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"Romantic Realities": Sherlock Holmes and Urban Imagination

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**“ROMANTIC REALITIES”: SHERLOCK HOLMES
AND
URBAN IMAGINATION**

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in English

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ABSTRACT

My thesis explores excerpts of the Sherlock Holmes canon through literary and historical lenses, and relies on close readings to investigate the representation of urbanity in the stories. For my work, I rely on the term “urban imagination” as I discuss the way that Arthur Conan Doyle places representations of real London places adjacent to fantasy urban locations of his own creation, and the effect that this has on the narratives and on Sherlock himself. Doyle uses urban imagination in his romanticization of city life, and his manifestation of a London particularly suited to Sherlock’s needs. The kind of London which readers have come to expect from Sherlock’s stories is presented in a very specific way, which not only informs Sherlock’s character as an expert city navigator and the ultimate urbanite, but makes it possible for Sherlock to solve crimes in the way that he does. In this capacity, this thesis examines one aspect of Sherlock’s world, and how it allows Sherlock to *be* Sherlock. Each of my three chapters approaches a different aspect of how urbanity is manifested by Doyle. Chapter one examines the city itself, chapter two explores the material artifacts which populate Sherlock’s world, and chapter three follows Sherlock into the country and questions how urban imagination is used when Sherlock leaves his typical urban landscape. Each chapter includes a close reading of a few of the most pertinent Sherlock stories, as well as a consideration of the historical context of Doyle’s writing. Through a unique combination of methodologies, this thesis contributes to the ongoing dialogue and prolific scholarship surrounding Sherlock Holmes, and stands as an exercise in literary analysis and theoretical integration. It is an attempt to approach some of the most influential popular literature in history from a new perspective, and the manifestation of a desire to further study one of the most fascinating and recognizable literary characters to date.

INTRODUCTION

Doyle had mastered the art of creating what Howard Haycraft called a “romantic reality” . . . to create a landscape of the imagination more compelling than the real thing . . . – Rosemary Jann

It is difficult to overestimate the impact that Sherlock Holmes has had on the world. For more than a century, readers have pored over the work of Arthur Conan Doyle, and critics have created a mountain of scholarly work reading the Sherlock canon through countless theoretical lenses. He has been translated, adapted, re-adapted, and resurrected, and has appeared on film and television more than any other fictional character in history (Guinness World Records). Yet for all the things Sherlock Holmes has become in the last century, there is something fundamental about him and his world which never seems to change. Sherlock’s name alone immediately conjures images of adventurous chases through dark, cobblestoned streets glinting with the yellow light of city street lamps. The character is inseparable from his home in London at the end of the nineteenth century, a romanticized landscape which lies at the very heart of the Sherlock stories. Doyle’s depiction of London’s urbanity pervades Sherlock’s work as a detective, even when Sherlock himself travels to Winchester in “The Copper Beeches” or to the moors of Devonshire in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The urbanity is specific, constructed in a deliberate way, at once life-like and a fantasy, and intrinsic to the manifestation of Sherlock as Sherlock. In this thesis, I have endeavored to examine Sherlock’s London, to contextualize it historically, and to relate its impact on not only the narratives within the Sherlock stories, but on Sherlock himself as well.

One must begin by asking how Doyle chooses to represent London as a city. When Doyle began writing the Sherlock stories in 1887, city life, and specifically London life, was “more and more the crossroads of unprecedented cultural, economic, and political change that was at once perilous, opportune, and spectacular” (Fritzsche 30). Doyle’s depiction of London is, first and foremost, rooted in this reality; however, it also takes advantage of the conflict between the excitement and the anxiety of the period, and separates Sherlock’s London from reality. Sherlock’s London, although grounded in the real, is also a fantasy.

Behind Doyle was the legacy of more than a century of “Industrialization, commercialization, and colonization,” which were not only changing the world, but placing London in the center of it (Fritzsche 30). As Anthony Clayton explains, “London, towards the end of the nineteenth century, was the richest, largest and most important city in the world, the heart of an empire and the symbol of British power and influence” (Clayton 7). Furthermore, “London was a world city, not just a very large centre of population, but a major hub of political power, commerce, finance, consumption, and information-gathering and dissemination, among other things” (Daly 119). Simultaneously, however, the urbanization and industrialization that began before the turn of the nineteenth century had left large social problems in their wakes. Poverty was rife throughout the city, and living and health standards still faced many years of needed improvement (Clayton). The reality of London life in Doyle’s time, then, was the combination of the extremity of social problems and the great pace at which modernity seemed to leap forward. Doyle takes advantage of this reality, creating an urban environment for Sherlock whose foundation is a recognizable manifestation of London, but one which is permitted to romanticize city living.

As a function of this romanticization, Doyle's London is created as exactly the kind of landscape which aids Sherlock in his detective work while appealing to the sensibilities of readers. It is, precisely as McCrea writes, a kind of fantasy of "London fog, gas lamps, Cockney cabbies, and footsteps clattering down dark city lanes" (McCrea 69). It is a recognizable fantasy of London. As Tanya Agathocleous discusses, nineteenth-century writers used London "as a way to apprehend global modernity," and, "Disenchanted with the forces that were bringing the world together, cosmopolitan writers attempted to *re-enchant* [the city] by subjecting it to the alchemical power of the imagination" (Agathocleous xiv; 7). In the creation of Sherlock's London, Doyle likewise uses "the alchemical power of the imagination," to combine the real and the fictionalized into a world perfectly-suited for Sherlock's adventures. Doyle makes real what is fiction, in large part by tapping into something compelling, into what readers wish or imagine the world to be. The London of Sherlock Holmes is a deliberate construction, and one which makes the Sherlock stories possible. Sherlock's setting is one of urban imagination.

Urban imagination will be the focus of this thesis. The term comes from Frank D. McConnell, who connects Sherlock to the cosmopolitan culture of the turn of the century, noting, "Doyle lived and wrote through the years that saw the birth of the 20th-century urban imagination" (McConnell 174). My use of "urban imagination" will refer to an idealized notion of city life, a fantasy of cosmopolitanism and urbanization in London in the late Victorian era. Doyle roots Sherlock's London in a sense of reality, but leaves space for the imagined and romanticized, creating an urban environment which operates precisely as is needed for Sherlock's investigative work. Rosemary Jann touches on this concept as she writes, "Doyle had mastered the art of creating what Howard Haycraft called a 'romantic reality': the ability to capture the feeling and not just the surface of place . . . to create a landscape of the imagination more compelling than the real thing"

(Jann 10). Similarly, Agathocleous contends that “Doyle use[s] an aestheticist version of realism along with novelistic romance” and “desire[s] to give form to the city as subject, despite [his] sense of its infinite complexity” (Agathocleous xix, 119). A “romantic reality,” or an “aestheticist version of realism” allows Doyle to craft a fantastical London that is the perfect urban space for Sherlock Holmes.

Through Doyle’s use of urban imagination, the city itself becomes a narrative focus, an urban space which is equally as instrumental in the creation of Sherlock’s identity as his famous pipe. My study of urban imagination is an exploration, therefore, of Doyle’s romanticization of London as a space particularly suited to Sherlock’s needs, of his treatment of “city as subject,” and of Sherlock’s use of London in his work. For, indeed, “Sherlock Holmes is a mapper of the metropolis, an agent who untangles the secret relationships of the London crowd” (McCrea 67). Novelists wrote of London throughout the nineteenth century, but Doyle’s treatment of London stands out in the way that it predicates Sherlock’s function as a character upon the urbanity of the London created in the stories. The romanticization of the city seen in the stories puts particular emphasis on the operation of city life, and the way that Sherlock fits within it as an urbanite. As will be explored, Doyle makes clear that his specific manifestation of London is necessary for Sherlock to operate as he does, and each begins to inform the other: Sherlock’s London is created by Doyle specifically for Sherlock’s use, and Sherlock is created by Doyle as a character who relies on the city to function recognizably. Moreover, as an urbanite, Sherlock deftly navigates a cosmopolitan landscape teeming with people from all walks of life, allowing readers to indulge in the excitement of modern living without succumbing to “that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drawn,” which Watson describes in *A Study in Scarlet* (The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes 4). When I speak throughout this thesis of

Sherlock's London being "romanticized," I refer to the way that Sherlock depends upon the city, and the way that Doyle crafts and manifests his representation of London to serve the Detective. Sherlock relies on the city itself to conduct his investigations, and the city then re-informs Sherlock as a character. Only in the kind of London which Doyle creates is Sherlock able to be the world-famous detective we know him to be. Urban imagination allows Sherlock to *be* Sherlock.

To develop an understanding of urban imagination, this thesis will be separated into three chapters, each addressing Doyle's creation of Sherlock's urban environment from a different angle. The first chapter will examine Sherlock's physical environment in detail, addressing the ways in which Sherlock's London is both grounded in reality and fictionalized. The combination of these aspects of realism and fantasy is central to Doyle's use of urban imagination. Additionally, this chapter will explore *how* Sherlock uses London, and how the city itself is necessary for his work. To illustrate this, chapter one will include close readings of "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Red-Headed League," and *A Study in Scarlet*.

The second chapter will incorporate Thing Theory – the theoretical study of objects and their meanings – and particularly the work of Bill Brown and John Plotz, to investigate the material objects of Sherlock's world, and the ways that these objects signify urbanity. I will demonstrate how Sherlock depends on physical objects and *things* just as he depends upon his urban environment, and therefore, how things act as extensions of the urban imagination which romanticizes Sherlock's world and makes it possible for him to be the character readers know and love. Furthermore, my examination of the objects which surround Sherlock will include an analysis of Sherlock's signature objects, and the ways in which they cause Sherlock himself to be objectified. In chapter two I will look predominantly at "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Red-

Headed League,” as well as small sections from several other stories in connection with the illustrations of Sidney Paget.

The third chapter will then follow Sherlock out of his London home and into the country, exploring the effect that leaving the city has upon Sherlock. I will examine “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” “The Adventure of the Yellow Face,” *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and “The Final Problem,” finishing my discussion of Sherlock by reinforcing the importance of the city in Sherlock’s work. The chapter will investigate the ways in which Sherlock carries the city with him into rural environments, and how urban imagination continues to be a central element of these Sherlock stories.

Through this thesis, I hope to contribute a new academic perspective on Sherlock Holmes which finds itself situated between historiographic analysis and close critical readings of the texts themselves. While several others such as John Christopher and Michael Harrison, who have each written books entitled *The London of Sherlock Holmes*, have created meticulous indexes of the real locations found in the Sherlock stories, I am not particularly concerned with cataloguing the real, or even investigating how these real places have changed since Doyle’s day. Nor am I concerned, necessarily, with reading the Sherlock stories in order to explore their larger social influences or ramifications, as Rosemary Jann is. While I often rely on Jann to help articulate the kind of romanticization which arises from urban imagination, I do not intend, in this thesis, to investigate how Doyle’s manifestation of London treats social factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic class, or the political milieu. Rather, I will focus on Doyle’s specific treatment of urbanity, and regard it within the larger historical context of Empire and industrialization in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. I will synthesize historical perspectives like that of Sterns and Hinshaw, or of Tanya Agathocleous, and use them as a lens to contextualize the kind of London

created by Doyle. My contribution to the larger academic conversation regarding Sherlock lies in my specific definition of urban imagination and my consideration of the effect of a romanticized city environment on the stories. The combination of close reading and historical contextualization, with the particular intent of uncovering Doyle's specific treatment of urbanity, ultimately amounts to a unique analysis of the Sherlock canon.

Each of my three chapters will necessarily include a variety of methodologies, beginning with close reading and textual analysis of Doyle's work as the foundation. Throughout each of my chapters I will also draw from formalist research to synthesize work from the vast array of Sherlock scholarship. Chapter one will put particular emphasis on elements of British and urban history as the chapter explores the physical manifestation of London itself. Chapter two relies on materialism and the work of Brown and Plotz as I incorporate Thing Theory. I will also examine the artwork of Sidney Paget as I consider the ways that Doyle's urban imagination permeates Sherlock's use of tangible objects in his work. Chapter three will then incorporate concepts of social geography as I examine the impact of changing Sherlock's physical environment as he moves into the countryside. Then I will reintegrate materialism and the work of Plotz and Brown in the context of the countryside.

Throughout the whole of my argument, I hope to demonstrate the importance of Sherlock's settings, and the influence that historical thought has upon a literary character as culturally pervasive as Sherlock Holmes. As any exercise in literary analysis is, this thesis is concerned with the exploration of a new interpretation, perspective, or understanding of the texts in question, but the additional weight of Sherlock's impact on cultural consciousness must also be taken into account. The result is that the social and cultural milieu of Doyle's historical moment is particularly important in understanding Sherlock as a character and popular figure. When the historical context

of London's urban reality at the end of the nineteenth century is considered, the romanticization of Sherlock's urban fantasy comes into focus. Moreover, as a figure of popular literature, Sherlock reflects the historical and cultural milieus of his creation, and thus an examination of Doyle's romanticization of Sherlock's London lends insight into the excitement and fears which surrounded urbanity at the end of the nineteenth century. My discussion of urban imagination stems from a desire to articulate the way that, in the case of the detective, history, culture, and literature come together to manifest a character who pervades culture and academia alike, and in turn begins to reflect back on the cultural atmosphere which created him.

CHAPTER ONE

To begin my discussion of Sherlock and urban imagination, I would like to turn to the city itself, and Sherlock's place within it. Sherlock Holmes is, without a doubt, an urbanite. Readers' understanding of him depends on the context of his city environment, and Doyle's stories rely on the manifestation of a London specific to the end of the nineteenth century, a time when the world's idea of what city life was and meant was constantly being redefined. In this chapter, I will define urban imagination in relation to Doyle's depiction of London, which is both rooted in the reality of London at the time, and a fantasy – a combination which romanticizes the city. Doyle uses urban imagination as he molds Sherlock's London to be precisely what he desires as an urban landscape for Sherlock. In this context, Doyle's urban fantasy is fashioned through the play between the real and the fictional elements of the London which appears in the text; it is "the art of creating what Howard Haycraft called a 'romantic reality' . . . a landscape of the imagination more compelling than the real thing" (Jann 10). Within this idea of a 'romantic reality,' I will examine how Sherlock occupies this specific manifestation of London – how he observes the physical world around him, and how it affects his detection work. Sherlock's London contextualizes urbanity in the history and culture of the late nineteenth century, and creates the precise arena necessary to carry out his investigations.

