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Sherlock Holmes: A Character of the City.

Analysis of the Nineteenth Century city in Arthur Conan Doyle's series.



Brooke Gabriëlle Weise

S1899880

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This Supervisor: dr. A.E. Schulte Nordholt

Second Reader: dr. M.S. Newton

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Introduction

There are few literary characters who speak to the imagination such as Sherlock Holmes and his faithful companion Dr John Watson. The city in which these stories are set has an equally strong grasp on the imaginations of the masses: the moment Sherlock Holmes and London are mentioned within the same breath, a very iconic and somewhat stereotypical image of the city comes to mind. A foggy, smoke ridden city, congested with traffic, populated by exotic figures, which in the nineteenth century has become the heart of a global Empire.¹ This of course, is a stereotypical image of the city, a way of describing the city by authors in order to gain some form of control over the immense city. This will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. The characters Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are still quite as popular as they were in the nineteenth century, maybe even more so. In the recent years the two iconic characters have starred in movies, various TV-shows as well as new books. There are some authors who have tried to recapture the magic of Sherlock Holmes.² Whether they have succeeded is another matter, and does not fit within the scope of this research. Though the stories have always focussed on the world's only consulting detective and the good doctor, they are always connected to capital of an Empire, London. This connection between Sherlock Holmes and London is precisely the subject of this research. The question which has been centralised in this work is: What was the message that Conan Doyle was possibly trying to send his contemporary readers through his description of London and his use of the genre of crime fiction?

Although it is quite difficult to ascertain what Conan Doyle's real intentions were when he wrote Sherlock Holmes, the stories can be interpreted, based on a close formal and thematic analysis. It is possible that the final conclusion of this work will be that the stories sent their contemporary readers a soothing and comforting message, but it could also be the opposite, that readers

¹ Pat Hardy, 'The Art of Sherlock Holmes: 'The air of London is the sweeter for my presence'', in Alex Werner (ed.), *Sherlock Holmes: The man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die* (London 2014) 135.

² For example: Anthony Horowitz, *The House of Slik* (Washington D.C. 2015).

read these stories, such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, as gothic tales. Ian A. Bell states that the role of the newly fashioned nineteenth century detective was to be an agent of consolation or security.³ Stephen Knight in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* states:

“The captivated readers had faith in modern systems of scientific and rational enquiry to order an uncertain and troubling world, but feeling they lacked these powers themselves they, like many audiences before them, needed a suitably equipped hero to mediate **psychic protection.**”⁴ (emphasis added).

This hypothesis will be tested on the primary corpus of this research. How and why contemporary readers might have felt this way, and why they required psychic protection will be explained further in the next chapter. That chapter will describe what has been written about Sherlock Holmes and London thus far, and also elaborate further on these concepts of psychic protection and the stereotypical image of London. The chapters following after that will each focus on a Sherlock Holmes story, a part of the thematic and close analysis. In order to answer the centralised question, three parts of the Holmesian canon have been chosen. Each chapter will focus on a story or a novel, in order to do the analysis the justice it deserves. These stories have been selected on their usefulness as well as the time in which they were written. There are quite a lot of stories to choose from: the complete Holmesian canon exists of four novels and fifty-six short stories.⁵ Besides focus on the city within these stories, the analysis will also pay attention to the criminals and kind of crimes which are committed within these stories. The reason for this is that urbanisation led to different or at least a more close connection to crime in daily life. Crime had always been around, but now, in a city, people were constantly in closer vicinity to crime than before in a rural community. During the nineteenth century, the detection of crime and

³ Ian A. Bell, ‘Eighteenth-century crime writing’, in Martin Priestman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge 2002) 8.

⁴ Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London 1980) 67.

⁵ Christopher Roden and Barbra Roden, ‘Introduction’, in Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (New York 2009) xiv.

prosecution of criminals evolved in a rapid pace, as well as theories and ideologies used to describe criminals. These theories and ideology are also present in the Sherlock Holmes stories and, as Conan Doyle crafted each tale carefully, these details are important for the interpretation of the possible message contained within the Sherlock Holmes series.

For analysis in this work, the first, approximately the middle and the last Sherlock Holmes stories have been selected. These parts of the Holmesian canon have been selected because it might be possible that there is a development in Conan Doyle's presentation of London, and if this is indeed the case, that this development might also influence the message he was possibly trying to send his contemporary readers. To see if this is the case, this research will analyse two Sherlock Holmes novels and one short story. This was not chosen deliberately, selection of the stories was based on their usefulness for analysis.

The first analysis of a Sherlock Holmes novel can be found in chapter two. The very first Sherlock Holmes novel was called *A Study in Scarlet*. This novel first appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* of 1887. When this novel was first published, it was met with limited appreciation.⁶ Even though this was the case, this story is quite important in the scope of this research, for a very clear reason: it was the very first Sherlock Holmes story. Conan Doyle needed to create the whole world, atmosphere and characters in a cohesive story for the first time. He not only created the London of Sherlock Holmes, he also created the formal pattern which all Sherlock Holmes tales would follow. Stephen Knight has identified this basic structure, hidden within all the tales with some minor differences, which controls the Sherlock Holmes stories.⁷ For example: almost all Sherlock Holmes stories begin in Baker Street, in their apartment, where the case is then introduced. After this introduction, each story differs slightly from the others.

⁶ Alex Werner, 'Sherlock Holmes, Sidney Piaget and the *Strand Magazine*', in Alex Werner (ed.), *Sherlock Holmes: The Man who Never Lived and Will Never Die* (London 2014) 101.

⁷ Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, 74-78.

The method used for analysing the Sherlock Holmes novels and stories is based loosely upon the method described by Mieke Bal in her book *Narratology*. She states that a narratologic analysis of a narrative text require a three-layer distinction. A narrative text is a text in which an agent or subject conveys the story to an addressee.⁸ The three layers she distinguishes are: text, story and fabula, in which the text is considered to be a finite, structured whole which is composed of signs, a story is the content of that text, and a fabula is a series of logic and chronologic events that are caused or experienced by characters of the story.⁹ Another important basis of the analysis is the pattern which forms the base of each Sherlock Holmes story or novel, as described by Stephen Knight. This basic structure or pattern will be elaborated further in chapter two.

The importance of the first Sherlock Holmes novel can be found in the first impressions which it uniquely offers. These impressions are often quite important and telling, and this might also be the case in *A Study in Scarlet*. This novel contains John Watson's very first impressions of London. His first impressions are opposed by Sherlock Holmes's thorough knowledge of the city. This opposition might reveal certain hidden aspects of the stories, as well as Conan Doyle's possible view of London.

As chapter two contains the analysis of the first Sherlock Holmes novel, chapter three will contain the analysis of approximately the middle Sherlock Holmes novel. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* has been chosen to fill this place, even though there are two ways this story could have been selected. The first one is to literally take the middle story of the Holmesian canon, once it has been placed in chronological order. This chronology within the canon differs quite strongly from the actual time in which they have been written. As there are sixty tales in total, the middle one would have been the short story titled 'The Priory

⁸ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto 2000) 5.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 5-6.

School’, which had been published in the collection *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in 1904/1905.¹⁰

The second option was to take a story which has been published approximately written in the middle of the long period over which these tales were written and published, from 1886/1887 until 1927.¹¹ *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was serialised in the *Strand* magazine from 1901 until 1902, and published in book form in 1902. This was also the first Sherlock Holmes story released since his shocking death in ‘The Final Problem’ in 1893, although it had been situated within the canon before Holmes’s death. This novel is quite important for the Holmesian canon, as it paved the way for more Sherlock Holmes tales. If this novel had not been written, it would not have even been a possibility to consider ‘The Priory School’ for analysis.

Why then, has *The Hound of the Baskervilles* been selected rather than ‘The Priory School’? As has been mentioned briefly before, all Sherlock Holmes stories follow the same pattern. They all begin in London, in Holmes and Watson’s apartment at Baker Street. This also applies ‘The Priory School’ and *Baskervilles*, and after the introduction of the case, both stories actually leave London behind and move into the wide country of England. Because both stories are situated for the most part outside the metropolis which is the scope of this research, both works might appear to be ill-suited for analysis in this research. This might turn out to be the case, but it might also be quite different. As the stories both leave London behind after the case has been introduced, it is possible to use these stories after all, simply because they leave London.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson’s inexperience and Holmes’s thorough knowledge of London are opposed. In ‘The Priory School’ and *Baskervilles*, London and the English country are opposed. By describing the country, Conan Doyle might also reveal a lot about his opinion or views of the city. Through this opposition, the possible message he wished to send his contemporary readers might be revealed. In this sense, both tales fit quite nicely within this work. *The*

¹⁰ University of South Florida, ‘The Return of Sherlock Holmes’: <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/178/the-return-of-sherlock-holmes/> (05-07-2017).

¹¹ Roden and Roden, ‘Introduction’, xi.

Hound of the Baskervilles has been selected in the end, as ‘The Priory School’ is merely a short story, while *Baskervilles* is a novel. In a choice between a short story and a novel, a novel offers more material for close and thematic analysis.

The final close and thematic analysis can be found in chapter four. This chapter will focus on the very last tale in the Sherlock Holmes canon, ‘The Retired Colourman’. This last Sherlock Holmes story was originally published as a part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* in 1927.¹² This story has been chosen for a similar reason as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, besides it being the last story in the canon. This story compares the centre of London, such as Baker Street, to a completely different part of London: the suburbs. Again, this opposition might be more revealing than it seems at first glance. This was the final story, the close of the Holmesian canon. It was the end of an era.

These three chapters will thus encompass the close and thematic analysis of the primary corpus of this work. The next chapter will create the context for this analysis, and situate the stories in the developments of the nineteenth century.

¹² Alexis Barquin, ‘The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes’: https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php?title=The_Case-Book_of_Sherlock_Holmes (05-07-2017).

Chapter One – Cities in Novels and Stories, and *Sherlock Holmes's* London.

As stated in the introduction, this chapter will create somewhat of a context for this research. Firstly, it is important to see what London was like at the end of the nineteenth century. This city and its developments were fundamental for the stories Arthur Conan Doyle was to create, as each author is part of his own society as well as his own generation: if the literature of the age is to be understood, the main preoccupations and assumptions of that age need to be understood.¹³ Unfortunately, it is not possible within the scope of this work to concentrate on all the developments, main preoccupations and assumptions of the nineteenth century. This in itself would require a whole work of itself. The focus has here been placed on the development towards modernity and other aspects which are more relevant to the scope of this research. After this description of nineteenth century London, a brief glance will be cast on cities in novels and stories, in relation to crime fiction. After this, Sherlock Holmes's London will be described. Other concepts touched upon in the introduction will also be elaborated and applied within this research. First the time has come to look at the actual city on which Sherlock Holmes's London was based.

