's colonies and the influx of foreign people, medicines, and influence on London. For as much pride and power as colonization brought to Victorian England, it also brought corruption and, at least from the perspective of Doyle's fiction, often turned its colonizer participants into thieves, drug addicts, diseased men, or mad murderers.

According to Laura Otis's article, "The Empire Bites Back: Sherlock Holmes as an Imperial Immune System," the Europeans "viewed the maintenance of Empire as a defensive rather than an aggressive strategy" in justifying their invasion of foreign countries in order to "protect their original borders against invasion" (Otis 31). However,

Otis argues, the “very process of [British] expansion... left them vulnerable to the new germs, mates, and ideas that their soldiers would bring home with them” (31). Doyle’s character Sherlock Holmes thus satisfies an imperial hope, a single Londoner who is able to determine, simply by observing the appearance and behaviors of people, whether or not they are a threat. Holmes apparently has “limitless energy and intelligence, [with which] he [is able to defend] the heart of his Empire against the germs that must inevitably reach it from the foreign land it seeks to control” (31). Many of these “germs” are brought over by the participants in the wars themselves. The men who return to the rural spaces of England *are* the germ, *are* the threat to England; they are contaminated with greed and savage behavior, both forms of madness in that they are characteristics which only belong to the Other, not to Victorian heroes. In this way, Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes plots can be read as warnings to the British public of the nefarious and possibly infectious influence of foreigners. Highlighting Doyle’s own experience with bacteria in the Boer War, Otis believes that he wrote the Holmes stories purposefully to depict the “potential destruction that undetected foreign and domestic malefactors might bring about in British society” (32). Moral Victorian society was in danger of being corrupted by the return of foreign elements to their homeland.

Patrick Dunae, in his article, “Boys’ Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914,” claims that boys’ “books and periodicals were without exception dedicated to the imperial idea” in such a way “as to inspire confidence and devotion among the vast adolescent public,” regardless of any negative impact colonization might cause (106). However, while support for Britain’s endeavors is upheld, bringing elements of foreign influences back to London is not. Sherlock Holmes’s adventures operate in the same

dualistic manner; Doyle's imperialist ideologies are embedded in the text as his fiction encourages English readers to feel fascination with as well as fear of foreign elements and people in the same way that he and countless others experienced while abroad. Therefore, the public's fascination with elements such as foreign anatomy, exotic drug use, and primitive lifestyles often is intertwined with the fear that their savage behaviors and "diseases" are contagious. So even while his fiction lures readers with outlandish villains and crimes, Doyle uses this fear of the foreign to encourage the public to keep foreign elements out of London, or if need be, to eliminate them altogether.

The presence of fear and fascination with foreign influences is present throughout the Holmes series. The following pages will focus primarily on one early novel, *The Sign of Four*, depicting Holmes's embracing of foreign substances as well as the public's fascination with poisons, and one late novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where primitive lifestyles are the newest cause for apprehension and the threat of the foreign has invaded English soil in the form of people who have returned from too much time abroad. Holmes represents the perspective of the public in both cases, a perspective which continued to shift as new consequences of colonial exploits were revealed. No matter how impossible a case seems, Holmes is able to use science and keen observations to detect and control the influx of negative foreign impact, reassuring readers that London could remain uncontaminated if enough caution was used.

Chapter 2: Fear and Fascination in *The Sign of Four*

Victorian society in the late nineteenth century was inundated with discoveries abroad and at home. One of the most influential and intriguing findings was Britain's importation and experimentation with opium, cocoa leaves, and morphine. And although all three drugs, as well as other foreign elements, later became associated with disease and contamination, Londoners in the 1880's were at first too enthralled with the wealth that could be gained from colonial exploits to be concerned with the consequences; purchasing foreign commodities was one trait all the social classes had in common. England's fascination with and simultaneous anxiety concerning foreigners and imports was widely apparent not only in scientific literature, published primarily for the educated population, but in fiction as well, such as within the stories published in *The Strand*. The public's fascination with foreign elements was only strengthened by Doyle's introduction of Sherlock Holmes's and Dr. Watson's recollections of their eccentric encounters with criminal enterprises. Despite the dangers that came to be associated with the foreign, the public continued to attain and use foreign items and substances, unable to conceal their fascination.

A Nation's Drug Fascination

According to "Addiction, Empire, and Narrative in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*," in nineteenth-century England, the foreign substance opium became "a major export commodity for Britain's largest colony, India, and the British government was very sensitive to the profits that could be realized through the sale of the drug" (Keep, Randall 207). It was not until nearly a decade after the first introduction of

cocaine and morphine into mainstream London that scientists and psychiatrists recognized the negative side effects and addictive properties of opium products, but much of the public chose to maintain its drug habit for years afterward (and efforts to stop them lacked enthusiasm because of how amply their habits fed the economy).

Many middle-class citizens of Victorian England became opium or cocaine addicts partially due to their fascination with the foreign substance and partially due to the medical community's encouragement. Scientists, ironically, aided in spreading this epidemic by praising the use of opiates and cocaine in various medical procedures. (See Appendix B). In fact, some sixty-seven articles were printed supporting the use of cocaine and its medicinal advantages in the *British Medical Journal* in 1885. One such supporter was Sigmund Freud who promoted regular cocaine use with his patients to help cure their depression, lack of motivation, and so on. He reported that cocaine helped with "fatigue, nervousness, neurasthenia, and morphine addiction" (Keep, Randall 209). Carl Koller, another well-respected doctor and researcher, encouraged using cocaine as a local anesthetic in eye surgery; his advice was followed for years.

Opium and cocaine appeared at first to be a miraculous new advancement for scientists and doctors to utilize in several fields. But scientists were not the only ones to take advantage of the newly imported substance; countless businesses targeted consumers of all types. Advertisements frequently praised drug use for mental stimulation and promoted products that contained the drugs, such as Coca Cola, toothache medicines, dental procedures, teas, lozenges, wines, and so on, all of which were exceedingly popular until 1903. The opium in medicines such as Hostetter's Celebrated Stomach Bitters not only claimed to prolong one's life, but also cured a patient of depression; the

drug was supposedly the key ingredient in making the product effective (Klinger 312). According to the article, “Opium for England,” approximately five out of six working class families used opium on a regular basis for ailments or stimulation! Adults frequently drank various beverages containing opium or cocaine, often on a daily basis. Shockingly, parents would use cocaine regularly to alleviate even their toddlers’ and infants’ tooth aches, which Leslie Klinger remarks was eventually found responsible for the deaths of numerous infants (312). With such rampant use of both opium and cocaine, the substances may have been, at least temporarily, depicted as English creations; however, once the drugs became correlated with death and addiction, they once again became predominantly associated with the foreign. Not only were both substances imported from abroad, the labels and advertisements for products that contained the drugs often incorporated images of foreigners on them. Nevertheless, the fascination concerning the foreign substances, regardless of their potential danger, made it commonplace to have drugs in the home. No one exhibited any fear of drug use until scientists discovered and made public how damaging consistent use could be to one’s health.

When scientists changed their minds about the use of cocaine, morphine, opium, and other drugs extending from these sources, this new perspective on drug use caused it to become associated with criminals and foreigners. After recognizing the substances’ hazardous side effects, “the ‘oriental’ element was accused of [harmfully] influencing the moral British society; further perpetuating prejudice and inaccurate representations of Asians [and] Indians, while diminishing the role of England itself in its own infliction” (“Opium for England” 3). Once recreational (as well as medical) drug use became less

acceptable, opium dens began opening up for those who were unable or unwilling to drop the habit. In Doyle's short story, "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Watson travels to one such opium den in search of Isa Whitney, an addict whom he was to return home. Watson finds this den's entrance, "a black gap like the mouth of a cave," and Doyle's portrayal personifies it as if it was about to swallow Watson whole. Watson feels like he's entering something "like the forecastle of an emigrant ship," an image straightforwardly connected with foreign invasion. Doyle describes the scene as riddled with "bodies in strange fantastic poses, bowed shoulders, bent knees, heads thrown back and chins pointed upwards" and "here and there a dark lack luster eye" (Doyle *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 132). Doyle easily associates these images of addicts with the idea of foreign Others, successfully dehumanizing them by limiting their descriptions to animal-like features. Not unlike other postcolonial novels, the figures in the den are depicted as little more than body parts jutting out of the darkness, and therefore not defined as whole people as other Londoners are, but simply parts that are not associated with having much value. Despite the creepy dens and health risks, the fascination with the various drugs endured, and the addiction continued among many. Conan Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes was no exception.

A Detective's Drug Fascination

Doyle's second detective novel, *The Sign of Four*, published in 1890, opens with Holmes injecting cocaine into "[his] sinewy forearm and wrist all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture marks" to the hearty disapproval of Dr. Watson, who entreats him to consider the consequences. Holmes eventually admits that its "physical influence is... a

bad one," however, he is unwilling to give it up, because the mental stimulation entertains him during those times he is lacking an exciting case (Doyle 214). Like other addicts, the signs of Holmes's addiction to the foreign (and dangerous) substance is evident on his arms, making even Holmes himself a little less conventional and less heroic than a typical protagonist, and therefore more fascinating. Unusual attributes like Holmes's attraction to cocaine in part account for his enduring popularity, even when the practice was condemned as criminal and destructive. Despite his emerging scars however, the detective is unwilling to quit using the drug because his mind "rebels at stagnation" (216). He, like the public, remains enthralled with this substance from foreign lands.

Watson, like Victorian England's public at the time, (which was developing a slow but growing awareness of the negative side effects of opium use,) continues to voice his disagreement with Holmes's habit, noting that he had been watching Holmes's practice of injecting himself "three times a day for many months" (Doyle *The Sign of Four* 213). When Holmes propositions Watson to try a bit, he replies that he has "not yet gotten over the Afghan campaign," insinuating he has suffered from too much experience with foreign enterprise already, as well as implying his distaste for Holmes's habit. He warns Holmes, pleading, "Count the cost! Your brain may...be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process, which involves increased tissue-change and may at last leave a permanent weakness" (214). Holmes disregards Watson's warning and simply proceeds to justify his drug use by claiming he "cannot live without brainwork" (216). He further comments to Watson about Victorian England saying, "[he] could dispense [with] artificial stimulants. But [he] abhor[s] the dull routine of existence" (217). Holmes's addiction to morphine and cocaine in the first half of the detective series

perhaps warns the public that even as admirable and rational a man as Sherlock Holmes can be susceptible to the influence of foreign substances, regardless of the obvious penalties.

Clearly, Holmes chooses to maintain his fascination with cocaine despite the public's new-found fear. Often at pauses in his investigation, Holmes will return to Baker Street to inject himself again. His addiction is emphasized again at the end of *The Sign of Four*; Watson remarks at the conclusion of the case that each person involved is receiving some token of appreciation except for Holmes. "The division seems unfair [since] you have done all the work in this business [but] I get a wife out of it, Jones (the policeman) gets the credit" and nothing is given to Sherlock Holmes, claims Watson. Unfortunately, Holmes's response in the very last line of the novel may be the only unsurprising element of the plot; "'For me,' [says] Sherlock Holmes, 'There still remains the cocaine bottle.' And he stretched his long white hand up for it" (379). While the foreign fascinates Holmes (and his readers), it is simultaneously killing him.

Fascination with Foreign Acquisitions

Drugs such as opiates and cocaine were not the only foreign commodities sought out by the Victorian public. Especially popular among those Victorians who traveled abroad for war or trade, were commodities (like rugs, vases, tapestries) to decorate their elaborate homes with. Some even purchased foreign animals and servants to roam their estates and keep them in the company of the exotic.

In Doyle's short story "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," the influence of the evil foreign East on the innocent Victorians in the West is made apparent. In this story, a

woman named Helen Stoner seeks out Holmes because she is concerned for her life having heard a mysterious whistle outside her home--the same whistling sound that foreshadowed her sister's death the previous year. Helen is living with her stepfather, Dr. Roylott, who "had no friends at all save the wandering gypsies" who, according to Helen are vagabonds whom "he [gave] leave to encamp" upon the family estate (Doyle *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 188). Her fear of the foreigners is made further obvious when Helen claims, "It must be those wretched gypsies in the plantation" who are responsible for killing her sister.