As stated above, Doyle marries the real and the fantasized in his creation of Sherlock's London, establishing a city landscape that is, at once, a reality which could be observed daily by Sherlock's fans on the real streets of London, and a romanticized fantasy of London life. To understand how urban imagination is used in this way, I will start by exploring the occurrence of real London place marks in the texts and how they depict the city from a specifically late

nineteenth-century perspective. Doyle consistently informs readers of Sherlock's location, filling the texts with mentions of real streets and boroughs in London. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," for example, Irene Adler lives in St. John's Wood, which is a real area of London (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 10). The headquarters of the Red-Headed League is located on Fleet Street, which is a real street (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 28). One of Doyle's most striking references to the city, however, occurs in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." When a precious gem is stolen and hidden away in an unsuspecting citizen's Christmas goose, Watson and Sherlock trek across the city – on a literal goose chase – to track down the thief. The goose's owner tells Sherlock that he purchased the goose from "the Alpha Inn, near the Museum" – the British Museum, that is, and so Sherlock and Watson begin their quest (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 104). Watson recalls, "Our footfalls rang out crisply and loudly as we swung through the doctors' quarter, Wimpole Street, Harley Street, and so through Wigmore Street into Oxford Street. In a quarter of an hour we were in Bloomsbury at the Alpha Inn" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 105). The reader can legitimately trace Sherlock and Watson's route on a map, following them through the streets of London. Sherlock is informed at the Alpha Inn that the goose was procured by the inn "from a salesman in Covent Garden," and Watson again takes the reader along for the journey: "We passed across Holborn, down Endell Street, and so through a zigzag of slums to Covent Garden Market" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 105). The salesman in Covent Garden informs them that his supplier is a "Mrs. Oakshott, 117, Brixton Road," but Watson and Sherlock are saved the trip to Brixton when they overhear another man, James Ryder, who turns out to be the gem's thief, asking after the goose in the same fashion; the three men then return to Baker Street together (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 107-8). This particular episode gives the reader a panoramic view of Doyle's London and Sherlock's movement within

it, but what is the significance? How does this panorama affect our understanding of Sherlock Holmes?

It is here that I would like to address a phrase found in Tanya Agathocleous's book, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World*: "the city as subject." Agathocleous writes that Doyle had "a fascination with aesthetic perception and its relation to global perspectives and urban experience" and describes Doyle's prominent use of the London landscape as the "desire to give form to the city as subject" (Agathocleous 118-9). This, I believe, speaks to the way that the city itself becomes an active element of the Sherlock stories, as well as the way that Doyle chooses to treat London in a specific way in the Sherlock texts, molding the city to become what is needed for Sherlock's investigative work.

A compelling example of this can be found by returning to Sherlock and Watson's "goose chase" in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." As explored above, this particular story of the goose and the stolen gem contains many references to real places in London, so much so that the concept of the "city as subject" comes into play. As Sherlock and Watson weave through London's streets, the urban space plays a crucial role in the realization of the story's narrative; Sherlock and Watson's journey through London is described as though the city were a character itself, and the immediacy and connectedness of the city is emphasized. Only in a city space such as London could the men follow the thief's tracks in the way that they do, for only in a space of dense living and accessible transportation could the men make the journey so quickly from one part of the city to the next. Doyle makes London manifest as a playground for Sherlock's adventures, and for the specific purpose of serving Sherlock in his search for the truth in a way that celebrates London as an exciting, interconnected place. At the beginning of the story, Sherlock describes the event of

the lost goose as “one of those whimsical little incidents which will happen when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles. Amid the action and reaction of so dense a swarm of humanity, every possible combination of events may be expected to take place . . .” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 95). Indeed, Sherlock’s words prove themselves true when Sherlock and Watson encounter the very man they’re looking for at precisely the correct moment, as the man is engaged in exactly the same kind of urban spree as they are. Moreover, Sherlock defines the adventure as a “whimsical little incident” *of* urbanity, recognizing that the case of the Blue Carbuncle occurs specifically as a product of his London landscape. Doyle’s London comes to life with the perfect kind of urbanity needed for Sherlock to conduct his investigations: an urbanity which facilitates his exploration of his physical surroundings, and one in which the sheer number of participants in urban life makes Sherlock’s study of human interactions possible. This is the “city as subject,” and it will prove to be an important element in the exploration of the urban imagination Doyle uses to create Sherlock’s world.

For Doyle’s original readers, of course, Sherlock’s encounters with these real-life places would not have been understood in isolation, but as part of a larger historical awareness of London’s late Victorian urbanity, which also informs the reader’s appreciation of how Doyle’s depiction of London deviates from the reality of this historical context. Therefore, before examining how Sherlock’s London is romanticized and thus constructed with a sense of urban imagination, I must first unpack the social, economic, political, and technological landscape of the real London of the time.¹ As Nicolas Daly explains, “London [in the late nineteenth century] was

¹ Of course, a comprehensive history of the late Victorian era lies far outside the scope of this paper, and I will only have the opportunity here to choose a select few aspects of the period’s history to explore which are particularly relevant to this thesis. To read further on the history of the period and its relation to Sherlock Holmes, please see one of the following: for a panoramic index of social, political, and historical contexts, both British and global, of the end of the nineteenth century, please see *The Fin-De-Siècle World*, edited by Michael Saler (2015). Sterns and Hinshaw’s book, *The ABC-CLIO World History Companion to the Industrial Revolution*, is a glossary-style

a world city, not just a very large centre of population, but a major hub of political power, commerce, finance, consumption, and information-gathering and dissemination, among other things” (Daly 119). The last twenty years of the century followed on the tail-end of Britain’s second industrial revolution and was a period of stability and growth. As Clayton writes, “London, towards the end of the nineteenth century, was the richest, largest and most important city in the world, the heart of an empire and the symbol of British power and influence” (Clayton 7). The population was booming, the middle class grew, and the economy flourished. The 1840s had seen an explosion of the railroad network across Britain, 1863 marked the opening of the London Underground, and by 1878 the new electric light had started appearing in the streets. Steam powered factories, the production line sped up, huge steel beams rose from the ground, and more consumer goods were available to more people than ever before (Hudson). The London of the Late Victorian era was, in many ways, one of absolute power, a city at the height of its prosperity.

Accompanying this prosperity, however, was a certain amount of anxiety as the Western World prepared to surge forward into a new century; Britain could not remain at its height indefinitely, and would soon become, once again “one power among others both in Europe and in the imperial scramble” (Daly 117). Fear for the Empire’s inevitable decline seeped into the culture of the era, and Doyle’s writing was no exception. Sherlock is, indeed, “a creation of the fin de siècle . . . overshadowed by fears of cultural decadence and increasing fragmentation” (Jann 6). Moreover, these fears of fragmentation mingled with anxieties of cosmopolitanism. Peter Fritzsche explains that “cities became more and more the crossroads of unprecedented cultural, economic, and political change that [were] at once perilous, opportune, and spectacular” (Fritzsche 30). The

overview of the Industrial Revolution (1996). For an extensive bibliography of Sherlockian scholarship, including historical analyses and critiques, please see Ronald B. De Waal’s work “A Bibliography of Sherlockian Bibliographies And Periodicals” in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (1970).

urban imagination which permeates Doyle's writing harnesses fears of the unprecedented and uncertain and soothes them with depictions of smart, well-orchestrated city living. Additionally, industrialization had taken a social toll, exacerbating issues of poverty, overpopulation, and poor living conditions (among other things). As these real effects of urbanization took hold of London life, Sherlock's stories offered a gentrified perspective of the world. It is, I believe, from the anxieties described above that much of Doyle's romanticization of London springs. Poverty, overcrowding, and poor sanitation do not enter Sherlock's world; rather, urban imagination romanticizes London, allowing Holmes to live outside the concerns which plagued the lives of real Londoners. This is where Doyle uses urban imagination, and this where Sherlock's London becomes one of fiction.

One of Doyle's early short stories, "The Red-Headed League," revolves around a pawnbroker's business located around the East End of London in a place called Saxe-Coburg Square. Watson and Holmes return to the Square a few times, talk to locals, ask questions, and eventually hold a stake-out for the criminals. It is in Saxe-Coburg Square that Sherlock catches the thieves in the act and gets his man. The complication, of course, is that Saxe-Coburg Square is fictional. For all the famous and unknown squares in London, Doyle chose to make-up a new place, a place of imagination, in which to situate Sherlock Holmes. Similarly, the mysterious and infamous Irene Adler, whom Sherlock and Watson track in "A Scandal in Bohemia," lives on Serpentine Avenue; her address is given specifically to be "Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John's Wood" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 10). St. John's Wood is a real place, and yet Serpentine Avenue is fictional. Sherlock is known for his navigational skills and internal map of London, so why would Doyle set a Sherlock story in a fictional place? As this chapter has already made plain, the Sherlock texts contain many references to real London places. Saxe-Coburg Square and

Serpentine Avenue are made-up places because Sherlock's London is not entirely of reality. The urbanity of the stories' settings springs from a depiction of real London, but also introduces an element of fantasy through which the settings remain profoundly fictional in many respects. Moreover, Doyle's romanticization of Sherlock's London and its careful placement adjacent to real London references is the foundation of Doyle's use of urban imagination, creating an urban environment which is distinctly of the historical moment, recognizable to readers, and more remarkable than reality. Made-up locations are found throughout the text, in conjunction with the real, and I would like to investigate the effect they have on a cultural and historical understanding of Sherlock and his world.

Rosemary Jann writes that "The specificity of Doyle's settings made them instantly recognizable to a contemporary reader and enhanced the illusion of realism" (Jann 10). While the "illusion of realism" in Doyle's writing is, I believe, notable, it is not because of its specificity. When taking a closer look at the stories themselves, as John Christopher recognizes, Doyle's allusions to place are really quite vague; Holmes has a vast knowledge of London, but Doyle keeps the stories from being too grounded in the real by omitting any considerable commitment to specific places (Christopher 6). This is where I would like to insert my exploration. Many volumes have been written cataloging the real places mentioned by Doyle in the stories, as I have done above. Christopher himself, for example, indexes Doyle's London references in his book *The London of Sherlock Holmes*. Michael Harrison's book, also entitled *The London of Sherlock Holmes*, does something similar, providing a micro-history of any London street mentioned in the stories. Both books place Sherlock in a real London setting, expounding on the "specificity" which Jann praises. My angle, however, is not in the specifics of Sherlock's realism. Instead I will focus on how Holmes' London embellishes and romanticizes urbanity as it surrounds fictional locations

with references to actual London landmarks. Doyle wrote about Saxe-Coburg Square and not about a real place, but, as will soon be explored, he situates the fictional square in a very specific and very real part of the city. Similarly, Sherlock's famous residence at 221B Baker Street is fictional, but Baker Street is not. Sherlock's London is distinctively unreal in many ways, but constructed to look real. Doyle makes real what is fiction, in large part, by tapping into something compelling, into what readers wish or imagine the world to be; in short, he does so by creating a world of urban imagination.

A concrete example of such romanticization can be found by returning to the story "The Red-Headed League" and its setting in the fictional Saxe-Coburg Square. Considering that this particular text itself contains several references to real places in London, including St. Paul's Cathedral and Farringdon Street, it is significant that Doyle chose to have the main action of the mystery take place in a made-up setting. One can recognize, however, how Saxe-Coburg Square is placed in a real part of London. Doyle relied heavily on Londoners' contemporary knowledge of the city's regions and neighborhoods as he surrounded his made-up places with a sense of the real, for London was geographically divided, with sections in the north, south, east, and west of the city representing different ways of life according to their locations. In "The Red-Headed League," when describing his and Sherlock's journey across London to Saxe-Coburg Square, Watson writes, "We travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg Square" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 38). Aldersgate still exists today as an underground station, renamed Barbican, and is located in what would have been the north-eastern part of London in Doyle's day (it is much more central now because London has grown significantly in size over the last century). Additionally, when returning to the pawnbroker's shop to stake out their man, Watson notes that he and Sherlock "rattled through an endless labyrinth of

gas-lit streets until we emerged into Farringdon Street” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 42). Farringdon Street runs through the borough of Clerkenwell, also in the northeastern part of the City. Doyle manifests a made-up place as though it were real, giving details which help the reader to locate them and grounding Sherlock’s urban landscape in reality while making the space for his own addition to the kind of “landscape of the imagination” which Howard Haycraft describes.

Tying together the real and the fictional, however, is only one part of the establishment of a romanticized London setting for Sherlock. In the creation of Sherlock’s London, Doyle makes reference to real places just enough to lend a sense of reality to his fictional settings, without ever confronting the ugliness that many of those real places possessed. He often places made-up settings in specific geographical locations which were known to be poor sections of London, but glosses over the reality of poverty in those locations; the boroughs and sections of London of low income and ill-repute are often gentrified by Doyle. The reality of city life for many of the working class is not of the ilk represented in the Sherlock stories. Doyle’s romanticization of London rejects the problems which complicate the “city as subject” and instead endorses the image of Sherlock’s setting with urban imagination. As discussed in the last paragraph, when treated as a real place, Saxe-Coburg Square can be located in the northeastern part of London. As Fritzsche explains, the northeast was one of the poorest sections of the city at the time: overcrowded, unclean, and filled to bursting with working class families, quite apart from John Watson’s “house in Kensington” (Fritzsche 31; Doyle, Perry and Barreca 41). Fritzsche offers a larger understanding of the reality of poverty in some sections of the city, specifically referencing a panorama of the city from the era. The poorest sections of the city are portrayed as “‘miles of mean streets . . . smokey, dirty, unbeautiful.’ This was the East End of London . . . To the north were the grimy streets of working-class Holborn, Clerkenwell, Kings Cross, Finsbury, and Islington” (Fritzsche 31).