Nineteenth Century London.

In the United Kingdom, the nineteenth century was mostly marked by the industrial revolution, which changed the contemporary society in many, sometimes quite intense, ways.¹⁴ The industrial revolution was one of the most direct causes for the enormous growth of the cities, even though, through most of the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom could still be called a rural economy.¹⁵ This process of industrialisation began in England in the eighteenth century, and spread from other parts of the world from there.¹⁶ The

¹³ Raymond Chapman, *The Victorian Debate: English Literature and Society, 1832-1901* (London 1968) 3.

¹⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 'Industrial Revolution': <https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution> (14-05-2017).

¹⁵ Christopher Redmond, *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook* (Toronto 1993) 102.

¹⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, 'Industrial Revolution'.

industrialisation drew many unemployed workers to the city, hoping to find a better life in this new modern way of life. However, city life was accompanied by many different and new anxieties, such as the unfamiliar neighbour, the crime-rates of the city and so forth.

From 1888 until 1892, the Ripper murders took place in London.¹⁷ Events like these made it all the more clear that the city was wildly different from the calmer life in the countryside, where social hierarchy and popular traditions kept the community under control.¹⁸ During and after these murders, the increasingly sensational – and national – press repeatedly described Holmes’s London as the global capital of crime and vice. But though the facts of poverty and prostitution were clearly present in the city, London was actually becoming a much safer city. All reliable indices of crime began to fall from the 1850s onwards and continued to do so until the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁹ Living in a modernising city, it was suddenly quite possible to have no idea who your neighbours were, what they did or might do and so on. The city mixed up the social hierarchy, making room for whole new sub-classes, such as violent criminals and white collar criminals. There were also certain areas of the city which were considered to be unsafe for the ‘normal’, decent, hard-working people, as the criminals had full control over these areas of the city.²⁰

During the nineteenth century, the city of London was growing beyond comprehension or control. This exceptional growth was due to such aspects as overpopulation, and to accommodate its citizens, the city spread out into the countryside, claiming parts of the rural country.²¹ London had grown to such an extent, as Walter Benjamin describes:

“A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest

¹⁷ John Philip Jenkins, ‘Jack the Ripper’: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jack-the-Ripper> (15-06-2017).

¹⁸ Stephen Knight, *The Mysteries of the Cities: Urban Crime Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Jefferson 2012) 5.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 27.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 5-6.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 5-6.

hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralization, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world, orated giant docks and assembled the thousand vessels that continually cover the Thames".²²

Life in the city was a strange phenomenon. The Victorians lived in the midst of changes that threatened stability. These changes caused the Victorians to be frightened of much that was new.²³ They most likely felt a sense of needing to run to keep up with time, with the rapid developments in the city. The pace of the changes more than anything caused a deep rooted sense of dis-ease. During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, this caused a distinct climate of cultural pessimism among intellectuals.²⁴ In this century of modernisation, there had been a process of progress towards the rational, moving away from supernaturalism. This process was another by-product of this newfound modernity. The result of it all was, however, that much of the public became 'disenchanted by the world'.²⁵ This rapid modernisation offered countless opportunities of inspiration for literature and literary cities.

Another by-product of this newfound modernity was a group of new readers which was edging its way more forcefully between the poor and the middle class: the skilled workers, clerks, employees in retail trade and the 'upper' domestic servants.²⁶ A larger portion of the finances in the United Kingdom was to be spent on education during this period. As a result, the illiteracy rates dropped drastically during the nineteenth century.²⁷ The demand for more books was partially due to the rise of literacy in the United Kingdom. Means of

²² Quoted from: Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge 2002) 427-428.

²³ Chapman, *The Victorian Debate*, 36.

²⁴ Michael Saler, 'Clap if you believe in Sherlock Holmes', *The Historical Journal* 46 (2003) 599-622, 602.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 602.

²⁶ Chapman, *The Victorian Debate*, 55.

²⁷ Moshe Justman and Mark Gradstein, 'The Industrial Revolution, and the Subsequent Decline in Inequality in 19th-century Britain', *Explorations in Economic History* 36 (1999) 109-127, 120-121.

communication were improving, and new techniques were developed, making printing of novels and other reading materials cheaper. Writing for publication was no longer reserved for the creative artist alone, but also the easiest and most effective way of ‘influencing a changing society’, as Raymond Chapman states. He also writes that literature itself became more polemical and aware of contention.²⁸

Cities in Novels and Stories and the Study of Crime Fiction.

It is logical that many books written in the nineteenth century were staged in the cities of the era. The newness of the city and this newfound modernity offered many opportunities for dramatic action. The close relationship between novels, stories and the city has been subjected to intense, voluminous and sometimes tedious, critical discussion.²⁹ In *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, Robert Alter states that most considerations of the cities in realist fiction have been centred on the way that the material reality of the city has been portrayed in the contemporary fiction. Most critics tend to focus on the question: what can be learned about the city by reading contemporary fictions of that era?³⁰ Alter claims that this question is not irrelevant to the aims of many nineteenth century novelists, as some of them definitely considered their activities to be uniquely privileged to report the contemporary world.³¹ Alter does warn, however, that there is a qualitative difference between journalism and fiction writing. The focus on this particular question tends to blur that difference, and thus omit that there are limits on the access of the novelistic imagination to the collective realities.³² It would be unwise to look for a perfect and balanced expression of any society in its arts, be it literature or another form, as the expression of the city in the novel is a form of denial of the author or artist. The artist or author is always a part of his own society, of his own generation.³³ It is

²⁸ Chapman, *The Victorian Debate*, 2-3, 55.

²⁹ Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, (New Haven 2005) ix.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, ix.

³¹ *Ibidem*, x.

³² *Ibidem*, x.

³³ Chapman, *The Victorian Debate*, 3.

impossible to create a balanced and perfect reflection of a society in which an artist or author lives: being too close to events can distort ones view. In a novel, after all, the contemporary world is re-created through a highly coloured perspective, the perspective of the novelist, as well as the protagonist.³⁴ The type of analysis Robert Alter warns about has often been applied to realist literature, but not as much to crime fiction.

Crime fiction is a relative young field of study. For a long time, it was deemed unworthy of close academic study.³⁵ While much has been published on the study of crime fiction, not much of this fiction is deemed worthy of academic credit. If the authors of these works had a claim to some academic credentials, these works were owned up to as a guilty pleasure, much like ‘an addiction like tobacco or alcohol’.³⁶ According to Stephen Knight, this lack of interest stems specifically from the academic and literary elite and their prejudice against popular literature. The subject of popular literature is often involved with exploring a form of politics which is centred around the people and their concerns. In this process, there is a possibility this could displace the self-interest of this elite, which was white, bourgeois and male.³⁷ Since the 1960s, the barrier between this ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture has been dismantled and crime fiction has been increasingly deemed to be more worthy of academic analysis.³⁸ Though this has been the case, and much more has been written about crime fiction, this is not the case for the cities in crime literature. However, there is at least one exception: quite a lot has been written about Sherlock Holmes’s London.

Sherlock Holmes’s London

Sherlock Holmes traversed the city of London from the late nineteenth until the early twentieth century. The gas-lit, fog-shrouded London backdrop plays quite

³⁴ Alter, *Imagined Cities*, x.

³⁵ Martin Priestman, ‘Introduction’, in Martin Priestman (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge 2002) 1.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, ‘Introduction’, 1.

³⁷ Knight, *The Mysteries of the Cities*, 7.

³⁸ Priestman, ‘Introduction’, 1.

an essential part in many Sherlock Holmes stories. Although the great detective is said to possess a thorough knowledge of the city, ironically, his creator does not share this knowledge. In a letter to one of his friends he wrote:

“By the way it must amuse you to see the vast and accurate knowledge of London which I display. I worked it all out from a post-office map.”³⁹

Conan Doyle resided in London briefly for approximately two years in the early 1890s.⁴⁰ He never became a London novelist in the close, intimate and well-observed way that Charles Dickens had been before him. His limited knowledge forced Conan Doyle to get creative about the London in his stories. Thus he created a world for Sherlock Holmes that radiates out from 221B Baker Street, a fictional address in a real street that still exists today. The address 221 Baker Street does not exist as an actual residence: it is included in the large office building at the northern end of Baker Street, the headquarters of the Abbey National Building Society. The search then continued for another house in Baker Street: which one did Conan Doyle ‘disguise’ as 221B Baker Street in his stories? Many options have been named, and none have been confirmed, leaving the search wide open.⁴¹ The stories also describe the West-End, and extend out into the suburban edges of the metropolis. Hansom cabs, omnibuses and mainline trains transport the residents of London where they want to go, be it inside the city or outside.⁴²

It won’t come as much of a surprise that the parts of London which Conan Doyle often used in the stories were the two areas of the city where he lived during his brief period of residence in the city. The first area that Conan Doyle was quite familiar with was central London, entailing such places as Oxford Street, Montague Place and Wimpole Street, among others. The second area was south of the Thames, the suburbs that encircled the vast city and kept growing,

³⁹ Quoted from: Roden and Roden, ‘Introduction’, xii.

⁴⁰ David Cannadine, ‘A Case of [Mistaken] Identity’, in Alex Werner (ed.), *Sherlock Holmes: The Man who Never Lived and Will Never Die* (London 2014) 16.

⁴¹ Redmond, *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, 107.

⁴² Alex Werner, ‘Preface’, in Alex Werner (ed.), *Sherlock Holmes: The Man who Never Lived and Will Never Die* (London 2014) 8.

spreading out into the country.⁴³ These were the good parts of the city, where the upper middle classes and upper class resided. Most of Holmes's clients reside in these neighbourhoods.

London, like many other cities in the world, was in a constant state of transition during the time when the Sherlock Holmes stories were published. This transition could be noticed in several ways: old buildings were being demolished and streets were being widened to accommodate the rise in traffic in the city. In Westminster, enormous government buildings sprung up on both sides of Whitehall and on Trafalgar Square and along the Embankment, new palatial hotels welcomed the new influx of tourists to the imperial capital.⁴⁴ These new city quarters offered new dramatic possibilities for novels, such as lost government documents or worse.⁴⁵ As a result of all this change, the great city became more diverse and varied than ever before in its long history. Thus, although it might technically be improbable, it does make sense for Holmes and Watson to pass through various parts of the city in rapid succession:

“through the fringe of fashionable London, hotel London, literary London, commercial London and, finally, maritime London.”⁴⁶

London of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a city with a distinct character of its own. The fog-shrouded, gas-lit image of the city is a stereotype, created by authors and artists to find a way to attempt to control the vast modern city. Art of the nineteenth century is one of the main reasons for the persistence of this stereotypical image of London.⁴⁷ The vast capital of London was the location to be for artists who wished to capture modernity. They wished to ‘know’ what the city meant, they wished to capture this image.⁴⁸ The weather and the industrial fog, and its effect on the lights, were just some aspects which

⁴³ Cannadine, ‘A Case of [Mistaken] Identity’, 21-22.