As the story continues however, it appears more likely that the culprit is Dr. Roylott, who had an unlikely connection to the gypsies and a passion for Indian animals, particularly a cheetah and a baboon "which wander[ed] freely over the grounds" and a snake which he keeps hidden for his own purposes (188). Again, it seems his fascination with that which is foreign has had a destructive, almost savage influence on him. According to Doyle, Dr. Roylott's violence of temper had been "intensified by his long residence in the tropics," and he now is known as the "terror of the village" (188). In addition to the influences of the native people and animals Dr. Roylott brought back with him, he is accustomed to smoking a "strong Indian cigar" each evening before retiring to bed, contaminating even his body with the inhalation of the foreign substance (189).

With all of these clues at hand, Holmes discovers that indeed Dr. Roylott is the murderer of Helen's sister. On the very night Dr. Roylott decides to murder Helen herself, Holmes and Watson catch him. Dr. Roylott again is using an acquisition from foreign lands--a beast with a "diamond shaped head and [the] puffed neck of a loathsome serpent" (210). Dr. Roylott, intending to use the Adler snake to poison his victim in a

way that leaves no trace, is not only outsmarted by Holmes, but is in turn poisoned himself by this foreign beast he was so fascinated with. Had Roylott not spent time abroad, he would not have had access to and a subsequent obsession with exotic animals, nor would he have developed the madness which resulted in his being identified as the village terror. However, because Roylott, by this time, was so influenced by the foreign entities surrounding him, Holmes remarks that despite being directly responsible for Dr. Roylott's death, he "cannot say that [Roylott's death] is likely to weigh very heavily upon [his] conscience" (212). At this stage, because his time abroad has caused him to go mad and is suggested as the cause for his criminal intentions), Roylott is considered no more a person of worth than a foreigner is, and thus his death is not a substantial loss. Foreign substances and acquisitions more often than not have two consequences for the possessor: they lead him into madness, and therefore, lessen his worth as a human being.

A Correlation Between Foreign Dominance and Greed

This pattern of developing insatiable greed and subsequent madness after spending time abroad (and amplifying it by surrounding oneself with acquired foreign elements) is repeated in several of the detective's adventures, including Doyle's *The Sign of Four*. Early in the novel, Holmes is sought out by Miss Mary Morstan, who has received a package containing part of an Indian treasure her father is said to have possessed, a large and clearly valuable pearl. The arrival of the package is mysterious because her father disappeared the very night he arrived back in England four years ago from abroad, therefore the sender of the package is unknown. Doyle informs the readers that Mary's father, Captain Morstan, was not always heroic while serving the empire.

He, along with another English guard, Major Sholto, governed Indian prisoners in the Andaman Islands for some years before returning from their colonial endeavor. Although the object of imprisoning the Indians on the island was apparently to convert the foreigners into self-respecting and civilized people, the English did not behave in accordance with their teaching. Klinger informs us that of the 773 Indian convicts that arrived on the island, the majority died soon after “because they were forced to do manual labour in chains and fetters” (232). Additionally, when English soldiers caught eighty-six people attempting to escape, they hunted them, hung them, and barbarically buried them all together in a mass grave, still fettered together (Klinger 233). Sadly typical of the colonial enterprise, the English did not follow the same standards of civilized behavior they were supposedly teaching their inferior foreign captives. In fact, they behaved more savagely than the Others they were assigned to domesticate. Perhaps Doyle insinuates Morstan and Sholto’s ensuing cursed lives were justified because of the malicious acts they committed on the Andaman Islands.

It comes as no surprise then that Major Sholto and Captain Morstan were involved in stealing a treasure from the foreigners (and an English accomplice) they imprisoned. While the two English soldiers initially agreed to help the three Sikh men and Jonathan Small escape the prison in exchange for a portion of the Agra treasure, they never intended to do so. Instead they returned to Agra to dig up the foreign jewels for themselves alone and left the four original thieves incarcerated. On the night they return to England, Major Sholto is overcome with greed and argues with Morstan about the division of the treasure. Consequently, Morstan accidentally falls in the heat of the argument, cutting his head open and dying. In an act of uncivilized and, one might argue,

mad behavior, Sholto chooses not to tell a soul, not even Morstan's family, but to keep the cursed treasure for himself and his sons alone. Even on his death bed, he does not take responsibility for keeping his friend's death a secret for so long. Instead he is concerned about the contents of the letter he has just received, four years after Morstan's death, informing Sholto that one Andaman Islander (the English one who assisted three Sikhs in stealing the treasure in the first place) has escaped and seeks the treasure for himself, despite the obvious evil associations it carries. For men who spend too much time abroad, the fascination with wealth and foreign acquisition outweighs any fear of consequences. Certainly, greed was also present within the English that had not spent time abroad, but Doyle does not include this reality in his Holmes stories. In fact, Doyle's representation of the English that remained in London seems to be an untainted one. For example, after Watson and Mary Morstan learn that the treasure is disposed of in the Thames river, they do not despair about the loss of such riches. In fact, they are happy to remain in the same social class so that they might pursue a romantic relationship with one another. The money would have only been a burden.

In order to learn of these facts, Miss Morstan must first meet one of the Sholto sons, Thaddeus, who has summoned her via letter accompanying the most recent delivery of a sixth pearl, a "strange compensation" for robbing her of her rightful portion of the treasure, Holmes remarks (238). The second strange element Miss Morstan produces to Watson and Holmes is a letter she found at her father's vacant hotel (four years earlier) containing a "curious hieroglyphic like four crosses in a line with their arms touching... the sign of the four" (239). The primitive symbol, which is accompanied by "very rough and coarse characters," suggests to the three that they are dealing with an arguably less

educated suspect and one whose association with this foreign treasure has driven him to primitive and savage means of acquiring wealth. Indeed, the criminal leaves the same symbol on the body of his next victim in pursuit of the Agra treasure.

A Limited Perspective of the Foreign

When Holmes, Watson and Miss Morstan arrive at their curious destination, the Sholto mansion, they are greeted by a “Hindu servant clad in a yellow turban” who is out of place in an English establishment (9). From the first time readers come into contact with someone other than white Victorians, the darker-skinned characters are defined as Other; everything that is not English about them, such as their language or clothing, is emphasized in such a way as to objectify them. They are physical representations of what the public imagines a foreigner should be like. (See Appendix A). Jon Thompson, in his book, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, states that “once individuals are designated as cultural ‘others’ by virtue of being foreign ... they are scarcely characterized at all or are only handled in the most stereotypical fashion” (69). Just as Britain’s imprisoning of the Indians abroad on the Andaman Islands to civilize them implies that they are less human, less developed, and in need of British influence to better themselves, Doyle’s description of Indian servants is straightforward in defining foreigners as certainly intriguing, but still inferior and innately primitive. Neither the group on the Andaman Islands, nor the individual foreigner is portrayed as a well-developed character, thus limiting the composition of foreign presences to simple elements that emphasize their difference from the English. The servant at the Sholto residence is referred to as a “strangely incongruous ... Oriental figure [out of place] in the commonplace doorway of a third-rate suburban

dwelling-house.” His use of his native tongue also characterizes him as alien; “‘The *sahib* awaits you,’ [says] he” (Doyle *The Sign of Four* 245). Despite his polite and seemingly civilized demeanor, the servant is still perceived as unsuitable for English society given that his clothing, skin, and language make him Other. Furthermore, the mere presence of the Indian servant puts Holmes and Watson (and presumably the reader) on alert, suggesting that when a foreigner inhabits an English estate, danger is lurking.

The establishment they enter is also defined by the décor that marks it as fascinatingly foreign, exhibiting “the richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries drap[ing] the walls, looped back...to expose some richly-mounted painting or Oriental vase,” soft carpet that sinks slowly as a “bed of moss,” “two great tiger-skins thrown athwart,” and a “huge hookah” (247). According to Keep and Randall, in *The Sign of Four*, Sholto’s home represents a kind of “midway point between West and East... a kind of portal through which the three [men] step into a confusing world of free-floating signs of race and nationality, in which the ‘suburban’ becomes the ‘exotic’ and vice versa” (214). Because Sholto has chosen to invite foreign people and items into his home, it has, in a sense, been contaminated by the Other.

As soon as they arrive and meet Thaddeus Sholto at his home, he smokes the hookah to sooth his anxiety, another practice derived from the foreign lands that is read as destructive to his health. But, like Holmes, Thaddeus too chooses his fascination with the substance over his fear. His hookah use and his omnipresent foreign surroundings suggest that Thaddeus is diseased. Though he has just reached his thirtieth birthday, he appears much older, with a “bald shining scalp” and features which were “in a perpetual

jerk--now smiling now scowling, but never for an instant in repose” (Doyle *The Sign of Four* 247). He wastes no time sharing with Dr. Watson his fears of the weak mitral valve in his heart and his plaguing anxiety issues, both implied side effects of living under the curse of foreign influences.

The three visitors soon learn Major Sholto has a second son, Bartholomew, who is slightly older than Thaddeus. Thaddeus, who lives a short distance from the original Sholto estate where his brother resides, informs Holmes, Watson, and Miss Morstan that his father, Major Sholto, brought with him a “considerable sum of money, [and] a large collection of valuable curiosities,” but there was also a treasure they have never been able to locate at his brother’s estate (256). Bartholomew Sholto’s fascination with and greed for this foreign treasure became so great (after they learned of it just before their father’s death) that he “made measurements everywhere so that not one inch [of the inherited estate] should be unaccounted for” (258). Once Bartholomew discovers the treasure, however, the trouble resumes, suggesting again that wealth and commodities from abroad only create disharmony and madness for those that acquire them. In Bartholomew’s case, his discovery of the fascinating treasure quickly leads to his death by yet another foreign substance.

A Fascinating Weapon: Poison

Victorian England was highly entertained with countless trials featuring criminals who used poison to execute their victims throughout the nineteenth century, so Holmes’s extensive knowledge of poisons and cases involving toxicology is not surprising. In fact, E.J. Wagner reports that while Doyle was studying medicine under Dr. Bell, he learned of

a particularly famous case involving Eugene Chantrelle, a Frenchman living in Edinburgh at the same time as Doyle in 1878. The Frenchman promptly wed a student (Elizabeth) after his move to Scotland, but the marriage was an unhappy one and Eugene was repeatedly overheard bragging about his potential ability to poison her without anyone knowing the difference. A short while later, following Eugene's purchase of a suspicious life insurance policy, Elizabeth was found dead. The doctor investigating the case, (who is rumored to have consulted Dr. Bell,) discovered coal gas poisoning was responsible for her death. Doyle certainly would have followed the case, which "redeemed [toxicology] as a weapon in the interest of justice" (Wagner 55). This case and countless others involving poisoning were prevalent throughout the Victorian era, making courtrooms more popularly attended by the public than even the theater.

Watson and Holmes allude to several famous criminal cases involving poison throughout the detective series. In *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes novel, Watson refers to two famous women who allegedly were responsible for some six hundred murders via poisoning. Jefferson Hope, the criminal suspect in the novel, is an American Holmes tracks down for the murder of Enoch Drebber in London. During his interview, an unapologetic Hope reveals he learned how to make poison, the murder weapon, while working in the science department as a janitor at a university abroad. Of course, Holmes had already identified the poison as foreign as he did in several other cases. Poison seemed a fast and easy solution for criminals and citizens with personal vendettas in Victorian England.