Yet the reality of what Saxe-Coburg Square would have been is not represented in Doyle's narrative. Instead, it is gentrified by Doyle's writing, cleaned up, and placed in a fictional world which largely ignores the problems festering in East London at the time. The characters certainly recognize that the place is not pleasant:

It was a poky, little, shabby-genteel place, where four lines of dingy two-storied brick houses looked out into a small railed-in enclosure, where a lawn of weedy grass and a few clumps of faded laurel-bushes made a hard fight against a smoke-laden and uncongenial atmosphere. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 38)

The true nature of life in East London, however, cannot be conveyed in this description; living conditions for the working class in Late Victorian London were quite a bit harsher than what Doyle's "shabby-genteel" and "uncongenial" adjectives convey. Charles Booth's seminal study, *Life and Labour of the People of London (1891-1902)*, for example, documents that 22.4% of the London population lived in poverty, and that 8.4% lived in extreme poverty (Clayton 12). Additionally, Clayton reports that

The 1901 Census shows that 45% of families in Finsbury still lived in one or two rooms and in neighbouring boroughs the proportions exceeded a third. High rents, large family sizes and low wages were the main reasons for this overcrowding. A rent of about £11 a year would have to come out of a workman's income of perhaps £30 . . . The situation resulted in multiple occupancy, overcrowded lodging houses and high rates of malnutrition, disease and crime. (Clayton 13)

This reality of poverty is not contained in Doyle's world of urban imagination,² and even when Doyle does begin to ground Saxe-Coburg Square in the real, he quickly pulls Sherlock out of it

² Unlike the work of Dickens, which focused explicitly on a true-to-life representation of the plight of the poor and the cycle of poverty. See examples such as *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Hard Times*.

again: the full scope of Doyle's imagining of the fictional square lies in the great distinction between one side of the street and the other:

The road in which we found ourselves as we turned round the corner from the retired Saxe-Coburg Square presented as great a contrast to it as the front of a picture does to the back. It was one of the main arteries which conveyed the traffic of the City to the north and west. The roadway was blocked with the immense stream of commerce flowing in a double tide inward and outward, while the footpaths were black with the hurrying swarm of pedestrians. It was difficult to realize as we looked at the line of fine shops and stately business premises that they really abutted on the other side upon the faded and stagnant square which we had just quitted. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 39)

Sherlock and Watson suddenly find themselves out of the "smoke-laden and uncongenial" part of the city, and back in the bright, bustling excitement of a cosmopolitan city. The poor parts of the city, and the lives of the working class are swept under the rug, and Sherlock is allowed to stay in his bubble of romanticized city living. London is, once again, a fantasy world of "fine shops and stately business premises," the London of Doyle's urban imagination.

But what does the treatment of made-up locations as romanticized versions of reality add up to for the character of Sherlock, and what does it say about the romanticized urban environment of the stories? Gazing at the line of shops in Saxe-Coburg Square, which includes the pawnbroker's business, Sherlock comments, "I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca 39). Sherlock is known for his navigational skills and internal map of London, yet the stories themselves are often set in fictional places, like Saxe-Coburg Square. Christopher argues that Doyle chose fictional settings to keep his stories from being too rooted in the real (Christopher 6). Indeed, I see

Saxe-Coburg Square or any other fictional setting from the stories as evidence of the power of Doyle's writing to conjure up urban imagination and to escape from real urbanization while also glorifying a romanticized London.

To go a step further, I pose that Sherlock Holmes relies on Doyle's use of urban imagination as a reassurance to readers. Kustritz and Kohnen posit that "In his original incarnation, Sherlock Holmes functioned as a virtuoso reader of people and places . . . the newly expanded industrial city remained understandable and therefore safe" (Kustritz and Kohnen 86). As a character from popular literature, Sherlock Holmes reflects the sensibilities of London's fin-de-siècle, embodying the late Victorian fantasy of urbanity, and serving as the personification of stability, grace, intelligence, and success in the face of the ill-effects of urbanization and industrialization, as well technological and societal change. Sherlock and his city setting recall a Britain of great prosperity and a British identity which sits comfortably at the center of the world. They offer a gentrified perspective of an industrialized and urbanized world, erasing the ugliness of working class London and directing the reader to a fantasy world, delivered by a protagonist who always knows where he is and what he is doing. Sherlock and Watson continuously exist in the fun-house mirror version of London, and ". . . both extraordinary men reassure us in a time of cultural and social transformations . . . Holmes' scientific knowledge reassured 19th century readers that order could exist in the industrial city . . ." (Kustritz and Kohnen 94). Agathocleous explores how London itself was used by writers of the nineteenth century as a microcosm for the world and as a way to mediate urbanization; Doyle does not address the specifics of London life but instead uses a wide, aesthetically-focused lens as a way to comfort readers and help them escape from a world of uncertain and rapid change (Agathocleous xxi). For the world was certainly changing rapidly: "Industrialization, commercialization, and colonization" were changing the world, giving

rise to “new forms of life” and “rhythms that no longer collapsed in cycles of rise and fall but seemed to move insistently forward” (Fritzsche 30). Sherlock Holmes adjusts effortlessly to such new rhythms and thrives in a London of Doyle’s creation, one steeped in romanticization and urban imagination. Rosemary Jann describes Sherlock’s London particularly beautifully:

Porter characterized Doyle’s London as ‘mythic’ in the sense that it relies on a kind of metonymic shorthand to suggest the feeling of place with a few strategic and characteristically British details . . . ‘the distillers of familiar national essences’ that possess all of the romantic charm and none of the banality of the real thing. (Jann 33)

It is in this sense of the mythic, in the aesthetically-focused details of Doyle’s ‘metonymic shorthand,’ and in the reassurance that Kustritz and Kohnen argue that Sherlock extends to his readers, that I believe the beating heart of the stories’ endurance can be found.

To take a second look at how urban imagination is used in the stories and how Sherlock’s London is romanticized, I turn now to *A Study in Scarlet*, and Sherlock and Watson’s first adventure together. In this chapter, I have already discussed how Doyle uses urban imagination in the manifestation of a fictional setting in “The Red-headed League”; instead of confronting the reality of poverty in the poor sections of London in his time, Doyle refers to real places in the city just long enough to establish where his fictional Saxe-Coburg Square is located, but then pulls Sherlock and Watson away again, preferring to keep them in a romanticized world of well-understood city life. Doyle, therefore, doesn’t simply create a fictional place, but rather creates a fictional place within a romanticized version of the real London, and thereby, in his own way, romanticizes the whole city and constructs London for his own purposes. This is the creation of Sherlock’s romanticized London; however, urban imagination can also be used in other ways, as will be seen in *A Study in Scarlet*. In the novel, after meeting Sherlock and agreeing to lodge with

him at 221B Baker Street (a place whose own fictionalization will become relevant shortly), Watson accompanies Sherlock to investigate some “bad business” across town, at “3, Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 14). As with Saxe-Coburg Square, Lauriston Gardens is, in fact, a made-up place, but located, by Doyle, off a specific road in London which is real, giving the reader a precise sense of where Lauriston Gardens would be if it existed. Additionally, in using urban imagination, Doyle constructs the area around Lauriston Gardens in a way markedly different from what the reality would have been. As an online travel guide to Brixton reveals, “The London district of Brixton lies to the south of the River Thames,” and “underwent a huge transformation between the 1860s and 1890s, as railways and trams linked Brixton with the centre of London. In 1880, Electric Avenue was so named after it became the first street in the area to be lit by electricity” (Brixton History). Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, “Large, expensive houses were constructed along the main trunk routes into Brixton, attracting the middle classes,” and Charles Booth, whose 1898 survey of London’s socioeconomic landscape was mentioned earlier in this chapter, “graded Brixton Road in red [in his color-coding system] which was ‘Middle Class, Well-to-do’” (Brixton History; Brixton Road). Yet Sherlock and Watson’s sojourn to the fictional Lauriston Gardens off the very real Brixton Road reflects none of this middle class reality. In fact, Lauriston Gardens is described in ugly detail, constructed as a dilapidated, dirty place that should be more akin to the area of London where one would find Saxe-Coburg Square.

Even before bringing the reader to Brixton Road, Doyle begins to use urban imagination by constructing the urban space of the novel in a foreboding way: “It was a foggy, cloudy morning, and a dun-coloured veil hung over the house-tops, looking like the reflection of the mud-coloured

streets beneath” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 15). As the pair arrive at the location of the murder that will become Sherlock and Watson’s first case together, Watson relates

Number 3, Lauriston Gardens wore an ill-omened and minatory look. It was one of four which stood back some little way from the street, two being occupied and two empty. The latter looked out with three tiers of vacant melancholy windows, which were blank and dreary, save that here and there a “To Let” card had developed like a cataract upon the bleared panes. A small garden sprinkled over with a scattered eruption of sickly plants separated each of these houses from the street, and was traversed by a narrow pathway, yellowish in colour, and consisting apparently of a mixture of clay and of gravel. The whole place was very sloppy from the rain which had fallen through the night. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 15)

The description of this place’s exterior alone is enough to paint a specific image of an abandoned, run-down, plausibly poverty-stricken neighborhood, quite apart from what one would expect in Brixton in 1878, when *A Study in Scarlet* is set. Further, when Watson and Sherlock enter this ugly abode and find the room where the murderer left his victim, Doyle’s construction of this fictionalized setting as a dark and dirty place intensifies:

It was a large square room, looking all the larger from the absence of all furniture. A vulgar flaring paper adorned the walls, but it was blotched in places with mildew, and here and there great strips had become detached and hung down, exposing the yellow plaster beneath. Opposite the door was a showy fireplace, surmounted by a mantelpiece of imitation white marble. On one corner of this was stuck the stump of a red wax candle. The solitary window was so dirty that the light was hazy and uncertain, giving a dull grey tinge

to everything, which was intensified by the thick layer of dust which coated the whole apartment. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 16)

While Doyle made little concession to the reality of poverty in the East End of London where Saxe-Coburg Square is, he has created a world of misery in a fairly well-to-do neighborhood across town. Rather than being manifested through vague descriptions of uncongeniality as Saxe-Coburg Square is, Lauriston Gardens is constructed specifically for Doyle's purposes as a place which is particularly decrepit. When creating Lauriston Gardens, then, Doyle uses urban imagination.

But how does all of this affect a reader's perception of Sherlock? By using urban imagination, Doyle is able to place Sherlock in a London of his own design, and to construct an urban space for his own purpose. This becomes especially evident, I believe, as one examines Lauriston Gardens further. Not only does Doyle create a made-up setting which is placed in a real location yet unrealistically decrepit, he also does so in great contrast to the other urban spaces in which Sherlock and Watson have, thus far, existed. *A Study in Scarlet* is the first story in the Sherlock canon, and until investigating Lauriston Gardens, Sherlock and Watson have only been situated in one other notable setting – 221B Baker Street. This is significant because of the distinct – and I am sure purposeful – contrast between the two locations. Watson does not describe Sherlock's famous residence in great detail, but what he does provide by way of description is enough for the reader to get a sense of the apartment's atmosphere:

They consisted of a couple of comfortable bed-rooms and a single large airy sitting-room, cheerfully furnished, and illuminated by two broad windows. So desirable in every way were the apartments, and so moderate did the terms seem when divided between us, that the bargain was concluded upon the spot, and we at once entered into possession. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 7)

Watson's new living quarters contrast sharply with the dismal scene at Lauriston Gardens, making the crime scene stand out all the more. As Doyle lays the foundational elements of what readers will come to know as Sherlock's London, he purposefully constructs a crime scene in a dark, decrepit, dilapidated urban space. What is ugly is relegated to specific places, and connected explicitly to the crime which Sherlock undermines. Rather than refusing to confront the reality of urban living, as Doyle does in "The Red-Headed League," in Lauriston Gardens urbanity is constructed in a different way, and Doyle is 'uglifying' rather than beautifying Sherlock's environment. Yet, because it differs from reality and brings in elements of fiction, this uglified version of London is still a kind of romanticization. What may be ugly or displeasing about a city environment is used for Doyle's specific needs as he sets the scene for Sherlock's work. Sherlock's London continues to become manifest as an urban space which is grounded in London's reality, but also distinct from it, a version of the London that could be. Doyle places the world's greatest detective in this romanticized urban space and reassures the reader that whatever unpleasantness one may encounter in a city as large and diverse as London can be dominated, controlled, and subdued by the one-and-only Sherlock Holmes through his specialized mode of detection.

When one examines these examples from "The Red-Headed League" and *A Study in Scarlet* in conjunction with one another, a more complete idea of urban imagination emerges. More than a beautification of Sherlock's London, Doyle's urban imagination romanticizes London by marrying the real and the fictional. Urban imagination ultimately is used by Doyle to manifest Sherlock's London as precisely the kind of environment where Sherlock may succeed as a character, and where Doyle's narrative can be told most effectively. Moreover, urban imagination is tied to Doyle's historical moment, and accesses the kind of fantasy which reassures readers who are confronting the reality of urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century. Doyle uses urban

imagination, the city is romanticized, readers are allowed to indulge in the fantasy of Sherlock's world, and London is constructed according to Doyle's needs.

CHAPTER TWO

At the opening of “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Dr. John Watson stops by 221B Baker Street for the first time since being married. In his usual fashion, Sherlock Holmes makes a series of deductions about Watson’s life, which he could not possibly have known about, by stringing together facts gleaned from minute observations, all to Watson’s amazement. Concerning Watson’s walking through rough weather, employing a rough-handed servant-girl, and returning to his doctoring, Sherlock detects all of it in the first few minutes of looking at Watson:

It is simplicity itself . . . my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right forefinger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I might be dull, indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 3)

This excerpt from “A Scandal in Bohemia” is a piece of classic Sherlockian deduction, but I believe it is also evidence of something more. Shoe brushes, leather, iodoform, nitrate of silver, top hats and stethoscopes – the passage is full of objects, things, the kind of materialism that made up people’s lives and served as the evidence for Sherlock’s detection. Doyle’s writing is held together by descriptive passages of this nature which bring Sherlock’s world of urban imagination into focus. As readers encounter a romanticized London of fantasy in the text, they do so by first

constructing a London rooted in reality, and the realism and tangibility of physical objects in the text helps enormously to make this possible. Sherlock lives in a city environment of adventure, intrigue, and excitement, first and foremost populated by a tremendous amount of *things*, the kind of which simultaneously filled readers' everyday lives. Perhaps this is what Rosemary Jann referred to when she quoted Dennis Porter in writing of Doyle's "metonymic shorthand," used "to suggest the feeling of place with a few strategic and characteristically British details . . . 'the distillers of familiar national essences' that possess all of the romantic charm and none of the banality of the real thing" (Jann 33). Perhaps the objects which fill Sherlock's world are also in part responsible for *creating* it. Doyle creates his characters through these "characteristically British details," and through a reliance on a kind of materiality placed distinctively at the end of the nineteenth century. The objects on which Sherlock relies to do his detecting work are both evidence of his clients' lives, and evidence of turn-of-the-century urbanity.