⁴⁴ Werner, ‘Preface’, 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 8.

⁴⁶ Quoted from: Cannadine, ‘A Case of [Mistaken] Identity’, 24.

⁴⁷ Hardy, ‘The Art of Sherlock Holmes’, 135.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 135.

drew artists to the city.⁴⁹ Another way this stereotypical image has been preserved, is in literature. Sherlock Holmes and London are irrevocably connected, as it would be quite difficult to imagine him in another iconic city such as Paris or New York. It has been argued that there are three main characters in the Sherlock Holmes series: the great detective, the good doctor and the ever-present metropolis. The city was more than just a passive backdrop, it was a condition of possibility for the content and form of the series.⁵⁰

A character such as Sherlock Holmes could only have been written in a context such as has been described above. The context, environment, the time in which he was created were essential to his character. The changing reality of the city and the new social order which had risen out of these changes was in dire need of the services of something better than the police or a common detective. This new modernity and the anxieties it caused, could only be contained and understood by a great “consulting detective” such as Sherlock Holmes. Many critics have agreed that Sherlock Holmes is the world’s best detective, or at the very least the best known detective. He possesses an extensive knowledge of many different subject, all essential to the best execution of his chosen profession. This vast array of knowledge enables him to understand and thus handle all problems which come with living in such a new urban reality.

Sherlock is very much a creation of his own time: he is a detective who is highly intelligent, holds himself to high moral standards, he is a bit of an elitist, and yet he is able to remain down to earth in such a way that he was somehow able to connect with the normal people who populate his stories. It can be said that these people represent the anxieties of the contemporary readers. These readers bought the Sherlock Holmes stories as a way to enjoy and believe in these fables of protection which had been created by Arthur Conan Doyle.⁵¹ The introduction already briefly mentioned psychic protection.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 137.

⁵⁰ Cannadine, ‘A Case of [Mistaken] Identity’, 15.

⁵¹ Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction Since 1800: Detection, Death, Diversity* (Hampshire 2010) 55-56.

This phrase is quite suggestive, as it involves the inclusion of faith. In this sense, the detective becomes the readers personal custodian, guaranteeing safe passage and neutralizing the threat even of the most cunning criminals.⁵² He becomes this custodian through “a detailed and internally plausible textual belief system, designed to reinforce the audience’s great sense of security”.⁵³ Sherlock was able to grant his readers this form of psychic protection, in part because of his scientific character and method. The first time that Watson meets Sherlock Holmes, he is engaged in creating a new test that will positively identify blood stains, no matter how old the stain. Throughout the stories, Sherlock is clearly concerned with science, conducting experiments, and maintaining the aura of scientific inquiries.⁵⁴

However, there are also those who disagree that Holmes’s method is purely scientific and rational. Nils Clausson, for example, reasons that the Sherlock Holmes stories are not the rational detective or crime fiction many critics believe them to be. In subscribing these stories to the genre of crime fiction, the critics are ignoring the revival of the Gothic tale in the late 1880s and 1890s. He considers the Holmes stories to poses a strong air of Gothic Tales, and claims they are not as rational as they appear to be. This *fin-de-siècle* Gothic was a revival of the earlier gothic, and as Gothic is known to do, expresses several anxieties felt within the era. Clauson claims that the story *The Hound of Baskerville*, which will be analysed later in this thesis, is a perfect example of a gothic tale, rather than crime fiction. The tale contains a gothic plot, which contains the Victorian fear of degeneration rather than progress. The late-Victorians had confidence in the biological evolution, and this evolution would also bring social and moral progress. Yet the criminal in this tale shows clear signs of social and especially moral degeneration, the worst fear of the Victorians.⁵⁵

⁵² Bell, ‘Eighteenth-century crime writing’, 8

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 8.

⁵⁴ Knight, *Crime Fiction Since 1800*, 55-56.

⁵⁵ Nils Clausson, ‘Degeneration, Fin-de-Siècle Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story’, *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35 (2005) 60-87, 65.

Chapter two - *A Study in Scarlet*.

This first chapter contains the analysis of the first Sherlock Holmes novel: *A Study in Scarlet*. This novel was first published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887.⁵⁶ This novel is one of the in total sixty Sherlock Holmes tales: four novels and fifty-six short stories.⁵⁷ The question this chapter will attempt to answer is: What message does this thematic analysis draw from *A Study in Scarlet*, and how could this message have been related to the contemporary readers of this story? In order to properly answer this question, this chapter has been divided among several sub-paragraphs. The first part of the chapter will contain an analysis of the pattern of the novel, explaining how the pattern works for the novel and in the rest of the series. The shape and strategy of these stories is filled with meaning, and each story has a particular way of presenting the world it is situated in to its readers. The study of the overall structure, the bare bones, of the story can provide deeper insights into the message the story hopes to convey to its readers, and provide more information on the fears the story reacts to.⁵⁸ The next part will be an analysis of London within the story, and asks how the story reflects on the city. Is living in a city like London a good thing in the nineteenth century, or does all the bad and evil of the city outweigh the good aspects of urban life? The chapter also analyses the criminal and the kind of crime committed within this novel. The way the criminal and the crime, or even the crime scene are described could be quite telling about the message Conan Doyle might have wished to send his contemporary readers.

A Study in Scarlet was the first Sherlock Holmes novel, and as such, it had a very important task. This novel was to introduce the readers to the characters, the version of London which Conan Doyle had created, familiarise them with all of it. It is clear that Conan Doyle did not want to spend too much time introducing

⁵⁶ Philip K. Wilson, 'Sherlock Holmes. Fictional Character': <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sherlock-Holmes> (16-06-2017).

⁵⁷ Roden and Roden, 'Introduction', xiv.

⁵⁸ Knight, *Form and Ideology*, 4-5.

his readers to all these aspects, as initially he did not intend to write more than one Sherlock Holmes story.⁵⁹ Even though this is quite clear, the main characters are introduced quite thoroughly, as it is the first time the two meet each other as well. This introduction takes place quite quickly in the story, as the two are looking to hire lodgings together, at 221B Baker Street, in the centre of London. This is where the regular pattern of the stories officially begins for the first time.

Stephen Knight states that at the most basic level, analysis of a Holmes story would contain three parts: relation of the case, investigation and conclusion. These form the base for an unchanging basic structure.⁶⁰ The structure of the work has been worked out a bit more finely within this work. The elements within each Sherlock Holmes story often seem familiar, but because each tale contains a different case and the structure varies as the tale requires, there is no sense of repetition.⁶¹ A lot of tales in the Holmesian canon begin at the same place: 221B Baker Street. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes and Watson have first been introduced by a mutual acquaintance, Stamford, as both mention to him, on the same day, that they are looking for affordable lodgings. Finding these affordable, yet respectable lodgings on their own has proven quite difficult for both men, and after a quick round of introductions, the two decide to take apartments together in Baker Street.⁶² The apartment at Baker Street is described to be consisting of:

“a couple of comfortable rooms and a 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 on the spot, and we at once entered into possession”.⁶³

⁵⁹ Roden and Roden, ‘Introduction’, xi.

⁶⁰ Knight, *Form and Ideology*, 75.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 75.

⁶² Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (New York 2009) 3-7.

⁶³ Quoted from: *Ibidem*, 7.

It's cheerful, and well-kept throughout the stories by their housekeeper, Mrs. Hudson. When the weather calls for it, a blazing fire warms the comfortable sitting-room.⁶⁴ The brief initial description and the fact that the story returns there in between scenes of action quickly gives 221B Baker Street a sense of home, of warmth, safety, a calm place in the bustling city centre.

The next part of the pattern of the Holmesian Canon is the introduction of the case. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes receives a note written by police detective Gregson, requesting Sherlock to join him and Lestrade at a crime scene to investigate a case. The victim has been found dead without evidence of robbery or evidence as to how he met his death.⁶⁵ Holmes requests Watson to join him on the case, and the novel flows fluently to the next part of the pattern: the investigation itself. For much of this investigation, the reader is equated with Watson, and beyond his observations and small interpretations of these, the whole case is a mystery. This is the case in every Sherlock Holmes story: the reader is never able to catch on to the minute details that Sherlock Holmes observes throughout the investigation. The story, and thus the reader, follows Sherlock Holmes throughout the investigation, never fully understanding what is going on, and what he hopes to discover. Before the first part of the story is over, Sherlock has the whole case figured out. However, instead of giving his readers the answers they desire and are anxiously waiting for, Conan Doyle adds another part to the pattern of the story. Another story starts off in the second part of *A Study in Scarlet*, telling an entirely different story.

Part one of this novel had been narrated by Watson. The readers are reading Watson's report of the case, following him as he accompanies Holmes throughout the case. This new story which opens part two of the story however, doesn't have a first person narrator, as the rest of the novel does, the narrator of this particular story is omniscient. Initially, this story seems to have no connection to the first part of *A Study in Scarlet*, and it can be experienced as quite frustrating. The case was so close to its conclusion, and then this new story

⁶⁴ *Idem*, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (New York 2009) 725.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, 'A Study in Scarlet', 14.

takes over. As one reads on, it becomes clear that this story is indeed connected to *A Study in Scarlet*, via one of the most important persons of the story, the murderer, Jefferson Hope.⁶⁶ This new story reveals his motives for the double murder committed in *A Study in Scarlet*, and invites the reader to sympathise with him. How and why this was added to the story will be discussed later in this chapter. After Jefferson Hope's story has been revealed, and his motives made clear, Holmes finally explains how he solved the case to Watson. They are chatting over the case, most likely seated in their 'cheerfully furnished' comfortable sitting-room, and the whole case and investigation is laid out clearly. The tension which has been created throughout the story, finally has been released, and now 221B Baker Street has claimed a feeling of safety. This conclusion is the last part of the regular pattern which has been established throughout the Sherlock Holmes series. This pattern offers readers a sense of comfort before even beginning to read a Holmesian story. They know what is going to happen beforehand: the case will most likely be solved before the story runs out, and everything will be as it should be at the end, offering the psychic protection the contemporary readers seemed to long for. Even though this pattern is repeated almost every story, with some slight differences, no Sherlock Holmes stories are exactly alike. They are all unique, and sometimes the pattern adjusts to accommodate the story. The fact that his readers had become so adjusted to this pattern of stories might explain why they were so mortified when Conan Doyle decided to kill off his most famous creation in 'The Final Problem'. Suddenly, the story did not end well, the pattern was broken. Luckily, Conan Doyle later revived the detective, picking up the pattern again with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. More about this tale can be found in the next chapter.