With morphine as readily available as it was during the late nineteenth century, the opportunity for poisoning an undesirable associate was hardly a challenge. Ironically,

poisoning was often blamed on foreigners despite the fact that the British were utilizing it extensively as sedatives, medicine, and so on (see Appendix C). In particular, poisons extracted from animals were always blamed on the presence of foreigners in England or contaminated Englishmen bringing them back from abroad. For example, Dr. Roylott in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” uses the Indian Swamp Adler to poison his stepdaughter in order to keep her dowry for himself. In “The Dying Detective,” Holmes also blames a foreign animal-based poison, which he calls a biological weapon, for his illness (although he’s feigning his deathlike state) and informs Watson the toxin derives from the viper’s tooth coated with a substance from Sumatra. It’s contained in a spring loaded box, ready to strike the unsuspecting Englishman. Stories like this, while fascinating, encouraged negative attitudes against foreign presences in England.

In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes, Watson, and Miss Morstan travel to Bartholomew Sholto’s estate (inherited from Major Sholto), leaving the “damp fog of the great city behind” and enter a formidable location “girt round with a very high stone wall topped with broken glass” (260). The rural setting resembles the primitive and dangerous locations one might find abroad. Almost immediately after their arrival, they learn Bartholomew has not exited his room all day; breaking down the door, they find him dead, a poison thorn wedged into his neck. Immediately, the perpetrator is labeled as a foreigner, as no Englishman would use such a savage tool. Furthermore, the drug used in the miniature poison dart is not English, but a native poison. The thorn was “shot with no great force into the scalp,” as is common with foreign blow-pipes, and had a “gummy substance” on it, marking it as exotic (268). Holmes identifies not only the thorn as deriving from abroad, but also deduces that the poison on it responsible for killing

Bartholomew Sholto contains a "powerful vegetable alkaloid," which is known to be imported from the colonies. The foreign poison has caused the unusually quick effect of rigor mortis found in Bartholomew's muscles and the subsequent distortion of his facial features (278). This gummy substance yet another dangerous import from a foreign place, claiming the life of a young and presumably innocent British man, but that injustice would not change the Victorians' undeniable attraction to the prospect of a foreign criminal suspect knowledgeable about poisons. On the contrary, the dire circumstances would only attract a greater number of followers rather than deter Victorians from learning more.

Holmes's Detection and Neutralization of the Foreign

Upon further investigation of Bartholomew Sholto's room and the attic above, Watson and Holmes discover naked footprints in the dust, "scarce half the size of those of an ordinary man" (276). While Watson deduces that a child must have committed the atrocity, and the policeman Athelney Jones assumes Thaddeus killed his brother, Holmes knows better; the detective confidently concludes that the first suspect has a wooden leg and the second suspect is undeniably a foreign intruder. Luckily, Holmes notices immediately that the barefoot criminal has accidentally walked through creosote (a foul and sticky substance) while in the attic, enabling the men to track him. Using dogs to track criminals was a new concept in London, although the only use of it thus far (an attempt to track Jack the Ripper) had been unsuccessful. Holmes promptly sends Watson to pick up "a queer mongrel, with a most amazing power of scent," whose help he prefers rather than the entire detective force of London.

Toby, the dog, proves most helpful in tracking the two suspects for several miles through various terrains including estates, fields, and streets until they reach a shipping yard, where Holmes and Watson question the wife of Mr. Smith, owner of the *Aurora*, one of the fastest launches available. The case then goes cold and Watson and Holmes return to Baker Street to investigate the source of the footprints.

Holmes asks Watson what he makes of the “diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet, stone-headed wooden mace, great agility, [and] small poison darts.” Clearly Holmes has already come to a conclusion about the type of criminal they are seeking, but tests Watson’s deductive abilities for some entertainment. Without hesitation, Watson exclaims, “A savage!” (306). The two men share a lengthy discussion of how footprints can determine the race of the man leaving them. Indians have slightly larger feet, Hindoos’ feet are thinner and longer, and Mohammedans’ feet display a big toe farther separated from the rest, so this print is none of those. They use the first volume of an unnamed gazetteer to determine that the print belongs to an aborigine of the Andaman Islands, the “smallest race upon this earth” (307). Their small size does not make them benign however. From the gazetteer, Holmes reads, “They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small fierce eyes, and distorted features,” a description which defines the native population as not only primitive in appearance, but presumably monstrous in intent. Furthermore, the Andaman race is supposedly “so intractable and fierce... that all the efforts of British officials have failed to win them over in any degree” (308). In other words, these savages are untamable. If the gazetteer, widely accepted as fact, was not discriminate enough, the passage ends stating their “massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast” (308). Such

publications were not only extensively published and available for the public, they were universally relied on as reputable information defining what characteristics made up a particular race. After reading such an entry, it is no wonder Holmes and Watson kill the savage Tonga on sight once they finally catch up to the criminal pair.

To Jonathan Small and Tonga's credit, they manage to elude the detective and Scotland Yard for several days until the *Aurora* is finally spotted and chased down. For the first time, Watson and Holmes actually see the Andaman Islander and the English convict, only to find their readings accurate. Upon seeing Tonga, Watson remarks he's never seen "features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at [Watson and Holmes] with half animal fury" (332). From Doyle's depiction, there seems to be nothing human about Tonga; he is nothing more than a wild animal with murderous instincts and who is presumably incapable of being civilized, thus worthy of execution. As soon as they are in range and can identify the figure as the foreigner, Tonga, Holmes and Watson simultaneously shoot and hit their mark. To the defenders of civilized London, Tonga "arrived in England and brought with him the sheer excessiveness of the colonial world," thus, once detected, he must be killed to maintain the well-being of the innocent public (Keep, Randall 214). Holmes, Watson, and the Scotland police treat Jonathan Small quite differently however. Small is arrested, brought back to land and even offered a cigar to enjoy while he's questioned.

Small is not respectable however. His "sunburned reckless eye[s]" and "mahogany features" suggest he was undergoing a transformation into the savage lifestyle of a foreigner. Without provocation, Small admits feeling pleasure concerning

Major Sholto's murder. He hated the man, English or not, for betraying him, leaving him on the Andaman Islands instead of freeing him as he had promised to do in exchange for part of the treasure. Interestingly, despite Small also being a convict, having darker skin, a menacing agenda, an insatiable desire for wealth, and an admittedly murderous scheme, he is treated with far more respect than Tonga. Clearly, Holmes assumes that Small will behave in a civilized manner whereas Tonga could not. After all, Small did serve the empire for some time and helped "look after [an English landowner's] coolies," demonstrating that he was trusted at one point to decipher clearly between who was civilized and who was primitive (348). Holmes, Watson, and the Scotland Yard's better treatment of Small insinuates that they blame the influence the foreign Other had on him for his actions, rather than holding Small himself fully accountable.

Holding the Foreign Accountable

Holmes and Watson believe that Miss Morstan's father died, (along with the Major and Bartholomew Sholto), because of his connection to the Agra Treasure. This treasure, because it originated in India, is also an object of the foreign Other, and serves as a curse on those who seek to gain possession of it, as readers discover after Holmes and Watson capture Jonathan Small and kill his foreign partner, Tonga. Even Small himself states that the Agra treasure "never brought anything but a curse yet upon the man who owned it. To [the original merchant who attempted to transport it to Agra Fort] it brought murder, to Major Sholto it brought fear and guilt, and to [Small] it has meant slavery for life" (340). No one escapes the negative impact of possessing the foreign fortune. According to Keep and Randall's article, the "sheer excessiveness of the Agra

treasure, its power to attract, to kill, and to elude capture, and, perhaps most significantly, its imminent return to the shores of Great Britain in the form of a murderous conspiracy” plainly illustrate the danger the Agra treasure represents (212). However, Jonathan Small and Tonga were too fascinated by the foreign treasure to stop their search, just as the Sholtos once were.

The treasure originally was delivered to the Agra Fort during the attack of the Indian Mutiny, which perhaps foreshadows its connection to violence and injustice. Jonathan Small was once a part of the British army in India before losing his leg to a crocodile. Despite the loss however, he continued to serve the empire by monitoring a group of coolies who were working for a friend of the colonel’s, and eventually he spent time defending the fort against the Indian attack. However, his loyalty to England wavered once he was contaminated by foreign influence. A multitude of material was published concerning the Indian Mutiny. Besides Doyle’s fiction, a myriad of other written essays and memoirs appeared in the late 1800’s, showing English writers’ “compulsive, almost obsessional need to bring the Mutiny to account” (Keep, Randall 212). Whether in fiction or journalism, these writers (T.R.E Holmes, H.M. Greenhow, J.E Muddock, and G.A. Henty) including Doyle, justify the British fighting against the Indian Mutiny, and show the “extent to which the uprisings of the 1857-58 challenged British claims to colonial authority” (Keep, Randall 212). Even their use of the word ‘mutiny’ classified the act of the inhabitants as unjustified. Of course England had a right to colonize them, but Doyle appeared to recognize that by doing so, England risked taking on the negative impacts of that power as well.

Jonathon Small, in *The Sign of Four*, declares, “It was a fight of the millions against the hundreds; and the cruelest part... was that these men that we fought against, foot, horse, and gunners, were our own picked troops, whom we had taught and trained” (351). In his account, Small fails to mention that the English were greasing the rifles with pig and beef fat, an act which was extremely offensive to the religious Hindus and Muslims cooperating with England’s colonial efforts. According to Klinger, this act was only the beginning of several atrocities committed against the troops, eventually resulting in their rebellion. While Small demonstrates some knowledge of the native people’s desire not to be colonized, he more passionately depicts them as savages in their attempts, emphasizing in particular the image of his boss’s wife’s mutilated body. His attempt to justify England’s violence against the foreigners is expected, but certainly not fully accurate. Furthermore, Jonathan Small claims he never initiated the idea of stealing any treasure; he was influenced by two Sikh men whom he was assigned to stand on guard with. He refers to them as two natives, “two wild Punjaubees” (358), who spoke in their “queer Sikh lingo” together (356). He only became involved in stealing and hiding the Agra Treasure because the two Sikh men threatened his life if he wouldn’t join them. Again, the fascination with a foreign item as life-threatening is revealed. And although Small knew better than to become involved, he participates willingly in the end, helping the Sikh men to kill the rightful English owner’s merchant and bury the treasure in the fort until they could retrieve it later.

Eventually, Small reveals the whereabouts of the treasure while he’s in prison but is betrayed by Major Sholto, who steals and hides the treasure at his estate, in the attic. At the same time, Small shares the secret with Tonga, a foreign inmate he’s nursing back

to health who ultimately becomes Small's accomplice. They travel together for years before finally returning to England, determined to get back the Agra treasure. They were partners, therefore Small is also contaminated and an Other, just as Tonga is. He's a criminal, a cripple, and too closely associated with a foreigner. Despite his likeness to Tonga and his ensuing friendship with him, in the end, Small speaks about his foreign accomplice to Holmes as if he were nothing more than an evil savage. Tonga is called a "hell-hound" and "little devil" by Small (360), despite the islander's consistent devotion to Small, which is also used against him, classifying him as simple and stupid (Frank 187). Small and Tonga earned money by "exhibiting... Tonga at fairs...as the black cannibal." They made him into a side show freak, where Tonga would "eat raw meat and dance his war-dance" (189). They seem to think it is in Tonga's nature to kill and hurt others. When he killed Bartholomew, Tonga thought he had accomplished something good, as their mission was to repossess the treasure (which the Sholtos had stolen). Small said he was just a "bloodthirsty imp" (Doyle *The Sign of Four* 360). Watson's description of Tonga just after they shot him is equally disturbing as he catches one last "glimpse of [Tonga's] venomous, menacing eyes amid the white swirl of the waters" before he sinks (348). No one praises the foreigner for loyalty to Small, but focuses instead on his primitive, murderous nature.