Bill Brown, who has written extensively on Thing Theory, defines a "thing" as an object with "a changed relation to the human subject . . . less an object than a particular subject-object relation" (Brown 4). In other words, an object becomes a thing when it resists a clear definition as simply an object, and begins to take on properties or characteristics which give it subjective power. I therefore define the objects which fill the lives of Sherlock's clients precisely as *things* in Brown's sense of the word. When Doyle gives these things the power to be evidence, and to be the medium through which Sherlock solves his cases, he gives them agency of a sort, and blurs the line between object and subject. Furthermore, an analysis of things in the Sherlock stories heavily informs an exploration of Doyle's use of urban imagination in the stories, for the objects on which Sherlock relies act as a kind of "metonymic shorthand" for Sherlock's urban environment (Jann 33). In this chapter, I will argue that the presence of things in the Sherlock canon connects to an

urban imagination specific to London at the end of the nineteenth century in two different ways. First, they are evidence of more than a hundred years of industrial development in Britain, culminating in the results of the Second Industrial Revolution and the appearance of mass produced consumer products. Many of the objects which Sherlock examines and uses as clues in his cases are part of this new consumerism, objects which would have been mass produced, and owned by clients, villains, and readers alike. I would like to contend that the context of mass production and a new availability of quotidian materiality helps to create a romanticized version of London for Doyle's readers, one rooted in reality and realized through the urbanity of the mass produced objects themselves.

Secondly, the things which surround Sherlock connect to urban imagination through an entirely different kind of materiality that speaks to Britain's global connectivity in Doyle's time. I will explore this by examining specific personal items owned by characters in the stories, with a specific focus on those which reveal Sherlock's London to be a cosmopolitan city, connecting British citizens to far corners of the world and bringing objects of foreign cultures onto British soil. Unlike the standardized and recognizable objects in the text which would have been mass produced, this section will address curiosities, objects belonging to individuals, often with no market value but of great meaning to their owners. John Plotz's work on objects and portability in Victorian England helps to classify the kinds of objects that signify cosmopolitanism through their uniqueness and their ability to be transported from and to far-off places: "infallible, unbreakable relics" which "operate as a moveable repository of both family feeling and of Englishness, a national identity understood metonymically as an extension of domestic ties" (Plotz xiv). Unlike Brown, Plotz is concerned with objects which are decidedly out of the ordinary. He discovers that the objects of hallmark portability which he examines are, paradoxically, highly valued by their

owners and simultaneously of no actual monetary value. In short, they are “withdrawn from the ordinary rules of commodity circulation” (Plotz xiv-xv). These are the same kinds of objects which I will argue are evidence of the late nineteenth-century British Empire’s global reach, and of London’s centrality to the empire. These objects of Plotz’s classification enrich the creation of a London of fantasy, which revels in the great diversity of city life through Doyle’s use of urban imagination. I will attempt to reconcile the presence of cosmopolitan items with things of mass production in the stories, revealing a kind of duality which Plotz summarizes well: “the age of triumphant (and triumphantly English) mementoes was simultaneously the apogee of English capitalism, with London doubling as the world’s industrial engine and its central bank” (Plotz xiv). The balance in Doyle’s writing of both recognizable, mass produced objects, and individualistic tokens of personal value produces the urban romanticization which colors and shapes Sherlock’s world.

As I mention above, I refer to the objects of Sherlock’s world as things because of their role as objects of agency within the detective plots. The way the objects “speak” to the Detective blurs the line between object and subject, making it difficult to place them in any one category of functionality. Bill Brown tells his readers to think of things “as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects—their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems” (Brown 5). Brown’s words are quite appropriate for describing the power that the things of detective fiction have over the characters and action. Even before Sherlock, the founders of the detective fiction genre, which had emerged throughout the nineteenth century, set the precedent for the way detective work functions in literature and its need for physical evidence. Critics disagree on who takes the prize for the first detective character, but

consensus seems to agree that Edgar Allen Poe's character C. Auguste Dupin established the genre of the detective story in English fiction as we think of it today. First appearing in 1841 in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Dupin and his adventures laid the foundations for the genre which Sherlock would later come to define, and for the way detective stories function logistically and as a part of cultural thought.

If a detective character must solve a murder, he (or she) needs clues to follow, evidence pertaining to the lives of victim and the murderer. More or less, the rationalizing detective such as Dupin or Holmes is dependent upon observations of the material world around him; detective work requires *things*. Dupin searches for murder weapons such as a straight razor or a cloth belt, or tracks down a stolen letter. Green spectacles and orangutan hair lead him down the trail, and he conducts his snooping using magnifying glasses and snuff boxes. His business as a detective and as a character is entirely mediated through materialism and objectification, and the tangible world becomes the fodder for the detective fiction plot. To cite another example, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) similarly engages its readers in a contemplation of material objects. The plot revolves around a stolen gemstone, and evidence such as paint, letters, clothing, and laudanum is crucial to the solving of the mystery (Collins). Taking place in the country and in the home of a wealthy family, however, *The Moonstone* is still a step away from the materiality which mass production had made familiar in the everyday urban household by the end of the century. The importance of mass production to the creation of Sherlock's world becomes apparent when one examines the stories in a historical context.

Around 1870, the Second Industrial Revolution began in Britain and large numbers of standardized, factory-made goods flooded the market and were available for the average consumer for the first time. The lives of the general public were filled, suddenly, with mass-produced objects,

evidence of everyday existence which everyone could recognize. Peter M. Stearns and John H. Hinshaw describe, in their book, *The ABC-CLIO World History Companion to the Industrial Revolution*, that “During this phase [of the late nineteenth century], the industrial corporations began systematically to exploit the scientific process for new products and processes. Mass production techniques produced more goods than ever before . . .” (Stearns and Hinshaw 35). The lives of individuals, especially those who lived in urban environments where factories had transformed the landscape, began, gradually, to be defined in new ways: “By the late nineteenth century, mechanization had completely transformed the homes of ordinary people with domestic production equipment, such as sewing machines, and manufactured consumer items such as kerosene lamps and factory-produced rugs and wallpaper” (Stearns and Hinshaw 163). Furthermore, mass production processes and their effect on the middle class gave rise to mass consumerism: “Since the mid-nineteenth century, mass consumption of manufactured goods and services has become more important to developed industrial societies” (Stearns and Hinshaw 50). As society’s focus shifted to accommodate this influx of consumer objects, so, too, did the culture surrounding things take on new life. Therefore, when Sherlock Holmes appeared at the end of the century, the presence of and focus on tangible objects in his stories had a cultural resonance through which his readers could identify with the very objects which filled the lives of Holmes’ clients.

To clarify the impact of mass production on the late Victorian urban household, I would like, here, to conduct a case study of sorts, examining the effects of one kind of consumer object. Because of the prevalence and importance of clothing to the Sherlock Holmes stories, examining the technological changes which affected the production of clothes in the nineteenth century seems appropriate. Advancements in clothing production had been occurring gradually throughout the

Industrial Revolution, including the introduction of the power-loom in 1813 and that of graded paper patterns in 1863 (Noagi). Hitting a bit closer to the domestic sphere, the modern form of the sewing machine was invented in 1846, becoming a popular gateway for the production of clothing in the home; further, “The Singer Sewing Machine Company first put an electric motor on the sewing machine in 1889, and sweatshop production of clothing spread rapidly thereafter” (Stearns and Hinshaw 224-5). As Noagi writes, “By the time the power-loom and sewing machine had been adopted by the masses, they had also undergone additional improvements. These improvements . . . also made it possible to introduce a new way of speeding up the mass production of clothing” (Noagi). The manufacture of clothing was slowly becoming more and more industrialized, more and more a product of factories and standardization rather than of small-scale artists and specialists. For example, by the 1890s, “sewing machines were also being applied to the manufacture of shoes, displacing many skilled cobblers and generating a growing number of shoe factories” (Stearns and Hinshaw 225). Similarly, 1880 saw the introduction of the “Boston system,” and “It became the practice to divide a garment into sections and assign each separate section to an individual worker . . . In essence the production of clothes became an assembly line” (Noagi). Out of all this development, the effect was a far greater availability of clothing which was cheaper and more standardized, with an especially large influx seen in cities where factories had sprung up. Therefore, when Sherlock gleans information from his clients’ clothing in “The Red-Headed League,” “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” or “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” all written in the early 1890s, the story speaks to a particular moment in material history, in which Doyle’s readers would have had more familiarity than ever before with the *things* through which the Detective may conduct his work.

Furthermore, the material focus of the stories contributes to Doyle's use of urban imagination in creating Sherlock and his world. Just as Sherlock's fans interacted, in their own lives, with the same kind of tangible objects which facilitate the Detective's work, they also placed such commodities into a larger picture of a fantasy urban lifestyle. Given the trends of urbanization which made industrialization and the rise of the middle class possible, the new pervasive consumerism which arose at the end of the nineteenth century was a crucial part of the urban environment Doyle created. Industrialization was defined by the city landscape, and vice versa; it was in cities rather than in the country where Doyle's readers would have encountered the sheer quantity and diversity of factory-made goods with which Sherlock's adventures are saturated. The same romanticized version of London which made space for Sherlock's fictional address also had to accommodate a new kind of dealing in materialistic currency which highlights urban consumerism mediated through the beginnings of mass production. Sherlock's investment in understanding and working with consumer objects imbeds him in a world of Doyle's urban imagination while allowing the general public, with its mass-produced objects, to connect with detective fiction in a new way.

In sharp contrast, however, the solutions to many of the Sherlock mysteries come not in the form of standardized, factory-produced goods, but in unique material objects and tangible indicators of specific individuals. These anomalies, which I recognize as the same kinds of objects which John Plotz describes as Victorian objects of portability, act as signifiers in their own right, speaking to Doyle's urban fantasy from a different perspective than that of mass-produced consumer goods. As Plotz explains, "It is vital to begin with a sense of the novelty of the developments that make Deborah Cohen call the Victorian English 'the first people to be so closely identified with their belongings'" (Plotz 2). Indeed, the crux of this chapter is concerned with the

very presence of things in Victorian life, and how this presence pervades and affects Doyle's creation of a romanticized urban landscape. Plotz further elaborates that he is primarily interested in a very specifically-defined set of objects: "What Cohen calls "identification" arises, I am arguing, because certain belongings come to seem dually endowed: they are at once products of a cash market and, potentially, the rare fruits of a highly sentimentalized realm of value both domestic and spiritual, a realm defined by being anything but marketable" (Plotz 2). It is this category of objects which, at once, have been "withdrawn from the ordinary rules of commodity circulation," and remain products of sentimental, intellectual, or cosmopolitan value (Plotz xiv-xv). For the purposes of this paper, I will use this category of object analysis to outline the way that objects which are not mass-produced also help the romanticization of Sherlock's urban world to become manifest, specifically as they act as indicators of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

Plotz argues that "It was precisely because the Victorian world came to seem increasingly flooded by fungibles and commodities that certain objects and cultural practices, not so much sacrosanct as especially supple, became repositories of mobile memory" (Plotz xiv). This line of thinking pits the "fungibles and commodities" which appear numerous in the Sherlock stories (as discussed earlier in this chapter) against the unique items which color Sherlock's urban environment as one of global connectivity, and recall the kind of cosmopolitanism which defined London at the end of the nineteenth century. In his analysis of portability, Plotz rattles off the kinds of non-fungibles which may have been found in Victorian homes, and which, I argue, are evidence of kind of global connectivity which contributes to Doyle's use of urban imagination in creating Sherlock Holmes:

These are a few of [the Victorians'] favorite things: Shakespeare's complete plays; an Indian pearl necklace sold to buy a copy of Samuel Johnson's *Works*; some unlabeled

beetles bound for the British Museum; a monogrammed silver teapot; an Indian diamond with a “moony glow”; a Kashmiri shawl; a grandfather’s chest of documents in various languages; a ruby ring, its provenance carved upon it in Farsi; an embroidered handkerchief in a silver box. (Plotz 1)

Objects of this kind appear throughout the Sherlock texts, and display Sherlock’s London as a city of strong international power and of cosmopolitan curiosity. Additionally, Plotz takes special interest in the objects found in the Victorian novel, noting that “. . . when possessions fill Victorian novels—so copiously that later readers describe themselves as swaddled by, drowning in, or suffocating under their weight—they generally service not as static deadweights, but as moving messengers” (Plotz 1). Certainly, in the Sherlock stories, the possessions of clients and criminals, as well as of Sherlock himself, act as “moving messengers,” not just for Sherlock, but for readers as well, who piece together Sherlock’s urban world, in part, through an understanding of its tangibility and ‘thing-ness.’

The short story “The Red-Headed League” demonstrates well how prominent physical objects are in Sherlock’s urban world, as well as the way that the text maintains a balance of factory-produced consumer objects and of unique tangibles which act as indicators of cosmopolitanism. This balance, in turn, helps to create Sherlock’s romanticized urban space in full. When describing Mr. Jabez Wilson, Doyle gives particular emphasis to Watson’s observation of the man’s appearance and the objects which adorn his person:

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He wore rather baggy grey shepherd’s check trousers, a not over-clean black frock coat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, and a square pierced bit of

metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top-hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 27)

I would like to begin by exploring how this passage and the passage following, which contains Sherlock's deductions about Wilson, demonstrate the way that material objects are an ingrained part of the detective novel, and how their integration into Sherlock's work gives them the status of *things* as Brown defines it. Despite telling the reader that there is not much to be gained from Mr. Wilson's appearance, Watson provides a detailed description. The passage, I believe, challenges the reader to observe as Holmes would, placing a few common-place details within Sherlock's larger realized urban fantasy. A contemporary reader would, as Watson does, glean Wilson's status as a working-class man from his attire, and the detail provided naturally draws readers in and helps to realize the fantasy of Sherlock's world as though it were real. Moreover, any reader of Holmes would know that *everything* can be gained from this man's appearance, for that is how Sherlock does his detection. As Holmes himself says in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," "You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 68).