It is quite interesting that not Sherlock Holmes, but John Watson is the narrator of the Holmesian canon. There are several possible reasons for Conan Doyle to have made this choice. In his memoirs, Conan Doyle describes how he came to create Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, and where his inspiration had

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 36-61.

come from.⁶⁷ Holmes had been based loosely on his old teacher, Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Edinburgh Infirmary. At one point Conan Doyle writes:

“To his audience of Watsons it all seemed very miraculous until it was all explained, and then it became simple enough.”⁶⁸

“First it was Sherringford Holmes; then it was Sherlock Holmes. He could not tell his own exploits, so he must have a commonplace comrade as a foil—an educated man of action who could both join in the exploits and narrate them. A drab, quiet name for this unostentatious man. Watson would do.”⁶⁹

These passages from Conan Doyle’s memoirs make his reasons for selecting Watson as a narrator quite clear: he was a plot device, a way to allow him to create tension, as well as make it clear just how brilliant Holmes really is, like the audience in medical school in Edinburgh did for Joseph Bell. Of course it would have been impossible for Sherlock to be his own narrator: every explanation, every deduction would have fallen flat as showing off, rather than telling the truth and revealing the brilliance of the man. Also, although Sherlock does sometimes concern himself with the ‘common’ people who crowd his series, he is often found quite intimidating, frequently brusque, arrogant and aloof.⁷⁰ If Sherlock had been his own narrator, it is possible that the stories would never have reached the same popularity as they have with Watson as the narrator. It would seem that even though Watson, like the reader, is often clueless of the true facts of the case until the very end, he is essential to the story, much like the city in which the stories take place.

⁶⁷ *Idem*, ‘Chapter III – Recollections of a Student’, *Memories and Adventures* (London, 1924), found at project Gutenberg: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks14/1400681h.html#ch-11> (09-07-2017).

⁶⁸ Quoted from: *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ Quoted from: *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ Martin A. Kayman, ‘The Short Story from Poe to Chesterton’, in Martin Priestman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge 2002) 49.

The importance of London quickly becomes clear in *A Study in Scarlet*. The first page merely introduces the readers to the history of the narrator, Dr John Watson, formerly of the fifth Northumberland Fusiliers. He has been severely injured in the Second Afghan War in 1879, after which he returns to England.⁷¹ Watson has no family nor close friends in England, and having nowhere to return home to, he decides to travel to London. He arrives in this city as a newcomer, and his first impressions of the city are those of an outsider. He describes the city as “that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained.”⁷² Watson is unfamiliar with life in such an enormous city, and is clearly a bit intimidated by it, as he experiences the city as a “great wilderness”.⁷³ These views of London are, like the gas-lighted, fog-ridden image, a stereotype. These descriptions of the city were both romantic stereotypical images of the city, as well as means to attempt to gain control over this immense city. As Watson and Holmes take up lodgings at 221B Baker Street, and Watson has had some time to get to know the city a bit better, he seems to no longer feel as anxious about London. Sherlock Holmes clearly feels no anxieties about living in London at all: he possesses a thorough knowledge of the city, and often takes long walks through the city, even the lowest parts.⁷⁴ These were the parts of the city which housed the poor, as well as the parts which were avoided by the ‘normal’ decent, hard-working people, as the criminals had control over these areas.⁷⁵ While Sherlock does possess a thorough knowledge of London, it is clear that Conan Doyle does not share this knowledge. The stories of Sherlock Holmes are littered with descriptive and topographical errors, and Conan Doyle lacked the feel for what Henry James has called London’s ‘inconceivable immensity’, or for particular neighbourhoods. Much of London in the Sherlock Holmes stories is enumerated, streets are named, but rarely described.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, ‘Anglo-Afghan Wars, British-Afghani History. Second Anglo-Afghan War’: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglo-Afghan-Wars#ref1119630> (14-06-2017).

⁷² Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, 3.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 8.

⁷⁵ Knight, *The Mysteries of the Cities*, 5-6.

⁷⁶ Cannadine, ‘A Case of [Mistaken] Identity’, 18.

The next time Watson discusses London, Holmes and Watson are on their way to the scene of the crime, after receiving an invitation from police inspector Gregson. There have been reports of a murder at 3 Lauriston Gardens, just off the Brixton Road. According to Charles Booth's London map, this was an area of the city which housed well-to-do middle class families.⁷⁷ Lauriston Gardens is a non-existent street. There is a Lauriston Street, but no Lauriston Gardens in real-life London. This is a clear example of one of Conan Doyle's literary sleights of hand, as he will use often throughout the stories, and although he had little feel for the city, Conan Doyle did rightly recognise a metropolitan phenomenon in the dense, yellow, pea-soup fog and the feelings of mystery and menace that it conjured up.⁷⁸

That mysterious and menacing fog is also present on the early morning when Holmes and Watson travel towards the scene of the crime: "it was a foggy, cloudy morning, and a dun-coloured veil hung over the housetops, locking the reflection of the mud-coloured streets beneath."⁷⁹ This fog was rightly a unique aspect of the city, and reached a peak between 1886 and 1890. The heavy, yellowish fog was caused by the smoke from factories, gasworks and railway engines, as well as steam from the tugs and steamers on the Thames. The tar from the low-temperature coal combustion gave this fog its yellow hue, which darkened as the day progressed.⁸⁰ The fog and the knowledge that it has rained the evening before (when the crime was being committed) gives the atmosphere a sense of bleakness, fitting the situation in which these observations are made. It would be quite anticlimactic if, while traveling towards the scene of a crime, the sun was shining brightly and the whole city seemed to shine with happiness. This fitting, bleak description of the city also applies to the house in which the crime has been committed. Watson observes that:

⁷⁷ London School of Economics and Political Science, Charles Booth's London Map': <https://booth.lse.ac.uk/map/14/-0.1174/51.5064/100/0> (09-07-2017).

⁷⁸ Cannadine, 'A Case of [Mistaken] Identity', 19.

⁷⁹ Conan Doyle, 'A Study in Scarlet', 15.

⁸⁰ Hardy, 'The Art of Sherlock Holmes', 138.

“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 gravel. The whole place was very sloppy from the rain which had fallen through the night.”⁸¹

Brixton Road is a neighbourhood for the middle class, well-to-do people. This part of it however, has clearly been neglected and abandoned. It could have been a wonderful family home, but now it is the scene of a crime. The fact that this crime takes place in an abandoned house in a relatively well-to-do part of the city, shows that the criminal has put some thought into his crime. The next part of the city which is mentioned by Watson is Audley Court. Again, this is a non-existent part in the real London, but in Holmes's London, this is a fairly poor part of the city. “Audley Court was not an attractive locality. The narrow passage led us into a quadrangle paved with flags and lined by sordid dwellings.”⁸² It is a part of the city which, had Watson been alone, he would most likely have skipped visiting. But now, he is with Sherlock, and this locality is a part of the investigation, as the police constable who initially discovered the victim lives there. Holmes and Watson travel through the city a bit throughout the investigation, but these scenes are always accompanied by some scene of action, drawing the attention away from the description of the city. It is clear that Conan Doyle did not know London very well, and as a result, he was forced to create a London that was both imaginary and real. This way, the city would still have that authentic feeling to his contemporary readers, while also protecting himself from descriptive errors. There have been many searches for the actual locations of the

⁸¹ Quoted from: Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, 15.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 21.

events in Sherlock Holmes series, and the most famous of all locations is, of course, 221B Baker Street. This number is included in the large office building at the northern end of Baker Street, the headquarters of the Abbey National Building Society. The search then continued for another house in Baker Street: which one did Conan Doyle ‘disguise’ as 221B Baker Street in his stories?⁸³

Despite these topographical ‘errors’, Sherlock Holmes and London were the ideal connection. No other city offered the changes, and thus opportunities for stories like London did. During the nineteenth century, this city was in a constant state of change: old buildings were being demolished and streets were being widened to accommodate the rise in traffic in the city. In Westminster, enormous government buildings sprung up on both sides of Whitehall and on Trafalgar Square and along the Embankment, new palatial hotels welcomed the new influx of tourists to the imperial capital.⁸⁴ These new city quarters offered new dramatic possibilities for novels, such as lost government documents or worse.⁸⁵ Of course, these dramatic possibilities required the services of the world’s only consulting detective.

The case given in *A Study in Scarlet* is quite interesting, as it involves a contemporary crime theory. The story contains the double homicide of Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson by Jefferson Hope. The initial description of Enoch Drebber brings in the contemporary theory created by the criminologist Cesare Lombroso. He tried to discern the relationship between the psychopathology and physical and/or constitutional defects in criminals. More concretely, he attempted to identify criminals by creating composites. To create one of these composites, he would take photographs of a certain kind of criminal, say arsonists, and then overlay these photographs. The image that formed after this process would show the basic ‘structure’ of arsonists. He believed these criminals were proof of existence of a hereditary class of criminals who are

⁸³ Redmond, *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, 107.

⁸⁴ Werner, ‘Preface’, 8.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 8.

effectively biological throwbacks to a primitive stage of human evolution. This theory is part of the study of atavism.⁸⁶

When Holmes and Watson arrive at the first crime scene in Lauriston Gardens, Watson's description of the victim is quite striking:

“At present my attention was centred upon the single, grim, motionless figure which lay stretched upon the boards, with vacant, sightless eyes staring up at the discoloured ceiling. It was that of a man about forty-three or forty-four years of age, middle-sized, broad-shouldered, with crisp curling black hair, and a short, stubbly beard. He was dressed in a heavy broad-cloth frock coat and waistcoat, with light coloured trousers, and immaculate collar and cuffs. A top hat, well brushed and trim, was placed upon the floor beside him. His hands were clenched and his arms thrown abroad, while his lower limbs were interlocked, as though his death struggle had been a grievous one. On his rigid face there stood an expression of horror, and, as it seemed to me, of hatred, such as I have never seen upon human features. This malignant and terrible contortion, combined with the low forehead, blunt nose, and prognathous jaw, gave the dead man a singularly simious and ape-like appearance, which was increased by his writhing, unnatural posture. I have seen death in many forms, but never has it appeared to me in a more fearsome aspect than in that dark, grimy apartment, which looked out upon one of the main arteries of suburban London.”⁸⁷

Enoch Drebber is clearly a man of some substantial wealth, as can be judged by his clothing. Yet, despite this wealth, the man's physique betrays a deeper, darker nature simply by appearing ape-like. Cesare Lombroso would most likely have identified him as a criminal, an evolutionary throwback.