Tonga, Small and the two Sikh men are all "associated with the dejected, the abjected, and rejected;" in other words, the "grotesque" (Keep, Randall 215). Even the professionals, namely doctors and scientists, of Victorian England agreed that foreigners, and men who kept their company, were lower in development and morals, and thus dangerous. Scientists such as Havelock Ellis and Francis Galton wrote extensively about

criminal traits and how they were apparent in the foreign Other, partially due to the fact that foreigners were behind the English on the evolutionary ladder. Perhaps Doyle is commenting on criminals' primitive rationalization when just before Tonga is killed, Small throws overboard the treasure as well, so that it will never be recovered. While it may have been more intelligent to have used it to buy his way out of all the trouble he was in, he was so fascinated with the foreign treasure, he would rather no one had it if he could not.

Furthermore, Small's action of tossing the treasure into the Thames suggests that the continued presence of foreign entities on English soil is something even the greatest detective the world has known cannot fully prevent. Keep and Randall question whether or not Holmes and Watson truly rid themselves and England of the symbol [treasure and Tonga] of "colonial alterity" and thus rid Victorian society's "anxieties and insecurities" (216). The continued presence of any colonial entity belonging to the foreign Other is capable of contaminating the innocent English public, and perhaps even the landscape itself. According to Keep and Randall, the pair does not completely protect London in this case, as both the figure of Tonga and the Agra Treasure itself remain sunken in the muck of the English river, the Thames. The foreign influence is now permanently embedded in English soil, and the public needs to be aware and on guard against its alluring poison.

In each case, the foreign object, whether it is a treasure, an opium den, an animal poison, or an injection of cocaine, draws the characters toward it with an irresistible pull. And despite the risks, many citizens, like the characters in Doyle's literature, return again and again to the objects of their fascination. For some the foreign entity leads to their

death, for others it makes them lower on the evolutionary ladder and therefore of no consequence to kill. Criminology, like fiction, expressed unambiguous trepidation about foreigners and what they might bring into English society. Dr. Roylott, Jonathan Small, Tonga, and even Sherlock Holmes, all serve as warnings to the Victorian public about the dangers a fascination with foreigners can invite.

Chapter 3: Holmes's Use of Science to Assuage the Public's Fear in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

The Role of Science to Define Foreign Others

In literature popularly produced for young and adolescent males, the primary agenda of writers was to inspire favorable opinions of the empire's superior moral and patriotic outlook. Britain's imperial practices, and particularly their colonization of foreign lands, were justifiable because of "how the subject[s] benefited" from the empire's proper influence (Dunae 110). By bringing religion and English notions of civilized behavior, the public supported colonization of foreign nations because they believed England's actions were saving foreigners from their own primitive and savage existence. The messages built into Sherlock Holmes's adventures are no exception; inherent within the stories is a strong distrust of foreign people and places, as illustrated in the previous chapter. Doyle's novels, especially his earlier pieces, embraced imperialist ideologies, using English scientists' theories to determine and justify who were criminals and how to detect them. Doyle's fiction also suggests that foreign influence contributed to the sudden savage behavior of otherwise respectable English soldiers if they became too involved with foreign substances, treasures, or the people themselves. If the men were honorable when they left and mad when they returned, clearly they had been contaminated by the Other. Victorians employed science to justify this conclusion.

According to Thomas, author of "The Fingerprint and the Foreigner," the "theory and practice of criminology and the history of imperialism are consistently linked" and, consequently, racially motivated (669-70). Criminologists used science to identify

Otherness by means of indicating biological differences that signified a more primitive species in those who were not English as well as on those who associated too closely with the foreign. E.J. Wagner tells us the Victorians believed a “criminal strain [could run in one’s] blood” and be passed from one person onto the next, especially within families (195). Some anthropologists, such as Havelock Ellis, used Darwin’s theory of evolution to differentiate between the English and foreigners by their level of refinement (based on England’s concept of civilized behavior); he believed, “the criminal suspect, like the colonial subject, is placed a little bit lower than the English on the evolutionary chart and on the political hierarchy as well” (Thomas 662-3). Other scientists, such as Francis Galton (one of the first scientists --and eugenis-- to suggest fingerprinting as a means of detection), used scientific theories to “mark individuals biologically and to forcefully confer a suspect identity on them. Then, those same procedures [such as fingerprinting and skull analysis] were redeployed in the police system back home to protect ‘ordinary’ citizens from the criminal kind that Ellis had already associated anatomically with the foreign body” (Thomas 670). Often times the detective on a case in London during the late nineteenth century would assume the guilt belonged to a foreigner simply because of something as obscure as a splayed toe in a footprint, despite having never even met a person of that nationality, and certainly never having seen their feet. Science, unfortunately, due to its agenda in rationalizing racism during the nineteenth century, allowed for many mistakes in criminal studies. There are countless cases where the wrong person was accused or convicted simply because they were foreign or had what was defined as foreign traits. Even our celebrated detective believes in some of this faulty reasoning.

This fascination with science and anthropology and the public's faith in its ability to shield London from criminal influence is apparent throughout the Holmes series. The detective often uses his knowledge of Galton and Ellis's research to decipher clues at a crime scene and typecast possible suspects. By carefully observing one's fingerprint, handwriting, ear protrusion, jaw structure, or skull shape, Holmes is able to say whether or not the suspect is prone to criminal behavior. Thomas states, "Holmes reveals to Watson that he is familiar with the kind of literature on criminal anthropology... where the body, properly read, bears the distinguishing marks of personal identity" and uses it to decipher criminal intentions in suspects (671). Holmes once brags of reading about the use of ear lobes to determine the bearer's career; an article on reading facial features was published in *The Strand* at the same time Holmes's own adventures were being shared with the public through Doyle (and Watson). The ability to read a person by definite traits did much to assuage the fears of the public. With the prevalence of studies like these, faith in the police and detectives' ability to protect the public from criminals grew. Of course, the suspect was much more likely to be guilty if he was foreign or had spent a significant amount of time among foreigners, and thus had been negatively influenced by their savage behavior.

The Influence of the Foreign

In the first half of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the public's great fear of foreigners and the perceived potential of their negative impact on the refined existence of England is a primary concern. In *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) an innocent man is corrupted by the violent nature of the Mormons in America, so much so that he devotes the

majority of his life to murderous vengeance. Mr. Turner from “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” (published in 1891) too is taken in by a violent foreign gang of savages, the KKK, during his stay abroad, converting him into a criminal instead of a hero. Rural settings seem to generate dangerous criminal groups who lure in and contaminate otherwise innocent and respectable Englishmen. Again, in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (published in 1893), once respectable Dr. Roylott is so heavily influenced during his time abroad that he brings home Indian servants who live on his estate, cigars (a very common import enjoyed by criminal and detective alike) to smoke daily, numerous decorative items for his manor, and even vicious exotic animals to roam his English lands. Most significantly, however, he inherits the madness that so many other English seem to bring home with them after spending too much time with foreign and more primitive Others; his increasingly fanatical temperament is emphasized throughout the story. For Roylott, this madness, “which has been intensified by his long residence in the tropics,” is an all-encompassing desire for wealth even though it means killing his stepdaughters. For other would-be heroes turned criminal, madness is triggered by a desire for retribution or by a disease they have been infected with from foreign lands, but regardless of the cause, almost all of them regress to more primitive and savage behavior, brought on by the influence of foreigners. Holmes’s stories, by emphasizing this idea of contagious madness, reinforce the notion of England’s superiority, and repeatedly call attention to the need for the English to protect themselves from being contaminated by the criminal and primitive nature of foreign lands and people.

In Doyle's second early novel, investigated in the previous chapter, *The Sign of Four*, Doyle re-emphasizes the dangers associated with going abroad – serving the empire is both heroic and risky. Holmes and Watson, like all loyal Englishmen, do not condemn actions committed abroad by the Englishman-turned-criminal, Jonathan Small, when he helped to violently defend Agra Fort during the Indian Mutiny. The massacre by the Indians is portrayed by Doyle as extremely barbaric (whole families are slaughtered), while the Englishmen's bloody conquests in order to maintain a colony in India are not. It is not the violence encouraged by England that is blamed for the growing savagery in men abroad; instead it is the two Sikhs and later one short Andaman Islander (named Tonga) who are identified as barbaric and who are ultimately held responsible for influencing Jonathan Small in such a way that he too becomes greedy for the Agra treasure, so much so he would murder his own countrymen to get at it. When he becomes infected by the foreign Other's madness, Jonathan Small's transition reflects again the fear of foreign influence. Even Havelock Ellis, one of the scientists who tied race and criminology together, wrote a novel on criminal detection and national protection which captures the concern of the public at large. In his novel *The Criminal*, Ellis states, "the criminal figure inside the gates is rather like the colonial figure outside them. Both require a distinctively English response ... to ensure the safety and integrity of the English body politic" (Thomas 661). That English response was Sherlock Holmes --a man who was capable of detecting and often, eliminating of the threat.

Shifting Attitudes about Colonial Presence

While most of Holmes's adventures consist of detecting these foreign presences when they enter British ground, they do not necessarily condemn Britain's imperial agenda (even when their actions are beginning to be perceived as making England vulnerable to disease, crime, and madness) in the first half of the Holmes series. Taking foreign belongings, animals, riches, and drugs were encouraged in the 1880's; people were fascinated with foreign entities. However, accepting a foreigner as a partner was unquestionably criminal, as in Jonathan Small's case. Eventually though, possessing these foreign elements, especially drugs derived from opium and wealth acquired by colonial means, became increasingly questionable in the minds of the public as they neared the twentieth century--these too were at fault, at least in part, for contaminating otherwise sane and honorable men. This shift in perspective is apparent in the second half of the Holmes series. For example, in the first half of the detective's adventures, Holmes himself partakes a great deal in injecting cocaine without concern for its foreignness. He defends his choice vehemently and often, despite Watson's (and the public's) growing concerns. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson warns Holmes, pleading "Count the cost! Your brain may...be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process, which involves increased tissue-change and may at last leave a permanent weakness," but Holmes justifies his drug use by claiming he "cannot live without brainwork" (1-4). Then Doyle took a ten-year hiatus (in Doyle's time; only three year in Holmes's time) from writing about Holmes, killing him off with a fall from a cliff with Dr. Moriarty; when he brought Holmes back to life, the new Holmes no longer exhibited this habit. Doyle does not show Holmes again dabbling with poisons or drug use, with the exception of smoking tobacco. As the perspective shifted from fascination

with to a fear of opium products, the perspective of England's agenda abroad mimicked this, warning the public of the dangers associated with colonization instead of promoting England's self-proclaimed savior-like ambitions.

Therefore, colonialism became a less popular endeavor as the years progressed and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novels changed accordingly. Doyle wrote his last Holmes novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901), a decade after his first invention of the detective and by this time, Victorian London's public clearly feared the consequences of foreign influence on England more than they wished to expand their empire. Public support of colonization in India had severely diminished after the Indian Mutiny; the people's fear of disease and their soldiers falling into madness (becoming like the Other) overcame their greed for power. Perhaps this is why Doyle's last novel is the only one without a significant part of its story located abroad. Instead Watson and Holmes are called only to the rural areas outside London to investigate a supernatural murderer--a hound--but the mission proves just as fascinating and wrought with fear as any other. And the land itself, despite being a part of the Empire, resembles the primitive spaces of foreign lands much more than it does modern 1880's London. In the Holmes series, criminals seem to inhabit these rural spaces more prevalently than they inhabit the city (despite the fact that in reality crime was everywhere in late nineteenth century London). Holmes and Watson must investigate the criminal activity in these rural spaces in order to detect and dispose of any criminal before he is able to reach and therefore threaten the safety of London (as they plot to do with the Nottingham criminal by sending him to America rather than let him continue to roam English lands). Therefore, they go to great measures to protect London and Sir Henry Baskerville by traveling to the dark moor and

staying there indefinitely. Holmes goes so far as to keep his presence a secret for the first several weeks, staying disguised and residing in the Neolithic caves that characterize the moor as a still primitive space (though he organizes his space methodically as if he were back at Baker Street, unwilling and perhaps unable to completely resemble the men of more archaic existences).