Holmes himself goes on to demonstrate this method as he reveals what he knows of Mr. Wilson: "Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 27). Sherlock of course knows Mr. Wilson is a Freemason because of his "arc-and-compass breastpin"; he knows Mr. Wilson has done a lot of writing by noticing "that right cuff so very shiny for five inches, and the left one with the smooth patch near the elbow

where you rest it upon the desk”; he knows about China because he recognizes “the fish that you have tattooed immediately above your right wrist” and “a Chinese coin hanging from your watch-chain” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 28). The breastpin, the sleeve cuff, the elbow patch, and the Chinese coin on the watch chain: the reader would observe how each of these very tangible products tells the story of Mr. Wilson’s life, especially to Sherlock’s discerning eyes, and how products like these told stories about their own lives. Readers and Doyle both use these object to build Sherlock’s world, and to gain an understanding of it. In this capacity, the detective novel gives these objects a vehicle through which they become *things* which defy a straightforward subject-object categorization. Through Sherlock’s eyes and the eyes of readers who understand their significance, Wilson’s clothing and accoutrement become active members of the scene, moving the plot forward, and almost taking on their own agency to act as signifiers of Wilson’s life. Possessions and tangible objects are produced in this capacity throughout Sherlock’s stories, and thus Doyle makes them the subject-object paradoxes which Brown defines as things. Additionally, Sherlock’s observations place the reader in a notably engaged yet passive position. Watson pulls the reader in with his initial description of Mr. Wilson’s appearance and challenges the reader to engage in Sherlock-like detection, especially with regard to Wilson’s working-class status and general temperament. Not until Sherlock explains his observations, however, is the reader given the details which lead Sherlock to his conclusions. The consumer objects which are so crucial to Sherlock’s mode of detection are therefore introduced in the context of being such, and these material agents of Doyle’s urban imagination are woven into the very foundations of Sherlock’s widely popular narratives.

While acting as mediators of plot and characterization, the objects described in the above passages simultaneously become things as they define Sherlock’s world as one of urban

imagination. I return here to the specific mention of clothing in the text, which proves to be particularly important to Sherlock when he first meets his client, while acting as evidence of factory-produced consumer objects. In Watson's description, "baggy grey shepherd's check trousers," a "not over-clean black frock coat," a "drab waistcoat," a "frayed top-hat," and a "faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar" are all specific items which could and would have been factory-produced in the late-1800s (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 27). Watson presents these pieces of clothing as clues to Wilson's occupation and social status as a British tradesman, a position which relates particularly to the working-class urban experience. Despite wearing clothing which would have been factory-produced and far more standardized, however, Wilson does not simply blend in, and Sherlock is able to conclude that Wilson has done a lot of writing recently by noticing precisely how Wilson's clothing deviates from the standard: "that right cuff so very shiny for five inches, and the left one with the smooth patch near the elbow where your rest it upon the desk" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 28). Wilson's clothes are products of an industrial city, both of a standardized quality, and demonstrative of Wilson's city life. As a member of Sherlock's London world, Wilson contributes to the urban imagination of the interaction and the setting when Doyle creates in him a recognizable form of urbanity, one which is deduced and noted by Watson and Sherlock through the tangible things which Wilson wears.

On the other hand, however, Wilson also carries with him a tangible object which is decidedly not factory-made: the Chinese coin speaks explicitly to a sense of cosmopolitanism, and creates a character whose experiences fit specifically into the landscape of London as a global metropolis. To return to Plotz's idea of a portable Victorian object, the coin has literally been "withdrawn from the ordinary rules of commodity circulation," and is simultaneously of no

marketable value and of great intellectual value (Plotz xiv-xv). The coin is not standardized, nor is it factory-made or even recognizable to all readers. It is, nonetheless, part of what creates Sherlock's urban environment, and frames the narrative in a London setting which is distinctly cosmopolitan. The British were interested in China throughout the nineteenth century for the importation of tea, silk, porcelain, and opium. As a British citizen and a Londoner, Wilson's trip to China and the physical evidence of it fit nicely into the context of the established international reach of the British Empire in the late Victorian period, and the centrality of London within the Empire. The Chinese coin effectively establishes Wilson as a city dweller and a world traveler, creating a world of urban fantasy which emphasizes and romanticizes London's cosmopolitanism and global connectivity in a way which is rooted in the reality of the time.

Throughout the rest of the story, the kind of objects which inform Doyle's use of urban imagination take on even more crucial roles. Jabez Wilson brings his case to Sherlock and Watson in the form of "a dirty and wrinkled newspaper," and the men are able to trace the paper trail of the Red-Headed League from the advertisement in the paper through the "piece of white cardboard about the size of a sheet of notepaper" which reads "THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE IS DISSOLVED. OCTOBER 9, 1890" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 26, 28, 35). On an even larger scale, however, the story itself revolves around a pawnbroker's business and the dealings the Red-Headed League – used as a cover for criminal activity – both of which are primarily concerned with the treatment or movement of objects. A pawnbroker, naturally, is a middleman in the exchange of used consumer objects, and so Wilson's business becomes the backdrop of the story's particular take on urbanity, as well as a specifically potent grey area between valuable marketable goods, and material anomalies which function as evidence of the life of an individual. One could realistically find both factory-made and hand-made

goods in a pawn shop, and so the material currency of Wilson's business would deal with a spectrum of materiality, indicating both the standardization of consumer objects through the industrialization of urban space, and the variability of unique personal objects which could be found in a cosmopolitan city such as London. Furthermore, a pawnbroker's business is distinctly urban, and could function only in a city, where the density and diversity of life allow the resale of objects to be commercially viable. One would not generally find a pawnbroker in the country, simply because a smaller population does not allow such a business to succeed. Wilson's occupation contributes significantly to the romanticization of the urban setting, and the material objects with which he does business would have spoken to readers as evidence of a romanticized London, defined by industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and a large and diverse population.

On top of this, the Red-Headed League, as Sherlock and Watson quickly discover, is a front for the perpetrator John Clay, and is used to preoccupy Wilson with a meaningless task which is, once again, specifically concerned with the use of material objects:

“And the work?”

“Is to copy out the Encyclopedia Britannica. There is the first volume of it in that press. You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting-paper, but we provide this table and chair.”

(Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 33)

Doyle could have had the pawnbroker preoccupied with anything meaningless, but the activity he chose is highly tangible as well as dependent on consumer materials. Wilson further emphasizes this when he explains, “I determined to have a look at it anyhow, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a quill-pen, and seven sheets of foolscap paper, I started off for Pope's Court” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 34). The objects involved in Clay's

ruse are quantified and priced, and then brought to a specific place in London as a part of a master plan which could only work in a city (Clay engages Wilson in order to keep him out of the basement of his pawnbroker's business, where Clay is tunneling to the nearby bank in order to rob it). Even though copying the encyclopedia is meaningless work, it is steeped in urbanization through its dependence on material objects, and, as recalled from Sherlock's original evaluation of Wilson, leaves physical marks of itself. Wilson is transferred from one place of objectification to another when he leaves his pawnbroker business for the offices of the Red-Headed League, and he is marked by the objects along the way.

Furthermore, as Sherlock explains at the end of the story, he is ultimately able to solve the case through an observation of a specific object, which brings the reader once again back to the significance of clothing. Sherlock realizes that Clay has been tunneling in the basement when he notices the state of his trousers: "I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must yourself have remarked how worn, wrinkled, and stained they were. They spoke of those hours of burrowing" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 47). The Detective notably detaches the object from the person ("I hardly looked at his face"), bringing the focus of his observation down to the clothing itself. As with Wilson at the beginning of the story, Clay's clothing – which acts as a place-marking signifier of urbanization as a consumer product which would, most likely, have been factory made – begins to function with its own kind of agency. The trousers, a piece of clothing which would have been made in a standardized way, speak to Sherlock's keen sense of detection as they deviate from the standard (the knees of the trousers are worn and dirty); as an object which blurs the line between object and subject in this instance, the trousers become a thing which affects the direction of the narrative. Against the

criminal's wishes, his clothing participates in a kind of communication with Sherlock, telling the story of Clay's movement as a criminal in an urban environment.

The clothing of criminals is not the only kind of attire to consider, however, and one need only turn to the illustrations of Sidney Paget to recognize how important Sherlock's clothing is to his identity. The hat, the coat, the pipe, the magnifying glass: these clothing pieces and accoutrements serve nearly as well as the name Sherlock Holmes in identifying the Detective. For the final section of this chapter, therefore, I would like to turn to Sherlock himself, and examine his specific relationship with objects. Sherlock, of course, engages with objects not only as evidence, but also as a way to facilitate the actual act of investigation. Sherlock famously searches for ways to busy his hands while mulling over difficult cases. His violin, for example, allows Sherlock to place tactile focus on an object while his mind works on a problem. After doing some snooping around the fictional Saxe-Coburg Square in "The Red-Headed League," Sherlock insists, "And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich and a cup of coffee, and then off to violinland, where all is sweetness and delicacy and harmony" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 39). Sherlock's "violinland," in this instance, constitutes attending a concert, ("Sarasate plays at St. James's Hall this afternoon") which speaks to the urbanity of Sherlock's environment, in which art and culture are readily available. Additionally, Watson's explanation that Sherlock is "an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer but a composer of no ordinary merit," feeds into the character's need for materialistic stimulation, via the tangibility of a violin, as well as the overall romanticization of urbanity in the stories (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 39). Also in "The Red-Headed League," Jabez Wilson leaves the flat after initially consulting Sherlock, and Watson asks "What are you going to do, then?" True to his form,

Sherlock answers, “To smoke . . . It is quite a three-pipe problem, and I beg that you won’t speak to me for fifty minutes” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 37). The pipe itself becomes a way for Sherlock to conduct his investigative work, almost as though the object is a gateway to his brilliant mind. Like Sherlock’s violin, the pipe is an object used to facilitate the investigation, which speaks to urban fantasy through its tangibility and materialistic realization. To readers, objects such as the violin and the pipe have become the key to Sherlock, so much so that we now identify him by them.

Here, Sidney Paget, once again, makes a grand entrance. Not only do many of his illustrations focus on important moments of interaction between Sherlock and the objects he studies, but they also, inadvertently, create a dynamic between the reader and the page whereby Sherlock comes to be defined by the materialistic objects with which he is surrounded. Each of Paget’s illustrations is captioned with a short quotation from the text it accompanies, and many of these captions alone reveal how Paget portrays the importance of material objects in the stories. For “The Adventure of the Crooked Man,” for example, Paget illustrated a moment captioned “What do you make of that?” (Stock³). The image shows Watson and Sherlock poring over a piece of evidence: “a large sheet of tissue-paper . . . covered with tracings of the foot-marks of some small animal” (Stock; Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 389). Similarly, an image captioned “Holmes opened it and smelled the single cigar which it contained” was published alongside “The Adventure of the Resident Patient,” in which Sherlock examines the evidence of a dead man’s cigar case and cigars (Stock). He demonstrates his knowledge on the subject, qualifying “Oh, this is an Havana, and these others are cigars of the peculiar sort which are

³ Each time I reference a Paget drawing, I will cite a website compiled by Randall Stock, rather than the portrait itself. Stock’s website contains a census of Paget’s Sherlock illustrations, with accompanying descriptions and notes concerning the history and publication of each of the images.

imported by the Dutch from their East Indian colonies. They are usually wrapped in straw, you know, and are thinner for their length than any other brand” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 403). From this information, and from discerning the way each cigar was cut and smoked, Sherlock determines that “This is no suicide, Mr. Lanner. It is a very deeply-planned and cold-blooded murder” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 403). Paget’s illustration “Holmes examined it critically” from “The Adventure of the Naval Treaty” tells the same kind of story, as Sherlock inspects a fragment of wood from a fence, as does “I heard him chuckle as the light fell upon a patched Dunlop tyre” from “The Adventure of the Priory School,” in which Sherlock and Watson find a missing bicycle (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 433, 522; Stock). Paget consistently portrays Sherlock in action, which often means portraying Sherlock’s involvement with material objects. Moreover, the bicycle tire, like the cigars, constitutes an area of Sherlock’s special knowledge, with Sherlock telling Watson “I am familiar with forty-two different impressions left by tyres” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 516). Doyle’s writing and Paget’s illustrations work together to produce a lasting impression of Sherlock as a character of materiality, and as Paget’s work lives on in our cultural understanding of who Sherlock is, his visual representation of the Detective takes on a new importance.

For twenty-first century readers who are aware of Sherlock’s legacy, the presence of objects in Paget’s illustrations becomes even more compelling when we see our very definition of Sherlock manifest through them. In his census of Paget’s work, for example, Randall Stock records that the illustration “We had the carriage to ourselves” was owned for many years by Doyle’s daughter, Dame Jean Conan Doyle (Stock). Stock takes note of Jean’s inscription on the illustration’s cardboard backing: “This is the first appearance of SH in a deerstalker” (Stock). The

grainy image of Sherlock and Watson sitting peacefully in their train compartment leaves a stark impression. It is a piece of history, frozen in grey watercolors, the moment Sherlock becomes *the* Sherlock of popular culture. Famously, Doyle never wrote of the deerstalker hat, yet the Detective is inseparable from the famous garment with which Paget anointed him. Sherlock is steeped in materialism, so much so that his cultural iconography may be reduced to a collection of objects: a deerstalker, a pipe, a magnifying glass.