The second story which has been embedded in *A Study in Scarlet* reveals Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson as the horrible criminals that they are.

⁸⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 'Cesare Lombroso': <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cesare-Lombroso> (09-07-2017).

⁸⁷ Quoted from: Conan Doyle, 'A Study in Scarlet', 16.

They wished to marry a young woman who had no interest in marrying either of them, and so they chased her down until finally, they caught her and murdered her father. She was forced to marry Enoch Drebbler, and a month later, she died. The woman, Lucy, wished to marry Jefferson Hope, and when Lucy died, Jefferson vowed to avenge her and her father's death.⁸⁸ Joseph Strangerson is described to have a long, pale face, and a thin countenance compared to Enoch Drebbler.⁸⁹ They are both quite vicious, and both have gotten away with their crimes. Jefferson Hope, on the other hand, is said to have a fierce face and resolute expression.⁹⁰ Throughout the story, readers get to know him as a kind-hearted and brave man, who risked his life to be with the woman he loved. Even though he committed a double homicide, he is a different kind of criminal than Drebbler and Strangerson. The latter used brute force and violence to pursue their desires, while Hope uses his brain to accomplish his goals.

Drebbler's murder is committed via poison. The amount of crimes committed via poisoning rose in the nineteenth century, and Victorians considered poisoning to be a crime of civilisation, as one had to use their brain rather than brute force.⁹¹ Hope offered Drebbler a tin box containing two pills: one contained poison, and the other was harmless. Drebbler was to take one, and Hope would take the other, no matter which one Drebbler chose.⁹² Jefferson had planned the same for Strangerson, but unfortunately, Strangerson had already learnt what had happened to Drebbler, and refused to cooperate. After this, Jefferson was forced to retreat to violent measures, before Strangerson could alert anyone else to his presence.⁹³ The story of Lucy and her father, of the crimes Drebbler and Strangerson committed, provide Hope with a clear and quite relatable motive for murder. Throughout the story, it is suggested by Watson that

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 38-61.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, 51.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 54.

⁹¹ Ian A. Burney, 'A Poisoning of No Substance: The Trials of Medico-Legal Proof in Mid-Victorian England', *Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999) 59-92, 69-70.

⁹² Conan Doyle, 'A Study in Scarlet', 62-67.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 62-67.

maybe, the killer did society a favour by ending the lives of such horrible figures, especially Drebber.

“Every time that I closed my eyes I saw before me the distorted, baboon-like countenance of the murdered man. So sinister was the impression which that face had produced upon me that I found it difficult to feel anything but gratitude for him who had removed its owner from the world. If ever human features bespoke vice of the most malignant type, they were certainly those of Enoch J. Drebber, of Cleveland. Still I recognized that justice must be done, and that the depravity of the victim was no condonement in the eyes of the law.”⁹⁴

Watson states these things long before he ever learns of the motives of Jefferson Hope, and the distinction “in the eyes of the law” suggest that in his eyes, Jefferson Hope did the world a favour. In the end, Jefferson Hope is apprehended, but he never faces the law for the crimes he has committed. He is terminally ill, and dies peacefully in his cell the first night after he has been apprehended. In death, he looks peaceful, smiling, his purpose complete. Justice has been served and the case has been solved, wrapping it up nicely.

Taking everything into consideration, it is quite likely that Conan Doyle hoped to offer his readers some sense of psychic protection with the Sherlock Holmes stories. After the close thematic analysis of the story it has become clear that Conan Doyle did admit to the dangers of living in a city such as London, but he also wishes to assuage these anxieties. The anxieties felt by the Victorians would most likely have been inspired by the increasingly sensationalistic press, in which London was described as the capital of crime and vice.⁹⁵ Even though the facts of poverty and prostitution were clearly present in the city, London was actually

⁹⁴ Quoted from: Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, 24.

⁹⁵ Knight, *The Mysteries of the Cities*, 27.

becoming a much safer city. All reliable indices of crime began to fall from the 1850s onwards and continued to do so until the outbreak of the First World War.⁹⁶

This interpretation of the analysis within this chapter comes to the conclusion that Conan Doyle's message for his contemporary readers was to be a soothing one. While he understands and can relate to the anxieties of living in a new urban reality such as London, these anxieties are not always well-founded. It is a wonderful city, a great city, as Sherlock Holmes always states. The nineteenth century saw many developments, among others in criminology. The Victorians wished to believe in progress and that their society was the pinnacle of evolution,⁹⁷ but crimes such as the Ripper Murders, made it hard to believe in such things. By creating a character like Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle offered his readers some sense of safety. Christopher Clausen wrote: "A Character like Holmes could grow to full stature, only in a time when science was viewed by its enthusiasts as a new force crusading for progress against ignorance and unreason".⁹⁸ With his knowledge of science and the city, Holmes was able to help his readers, mostly white-collar workers,⁹⁹ overcome the anxieties they might have felt while living in this 'capital of crime and vice', and showed them that, living in the city is not as bad as the press made it seem.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 27.

⁹⁷ Andrzej Diniejko, 'Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution and the Intellectual Ferment of the Mid- and Late Victorian Periods': <http://www.victorianweb.org/science/darwin/diniejko.html> (09-07-2017).

⁹⁸ Christopher Clausen, cited in Nills Clauson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story', *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35 (2005) 60-87, 62.

⁹⁹ Knight, *Secrets of Crime Fiction Classics: Detecting the Delights of 21 Enduring Stories* (Jefferson 2015) 90-91.

Chapter three – *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Although Conan Doyle wrote many Sherlock Holmes stories, he was never as fond of his creation as his readers were. He felt as though Sherlock Holmes was keeping his mind from better matters, and thus he decided to kill off his famous detective in ‘The Final Problem’ in 1893.¹⁰⁰ The next nine years passed without new stories about Sherlock Holmes, until in 1902, under both social and financial pressure, Conan Doyle caved and created a new Sherlock Holmes tale. He gave the directors of the *Strand* magazine, in which the Holmes stories had been serialised after his first two novels,¹⁰¹ a choice: “Suppose I gave the directors the alternative that it should be without Holmes at my old figure or with Holmes at £100 per thou¹⁰².”¹⁰³ The choice was easy, and thus readers finally got a new Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.¹⁰⁴

Conan Doyle chose to place this tale before the death of the detective in the Holmesian canon, as he had not quite made up his mind to write more than one new Sherlock Holmes tale. Despite the fact that there had been no new Sherlock Holmes tales, or maybe just because this was the first new tale in nine years, the novel was an enormous success. It was the only time in the *Strand’s* history when the magazine had to go for a seventh printing.¹⁰⁵ The enormous financial success, as well as more social pressure, finally convinced Conan Doyle to revive Sherlock Holmes for good, and create new series of stories for his detective. Besides his quite substantial fee, Conan Doyle had only one condition: “I would not write a Holmes story without a worthy plot, without a problem which interested my own mind, for that is a requisite before you can interest any one else”.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, ‘Sherlock Holmes. Fictional Character’.

¹⁰¹ Kayman, ‘The Short Story from Poe to Chesterton’ 41-58.

¹⁰² Per thou, meaning per thousand words. Extra information: each Sherlock Holmes story is a minimum of 12.000 words.

¹⁰³ Roden and Roden, ‘Introduction’, xiv.

¹⁰⁴ Vybarr Cregan-Reid and Lizzie Enfield, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles. Novel by Doyle’, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Hound-of-the-Baskervilles> (16-06-2017).

¹⁰⁵ Roden and Barbra Roden, ‘Introduction’, xiv.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, xiv.

Although the relevance of this story has already been pointed out in the introduction, the facts stated above were also important while selecting this story. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is one of Holmes's most popular stories, and it is not very hard to see why. It is a story which contains everything: the great consulting detective, a good ghost story, haunting surroundings and a mystery that even baffles Sherlock Holmes himself, until he has figured it all out, of course. The story moves out of London and into the countryside for a large part of the story, but this makes analysis of this chapter all the more interesting. It is when comparing opposites to one and other that many details can become clear. The opposition is more revealing than some elaborate descriptions. The central question of this chapter is similar to the previous chapter: What message was Conan Doyle possibly trying to send his contemporary readers through his descriptions of London, in comparison to the moor country?

This Sherlock Holmes novel differs from the others in several distinctive ways. First there are some slight but important differences in the basic pattern described within the previous chapter. The second quite notable difference is the 'character' of the story. The following will show why *The Hound of the Baskervilles* can be considered to be a Gothic tale, rather than a scientific detective story. After that, analysis will again turn to London as it is described within the story, but it will also focus on the comparison between London and the moor country which takes quite an important place within the story. It is only to be expected that this opposition can be quite telling. Finally, analysis will also briefly turn to the crimes and criminals described in this novel.

The previous chapter discussed the structure which can be found in almost all Sherlock Holmes stories. This is also the case for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with some differences. Like many other stories, it begins in 221B Baker Street, where the case is introduced to Sherlock and Watson. This is where the first difference becomes apparent: the kind of case that Holmes is asked to take. This is different from, for example, *A Study in Scarlet*. They are not asked to solve a murder or crime, but to give counsel about what to do in this particular case. The

case is introduced by Dr James Mortimer, a country practitioner who has travelled to London to seek Sherlock Holmes's counsel. Three months before his visit to 221B Baker Street, his close friend and patient Sir Charles Baskervilles, had died under suspicious circumstances. Yet, he does not wish Holmes to solve these circumstances, he hopes he can tell him what to do. He tells the tale of the Baskerville Legend, and confesses that after Sir Charles's suspicious death, he has taken the legend to heart. Now Sir Charles's heir is on his way to London, and Dr Mortimer is anxious about bringing him to Baskerville Hall, setting him in close proximity to a legend that could endanger the young heir's life.¹⁰⁷ After some deliberation, they agree for Dr Mortimer to return the following day with the heir, Sir Henry Baskervilles. After some time in London and several small mysteries which aren't solved until the very end of the tale, it is decided for Watson to travel with Sir Henry to Baskerville Hall, as Holmes claims that he has business in town he needs to attend to.¹⁰⁸ Thus the story leaves London, and Sherlock Holmes isn't seen or heard from for the next 6 chapters, which is unusual to say the least. Sherlock is said to be a man of action, yet in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he is not present for almost the entirety of the investigation, deciding to remain in London.