Fear and Fascination with Rural Spaces

Throughout Holmes's adventures, he regularly comments negatively about the country outside of London. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, upon discovering that the crime is located in the country, he immediately characterizes it as a place of more primitive existence, full of uneducated and outdated people. Despite the Devonshire moor's presence on British soil, the country outside of London was still a threatening presence to many of the *The Strand's* readers, particularly because it lacked the technology London embraced and thrived on. Compared to modern London, the moor is a foreign land. Despite the moor's identity as an English entity in today's world, in Doyle's descriptions of the moor, the landscape is too treacherous, too murky alive, and much too closely associated with primitive existences to be called anything other than a dangerous rural space; Doyle's moor contains qualities quite opposite from those of late nineteenth century London. According to Jane M. Jacobs, "Imperialism operates within an ideal of the Manichean binary, which construct[s] a demonized Other against which flattering, and legitimating images of the metropolitan Self [are] defined" (Wolfreys 174). In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the metropolitan Self is represented by Holmes and Watson, as well as their London home. According to Holmes and the empire's

ideology, the city is a place of civilized people, modern technologies, and contemporary buildings, whereas the country, and in particular the moor, is the opposite, representing the more primitive population, relatable to the Other. The moor is defined as a place that once housed pre-historic populations and never successfully progressed. The inhabitants are less civilized, the technologies of the city non-existent, and the buildings decrepit, and surrounding caves creepily reminiscent of a more savage and primitive existence. The land seems to be as cursed as the foreign lands abroad, certainly creating an atmosphere of fear for the readers.

While some spaces just outside the city are peaceful, the moor is deemed undesirable and treacherous. While discussing the moor, before ever visiting, Watson remarks, “It must be a wild place” (Doyle *Hound of the Baskervilles* 160). Going to Devonshire, the location of the Baskerville estate, the “putrid” country and the moor, is implied to be a dangerous business, but Watson honorably agrees to accompany and protect Sir Henry, the replacement for the deceased Baskerville, Sir Charles. Through Doyle’s descriptions, the danger of traveling beyond the boundaries of the Center is reinforced as they venture farther away from the city. On the journey to Devonshire, Sir Henry, Watson, and Dr. Mortimer initially express excitement as all three men are briefly taken in by the “lush” and “luxuriant” Devon scenery. However, they quickly find they have left the “peaceful countryside” only to encounter “gagged and sinister hills” that surrounded the “gloomy curve of the moor” (Doyle 187). The farther from London they travel, the more dangerous and savage the environment becomes. In his account, Watson writes that as he, Dr. Mortimer, and Sir Charles “left the fertile country behind,” the “road in front of [them] grew bleaker and wilder over huge russet and olive slopes,

sprinkled with giant boulders” (188). Even the trees, “stunted oaks and firs,” have been “twisted and bent by the fury of years of storm,” reinforcing the idea that the land is diseased, not unlike the foreign landscapes described in earlier Holmes adventures (188).

The buildings too are lacking London’s modern semblance. Much to his dismay, Sir Henry arrives to find that Baskerville Hall is a “ruin of black granite and bared ribs of rafters” with an addition only half constructed by “the first fruit of Sir Charles’s South African gold” (189). The addition being built is due to the riches the previous tenant, Sir Charles, acquired from foreign lands, suggesting that the place was cursed or contaminated by its connection to the foreign and therefore a danger right from the beginning. Furthermore, to describe the hall as a bare skeleton with exposed ribs evokes a sense of death characterizing the estate. Sir Henry, now not nearly as excited as he was at the onset of their journey, acknowledges his Uncle Charles’s fear of the place. The estate in no way resembles the safety the city provides, prompting Sir Henry to declare, “I’ll have a row of electric lamps up here inside of six months, and you won’t know [danger] again, with a thousand candle-power Swan and Edison right here in front of the hall door” (189). Bringing the city lights to the country estate may help civilize the place by adding one esteemed aspect of modern technology that London embraces, making the estate less primitive and therefore safer.

Although Watson and Sir Henry blame their fears initially on the late hour in which they arrived, they quickly confirm their worries as logical the next morning. Stapleton, a neighbor and an enthusiastic naturalist, guides them through the “great Gimpen Mire” where one “false step yonder means death to man or beast” (Doyle *Hound of the Baskervilles* 198). Soon after Stapleton says this, they witness a helpless pony

devoured by the moor. Here again, the land itself is given an evil agenda, to consume the lives of the innocent and naïve, just as land abroad did in earlier texts. Then, to establish even further the danger of the place, all three hear “a long, low moan” sweep across the moor. Stapleton claims that “the peasants say [the sound] is the Hound of the Baskervilles calling for its prey” (199). A place like the moor seems a fitting habitat for murderers (like the Nottingham criminal who is roaming the land) and supernatural forces of evil, out to take down the invaders from London.

The “melancholy of the moor, the death of the unfortunate pony, the weird sound which had been associated with the grim legend of the Baskervilles” all successfully create tension and fear in Watson during his stay (203). Doyle clearly depicts rural spaces as dangerous, despite being located on English soil. Watson concludes that “some sinister influence . . . is at work around us,” suggesting that any occupant of the moor or Baskerville Hall, located within the moor, is in danger of being contaminated or even consumed by the evil evoked by the land, which is exactly what happens to the Nottingham criminal they seek at one point in the novel (231). If the scenery were not so wrought with danger--cliffs, quicksand, and constant blinding fog--he may have survived. The land itself is not the sole cause of his (or anyone else's) death however. Something more sinister and disturbing murkily roams freely, hunting any who stay out past dark.

Just before Mortimer reveals this mysterious presence, he shares with Holmes that Sir Charles was about to escape the moor in favor of London. The “constant anxiety in which he lived, however chimerical the cause of it might be, was evidently having a serious effect upon his health” (152). Mortimer had recommended that Charles retreat to town for at least a few months to recuperate from the effects the desolate and threatening

life on the moor had caused him, insinuating that the modern landscape and facilities available in London could cure him of his failing health. Unfortunately, something else reached him the night before he was to make his getaway, leaving “his features convulsed with some strong emotion to such an extent that [Dr. Mortimer] could hardly have sworn to his identity” (152). Although his throat was not ripped open as the previous Baskerville family resident’s was, the expression on his face conveys to the readers the sense of terror Charles must have experienced. The supernatural hound now had the ability to kill a man on sight without even touching him.

Finally, when Sir Henry arrives in London in order to move into the Baskerville estate, he immediately receives a letter that reads, “As you value your life or your reason keep away from the moor” (164). One’s life and one’s reason are perhaps the two most vital assets readers in the Victorian age valued because it was such a booming era of scientific discovery. Moving to a place as seemingly cursed as the moor could steal a person’s sanity, driving them slowly into madness. Madness was a very real threat for Henry as his grandfather was known as for his uncivilized behavior in the years prior to his death. Although Sir Henry when we initially meet him is confident and determined, he is soon broken by the fearful appearance and abilities of the moor. Any reader could see how easy it would be to fall into madness when living in as primitive a place as the skeletal Baskerville Hall and the surrounding fog-ridden and murderous moor.

(However, if Watson and Holmes could detect the true cause of crime present in the moor, they could restore their confidence in their country through its ability to protect them.)

Fear and Fascination with Supernatural Forces

Prior to Darwin's ground-breaking *Origin of Species*, and the following deluge of scientific investigations into the anatomy of people and animals, Victorian England used superstitions and folklore in an attempt to describe any unexplainable and seemingly supernatural events. Sensational beliefs, such as thinking a murder victim's wounds would bleed in the presence of his killer, were commonplace (Wagner 194). In particular, myths about black dogs and their association with death fascinated the public. Mythological tales about black dogs have been told as far back as 500 BC when Homer narrated his famous tales of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Greek God Hades used his three-headed black dog, Cerberus, to guard the Underworld, land of the dead. Anubis, the Egyptian god of mummification and embalming is depicted as possessing the head of a black dog or jackal. E. J. Wagner, author of *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*, tells us that "tales of spectral black dogs [continued to be] prevalent and widely believed well into the twentieth century Britain" despite the new obsession with science (24). Common people strongly believed witches used black animals, primarily cats and dogs, to carry out malevolent deeds. A rumor once spread that even Jack the Ripper halted in his murderous schemes temporarily while the dogs were let loose to track his scent, not returning to the streets until they were returned to their kennels (27). Superstition about black animals only grew as police were unable to solve a famous crime involving a murdered man named Charles Walton, who was known for seeing a large black dog just before his sister's death, and again before his own murder. Police never solved the crime (29).

Doyle fed into the fear the Victorian age associated with the black dog myths by making an abnormally large and dark hound the new primitive weapon of the moor's criminal mastermind. The descriptions of the hound are no less than terrifying. Dr. Mortimer brings Watson and Holmes a manuscript written by the previous, now murdered, Baskerville, describing the legend of the hound. Hugo Baskerville, the murdered tenant's (Charles's) father, was found by his men in a space between two rocks placed there by primitive "forgotten peoples in the days of old." Finding the body of Hugo and the woman he sought to capture is not what frightened the men though. It was that "standing over Hugo, and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville, on which, as it turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon them, the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life" (Doyle *Hound of the Baskervilles* 147). Furthermore, one of the three "dare-devil roysterers" died of fear that night and the other two were defeated men for the rest of their lives. Even to look upon the hound could break an otherwise strong and sane man.

However, the detective and the doctor are resistant to believe in such sensational tales. Watson writes that he refuses to accept the myth of the hound because "to do so would be to descend to the level of these poor peasants, who are not content with a mere fiend dog but must needs describe him with hell-fire shooting from his mouth and eyes," suggesting once again that those people who willingly inhabit the country are unintelligent and less civilized than those who inhabit the more advanced environment of the city (232). But despite Watson and Sir Henry's desire to remain scientific and

rational, they too fall into fear until the infallible Sherlock Holmes reunites with them, restoring their confidence.

Holmes's Ability to Combat Superstition (within Foreign Spaces) with Science

In their search for the supernatural murderer, Holmes and Watson set up Sir Henry as bait in order to catch and kill the hound (and perhaps his owner who turns out to be Mr. Stapleton). They know rationally that the fog is nothing more than a characteristic of the moor itself, despite its seemingly purposeful agenda to work against Sir Henry's survival as the heir to Baskerville Hall. The way in which Doyle personifies the fog of the moor reiterates its supposedly conniving and destructive intentions; Holmes watches the fog's "sluggish drift" and even he seems to give it life--"it's moving towards us, Watson" (275). The land, dark and mysterious, not unlike foreign lands in their unpredictability, combats the noble efforts of Holmes and Watson, and tries to devour them as well on their final excursion. The moor, location of the primitive and forgotten people and supernatural beings, becomes more fearful in the readers' mind as the two continue where every "false step plunged [them] more than once thigh-deep into the dark, quivering mire, which shook for yards in soft undulations around [their] feet" (282). The mire's "tenacious grip plucked at [their] heels as [they] walked, and when [they] sank into it was as if some malignant hand was tugging [them] down into those obscene depths, so grim and purposeful was the clutch in which it held [them]" (282). Although threatening, the moor cannot detain the two from continuing their pursuit of the starved hound and its murderous master. Still, what reader wouldn't shudder with fear regardless of the fact that the land can not rationally be responsible for murdering a person?

Only Holmes seems immune to the fear the other characters experience, proven by his choice to reside in the creepy primitive caves located a small distance from Baskerville Hall. He admits to Watson that the setting is certainly worthy of the devil, but “the devil agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not?” (160). Holmes comes to this conclusion easily through his amazing powers of deduction, first reasoning that Sir Charles must have stood for quite some time at the gate to the moor, as evidenced by the pile of cigar ash that remained. (We later learn he was waiting for a woman who was posing as Stapleton’s single sister, but the hound shows up in her place). However, he must have seen something “which terrified him so that he lost his wits and ran and ran until he died of sheer horror,” comments Watson (209). But while Watson suggests that the sight may have been of a “spectral hound, black, silent, and monstrous,” Holmes is quick to point out that the footprints noted by Sir Charles’s body are material enough--therefore, there is nothing supernatural about the canine. His confidence reassures readers that all is under control beneath his watchful eye, but until he reveals himself as present at the moor--which doesn’t happen until halfway through the novel--readers are stuck feeling the tension shared by Sir Henry, Dr. Watson, the staff, and the community and the fear that they will be the next victims of the moor and its supernatural hound.