Unlike the deerstalker, Sherlock's pipe makes many appearances throughout the stories, and his affinity for tobacco pipes is made clear. Paget's illustration "He held it up" accompanies a passage from "The Adventure of the Yellow Face" in which Sherlock scrutinizes a pipe left behind by a mysterious client who had grown impatient waiting for Sherlock's return to the flat (Stock):

A nice old briar with a good long stem of what the tobacconists call amber. I wonder how many real amber mouthpieces there are in London? . . . I should put the original cost of the pipe at seven-and-sixpence. Now it has, you see, been twice mended, once in the wooden stem and once in the amber. Each of these mends, done, as you observe, with silver bands, must have cost more than the pipe did originally. The man must value the pipe highly when he prefers to patch it up rather than buy a new one with the same money. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 328)

Once again, Sherlock's detection work is facilitated by the use and examination of objects. Sherlock becomes defined by these products, however, as they become recognizable parts of his idiosyncratic nature and begin to operate independently as signifiers of Sherlock. Sherlock refers to his need for his pipe to help him think countless times throughout the canon. Paget captures one such moment in his drawing for "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," entitled "Taking up a glowing cinder with the tongs" (Stock). The text goes on to describe Sherlock "taking up a glowing

cinder with the tongs and lighting with it the long cherry-wood pipe which was wont to replace his clay when he was in a disputatious rather than meditative mood” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 295). Other Paget drawings such as “A Retrospection” from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, “Is there any other point which I can make clear?” from “The Adventure of the Naval Treaty (Part II),” and Paget’s three portraits of Sherlock which were not published with any stories all feature Sherlock with his pipe as the classic Sherlock of popular cultural knowledge (Stock). In the same vein, Sherlock’s famous magnifying glass is also portrayed by Paget, most notably in the drawing “Look at that with your magnifying glass, Mr. Holmes” which was printed alongside “The Adventure of the Norwood Builder” (Stock). In the illustration, Sherlock engages his brilliant mind through the literal lens of a tangible object, one which would come to represent the very act of detection in years to come. This is the Sherlock Holmes we know. He meditates on his pipe, smoking mindlessly while his thoughts turn at enormous speeds; this image is so familiar that the object of the pipe nearly replaces Sherlock himself, a kind of materialistic metonym. Likewise, the magnifying glass is, indeed, a cultural symbol for mystery and investigation. The walls of the Baker Street tube station in London are tiled with images of the famous silhouette which features the deerstalker and the pipe. In a movement opposite to that of the inanimate objects which become things, as defined by Brown, Sherlock has, himself, become objectified, a cultural conglomeration of material objects meant to evoke a man of specific time and place. While the objects around him take on a certain subjectivity, Sherlock counters this movement and begins to move from the categorization of subjectivity to that of objectivity.

As *things* and pieces of clothing which would have begun to be mass-produced, and simultaneously objects which signify far more than their market value, Sherlock’s iconic objects, such as the deerstalker and the pipe, are precisely the kinds of objects which Plotz characterizes as

meaningfully portable. Their *thingness* is indicative of urbanity, and yet they are carried with Sherlock even when he leaves the city, and are representative of Sherlock's very identity. They function, therefore, both as elements of urban imagination and as vestiges of mobile tangibility. In the next chapter, the concept of mobility will become especially important as I explore what happens to Sherlock as he leaves London. Like his famous pipe, Sherlock himself, as the reader will see, becomes a moving manifestation of Doyle's urban imagination as he takes the treacherous step into the countryside.

CHAPTER THREE

Exploring Arthur Conan Doyle's use of urban imagination in the creation of Sherlock's London, as this thesis has attempted to do thus far, begins to piece together the way that Doyle's romanticized manifestations of city life shape the character of Sherlock and his work. However, doing so addresses only some of the stories' settings. As Barry McCrea observes,

There is a distinct subset of London stories modeled after Dupin's Paris mysteries (e.g. "The Blue Carbuncle" or "The Red-Headed League"), and these are responsible for the association of Sherlock Holmes with London fog, gas lamps, Cockney cabbies, and footsteps clattering down dark city lanes. But a far greater number of mysteries take place in the countryside . . ." (McCrea 69)

Even if Sherlock himself stays in the city, one must address the effect that the countryside, looming just outside London's borders, has on other characters and on Sherlock's work. Consider, for example, the case of Irene Adler. Contemporary adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories make it easy to forget how elusive and fleeting Irene Adler's appearance is in the canon. Adler is written into only one of Sherlock's adventures, "A Scandal in Bohemia," and the reader meets her only very briefly and from a distance in the original text; the most tangible fact the reader receives about Adler is her address – Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John's Wood (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 10). As mentioned briefly in a previous chapter, Serpentine Avenue is, like many of the locations in the stories, a fictional address, situated by Doyle in a specific part of London. Readers, therefore, identify Adler through Doyle's use of urban imagination, which marries the real and the fictional and shapes London to his narrative needs. At the end of the story, however, this use of urban imagination in connection with Adler is upset, because Adler leaves London. As London's systems of transportation lurched forward at the

end of the nineteenth century, with the well-established underground system, a far-reaching cross-country rail network, and the first appearance of the automobile, a Londoner's journey outside the city may seem second nature. When juxtaposed with Sherlock's great love of, and dependence on London, however, Adler's journey becomes more significant, pushing out the boundaries of Sherlock's world into unfamiliar, at times untamed, territory.

When Adler leaves London at the end of "A Scandal in Bohemia," Doyle introduces a new kind of non-urban element, one which has a remarkable impact on Adler herself. Just when Sherlock Holmes believes that he has caught up with Adler, he is informed by her maidservant that "She left this morning with her husband by the 5:15 train from Charing Cross for the Continent" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 22). Moreover, she leaves a note for Sherlock which she signs, "Very truly yours, Irene Norton, *née* Adler" (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 23). The reader most identifies Adler by her address in the city, and therefore Adler leaving that address not only means that she escapes from Sherlock's reach, it also constitutes a literal change in identity for her. No longer is she the infamous Irene Adler, and in losing the identity she has established in the city, it is as though she is entirely lost. Leaving the city is, as far as the reader is concerned, fatal to Adler. This demonstrates, I believe, the impact that Doyle's London environment of urban imagination has on the characters, and leads me to ask: what happens when our "dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes" leaves the city? (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 22). Now that a romanticization of urbanity has been established in both Sherlock's physical surroundings and in the objects which fill his world, I turn to Sherlock himself. For the final section of this thesis, I will examine how Sherlock himself depends on Doyle's use of urban imagination, and how his character changes when he is removed from his familiar city environment.

In a passage from “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” Sherlock and Watson travel to Winchester for a case, and the reader encounters a different side to Sherlock as the detective ruminates on his hatred of the countryside. The sudden dark nature of the passage is striking enough that it is worth including large sections of it here. Watson first describes the pastoral beauty of the scene outside the train window:

It was an ideal spring day, a light blue sky, flecked with little fleecy white clouds drifting across from west to east. The sun was shining very brightly, and yet there was an exhilarating nip in the air, which set an edge to a man’s energy. All over the country-side, away to the rolling hills around Aldershot, the little red and grey roofs of the farm-steadings peeped out from amid the light green of the new foliage. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 150)

The description is idyllic and pleasantly atmospheric, making Sherlock’s thoughts on the place stand out all the more. When Watson asks Sherlock, “‘Are they not fresh and beautiful?’ . . . with all the enthusiasm of a man fresh from the fogs of Baker Street . . . Holmes [shakes] his head gravely,” and replies (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 150):

You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there . . . They always fill me with certain horror. It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside . . . There is no lane so vile that the scream of a tortured child, or the thud of a drunkard’s blow, does not beget sympathy and indignation among the neighbours, and then the whole machinery of justice is ever so close that a word of complaint can set it going,

and there is but a step between the crime and the dock. But look at these lonely houses, each in its own fields, filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 151)

Sherlock's dark view of the countryside contrasts directly with Watson's enjoyment of its beauty and, moreover, sets Sherlock's hatred of the country directly against his love for and dependency on the city.

The passage causes me to think back to the goose chase of "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," in which the reader may discern how Sherlock depends on the specific logistics of city life in order to conduct his investigations. Sherlock relies on the fact that, in the city, "the whole machinery of justice is ever so close that a word of complaint can set it going," and this is especially apparent in "Blue Carbuncle" as Sherlock and Watson use the ease of transportation and the sheer density of the city to their advantage; the men are able to visit several different sections of the city in one night simply because of the accessibility of doing so in an urban environment. As the very train journey on which Sherlock voices his hatred of the country in "Copper Beeches" demonstrates, the same cannot be said of the country. Nearly any story which sees Watson and Sherlock travel to the country puts particular emphasis on their travel, forcing the reader to experience the distance between the city and the country, and how much more isolated the country is from Sherlock's discerning eye of justice.

Sherlock's hatred of the country, therefore, stems directly from the very fact that the country is *not* the city, and so in creating it, Doyle extols the city and further establishes his urban fantasy; even as Watson and Sherlock leave the city, the urbanity of London continues to be shaped

by Doyle for his own purposes, and to hold power in the sense of “city as subject.” As Watson says in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” Sherlock,

loved to lie in the very center of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumor or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of Nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 849)

Indeed, Sherlock dreads “the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places [as the country], and none the wiser,” indicating how important it is both to Sherlock as a character and to the development of the stories’ plots that the Detective be in the kind of urban space which allows him to be “responsive to every little rumor of suspicion of unsolved crime” (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 151; Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 849). As I now hope to explore, because of Sherlock’s desire to be connected to the city, the reader experiences a change – at times detrimental – in Sherlock’s character in the stories which are set in the countryside.

In “The Adventure of the Yellow Face,” for example, the reader witnesses a rare occurrence as Sherlock is taken out of his usual city environment: Sherlock makes a mistake. Despite the story taking place in London, there is a particular emphasis placed on the rural elements of the setting. At the start of the story, for example, Watson convinces Sherlock to go on a walk with him “in the Park, where the first faint shoots of green were breaking out upon the elms, and the sticky spear-heads of the chestnuts were just beginning to burst into their five-fold leaves” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 327). While Watson emphasizes the beauty of the park’s environment, the men’s sojourn to a distinctly naturalistic and non-urban environment proves to

be a distraction from Sherlock's work, and keeps Sherlock and Watson from meeting a client who comes by Baker Street in a flurry of anxiety. In "The Yellow Face," therefore, Doyle introduces an element of the non-city and non-industrial which exists *within* London, and which negatively impacts Sherlock's investigation; Sherlock's removal from his usual London setting, in which an urban fantasy is created, renders the Detective more inefficient than the reader is wont to see. As the story progresses, Sherlock encounters more elements of the country, and the story's unusual setting continues to affect his work. When Sherlock and Watson finally do meet up with their client, Grant Munro, he explains that some unusual and worrying things have occurred lately at his home in Norbury, which he describes as "very countrified, considering that it is so close to town. We had an inn and two houses a little above us, and a single cottage at the other side of the field which faces us, and except those there were no houses until you got half way to the station" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 330). Despite being in Norbury, a neighborhood in the southern London borough of Croydon, Munro's home is distinctly apart from Sherlock's usual city surroundings, and it is in *this* setting that Sherlock makes his error. The Detective believes that Mrs. Munro is hiding her not-so-late husband in the abandoned cottage on the Monros' property, but is surprised to learn that the Lady is, in fact, hiding a child from her previous marriage (who also happens to be evidence that her previous marriage was interracial). During the investigation, Sherlock is physically removed from the scene of the investigation as he works from Baker Street, and when he is called to the "countrified" cottage, he finds himself displaced. In both cases, he cannot conduct his investigative work in his usual way, and so his work suffers through the case's less-urban elements.

Rosemary Jann describes Sherlock as being "heir" to England's prosperity in the nineteenth century, and Kustritz and Kohnen deduce that "Holmes' scientific knowledge reassured 19th

century readers that order could exist in the industrial city . . .” (Jann 3; Kustritz and Kohnen 94). In synthesizing the work written about Sherlock’s identity as a modern nineteenth-century city dweller, it becomes apparent how dependent the character is on his urban environment. McCrea makes a distinction between the city and country settings of the stories, remarking, “In the imagination of the stories, the English countryside, settled by venerable family lines in their ancestral homes, is opposed to London, a murky, volatile world of anonymous crowds, uncertain or hidden identities, and ad hoc, unclassifiable households not describable in terms of genealogy or marriage” (McCrea 69). McCrea’s analysis, however, fails to recognize the way that Sherlock’s London, albeit with its own kind of wilderness, is nonetheless constructed specifically for the purposes of Sherlock’s work. This thesis has endeavored to explore how Doyle’s manifestation of London, created with urban imagination, is instrumental in the manifestation of the Sherlock stories themselves. As “The Yellow Face” demonstrates, outside of the city Sherlock is not the character readers can normally recognize. The country setting of the story plays such a large role in Sherlock’s mistake in “The Yellow Face,” that Sherlock remarks to Watson: “if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 338). Sherlock not only recognizes his mistake, but he chooses to identify it precisely with the location of the case, making an explicit connection between the mistake and its non-urban setting. In the country, Sherlock is still prone to rely on the kind of romanticized urbanity which is only accessible to him in the city; something about the case of “The Yellow Face” therefore seems unexpected and misleading to Sherlock, and in the end reveals Sherlock’s weakness in the country. This, however, is only one case. Sherlock leaves London in several of the stories, so I will now turn to, quite possibly, the most famous of Sherlock’s

adventures: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Sherlock finds himself upon the moors in Devonshire, and the narrative plays out in exceptional and surprising ways.

At the beginning of the case, Sherlock first laments the logistics of encountering a mystery set in the country, echoing the frustrations articulated on his and Watson's journey to the country in "The Copper Beeches"; having learned of Sir Charles Baskerville's recent death, Sherlock voices a kind of defeat in not having seen the scene of the crime himself:

Sherlock Holmes struck his hand against his knee with an impatient gesture.

"If I had only been there!" he cried. "It is evidently a case of extraordinary interest, and one which presented immense opportunities to the scientific expert. That gravel path upon which I might have read so much has been long ere this smudged by the rain and defaced by the clogs of curious peasants. Oh, Dr. Mortimer, Dr. Mortimer, to think that you should not have called me in!" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 646)

In the first place, any case set in the country will pose specific difficulties to the detective who is physically separated from the setting of the crime itself. In London, Sherlock may see to any person or place in a matter of hours, but any need to travel outside the city will, naturally, lessen the immediacy of his actions. On the surface alone, therefore, the element of the non-urban in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is already working against Sherlock before the investigation even begins. Several excerpts from the text, however, also demonstrate that Doyle characterizes the story's Devonshire setting as something more sinister than inconvenient, for it soon becomes clear that in the country there lies an unaccountable danger which challenges Sherlock and Watson in ways not yet encountered in this thesis.