Another difference to *A Study in Scarlet* is that this novel does not contain a lengthy extra story. In that novel, five chapters were devoted to the events that in the end, gave Jefferson Hope his motives to commit that double homicide. There is not one lengthy story such as this in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but there are several embedded stories, which will be elaborated further on in this chapter. At the end of the novel, Sherlock Holmes is revealed to have been near Watson all along, hiding out on the moor in order to solve the case. The investigational part of the pattern had continued all along, it was just out of Watson's sight. After the investigation, a scene of action follows, concluding the case. At the end of the story, Holmes and Watson are back at 221B Baker street, enjoying their evening, chatting by the fire, as Holmes recounts every step of the

¹⁰⁷ Conan Doyle, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', 635-642.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 642-662.

case, explaining it all to Watson and the readers, wrapping it all up in a neat bow.¹⁰⁹ Thus, despite the obvious differences between the two novels, it has become apparent that the most bare structure of introduction to the case, investigation and conclusion is persistent within *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, despite the differences in the presentation of this novel. Besides this fact, this novel is quite different from the others in at least one striking way.

The first striking difference lies in the character of the story. When Watson and Holmes are first introduced in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes is exulting over his discovery of an infallible test to identify blood stains.¹¹⁰ With this discovery, the scientific detective was born, and throughout all stories, Holmes as a scientific detective manages to solve every problem. Certain readers, critics and even police detectives have taken him at his word, and see him as the world's foremost practitioner of the science of deduction.¹¹¹ For many, Holmes is the epitome of a scientific detective, who solves every case with pure, rational science. While this may or may not be the case for other stories, such as *A Study in Scarlet*, this does not seem to be the case for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Nils Clausson challenges this orthodoxy in his article 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story'. In this article he writes that this orthodoxy of viewing Holmes as a scientific detective, especially in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*,

“ignores the important relation between the emergence of the Holmesian detective story and two contemporary developments: the revival of the Gothic tale in the late 1880s and the 1890s; and, second, the introduction into England of the criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso and his followers, who postulated contemporary theories of degeneration and atavism as a scientific explanation of criminal behavior. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is as much a *fin-de-siècle* Gothic tale as a detective story, and

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 666-760.

¹¹⁰ *Idem*, 'A Study in Scarlet', 6.

¹¹¹ Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection', 61.

the two keynotes of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic are its questioning of the power of late-nineteenth century positivist science and its appropriation of the discourse of degeneration from the writings of Lombroso.”¹¹²

This statement from Clausson also draws doubts about *A Study in Scarlet*, if this could be seen as a scientific detective story, considering Conan Doyle’s use of the theories of Lombroso in this tale. However, *A Study in Scarlet* is quite different from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In the prior, the degenerate criminals were the bigger threat, and especially Enoch Drebber was eliminated in a way that could be considered civilised: no brute force of any kind was required. Jefferson Hope offered the man a deal: take one pill, and I will take the other, no matter what the consequence. This story can thus still be considered a victory for the scientific detective. The following will show why *The Hound of the Baskervilles* can be considered to be a Gothic tale, rather than a scientific detective story.

The modern detective story emerged almost simultaneously with the late Victorian revival of the Gothic tale.¹¹³ These genres are conventionally opposed, as the detective tale claims to narrate the triumph of science, logic and reason over science, while the late Victorian Gothic tale can be read as a “counter-attack” against these Western assumptions, regarding science, reason and progress.¹¹⁴ This counter attack, according to Judith Wilt, is discernible in three repressed anxieties that emerge in this late-Victorian Gothic revival. The first deals with anxieties about a long-dormant or suppressed past which re-emerges in the present. The second is the opposite: the fear of regression. The third anxiety Wilt has termed as “going native”.¹¹⁵ These anxieties can all be found within *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The long-dormant past that comes back to haunt the evolved and progressive present is the tale of the Baskerville legend. This ancient legend, which both Dr Mortimer and Sir Charles had taken to heart, terrifies Sir

¹¹² Quoted from: *Ibidem*, 63.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, 63-64.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 64.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 64.

Charles literally to death, and scares Dr Mortimer enough that he does not wish to bring Sir Henry to Baskerville Hall. It terrorizes the present, as it influences the actions of several characters within the tale: It is what drives Dr Mortimer to visit Sherlock Holmes in London, it drives Watson to leave London, in order to protect Sir Henry and unravel the mystery of Sir Charles's death as well as the legend, if he can.

The anxiety of regression, based on the theories of Cesare Lombroso and his contemporaries, can also be identified within *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, namely in the main perpetrator in this novel. Stapleton appears to be an "interesting instance of a throwback, which appears to be both physical and spiritual".¹¹⁶ Lastly, the final anxiety of "going native" is also there, when Watson, Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer leave the comfort and modernity of London and travel towards Baskerville Hall. The one who really "goes native", however, is Sherlock Holmes, the great detective himself. He has tricked Watson into believing that he has business to attend to in London, and has secretly travelled after him, residing in the moor country the entire time, as discovered at the end of the story. Holmes had done so in order to trick the criminal into believing himself to be safe, allowing Holmes to observe everyone to their truest nature, enabling him to solve the case. The Gothic aspects of the plot undermine not only the detective story's and the confident endorsement of science and reason, but also the sentiment that evolution is necessarily coupled with social and moral progress.¹¹⁷ Sherlock Holmes makes his most passionate appeal to reason and science early on in the story, when Dr Mortimer accuses him of guessing. Holmes replies: "Say, rather, into the region where we balance probabilities and chose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to start our speculation."¹¹⁸

Despite his claim of scientific use of imagination, his solution of Sir Charles's death does not display a lot of use of scientific methods. It merely appears scientific, but it is merely a more sophisticated version of the parlour

¹¹⁶ Conan Doyle, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', 714.

¹¹⁷ Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection', 65.

¹¹⁸ Conan Doyle, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', 653.

trick he plays on Watson in the opening pages of the novel.¹¹⁹ On the morning that the novel opens, Watson discovers a walking stick standing in the sitting-room of 221B Baker Street. Curious about the object, he picks it up and analyses it carefully as he has seen Holmes do numerous times. Holmes is seated at the breakfast table with his back towards Watson when he suddenly asks what he makes of the walking stick. Watson, astonished once again, asks Holmes how he could possibly know what he was doing. Holmes replies: “I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee pot in front of me”.¹²⁰ Holmes solves the mystery of the Baskerville legend not by applying the scientific methods he is so boastful about, but by realizing that a case which appeared to be quite complicated was, in fact, quite simple.¹²¹

Much like the case, Holmes is able to simplify the multiple, complex narratives of Watson into a single, connected narrative in the end. Throughout the novel, there are as many as eight embedded narratives within Watson’s framed narrative.¹²² The first is the manuscript containing the Baskerville legend. This manuscript has been created in 1742, and has been read to Holmes and Watson by Dr Mortimer, in relation to the second embedded narrative: the report of the death of Sir Charles as printed in the *Devon County Chronicle*.¹²³ Dr Mortimer’s own observations of Sir Charles’s death form the third embedded narrative, the fourth are the reproductions of fragments from the diary that Watson kept during his stay at Baskerville Hall. The fifth embedded narrative exists of reports which Watson sent to Holmes in the form of letters to Baker Street (which were then forwarded to Sherlock out on the moors). Mrs. Barrymore’s account of her brother, the escaped convict Selden, forms the sixth embedded narrative. Number seven is the account of Mrs. Laura Lyons of her personal relationship with Sir Charles, and finally, the eighth embedded narrative is Sherlock Holmes’s “retrospective”, in which he connects all these separate narratives and simplifies it into a single connected narrative and solves the

¹¹⁹ Clausson, ‘Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection’, 67.

¹²⁰ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 635.

¹²¹ Clausson, ‘Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection’, 68.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 69.

¹²³ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 639-643.

mystery.¹²⁴ This opposition of narratives, of Holmes's single connected narrative versus Watson's complex narrative makes the duality of the genre of this novel clear. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* can be considered to be both a ratiocinative detective story, but it can also be considered to be a Gothic tale. After this analysis, it has become clearer that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* could be considered to be more of a Gothic tale than *A Study in Scarlet*. It lacks the scientific air that Sherlock Holmes usually carefully preserves, and focusses more on the dark and supernatural aspects. This supernaturalism is clearly evident in the setting of the story. Mieke Bal states that the contrast of outside and inside is often relevant in analyzing narratives. Inside may suggest safety and protection, while outside suggests danger and anxiety. She states that country and city are contrasted in many romantic and realistic novels.¹²⁵

These contrasts of outside and inside can be applied in numerous ways in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. First, it can be applied in London, where inside 221B Baker Street everyone is safe and protected, while outside in the metropolitan city, there is a possibility of danger. The second way this comparison can be useful is with the comparison of London versus the Moor country of Baskerville Hall. Compared to this grim open country, London could be considered to be the safer option. Inside thus means inside the city, and outside is on the country, where there is hardly ever anyone around to be of any use in the face of possible danger. Especially this second opposition is quite interesting and clearly present in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It is more common for the city to be seen as a place of danger, a 'cesspool of Empire', as Watson initially stated in *A Study in Scarlet*. The fact that in this particular story, the city is regarded as the safer of the two, is quite interesting. Holmes is hesitant about sending Watson out into the wild moor country:

¹²⁴ Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection', 69.

¹²⁵ Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 220.

“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.”¹²⁶ (emphasis added).

Baker Street is where the tale, as many others, began. Holmes and Watson are both in the sitting-room, where their breakfast is waiting for them as always. The reader is enabled to feel comfortable, homely even, as the case is introduced to Holmes and Watson. The sense of safety has hung about Baker Street from the first story. It is the place where Holmes and Watson are able to retreat, regroup and theorize at will about the case at hand. It is a place where they are at rest, at home, safe and sound.

The first time Holmes and Watson venture into the city in this novel, they are following Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer. Sir Henry had received a strange note, warning him to stay away from the moor, and Holmes suspects that someone has been following Sir Henry. This is why he decides to follow Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer, to confirm his suspicions. They walk through Baker Street, down into Oxford Street, and via Oxford Street towards Regent Street. These streets are lined on both sides with shops and residences, and are known to always be quite crowded, both with pedestrian as well as with traffic.¹²⁷ Thus far, Conan Doyle’s description of the city is accurate and precise: the route the men follow can be traced on maps of London. Even though the routes are precise and accurate, what happens next is a literary sleight of hand by Conan Doyle: Holmes spots the man who has been tailing Sir Henry, and when he is discovered, the man rushes off into the stream of traffic: “Instantly the trap-door at the top flew up, something was screamed to the driver, and the cab flew madly off down Regent Street”.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Quoted from: Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 663.