When they reunite, Watson and Holmes rely on science and investigative strategies to catch their culprit. Initially this is difficult to do since any of those living in such conditions could be the uncivilized and vicious owner of the murderous hound. The first man they seek and find (although not alive) is the Nottinghill criminal who is roaming the moor until he can find a safer more secluded location in which to hide. Watson reflects on Sheldon, the escaped convict, in terms of what is not civilized; he was

a “man of darkness” living where the “only signs of human life ... [were] those prehistoric huts which lay thickly upon the slopes of the hills” (236). But soon enough, Sheldon becomes a victim of the hound, eliminating him as a suspect. Upon Holmes and Watson’s discovery of Sheldon dead with a “beetling forehead” and “sunken animal eyes,” they express no remorse for his death (259). Indeed, Sheldon represented a threat to the well-being of the Empire, and thus his death is something to be celebrated rather than mourned over. The detective and the doctor waste little time resuming their focus on the case.

The Role of Phrenology

According to Anthony Wohl’s article, “Phrenology and Race in Nineteenth Century Britain,” a “man’s physical and, by extension, moral, intellectual, and social development, could be determined by, and seen in, his physiognomy -- in, say, jaw structure and shape of the head.” Traits like a protruding jaw signified a lower, more primitive being. Phrenology was one more way in which to create a social and racial hierarchy scientifically by naming characteristics of a certain population’s skull and resulting facial features as more closely related to primates than to civilized humans. (See Appendix D).

Evidence of the public’s fascination with phrenology is apparent in several of the Holmes stories. Perhaps the most famous is the analysis of Dr. Moriarty’s skull in “The Final Problem” in which Holmes describes Moriarty’s sunken eyes, protruding face, and head which is “forever oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion” (Doyle *Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures* 720). However, Moriarty counters Holmes’s

analysis, saying that the detective's frontal lobe is less developed than his adversary expected, insinuating that Holmes lacked the ability to draw accurate conclusions from abstract ideas. According to Klinger's edited notes in the margin, the expert of phrenology, Franz Gall, not to mention many others, "believed not just that the size of the brain dictated mental capacity, but that personality traits such as self-esteem, wit, and a faculty for music or math were determined by thirty-five 'organs' comprising the brain" (721). Gall's studies expanded when two Americans traveled between England and New York teaching courses on head reading, which led to phrenology becoming a lucrative profession in Victorian England. Belief in scientists' study of the skull size and form was so trusted that even prospective couples often had their heads analyzed by professional phrenologists to determine whether or not they were compatible (Wagner 193).

Another famous scientist, Cesare Lambroso, wrote *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies*, in which he determined what he believed to be the origin of criminals through studying the differences between the heads of those who were insane and those who committed only minor crimes. He determined "the characteristics of primitive men and of inferior animals [were] being reproduced in [Victorian] times" (Wagner 196), suggesting that lower classes and mentally defective people (those with abnormal or underdeveloped skulls) should be banned from procreation if England wished to rid itself of crime. In the U.S., Lambroso's studies (combined with Richard Dugdale's sociology work), "led to the forced sterilization of a number of people who were adjudged imbeciles" (198). Both men were obviously promoters of eugenics, using controlled breeding to improve the human race, and used skull analysis to justify their beliefs. Finally, almost all phrenologists agreed that "heredity was a major cause of criminality,"

which could be detected through skull analysis, which added an unexpected twist in Doyle's final Sherlock Holmes novel.

In the opening pages of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Dr. Mortimer is instantly compelled to touch Sherlock Holmes's skull, asking "Would you have any objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure? A cast of your skull, sir, until the original is available, would be an ornament to any anthropological museum" (142). He explains that his hobby is studying "the supraorbital crest, the facial angle, the maxillary curve," all readable components of the skull (165). Both Holmes and Mortimer demonstrate their knowledge of phrenology by agreeing that the differences between the skull of a negro and the skull of an Esquimau are as easily detectable as different fonts on a magazine, and later Mortimer shares with Watson his observations of Henry Baskerville's skull, who, as a great-grandson of Hugo, was certainly at risk for insanity. Dr. Mortimer states that Henry's rounded head "carries inside it the Celtic enthusiasm and power of attachment," which luckily are not the traits in a skull which would indicate his likelihood of criminal behavior.

This obsession with skull analysis and its connection to primitive or underdeveloped people is continued throughout *Hound*. At one point, Dr. Mortimer is excavating the sight of prehistoric civilization in a series of caves located within the moor and brings back a Neolithic skull he found among the ruins. His enthusiasm for the study of primitive culture through their skulls foreshadows the detective's eventual discovery.

Holmes's ultimate recognition of the similarities between the past Baskerville heirs' skulls and the features of Mr. Stapleton's head is the key to the solving the case. By using his familiarity with phrenology, Holmes is able to detect that Stapleton is

evidently a relative of the Baskervilles, greedy to own the estate himself. One evening, while Watson and Holmes inspect the paintings of the Baskerville family past, Holmes instantaneously recognizes the profile of a familiar figure. Requesting Watson to look again, he intends for Watson to recognize “the face of Stapleton ... [springing] out of the canvas.” As explanation, Holmes discloses that his “eyes have been trained to examine faces and not their trimmings... [as] it is the first quality of a criminal investigator that he should see through a disguise” (266). Not only does Holmes reassure the public of his keen ability to detect threats to the Empire, he reaffirms the faith in science to overcome seemingly supernatural ideas by discovering the true force behind the murdering hound-- a jealous and jolted relative who spent most of his life in foreign countries. Holmes also helps assuage readers’ fears by encouraging them to perceive these criminals as little more than animals that can easily be contained or eliminated. As their discussion proceeds, Holmes demotes Stapleton, a long time resident abroad (concealed under a different name, but now a resident of the moor,) to the value of a fish: “We’ll know before the day is out whether we have caught our big, lean-jawed pike, or whether he has got through the meshes” (267). Unfortunately for Stapleton, the mesh he escapes to is the devouring moor. Not surprisingly, Stapleton, the conjurer of the evil plot to starve the hound and use chemicals to provide him with an unnatural glow, was from abroad himself for numerous years before returning to England with his criminal intentions of stealing the Baskerville estate by any means necessary.

Holmes and Watson end their investigation with a careful study of the hound. Holmes nearly loses his client, Sir Henry, by using him as bait in order to catch the hound, but as always, he is able stop the perpetrator, this time with five bullets, proving

the hound is flesh and blood after all. Even in death, they observe “the huge jaws ...dripping with a bluish flame and small, deep-set, cruel eyes ... ringed with fire” (279). Terrifying, but material none-the-less. “Phosphorus,” remarks Watson, and “a cunning preparation of it,” responds Holmes. Thus, even the supernatural hound is deduced to an animal whose appearance was manipulated by a chemical, and so, easily enough, the supernatural hound is reduced back to a readable and non-threatening being through rational investigation.

Conclusion: an Eternal Protagonist

The Empire's Hero

Like his protagonist, Doyle “shared the prejudices of his time and place in his unswerving support of the British Empire ... [and] his unquestioning acceptance of the class system,” making both men (despite the prior’s fictional nature,) widely respected and sought out in times of need (*The Casebook of Sir Conan Arthur Doyle* 27). Perhaps this perspective was enhanced by their unique and simultaneous embracement of both outdated and progressive values. While Doyle and his character may have been old-fashioned in their sense of refined behavior, they were ahead of their time in their knowledge and use of science to confront issues of primitivism and superstition. In his book *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, Jon Thompson agrees, stating that Doyle’s “reworking of an ideology of empiricism in a popular form helped produce a comforting and reassuring image of society,” which ultimately helped maintain strict hierarchies among various races and social classes. New scientific developments, such as phrenology, eugenics, fingerprinting, and racial anatomy justified hegemonic systems and gave Holmes’s (and Doyle’s) perspectives credibility and power to assure the nation that science and logic could protect them from foreign entities. Furthermore, British dominance over primitive cultures was not only reasonable, but the responsibility of the elite, making colonization of foreign nations a necessary expedition in the minds of the British public. Once disease, drug addiction, and crime became more prevalent, however, the influence of foreign lifestyles, substances, and people was indisputably blamed.

Thompson goes on to say, however, that the London Doyle created was a myth. Crime was just as prevalent among the English as it was the foreign, but this notion would not have captivated the public as successfully as faulting the exotic forces in need of domesticating and neutralizing. Therefore, England needed an immune system of sorts to assuage their trepidation at the influx of foreign influences, and Holmes fit the mold. Laura Otis in her article “The Empire Bites Back: Sherlock Holmes as an Imperial Immune System,” claims that in order to more clearly define the heroic and patriotic motives of British heroes like Sherlock Holmes against the devious and criminal intentions of foreign Others, Doyle relied on the scientific rationality of Holmes’s methods in detecting criminals. Indeed, Doyle played on the British society’s admiration for scientists (such as Francis Galton and Havelock Ellis) in order to liken his character Holmes with heroic valor, in that both Holmes and these scientists “devoted all of [their] formidable mental powers to identifying and neutralizing living threats to society” (Otis 32). Indeed, the detective’s remarkably consistent ability to detect and defuse threats to London (after dropping his own addiction to foreign influence of course), made him the perfect weapon with which to combat the public’s fear. With such fantastical developments in the study of evolution and racial differences, stories that embraced imperial theories, and at the same time offered a subtle critique of England’s colonial exploits, captured the interest of tens of thousands of readers absorbed with questions concerning their rapidly progressing world.

A Lasting Contribution

Like Doyle, Holmes changed as society changed. According to *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, Stephen King claims the “older Doyle was a much more prosperous and prestigious man” (38). Holmes too became more esteemed; he was more respectful towards Watson and Scotland Yard, terminated his avid cocaine use, and even went for occasional healthy walks about London; his alterations reflected a gradually more enlightened nation. Most of his eccentric qualities remained however, leaving him as beloved as he was in his very first adventure. Because of his quirky personality and eccentric behavior, Holmes is endlessly entertaining to readers. And for his uncanny methods of inquiry and obsessive attention to detail, forensic science is forever grateful.

Evidence of Holmes’s influence on criminal detection is everywhere today. Fingerprints are still one of the primary methods of determining suspects present at a crime scene. Laboratories still test the effects of combining different chemicals and, unfortunately, biological warfare is still a threatening possibility. Facial analysis is used consistently to test the reliability of a witness or suspect. However, crime detection is not the only field the character Sherlock Holmes contributed to. Even CEO’s of enormous corporations, senators of the various states, and sports icons are evaluated via their expressions to measure the sincerity of their statements; just last month the nation watched as LeBron James retired from his hometown team and offered his condolences. Those analyzing his gestures and facial tendencies claim he was not sincere, resulting in an uproar from previous fans.

Sherlock Holmes would be impressed with the extensive databases available to scientists and law enforcement today, but we owe much of our start to Doyle. If Doyle had not been an author or a doctor, he might have been the greatest detective that ever

lived. While he never adopted the title of detective, the doctor did dabble in crime analysis; it was Doyle who recognized that differentiating between animal and human blood was vital in solving murder cases (Calamai). He also became involved occasionally with actual criminal investigation, which eventually led to London's establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal. Doyle did not receive much credit, however, other than for his article entitled "Strange Studies from Life," published in *The Strand* in 1903. Despite the presence of Doyle's article in the same publication as the fictional detective's adventures, it is instead his character Sherlock Holmes who is rewarded with the title of greatest detective, while Doyle's name is often omitted and forgotten. In fact, Britain's Royal Society of Chemistry named *not* Arthur Conan Doyle, but Sherlock Holmes, as an "honorary fellow for the pioneering use of forensics" (Calamai). So it seems the "improbable truth" is that the image of a lanky yet aggressive figure bearing a deer-stalker cap and incessantly smoking pipe, regardless of being a fictional fabrication, will forever be associated with crime and detection instead of the brilliant mind that created him.