As Sherlock himself remarks multiple times throughout the novel, the story of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is complex and unusual. For Sherlock fans, the case is peculiar in several ways,

not the least of which being Sherlock and Watson's separation, and Sherlock's absence from much of the novel. As Tallon recognizes, Sherlock and Watson are nearly always delivered as a pair, and even for those who have never read the original stories, "the names Holmes and Watson are so deeply connected with friendship that they have come to be synonymous with the idea" (Tallon 62). Moreover, the two appear nearly inseparable because Sherlock is delivered to readers by Watson: "Because of Conan Doyle's fictional framing device, we hear of Holmes's greatness through the excellent prose of Dr. Watson" (Tallon 66). Any regular reader of the Sherlock stories may therefore be surprised to find Watson working independently from Holmes as long as he does in *Hound*; as Kissane and Kissane write, "Watson's role in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* demands special notice. Throughout the middle section of the novel it is he, not Holmes, whom we observe conducting the investigation" (Kissane and Kissane 358). When the pair is reunited, Sherlock explains his deception and their separation:

In truth, it was partly for your own sake that I did it, and it was my appreciation of the danger which you ran which led me to come down and examine the matter for myself. Had I been with Sir Henry and you it is evident that my point of view would have been the same as yours, and my presence would have warned our very formidable opponents to be on their guard. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 705-6)

Despite this explanation, however, the effect of Sherlock and Watson's separation is that Sherlock is, ostensibly, largely absent from the country, as though the character himself cannot function outside the city. Rather than falling prey to the uncontrollable wilderness of the countryside, the illusion of Sherlock's London life, created through Doyle's urban imagination, is maintained through Watson's belief that Sherlock is still in London. The countryside itself, then, seems to

upset the usual dynamic of Sherlock and Watson's relationship, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* functions, from the outset, as an unusual text in the Sherlock canon.

Along with Watson and Sherlock's separation, *Hound* stands out in the Sherlock canon because of its introduction of elements of superstition and the supernatural, neither of which readers are used to encountering in Sherlock's world of reason and logic. As Kissane and Kissane recognize, "Doyle takes pains to emphasize that the Baskerville crime is an especially severe test of Holmes's method," and the inclusion of superstition regarding the legend of the Hound certainly contributes to the case's complexity (Kissane and Kissane 356). These elements, however, take on a new kind of effect when they appear outside of Sherlock's usual city environment, operating distinctly outside of Doyle's urban fantasy, and outside of Sherlock's control. Kyle Blanchette explores the extent to which the supernatural eludes Sherlock's normal process of observation and deductive reasoning:

According to Dr. Mortimer, 'There is a realm in which the most acute and the most experienced of detectives is helpless'—namely, the supernatural. Holmes is even more to the point when he explains to Watson, 'If Dr. Mortimer's surmise should be correct and we are dealing with forces outside the ordinary laws of Nature, there is an end of our investigation.' The basic sentiment here seems to be that the supernatural realm is inscrutable or perhaps inaccessible, beyond the reach of human investigation. (Blanchette 86)

The inaccessibility of the supernatural then resonates as particularly perilous in *Hound* when Sherlock and Watson venture out onto the moor. Throughout the novel, Doyle treats the case's country setting as that which is wild and untamable, less easily understood by Sherlock, and therefore far more dangerous and less accessible than London (as will be explored further at a later

point in this chapter). In the country, therefore, the superstition involved in the Baskerville case does not only function outside of Sherlock's investigative understanding, but also tempts Sherlock to believe in the supernatural. Unlike the local legends and backstories which inform other Sherlock stories, "The [Baskerville] legend is a beginning to the action rather than a clarification at the end; it is essential to the actual crime, and its atmosphere permeates the enveloping mystery" (Kissane and Kissane 354). Outside the control which Sherlock wields over his London environment, the plausibility of a supernatural explanation for the Baskerville mystery is given more levity, to the extent that "Even Sherlock Holmes, in all his rationalism cannot help seeing the successful completion of the case in the context of the Baskerville curse. Over the body of Stapleton's giant dog, Holmes pronounces his version of the hero's vaunt: 'We've laid the family ghost once and for ever'" (Kissane and Kissane 355). Although the reader knows that Sherlock's process of reason will win out in the end, he also experiences Sherlock's loss of control outside the London landscape, and thus, *Hound* forces the reader, along with Sherlock, to begin to consider less-than-material explanations for the happenings upon the moor. Without a sense of Doyle's urban imagination aiding Sherlock in his work, the rural setting of Devonshire poses a specific threat as it acts as "a test of what [Sherlock's] method ultimately represents: that is, the ability of reason to reduce even the most baffling mystery to a common-place" (Kissane and Kissane 357). Aside from the supernatural, however, the case of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and its countryside setting offers further challenges to Sherlock's established process as one continues to consider the way that a loss of his urban fantasy constitutes a loss of control for the Detective.

As described by Watson, the country is, on a surface level alone, far more dismal a place than London. On the train ride to Devonshire, Watson comments,

To [Baskerville's] eyes all seemed beautiful, but to me a tinge of melancholy lay upon the country-side, which bore so clearly the mark of the waning year . . . A cold wind swept down from it and set us shivering. Somewhere there, on that desolate plain, was lurking this fiendish man, hiding in a burrow like a wild beast, his heart full of malignancy against the whole race which had cast him out. It needed but this to complete the grim suggestiveness of the barren waste, the chilling wind, and the darkling sky. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 666)

Further, Watson and Baskerville's destination is equally uncongenial. Baskerville Hall is dark, depressing, and run-down, a gothic abode which matches the surrounding landscape, and continuously reminds the reader that the story is not set in the bustling, diverse, populous city where Sherlock usually carries out his work. Additionally, Watson makes the clear distinction that the country is not as modern as the city:

My previous letters and telegrams have kept you pretty well up-to-date as to all that has occurred in this most God-forsaken corner of the world. The longer one stays here the more does the spirit of the moor sink into one's soul, its vastness, and also its grim charm. When you are once out upon its bosom you have left all traces of modern England behind you, but on the other hand you are conscious everywhere of the homes and the work of the prehistoric people. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 677)

The country lags behind the city, lingering outside the great advances of industrialization and urbanization, which, as this thesis has explored previously, are forces which prove to be quite important in Doyle's shaping of Sherlock's environment. Outside the modernity of London – its great population, its markets flooded with consumer goods, and its potential for fictionalization and romanticization through Doyle's urban imagination – the country is dark, wild, and gloomy.

Moreover, as Watson ventures out of London, what was once understandable, logical, and reducible becomes supernatural, inexplicable, and outside being controlled.

When standing on the moor with Mr. Stapleton, Watson hears the cry of the Hound: “A long, low moan, indescribably sad, swept over the moor. It filled the whole air, and yet it was impossible to say whence it came” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 673). The sound is animalistic and unidentifiable, lost to Watson in the wilderness of the moor. Outside the city, such a sound cannot be located or traced, and the wild unknown threatens Watson in a way which the criminals encountered in London never do. Wondering what could have produced the terrible noise, Watson is told by Stapleton, (whom Watson and Sherlock later find to be the murderer himself) that “. . . all things are possible upon the moor . . .” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 673). Indeed, at such a moment of potentially imminent danger, to Watson and to the reader, anything, even the supernatural, seems possible. Watson himself comments, when considering the plausibility of actually encountering the giant spectral hound of myth, that “it was one thing to laugh about it in London, and it is another to stand out here in the darkness of the moor and to hear such a cry as that (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 690). The unbelievable suddenly is believable, and that which is normally reserved to logical and reasonable observation begins to give way to the supernatural.

Furthermore, in threatening to leave the realm of the logically explainable, the case simultaneously indicts the country as that which is out of Sherlock and Watson’s control. Watson creates a metaphor for this effect as he and Baskerville trek across the moor in search of the escaped convict, with only the light of a single candle as an indicator:

We stumbled slowly along in the darkness, with the black loom of the craggy hills around us, and the yellow speck of light burning steadily in front. There is nothing so deceptive as

the distance of a light upon a pitch-dark night, and sometimes the glimmer seemed to be far away upon the horizon and sometimes it might have been within a few yards of us.

(Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 690)

In the midst of the wild, untamed countryside, Watson and Sherlock pursue truth and understanding as though searching for the light of a single candle in the distance; the flame becomes a symbol for the knowledge which eludes Watson. The city is, quite literally, more illuminated than the countryside, and in the darkness the moor is full of the danger of what is unseen and unknown. Several times in the novel, the characters create an explicit dichotomy between the country and the city, contrasting the danger posed in the country with the relative safety found back in London. Mistaking Watson for Baskerville, Mrs. Stapleton runs across the moor, shouting, “Go back! . . . Go straight back to London, instantly” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 674). Even Sherlock himself, before sending Watson and Baskerville to Devonshire, warns,

I’ve been checkmated in London. I can only wish you better luck in Devonshire. But I’m not easy in my mind about . . . sending you. It’s an ugly business, Watson, an ugly, dangerous business, and the more I see of it the less I like it. Yes, my dear fellow, you may laugh, but I give you my word that I shall be very glad to have you back safe and sound in Baker Street once more. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 663)

In the eyes of the characters, the danger of the case is to be found specifically in the country, outside the control Sherlock wields in London. As Kustritz and Kohnen remind the reader, “In his original incarnation, Sherlock Holmes functioned as a virtuoso reader of people and places . . . the newly expanded industrial city remained understandable and therefore safe . . .” (Kustritz and

Kohnen 86). Outside the city, Sherlock cannot reassure readers of the safety of his environment, and so the countryside remains outside of his control.

The countryside itself, and specifically the Grimpen Mire out on the moor, then takes on a greater danger in being unknown and uncontrollable to Sherlock and Watson the urbanites, especially as they wage battle against Stapleton, who knows the land well. As Watson gathers evidence on his own in the country, Stapleton informs him how difficult navigating the moor's dangers can be:

“But my tastes led me to explore every part of the country round, and I should think that there are few men who know it better than I do.”

“Is it hard to know?”

“Very hard.” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 672)

Not only do Sherlock and Watson face the challenge of solving the mystery outside their usual environment, their adversary has the home field advantage and may use his knowledge of the countryside against them. This seems to become especially apparent as Sherlock and Watson have nearly cornered Stapleton, only to be foiled by “the one thing upon earth which could have disarranged [their] plans”: the weather (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 720). Wanting to sneak up on Stapleton, Sherlock finds the landscape obscured by “a dense, white fog. It was drifting slowly in our direction, and banked itself up like a wall on that side of us, low, but thick and well defined. The moon shone on it, and it looked like a great shimmering icefield, with the heads of the distant tors as rocks borne upon its surface” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 720). The fog “adds a full measure of suspense to the unique uncertainty of the peril” of the chase across the moor, but it also reinforces the fact that Sherlock is battling the natural environment of the country as much as he is battling Stapleton (Kissane and Kissane 353).

Sherlock is blinded in an environment which is outside his control and, in a way, simultaneously outside Doyle's control. Rather than romanticizing the countryside, as he does with the city, in a way which manifests a setting particularly suited to Sherlock's needs, Doyle allows Sherlock to grapple with an unfamiliar environment. Further, the challenges of the countryside only seem to multiply as the story's villain becomes more and more linked to the naturalistic elements of the setting; while Sherlock faces the unusual prospect of battling an antagonist that is a wild animal, Stapleton himself becomes increasingly more animal-like, assimilating into the wild countryside around him.

Once Sherlock reveals to Watson that Stapleton is the murderer, the language surrounding Stapleton quickly becomes animalistic, and Stapleton nearly becomes an extension of the wildness which he harnesses in the hound. As a naturalist, Stapleton is already particularly connected to nature, but by the end of the novel, this connection becomes more explicit. Sherlock compares Stapleton to a "big, lean-jawed pike," and assures that "he will be fluttering in our net as helpless as one of his own butterflies. A pin, a cork, and a card, and we add him to the Baker Street collection!" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 715). Stapleton's interest in insects is no longer an innocent hobby once his plot is discovered, but something indicative of a dark, twisted morbidity:

. . . we were faced by an object so strange and so unexpected that we stood for a moment staring at it in amazement . . . The room had been fashioned into a small museum, and the walls were lined by a number of glass-topped cases full of that collection of butterflies and moths the formation of which had been the relaxation of this complex and dangerous man. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 722)

Stapleton even begins to treat his wife as one of his specimens, and in discovering Stapleton's collection, the men also find Mrs. Stapleton 'pinned' like a butterfly. Stapleton's odd interests are those of a rural environment, a kind of exaltation of nature whose same malicious intent is directed toward the use of the hound to murder Sir Charles Baskerville. When both man and beast are charged as the antagonists of the story, Stapleton himself has already become an animal; he is a kind of echo of the "hellish" creature he employs (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 721). Outside London, Sherlock faces a challenge distinct from that which he normally encounters in the city, and rather than being able to use a London environment steeped in urban imagination for his own purposes, he encounters an adversary who is an extension of the very landscape which blinds him. In the end, the reader finds that Sherlock himself is not even able to overtake the criminal, and that nature must, in fact, overcome him:

There was no chance of finding footsteps in the mire, for the rising mud oozed swiftly in upon them, but as we at last reached firmer ground beyond the morass we all looked eagerly for them. But no slightest sign of them ever met our eyes. Somewhere in the heart of the great Grimpen Mire, down in the foul slime of the huge morass which had sucked him in, this cold and cruel-hearted man is forever buried. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 724)

Stapleton is, ultimately, literally swallowed up by the countryside, doomed to become a part of the land which had helped him to elude Sherlock. It is important to note, however, that this does not occur by Sherlock's hand; rather, the Detective must allow the country to take the man down, for even at the end of the novel Sherlock finds that he has no control in the story's rural setting.