¹²⁷ Alex Werner, ‘Holmes’s Central London in Photographs and Postcards’, in Alex Werner (ed.), *Sherlock Holmes: The Man who Never Lived and Will Never Die* (London 2014) 90-100.

¹²⁸ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 655.



¹²⁹ Fig. 1: Regent Street, approximately 1890. source: footnote.

. As is quite clearly visible in the photograph, this street is crowded with traffic, which would have started up at around the same time when the shops opened. The sidewalks are crowded with pedestrians, and there is hardly any way visible to even cross the street, let alone race of on any form of a high pace. Since Oxford Street and Regent Street are quite clearly mentioned, and the appointment with Sir Henry Baskerville had been at 10 o'clock in the morning, the described events in the story seem highly unlikely. Although this part of the story is clearly a literary sleight of hand, it does not impair the story or the possibility of the comforting message Conan Doyle may have wished to send his contemporary readers. This is the only time in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* that streets or locations in London are clearly described. Not long after these events, the narrative moves out of London entirely. Conan Doyle's description of the country is quite fitting the genre of this novel, but it also reveals more about his theories/philosophies about living in a metropolitan city such as London.

¹²⁹ Werner, 'Holmes's Central London in Photographs and Postcards', 92.

At the appointed day and time, Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer are waiting for Watson at the train station, and it is clear that Holmes is quite uncomfortable about letting Watson leave alone. He warns Watson: “keep your revolver near you night and day, and never relax your precautions”.¹³⁰ Holmes has already made it quite clear that he considers the country to be far more dangerous than the city ever could. In ‘The Adventure of the Copper Breeches’ he explains why:

“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.”¹³¹

“They always fill me with a 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.”¹³²

Initially, as the train leaves the station, Watson looks back at the city: “I looked back at the platform when we had left it far behind, and saw the tall, austere figure of Holmes standing motionless and gazing after us”.¹³³ The city is now behind, the modernity and safety are gone. This feeling is not quite present yet in the early stages of the journey from London to Baskerville Hall.

“In a few hours the brown earth had become ruddy, the brick had changed to granite, and red cows grazed in well-hedged fields where the lush grasses and more luxuriant vegetation spoke of a richer, if a damper, climate.”¹³⁴

This part of the journey is experienced as being quite pleasant. The city is far behind them, but not far enough to feel completely isolated from it and the modernity it represents. This pastoral part of the country represents a journey into

¹³⁰ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 664.

¹³¹ Quoted from: Andrzej Diniejko, ‘Sherlock Holmes’s anti-romantic view of the country’: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/doyle/rural.html> (10-07-2017).

¹³² Quoted from: *Ibidem*.

¹³³ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 664.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, 664-665.

a different kind, somewhat primitive landscape, a journey backwards in time.¹³⁵ The landscape is beautiful, but soon the first hints of the moor seep through, and the closer the travellers get to Baskerville Hall, the darker the atmosphere and the country gets. By the time they reach the end of their journey by train, they encounter two armed men in dark uniforms, guarding the gate of the train station.¹³⁶ During the ride in the wagonette during the last part of the journey, the atmosphere changes quite distinctly.

“Rolling pasture lands curved upward on either side of us, and old gabled houses peeped out from amid the thick green foliage, but behind the peaceful and sunlit countryside there rose ever, dark against the evening sky, the long, gloomy curve of the moor, broken by the jagged and sinister hills”.¹³⁷

The moor apparently represents a threat to the settled neighbourhood and provides the atmosphere with a deep sense of gloom. This sinister desolation has reigned for a long time: the old huts of previous civilisations are a poignant reminder of this fact.¹³⁸ Any attempt made by modernity, by civilisation to subdue this darkness, this threat to civilisation has failed.¹³⁹ Reaching the very edge of the Moor, the travellers learn that a convict has escaped the nearby prison, and it is said that he still roams the moors, adding yet another touch of darkness and doom to the already threatening moor.¹⁴⁰

As they reach Baskerville Hall, it is clear that any and all traces of modernity, even of the primitive pastoral England have been left behind.

“We had left the fertile country behind and beneath us. [...] The road in front of us grew bleaker and wilder over huge russet and olive slopes, sprinkled with giant boulders. Now and then we passed a moorland cottage,

¹³⁵ Clausson, ‘Degeneration, Fin-de-Siècle Gothic, and the Science of Detection’, 60-87, 71.

¹³⁶ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 665.

¹³⁷ Quoted from: *Ibidem*, 665.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, 673-677.

¹³⁹ James Kissane and John M. Kissane, ‘Sherlock Holmes and the Ritual of Reason’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 17 (1963) 353-362, 361.

¹⁴⁰ Conan Doyle, ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, 666.

walled and roofed with stone, with no creeper to break its harsh outline. Suddenly we looked down into a cuplike depression, patched with stunted oaks and firs which had been twisted and bent by the fury of years of storm. Two high, narrow towers rose over the trees.”¹⁴¹

This description of Baskerville Hall is Gothic to say the least. It is almost a stereotypical image of a haunted mansion, with the darkness and gloom just oozing out of every inch of the place. Even the trees, a most basic representation of beautiful nature, have been bent and twisted by years of storm. In his letters to Holmes, Watson declares this locality to be “the most godforsaken part of the world” and states that it felt as if he had “left all traces of modern England behind”.¹⁴² Of course this image of the moor country and Baskerville Hall are plot devices which Conan Doyle uses in his gothic tale. He uses the dark atmosphere and fear which these places inspire to create a high level of tension in the narrative, which is eventually released by a thrilling scene of action.

Thus the description of the bustling shopping streets of London and the increasingly dark countryside offer insights into Conan Doyle’s views of life in the city and life on the country. While Conan Doyle spent most his life on the country, the same cannot be said for Sherlock Holmes. In the description of the fertile pasture lands it seems as if life just outside the city would be the ideal. The bustling life of the city would be nearby, as would the modernity which only the city can offer, but one would have the green pasturelands as a palate refresher each day. However, as the journey continues towards Baskerville Hall, the moor takes up more and more of the countryside, removing any and all signs of the idyllic country. If the choice should be made between London and the gloom of the moor and Baskerville Hall, it is clear what Conan Doyle would chose, and more importantly, what Sherlock Holmes would chose.. While life in the city came with all new kinds of anxieties, they were anxieties which could be assuaged by the use of rational thinking and scientific methods. These methods seem to be at a distinct disadvantage in this gloom darkness of the moor.

¹⁴¹ Quoted from: *Ibidem*, 666.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, 677.

It is a bit difficult to ascertain which crimes have been committed within this novel. Sherlock Holmes is offered a case surrounding the Baskerville legend after Sir Charles dies under suspicious circumstances. While Stapleton is responsible for scaring the old man to death, or rather – his hound is responsible for that – he was not physically involved in Sir Charles's death, he was not even on the Baskerville property. Dr Mortimer comes to seek Sherlock's counsel, as he is hesitant to bring Sir Henry to the place where the legend might claim his life as well. While Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer remain in London, Sir Henry is the target of several petty crimes. He receives a threatening letter, telling him to stay away from the moor, and two boots are stolen (one boot from two different pairs of boots, one new and one used).¹⁴³ This legend, and Sherlock's scepticism towards it, plus these strange, petty crimes, are what convinces Watson to travel into the country with Sir Henry.

In the end, they learn that the dangerous Hound of the Baskerville legend is a mixed breed, a cross between a bloodhound and a mastiff, making it an enormous dog, whose jaws and snout have been covered in a specially derived form of phosphorous, which gave the dog its demonic hue. This hound had been used to scare Sir Charles to death, and was meant to be the instrument of crime in Sir Henry's case as well. Thus the crime actually committed within this novel can be described as attempted murder. This is, however, not the only crime. The criminal Stapleton, who is a naturalist, has also abused his wife, leaving her tied to a post in their home.¹⁴⁴

In the criminal Stapleton Conan Doyle makes interesting use of contemporary theories. Many Victorians were devout believers in Darwin's theory of evolution, and saw urban life and the developments in the nineteenth century as clear evidence of progress.¹⁴⁵ Society became more civilised, crime rates were dropping steadily since the 1850s, and urban society was constantly improving. However, there is also a downside to this idea of progress, which is

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, 651-658.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 722-723.

¹⁴⁵ Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection', 65.

degeneration. Stapleton is clearly an example of this Victorian angst of degeneration. Holmes is able to identify him as the perpetrator of the crimes, when he sees the portrait of Sir Henry's notorious ancestor, Sir Hugo Baskerville. Sir Hugo was a horrible man, who became obsessed with a young farmer's girl and decided to kidnap her in order to force her to marry him. When she escaped, he loosened his bloodhounds and set them on her as if on a hunt.¹⁴⁶ Once Holmes makes the connection between the original criminal of the legend and the contemporary criminal Stapleton, he remarks that "it is an interesting instance of a throw-back, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation. The fellow is a Baskerville – that is evident."¹⁴⁷ By identifying Stapleton as a Baskerville by study of the family portraits, Holmes is using the science of degeneration and atavism to identify the guilty party.¹⁴⁸ In this case, differing from *A Study in Scarlet*, the criminal, rather than the 'victims' is the degenerate. Again, Conan Doyle uses the theories of Cesare Lombroso within his works, albeit in a different scope this time.

In conclusion, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, just like *A Study in Scarlet*, was probably meant to send comforting messages to Conan Doyle's contemporary middle class readers. Firstly, the anxieties expressed by Watson in *A Study in Scarlet* are not present in this tale. This development is completely logical, as Watson had just arrived in London for the first time in that tale, and during *The Hound of the Baskervilles* he has been living there, and with Sherlock Holmes for quite some time. He has had time to get to know the city, and by living with and learning from Sherlock, his anxieties have diminished. This novel expresses how the horrific gothic aspects of the crimes committed on the moor are different from crimes committed in the city. For any crimes which take place in the city, Holmes is able to solve the case before the detectives have even begun to grasp what exactly has happened. In this novel, Holmes is absent for most of the action,

¹⁴⁶ Conan Doyle, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', 639-642.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 714.