A Timeless Character

Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories have never ceased to please and astonish countless devoted readers. When Doyle chose to kill off the beloved detective, the public never stopped writing complaint letters. When Sherlock Holmes stories returned ten years later, his fan base only grew. In fact, the inclusion of the Holmes chronicles caused the circulation of *The Strand* to double, jumping from 200,000 to 400,000 copies distributed monthly to a public eager to learn of their favorite's hero's

latest exploits (Thompson 61). Today, Doyle's detective novels are read in nearly every nation worldwide. Handbooks and critical essay collections and even a Young Sherlock Holmes series are published every year and devoured by the public. The detective's popularity gains momentum despite his dated existence.

A myriad of television producers and film directors have tried to recreate the infamous hero adored by so many. Some tales were even scripted for the stage; a play named "Baker Street" entertained a multitude of fans in New York City at one time. More than a hundred years after the invention of Sherlock Holmes, writers still struggle to create protagonists as appealing and timeless as the quirky detective. In today's media, Dr. Gregory House, the main character from the popular television series *House* is frequently believed to be based on Holmes. Dr. House's odd demeanor, brilliant ability to diagnose patients, questionable drug use, and general lack of interest in the opposite sex unmistakably insinuate that his character derives from the same lineage as Holmes. Even his arrogant, but somehow still loveable attitude likens itself to Doyle's creation. Additionally, programs like *Mythbusters* share Holmes's agenda of using science to combat old wives tales and superstitious beliefs. His influence is immeasurable.

Pertaining to films, the *Guinness World Records* has listed Holmes as the "most portrayed movie character" of all time; some seventy-six actors have played the role of the eccentric detective in over two hundred films. Not surprisingly, when Guy Ritchie decided to produce the latest rendition in his 2009 movie, *Sherlock Holmes*, the public went wild with anticipation. The Warner Bros' production brought in a whopping \$24.9 million from its opening night alone ("Sherlock Holmes"). Although Doyle may not have approved of an American, Robert Downey Jr., playing the part of his most famous

fabrication, he might have been pleased to see the enthusiasm audiences still possess for a character that came so naturally to him.

Doyle's creation of a character who shared the public's fascination with foreign entities and simultaneously possessed the insight and ability to scientifically detect and triumph over threats to the empire was no small accomplishment. Holmes became a symbol of imperial heroism. Today, Holmes's lasting fame has made his name synonymous with concepts of forensic science and detection. His legacy lives on, as evident through the continued publication of Doyle's novels and short story collections, as well as copious Sherlock Holmes societies and museums present in nearly every nation in the world. Not such an "elementary" feat after all.

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Appendix A: Depictions of Foreigners and Contaminated Englishmen

These two images from Leslie Klinger's edited collection of Sherlock Holmes novels depict the Sikh men trusted to help guard the Agra Fort (from *The Sign of Four*) as savagely murdering the merchant who carried the Agra treasure into the fort. Interestingly enough, no image of Jonathan Small's assistance in the murder accompanies the text in any of the publications I came across, even though he admits his participation.



The above two sketches were done by Richard Gutschmidt for the 1902 publication of *The Sign of Four*. The sketch (to the left), by Frederic Townsend, is of the same scene but in a 1903 publication of the novel. Note that here, Jonathan Small, while in the scene, is depicted as only an observer. He almost seems innocent regardless of his confession to tripping the merchant on his attempted escape.

In the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet*, the sketches depict Jefferson Hope as a gentleman and a romantic. First Hope saves Lucy Ferrier from her runaway horse. Then he courts her and softly comforts her in preparation for the time they will be apart before he returns to marry her. Both of the sketches below portray Hope as possessing these civilized and heroic traits.



summer evening he came galloping down the road.”

Geo. Hutchinson, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock Bowden, and Co., 1891)



“It is settled, then. The longer I stay, the harder it will be to go.”

Richard Gutschmidt, *Späte Rache* (Stuttgart: Robert Lutz Verlag, 1902)



“Snatching up her hand, he took the wedding-ring from her finger.”

Geo. Hutchinson, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock Bowden, and Co., 1891)

After Lucy is murdered by the Mormons however, Jefferson Hope goes mad with vengeance. This sketch reveals a savage side emerging from Hope. He now looks ragged and certainly more primitive than in his prior representations.

However, Jonathan Small *is* depicted as the murderous savage after he learns Major Sholto has stolen away with the Agra Treasure. He kills a guard in order to escape with Tonga, the native who is waiting for him with a canoe. This image was also reprinted in Klinger's edited publication of *The Sign of Four*.



"With three long hops I was on him."

H. B. Eddy, *San Francisco Call*, October 17, 1907



Death of Bartholomew Sholto.

F. H. Townsend, *The Sign of Four* (London:
George Newnes, Ltd., 1903)

Perhaps the most savage depictions of foreigners are those of Tonga, Jonathan Small's accomplice from the Andaman Islands. In this sketch, Tonga is in the shadows smiling at his successful murder of Bartholomew Sholto. This image too was taken from Klinger's edition.

In the sketch to the right, the Mormon prophet is threatening John Ferrier in *A Study in Scarlet*. Ferrier's daughter Lucy must marry an older Mormon man (who already has several wives) or suffer the consequences. Despite his light skin, the illustration depicts this American with a darker complexion, intimidating stature, and unkempt appearance, all of which emphasize his savage nature..



In the sketch to the left, Jefferson Hope has finally caught up with Enoch Drebber, the Mormon responsible for Lucy Ferrier's death. Note how apeline the Mormon man appears in the photo, despite Hope's intent to poison him here. (From Klinger's edition).

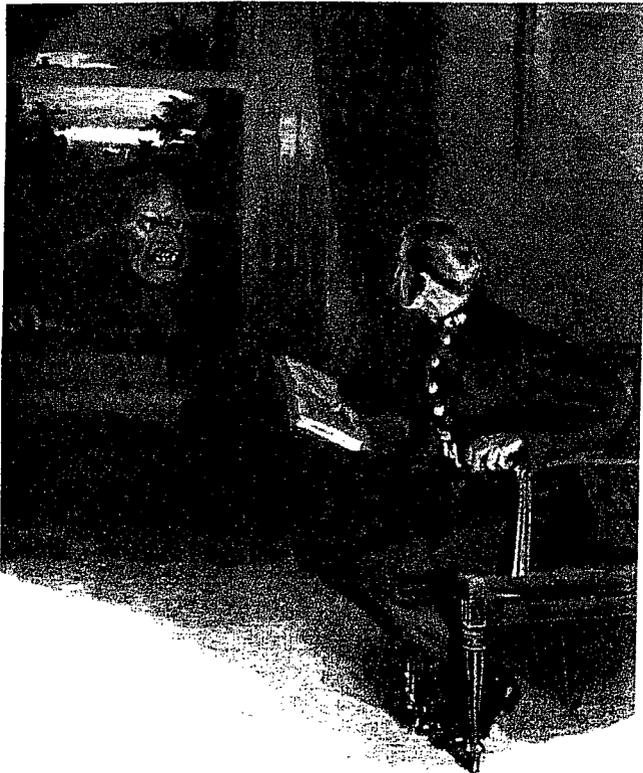
This final illustration from the novel *A Study in Scarlet*, depicts Jefferson Hope's capture, sketched by Richard Gutschmidt in 1902. His resistance and open mouth makes him appear in a state of madness. It took all four men to restrain him.



The Sherlock Holmes short stories also were accompanied by several sketches depicting foreigners in a savage manner. To the right is a sketch from “The Six Napoleons.” Like Small, this once sane Englishman has gone mad in his attempts to recover a foreign treasure, one he hid in a sculpture of Napoleon’s head. Note the evil glare in his eye and the primitive club he carries as a weapon.



We saw that he carried something white under his arm.
 Charles Raymond Macaulay, *Return of Sherlock Holmes*
 (McClure Phillips), 1905



In “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge” when the guard first spots the criminal, notice how similar his appearance is to a gorilla. He teeth are bared and his stature imposing. The sketch seems to suggest that the criminal is more primitive in his development intellectually (because of course he is easily caught by Holmes) as well as physically. This image too was reprinted in Leslie Klinger’s edited edition.

“There was a face looking in at me through the lower pane.”

Arthur Twidle, *Strand Magazine*, 1908

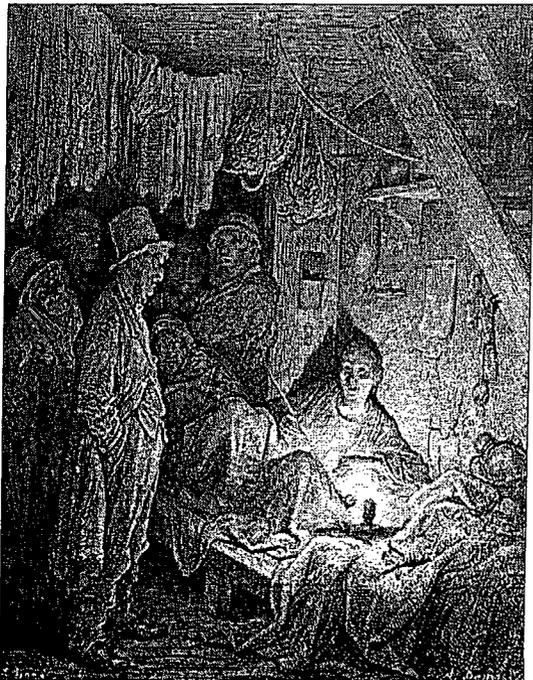
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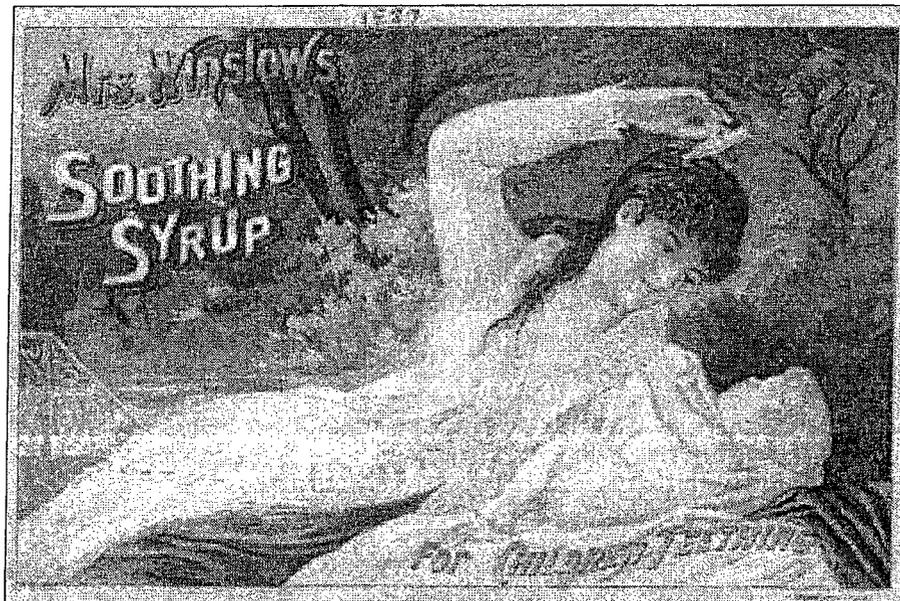
Appendix B: Promotion of Opium and Cocaine Use in Victorian England

Advertisements for eye salve (to the right) and for cough syrup below both brag of the effects of opium in their product (“Opium for England”).



A sketch of an opium den (to the left) from 1870 depicts a dark and dreary setting. The consumers appear numerous and poverty stricken (Rosen).