Without the control he normally has in his urban environment, Sherlock, as in "The Yellow Face," finds himself somewhat displaced, and outside what readers can usually expect from the

stories. As has been explored, the elements of the story related to the supernatural, and to myth, legend, and superstition rather than logic and reason, push Sherlock out of his usual mode of thinking and investigation. These elements are exacerbated by the rural setting, placing the mystery in an environment outside the logical modernity of urban living, and nearly out of Sherlock's reach. In this way, I believe the countryside setting, wild and uncontrollable, functions differently than the settings created for Sherlock in London through urban imagination. Rather than being able to use his surroundings to aid in his investigative work, Sherlock is controlled *by* the countryside, bending to its limitations and subject to its challenges. To combat this, and to try to regain control over the story's setting, the reader can see how Sherlock and the other characters attempt to assert a sense of urban order and control over the country. Throughout the novel, parts of the countryside are made to function like a city, especially by Sherlock, in order that a *sense* of urban fantasy may be created even outside London. One of the most striking instances of this happens when Watson and Henry Baskerville first arrive at Baskerville Hall. Henry remarks, "It's no wonder my uncle felt as if trouble were coming on him in such a place as this . . . It's enough to scare any man. I'll have a row of electric lamps up here inside of six months, and you won't know it again, with a thousand-candle power Swan and Edison right here in front of the hall door" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 667). Indeed, Henry wishes to impose the illumination of the city upon the countryside, an enlightenment which not only indicates a kind of knowledge or understanding, but one which would replace the kind of antiquity Watson later finds to permeate the English countryside with the brightly-lit modernity so identifiable with city life.⁴

⁴ The first electric street lights had only appeared in London in 1878, less than a decade before *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is set.

Additionally, Sherlock's time in the ancient hut on the moor functions as an attempt to regain a kind of control over the countryside like that which he possesses in London. It is important to note that, as Sherlock explains to Watson, he "stayed for the most part at Coombe Tracey, and only used the hut upon the moor when it was necessary to be near the scene of action" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 729). As is logical, Sherlock spends as much time as he can in some semblance of an urban environment, recreating a kind of London for himself. Even when he is on the moor, however, Sherlock reconstructs his familiar urban landscape through his own fastidious personal habits, as Watson observes: "In his tweed suit and cloth cap he looked like any other tourist upon the moor, and he had contrived, with that cat-like love of personal cleanliness which was one of his characteristics, that his chin should be as smooth and his linen as perfect as if he were in Baker Street" (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 704-5). Sherlock maintains himself as though he were still in London, attempting to reassert control over the rural environment in which he finds himself. I would even go so far as to argue that the hut where Sherlock hides out, dating to when "Prehistoric man lived thickly on the moor," acts as a kind of city of antiquity, the shadow of a Neolithic urbanity which allows Sherlock to carry out his detective work with some normalcy, even when he is outside London itself (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 673).

I posit above that Sherlock ultimately surrenders Stapleton to the natural environment of the country, for it is out of Sherlock's power to bring the man who knows the land so well to justice. In conjunction with this, however, Doyle's insertion of urban elements into the story's rural setting become paramount to the case's conclusion. Sherlock admits that much of the investigation had been calculated while he and Watson were still in London, and Sherlock was still surrounded by his familiar urbanity: "Thus I had made certain of the hound, and had guessed

at the criminal before ever we went to the West country” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 729). At the end of the novel, then, when Sherlock must face catching the criminal and solving the case in the country, the persistent presence of the urban becomes especially emphatic, manifesting in unexpected ways. First, Sherlock fools both Baskerville and Stapleton into believing he and Watson have returned to London; the city acts as a cover for them. Secondly, and more interestingly, however, when Stapleton escapes Sherlock’s grasp, his wife informs Sherlock that “There is but one place where he can have fled . . . There is an old tin mine on an island in the heart of the Mire. It was there that he kept his hound, and there also he had made preparations so that he might have a refuge. That is where he would fly” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 723). The abandoned tin mine functions much like Sherlock’s hiding place in the hut, signifying development and industry and acting as a kind of pseudo-urban vestige in the midst of rural wilderness. Kissane and Kissane allude to the function of the huts and the mine – “signs of human extinction” – as they describe the mire as an entity which not only threatens individuals, but civilization as a whole: “Among these signs of human extinction the mire itself serves as a compelling image of an impersonal and pervading hostility—whose force Doyle personifies as ‘some malignant hand’ (chap. xiv)” (Kissane and Kissane 361). In turn, the mine, as a vestige of civilization and industry, proves to be Stapleton’s downfall as he fails to reach his refuge and is overtaken by the natural landscape. As the criminal himself inserts a kind of city into his narrative, Sherlock finds the type of environment where he may regain some control, and so the novel can come to a resolution.

To finish my discussion of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, I return now to Bill Brown, John Plotz, and Thing Theory. As Sherlock first begins to ruminate on the Baskerville case, Watson returns to Baker Street to find Sherlock spread out on the couch, caught up in a mental maze of his

own construction, and exploring the countryside “in spirit”: “My body has remained in this armchair, and has, I regret to observe, consumed in my absence two large pots of coffee and an incredible amount of tobacco. After you left I sent down to Stanford’s for the Ordnance map of this portion of the moor, and my spirit has hovered over it all day” (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 649). Sherlock surrounds himself with tobacco, coffee, and large maps, rooting his mental process in the kind of objectification which gives these objects subjective power. The objects become *things* by Bill Brown’s definition: “You could imagine things . . . as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects—their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems” (Brown 5). Sherlock takes part in the kind of interaction with objects, so indicative of the mentality of an industrial age of mass production and mass consumption, which causes Plotz to observe that “. . . when possessions fill Victorian novels—so copiously that later readers describe themselves as swaddled by, drowning in, or suffocating under their weight—they generally serve not as static deadweights, but as moving messengers” (Plotz 1). With Sherlock still in London, the reader is treated to the Detective’s typical dependence on things, as well as their accessibility in London’s urban landscape. The map, in particular, is indicative of this, with Sherlock being able to simply send down for precisely the object needed to conduct his work, and have it delivered immediately. This simply would not be possible to accomplish with the same ease outside the city. Additionally, the map plays an interesting role as it serves as an exertion of control for Sherlock over the countryside. Devonshire *becomes* an object, one of the very *things* that creates Sherlock’s romanticized urban setting and allows his work in the city to be so effective. As Sherlock travels to the country, however, he

attempts to regain control by asserting a kind of urbanity upon his rural surroundings, and so the concept of objects as mobile messengers takes on new meaning.

To reconstruct some semblance of city life within the Neolithic hut, for example, Sherlock turns to a myriad of objects, imbuing the things themselves with the power to signify urbanity, turning them into “repositories of mobile memory” (Plotz xiv). When Watson happens upon Sherlock’s makeshift moor-side residence he is immediately struck by the sheer number of its material occupants:

Some blankets rolled in a waterproof lay upon that very stone slab upon which neolithic man had once slumbered. The ashes of a fire were heaped in a rude grate. Beside it lay some cooking utensils and a bucket half-full of water. A litter of empty tins showed that the place had been occupied for some time, and I saw, as my eyes became accustomed to the chequered light, a pannikin and a half-full bottle of spirits standing in the corner. In the middle of the hut a flat stone served the purpose of a table, and upon this stood a small cloth bundle—the same, no doubt, which I had seen through the telescope upon the shoulder of the boy. It contained a loaf of bread, a tinned tongue, and two tins of preserved peaches. As I set it down again, after having examined it, my heart leaped to see that beneath it there lay a sheet of paper with writing upon it. (Doyle, *The Greatest Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 703)

Watson’s discovery of Sherlock’s hideout recalls precisely the kind of object “identification” of which Plotz speaks, when “certain belongings come to seem dually endowed: they are at once products of a cash market and, potentially the rare fruits of a highly sentimentalized realm of value both domestic and spiritual, a realm defined by being anything but marketable” (Plotz 2). Sherlock’s need for Cartwright to supply him with commodities from town places the objects

which Watson finds in the hut in the realm of the marketable. As the objects serve to provide Sherlock with some kind of urban environment, however, they simultaneously function outside the concept of marketability, and so become endowed with Brown's subjective *thingness*. These things contribute to the creation of urbanity and take on the agency of subjects, allowing Sherlock to continue with his investigative work because of the level of control they provide; through the objects, Doyle's urban fantasy begins to be recreated, even in the wilderness of the Devonshire moor. Moreover, the things which begin to define and objectify Sherlock are largely absent through the novel, but make an appearance in the last chapter as Sherlock and Watson sit in the Baker Street flat. In Sidney Paget's accompanying illustration, "A Retrospection," Sherlock sits in a familiar Baker Street wingback, his famous pipe clenched between his lips, as he reviews the facts of the case for Watson (Stock). As Kissane and Kissane recognize, "It brings the action back full circle to the sitting room in Baker Street, and the blazing fire on 'a raw and foggy night' completes the impression of a snug security re-established" (Kissane and Kissane 360). The things which have come to define Sherlock in readers' minds surround the Detective once again, and the character finds his comfortable world of familiar urbanity restored. Ultimately, he returns to his London setting, created through Doyle's use of urban imagination, and regains control of his environment.

It seems most fitting to end this chapter with "The Final Problem" and Sherlock's presumed death over Reichenbach Falls. I hope to demonstrate that the story's villain, Professor Moriarty, poses a unique kind of threat to Sherlock as he forces the Detective out of London, asserting his own understanding of the city and mirroring Sherlock's dependence on urban fantasy. Tallon asserts that "Holmes and Moriarty are true enemies because they are well matched in terms of their virtues, except that Moriarty's virtues are applied to an evil end" (Tallon 73-4). Indeed, Tallon

also notes “how much his brilliance sounds like Holmes’s,” and it is Moriarty’s mirroring of Sherlock which allows the Professor to gain power over him (Tallon 74). Although Sherlock claims that “there is no one who knows the higher criminal world of London so well as I do,” his description of Moriarty as one who “pervades London” and is “the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city” demonstrates how firmly-entrenched Moriarty himself is in London’s urbanity (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 440). Just as the city itself aids Sherlock in his detective work, it is also the foundation upon which Moriarty has spun his web of crime, and the reader may bear witness to how deeply-connected the character is to London’s urbanity. For example, Sherlock is subject to several calculated attacks from Moriarty, and in their description the city seems to feature as prominently as when Sherlock and Watson are hot on the investigative trail:

I went out about mid-day to transact some business in Oxford Street. As I passed the corner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welbeck Street crossing a two-horse van furiously driven whizzed round and was on me like a flash. I sprang for the foot-path and saved myself by the fraction of a second. The van dashed round by Marylebone Lane and was gone in an instant. I kept to the pavement after that, Watson, but as I walked down Vere Street a brick came down from the roof of one of the houses, and was shattered to fragments at my feet. (Doyle, Perry and Barreca, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: 22 Stories* 442-3)

Sherlock’s record of the streets where the attacks take place frame Moriarty’s scheme in the very urban imagination in which Sherlock himself is steeped. Rather than using the city for his own purposes, however, Sherlock finds himself at the mercy of the only man he has ever encountered who is capable of using the city *against* him. This puts Sherlock in a unique kind of danger and,

as is not seen anywhere else in the canon, renders the city unstable and uncertain for Sherlock; Moriarty bests him by taking from him the security of London's urbanity and forcing him from its environment.

Even as Sherlock leaves London, however, Moriarty stalks him and causes Sherlock and Watson's journey itself to take an unusual form. Rather than the contemplative and often informative train ride the reader is wont to see as Sherlock and Watson leave London, the journey which Moriarty forces on the pair is uncertain and full of peril. The travelers are unsure of their final destination and must change course for Switzerland along the way in order to evade Moriarty. Further, although Sherlock leaves the city for fear of his life, the threat of non-urbanity awaits him just as it does throughout the rest of the canon, and in the end the isolated and pastoral scene of Reichenbach Falls literally kills Sherlock. Ultimately, displaced from the safety of London and unable to find security outside his usual city environment, Sherlock defaults to a kind of homelessness which proves to be fatal. Moriarty's ability to navigate the city and take advantage of London's urbanity allows him to use Doyle's urban fantasy against Sherlock, and results in a narrative whose non-urban setting at Reichenbach Falls has an inescapably disastrous effect on Sherlock.

Nine years after Sherlock's death, the Detective returned to the page for the first time in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Although he was not yet resurrected (*Hound* is merely a recollection of Watson's, and Sherlock would not live again until "The Adventure of the Empty House" in 1903) Sherlock is given the opportunity to revisit the country, and in this case he succeeds. Rather than being driven out of London as he is in "The Final Problem," Sherlock *chooses* to take the Baskerville case and travel to the country because of the challenge it poses. Furthermore, the end of *Hound* allows Sherlock to return to Baker Street and to, once again, be the

stable urbanite that readers love so dearly. In *Hound*, Sherlock effectively carries his sense of urban fantasy into the country, solves the mystery, and is able to return safely to London. Ultimately, in this sense, Sherlock conquers the country.

CONCLUSION

Whether on the Devonshire moor or reclining on the couch in Baker Street, Sherlock Holmes functions as a product of his romanticized London home. He relies on the fantasy which emerges from Doyle's urban imagination in order to conduct his investigations and to be the character which readers have loved for more than a century. Sherlock's London is rooted in the reality of late nineteenth-century urbanity, but Doyle also takes advantage of the anxiety of the period, and integrates a sense of fantasy into Sherlock's urban landscape. Doyle uses urban imagination to manifest an urban space perfectly suited to Sherlock's needs, and ties him to the particular historical context of his time. The tangible objects which populate Sherlock's world, when examined through lenses of materialism and Thing Theory, also tap into urban imagination, and further romanticize Sherlock's world. Sherlock relies upon the very objects which fill and help to build his urban surroundings. When Sherlock leaves the city for the countryside, his dependence upon urban imagination becomes even more apparent, and to compensate for the loss of a romanticized urban landscape, Sherlock will fabricate a sense of urbanity outside London.

When one examines the dynamics of urban imagination in the Sherlock canon, it is clear that Doyle's idealization of city life is reflective of his particular historical moment. I have intended, through this thesis, to demonstrate that the kind of London represented in the Sherlock stories is both historically and literarily significant, and that it is essential in the creation of Sherlock as a character. I believe that the research and close readings conducted in this investigation makes clear the importance of the settings which Sherlock occupies, and the function they play in the Sherlock narratives. Furthermore, Sherlock's status as an icon of popular literature allows him to act as a cultural signifier, and an exploration of the way that Doyle uses urban

imagination begins to give insight into the excitement and anxiety which surrounded London's urbanity at the end of the nineteenth century. History and culture come together to inform Doyle's romanticization of London, which in turn helps to create one of the most iconic figures in English literature. While there is no one reason for the Detective's explosive popularity, my work has endeavored to examine the texts from a new angle, and to offer one possible reading of Sherlock Holmes as a cultural icon.

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