Both of the following images demonstrate how prevalent medicinal cocaine use was among Victorian families. In particular, these ads target mothers with teething children. The website "Cocaine: a Victorian Mother's Little Helper" claims even Queen Victoria used cocaine on her nine children and was prescribed the drug by Sigmund Freud for her postnatal depression.

An advertisement for "COCAINE TOOTHACHE DROPS". On the left, a black and white illustration shows a young girl in a bonnet and a boy in a hat kneeling together, building a log cabin. The background shows a house and trees. On the right, the text reads:

COCAINE
TOOTHACHE DROPS
Instantaneous Cure!
PRICE 15 CENTS.
Prepared by the
LLOYD MANUFACTURING CO.
219 HUDSON AVE., ALBANY, N. Y.
For sale by all Druggists.
(Registered March 1885.) See other side.

Works Cited for Appendix B

“Cocaine: a Victorian Mother’s Little Helper.” *The Angry Penguins: Politics or Drugs*,

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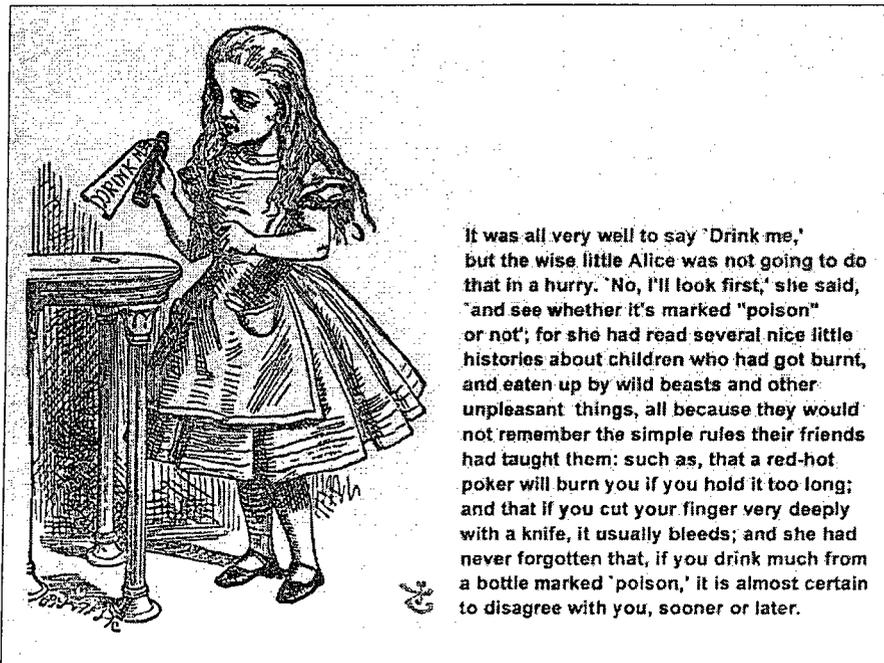
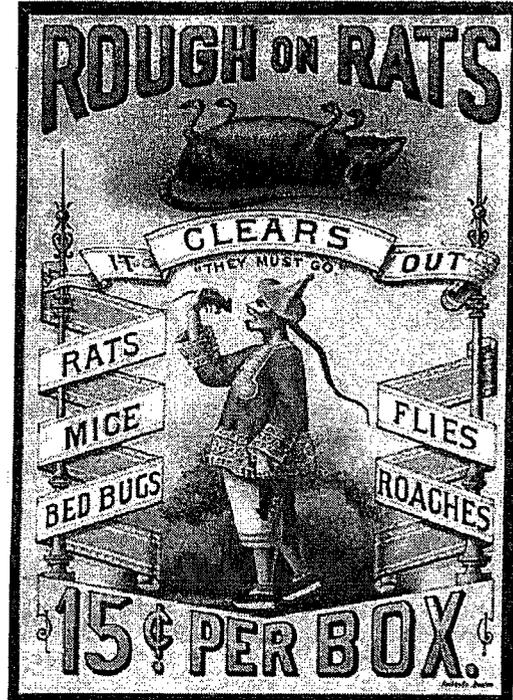
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Appendix C: The Prevalence of Poisons in the Victorian Era

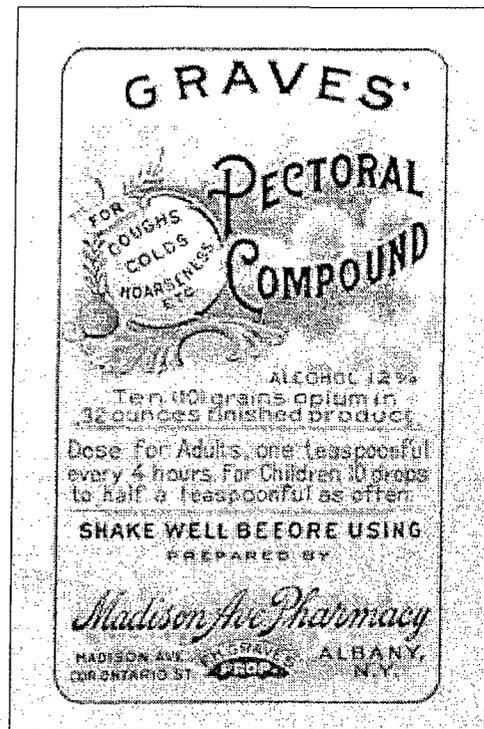
The website *The Trade Card Place* explains briefly how Victorians used scrapbooks to house their collected trade cards. This image to the right is of one such trading card from the late 1800's. Note the figure in the center is clearly Asian, emphasizing the foreign origin of poisons. Secondly, the figure appears to be eating or speaking to the rat, dehumanizing him, and defining him as possessing a more savage and primitive nature. The website *TV History* posts this card as for sale today for \$800 to any interested collectors of Victorian cards.



It was all very well to say 'Drink me,' but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. 'No, I'll look first,' she said, 'and see whether it's marked "poison" or not'; for she had read several nice little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

Doyle was not the first author to incorporate poison into his fiction plots. The above image from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* from 1865 suggests that in the Victorian era, even children (the primary audience of a nonsense novel) were familiar with the popularity and dangers associated with medicinal poisons.

The poison label to the right would also fit under Appendix A; however, it is worth noting how easily accessible medicines containing poison substances were. Virtually anyone could purchase a bottle of Graves' Pectoral Compound and poison someone's food or drink under the guise of medicine (Miller).



There are no sketches of actual poisons in the Holmes stories. However, the sketch to the left is of Holmes's experimentation with poison on an unfortunate dog. And the sketch below captures how poison distorted the body and facial features of its victim. Both images are from Leslie Klinger's edited edition of *A Study in Scarlet*.

"The unfortunate creature's tongue seemed hardly to have been moistened in it before it gave a convulsive shiver in every limb, and lay as rigid and lifeless as if it had been struck by lightning."

Geo. Hutchinson, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock Bowden, and Co., 1891)



"Sherlock Holmes approached the body, and, kneeling down examined it intently."
Geo. Hutchinson, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock Bowden, and Co., 1891)

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Appendix D: The Use of Phrenology for Criminal Detection

The diagram and subsequent definition below appeared in a dictionary published in 1895 (Rosen).

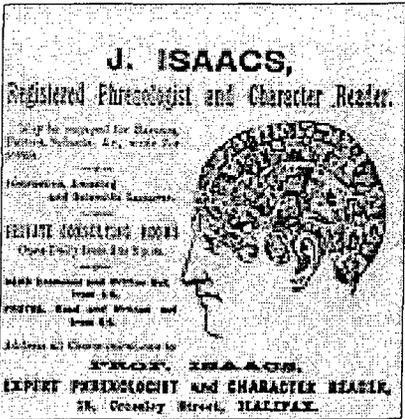
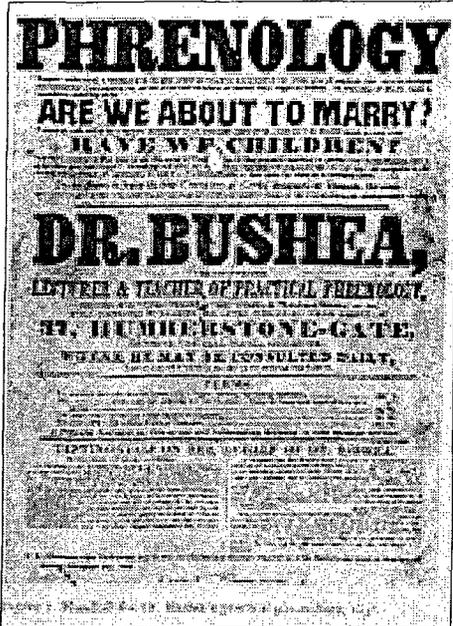
Phre-nol'o-gy (-nŏl'ŏ-jŏ), *n.* [Gr. φρήν, φρερός + -logy.] **1.** Science of the special functions of the several parts of the brain, or of the supposed connection between the faculties of the mind and organs in the brain. **2.** Physiological hypothesis that mental faculties, and traits of character, are shown on the surface of the head or skull; craniology. — **Phre-nol'o-gist**, *n.* — **Phren'o-log'ic** (frĕn'ŏ-lŏj'ĭk), **Phren'o-log'ic-al**, *a.*

A Chart of Phrenology.

1 Amativeness · **2** Philoprogenitiveness · **3** Concentrativeness · **3 a** Inhabitiveness · **4** Adhesiveness · **5** Combaticiveness · **6** Destructiveness · **6 a** Alimentiveness · **7** Secretiveness · **8** Acquisitiveness · **9** Constructiveness · **10** Self-esteem · **11** Love of Approbation · **12** Cautiousness · **13** Benevolence · **14** Veneration · **15** Firmness · **16** Conscientiousness · **17** Hope · **18** Wonder · **19** Ideality · **19 a** (Not determined) · **20** Wit · **21** Imitation · **22** Individuality · **23** Form · **24** Size · **25** Weight · **26** Coloring · **27** Locality · **28** Number · **29** Order · **30** Eventuality · **31** Time · **32** Tune · **33** Language · **34** Comparison · **35** Causality. [Some raise the number of organs to forty-three.]

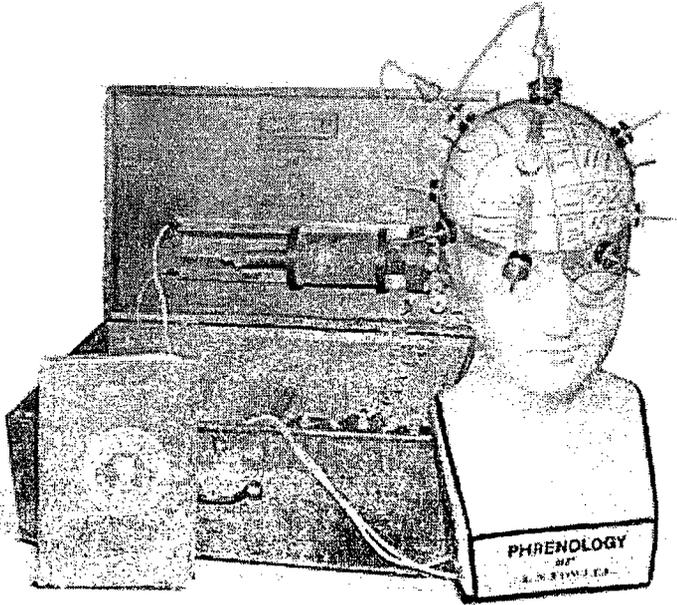
Dictionary Definition - 1895

The pamphlet to the right targets prospective couples. It advertises that the phrenologist is able to determine, by examining the skulls of the pair, whether or not their marriage will be prosperous (McLeod).



The ad to the left boasts that the doctor, J. Isaacs, can use phrenology to read one's character. What type of person will one be? What career might one have? These questions and more could be answered by a local phrenologist (Viner).

This image to the right depicts a phrenologist's tools (VonReik).



Again, the image of a book cover (below) emphasizes phrenology's ability to aid couples in finding the right partner for a successful marriage (Fowler).



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