¹⁴⁸ Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin-de-Siecle Gothic and the Science of Detection', 71.

hiding on the moor, not being able to solve the crime and wrap it up neatly until the very end of the novel. Thus, while life in the city can be dangerous and fraught with anxieties, the old anxieties of the country are worse, and the cases more difficult to solve for a lack of witnesses. The atavistic aspects of the criminal Stapleton, who disappears into the moor before apprehension, intensify the anxieties of the moor. He claimed to be the only man to be able to traverse the moors, meaning there is a possibility that he has survived, and will make another attempt to claim his Baskerville legacy. Conan Doyle is able to convey this message quite strongly by using the different settings of this tale. The bustling city life has an air of comfort, especially at the beginning and end of the tale, when Holmes and Watson are going about their life in Baker Street and the centre of London. Once Watson leaves the city, and goes to the moors, he has this strong feeling of having left all sense of modern England behind, and is faced with the dangers of the legend of the Baskervilles without the comforting psychic protection of the brilliant Holmes by his side. This sense of anxiety is quite present while reading the tale, and only dissipates once Watson miraculously discovers that Holmes has been on the moor all along, working the case. As long as Watson, and thus the readers, know that Sherlock Holmes is on the case, there is no sense of anxiety present, as Sherlock always manages to capture his man.

The Hound of the Baskervilles thus was able to comfort contemporary readers, by telling them that these degenerate criminals would not stand a chance against the great Sherlock Holmes. Even in the country, with barely any witnesses and a lack of evidence, he managed to identify his criminal. Though Stapleton escaped, it is made likely that his life was claimed by that ancient, gloomy moor, and that he will never be able to harm anyone again. Thus, as the story ends comfortably in Baker Street, a sense of security and safety is again returned to the tale. Even out in the moor, Sherlock finds his criminal, and not only that, he even manages to do so with clean linen.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Kissane and John M. Kissane, 'Sherlock Holmes and the Ritual of Reason', 353-362, 362.

Chapter Four – ‘The Retired Colourman’.

Since *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Conan Doyle wrote one more Sherlock Holmes novel like *A Study in Scarlet*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and created 21 more Sherlock Holmes short stories. The very last of these stories, later published in a collection known as *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, is called ‘The Retired Colourman’. This story was initially published in the *Strand* magazine of January in 1927.¹⁵⁰ This would be the last ever Sherlock Holmes story, as Conan Doyle was in ill health from 1929 on until his death early in 1930.¹⁵¹ The previous two chapters had the task of analysing an entire novel, while ‘The Retired Colourman’ is a short story. While this offers this chapter more opportunities of going into detail, there is also less to analyse. Also, while *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are quite well known Sherlock Holmes stories, the same cannot be said for ‘The Retired Colourman’. Therefore, the story has been added in appendix one. This story was selected because there might have been a possibility for a change in Conan Doyle’s presentation of London and the message he might have wished to send with this presentation. In order to see if this was the case, it was necessary to pick three distinguishable points in the Holmesian canon: the beginning, approximately the middle, and the end.

The Retired Colourman offers a perspective of London which has not been seen before in the Sherlock Holmes stories analysed within this research. It does not describe the city centre, which by now has become so familiar to his contemporary readers, but chooses to travel to a suburb of London: Lewisham. An old man comes to visit Sherlock Holmes, seeking his help on solving a terrible crime. The crime, however, turns out to be quite different than expected at the beginning of the story. The central question within this story is again similar to those of the previous two chapters: what message was Conan Doyle possibly

¹⁵⁰ Chris Redmond, ‘Sherlockian.net: The Retired Colourman’: www.sherlockian.net/canon/stories/reti.html (14-05-2017).

¹⁵¹ The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate, ‘Biography’: <http://www.arthurconandoyle.com/biography.html> (10-07-2017).

trying to send his contemporary readers by his comparison of London and the suburb Lewisham? What are the differences between the two?

The Retired Colourman opens, as most stories do, at 221B Baker Street. Watson has just returned home from an early morning stroll. On his way back inside, he passes an old man. Holmes, seated in the sitting-room, asks him what he thought of the man. Watson admits that he thought the man to be “a pathetic, futile, broken creature”.¹⁵² Within the first ten lines of the story, an atmosphere of old age, retirement, sadness and decay has been set and will be solidified even more within Sherlock’s next line: “Exactly, Watson. Pathetic and futile. But is not all life pathetic and futile? Is not his story a microcosm of the whole? We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow – misery.”¹⁵³

It is unclear whether Sherlock is discussing the fate of their new client, or if he is thinking about his own life and the purpose of life. The story follows the usual pattern of the stories, as has been established in the previous two stories. Sherlock informs Watson that the old man who had just left was a client, sent to them by Scotland Yard, “just as some medical men occasionally send their incurables to a quack. They argue that they can do nothing more, and that whatever happens the patient can be no worse than he is”.¹⁵⁴ The old man, Josiah Amberly, has brought the following case to Sherlock Holmes: he has spent his whole life working hard and building a decent pension. He finally retired and bought a nice house in the suburbs of London. In 1897, he married a woman who was younger than him, and two years later, the man is “as broken and miserable a creature as crawls beneath the sun.”¹⁵⁵ The old man had a close friend in the neighbourhood, a young doctor. The two enjoyed playing chess together, and the young doctor spent a lot of time in Amberley’s home. He also spent a lot of time

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, 1068.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 1068.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 1068.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 1068.

with his wife, and now the two have run off together with Amberley's deed-box and life-savings.¹⁵⁶

After this introduction of the case, the investigation begins. It is a strange case for Sherlock Holmes to take an interest in, as it is a bit of a common case. He usually makes such a big fuss about finding cases that are interesting and unique. In *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes even complains:

“There are no crimes and no criminals in these days. What is the use of having brains in our profession? I know well that I have it in me to make my name famous. No man lives or has ever lived who has brought the same amount of study and of natural talent to the detection of crime which I have done? And what is the result? There is no crime to detect, or, at most, some bungling villainy with a motive so transparent that even a Scotland Yard official can see through it.”¹⁵⁷

There must have been something about the story that interested Sherlock Holmes, a detail that was off in Amberley's narrative, a small indication that there was more to the story. Thus, as he himself is finishing off another case in London, he asks Watson to meet with the old man at his home in Lewisham. Watson agrees to do so, and travels to Lewisham to meet Amberley. He returns to Baker Street and gives his observations and limited deductions to Sherlock Holmes, who, after a few more inquiries has been able to solve the entire case. The story has followed the same pattern as the other stories have. The only surprise lays in the true nature of the crime committed in the story. The real crime of the story is hinted at throughout the story in its descriptions of Lewisham, and more importantly, Amberley's house.

The first account of Lewisham is given to Holmes by Watson upon his return to 221B Baker Street after having visited Josiah Amberley to investigate his case. He describes the neighbourhood as follows: “You know that particular quarter,

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 1069.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted from: Conan Doyle ‘A Study in Scarlet’, 12-13.

the monotonous brick streets, the weary suburban highways. Right in the middle of them, a little island of ancient culture and comfort, lies this old home, surrounded by a high sun-baked wall mottled with lichens and topped with moss...”¹⁵⁸ The city is always described as being busy, bustling with life, modernity is all around and it is certainly never boring. The description of Lewisham would not particularly excite anyone: the monotonous brick streets have nothing of interest to show. They are in proximity to the bustling life of the city centre, yet it is not visible here at all. At a distance, Amberley’s house is described to be a beautiful place, called ‘Haven. It is “a little island of ancient culture and comfort”, a safe haven of culture and education in a web of boring, monotonous brick streets. The sun is shining, the picture sketched is ideal, the beautiful home in a nice and calm neighbourhood. The same can be said for Josiah Amberley: at a distance he looks like a nice old man, well-educated, cared for, someone who enjoys culture. This is the ideal picture created for the outside world, a picture, however, that only works at a distance.

As Watson closes his distance to the house, he begins to notice more details, and it is clear that he is shocked by the state of the house and the gardens. “I have never seen a worse-kept place. The garden was all running to seed, giving me an impression of wild neglect in which the plants had all been allowed to find the way of nature rather than of art. [...] The house too, was slatternly to the last degree.”¹⁵⁹ Amberley is clearly aware of this decay, and tries to mask it by applying a new coat of paint to the house. Later on, it becomes clear that this is not the only rotten thing about the house that he was trying to mask. Once the case is solved by Sherlock, it is revealed that Josiah Amberley’s wife had never run away with the young doctor, but that he had become so jealous of the possibility that they had had an affair, that he snapped and killed them both. He had decided to start re-painting the decaying house in order to mask the foul odours of decomposing bodies, which he had hidden somewhere in the house.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Conan Doyle, ‘The Retired Colourman’, 1069.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 1070.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 1074-1077.

The house, and its decay, can thus be said to be an analogy for their owner. Josiah Amberley had come to Sherlock Holmes, hoping to deceive the detective and spinning him a wild tale about a ‘fickle wife and a treacherous friend’. Like his home, Josiah Amberley was a rotten man, who, with old age had broken down even more. The garden which has run wild, can be compared with the man’s insane jealousy. There are no indications in the story that the wife and the doctor were indeed having an affair, and it might be possible that the old man made it all up in his head. This horrid double murder could not have taken place in the busy city centre of London: someone would have noticed the noise, the fact that no one ever saw the couple leaving or the horrid smells which hung around the house. Again, Conan Doyle’s view of the city in Sherlock Holmes remains quite clear: the busy city centre is preferred over anything else. This mentality of city life was probably created specific for the Sherlock Holmes stories, as Conan Doyle only lived in London for two years, and lived in the country throughout the rest of his life.¹⁶¹

Josiah Amberley is initially described as a “pathetic, futile, broken creature.”¹⁶² He seems to have been completely ruined by his marriage to this young woman, and her subsequent betrayal. Once the true crime of the tale is revealed, the true nature of Josiah Amberley is also revealed: he is more like a bird of prey, “a misshapen demon with a soul as distorted as his body”.¹⁶³ He would have to be some horrible form of degenerate to commit such an atrocious crime founded on nothing but jealousy. The misshapen demon belongs in the neglected and decaying house, the time for pretending is over. The image of ‘Haven’ is destroyed as its owner is dragged to jail for prosecution.

In conclusion, the final story of the great detective Sherlock Holmes sends a similar message as *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It is another story which follows the established pattern, which gives the story a distinct sense of familiarity and safety. Though the ‘crime’ seems to be theft, a

¹⁶¹ The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate, ‘Bibliography’.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, 1068.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, 1074.

pretty common crime in Victorian England, it actually turns out to be a double homicide. The final story has a final twist for the faithful readers, and again is meant to soothe the contemporary readers. This horrific crime would most likely have been detected much sooner, if it had occurred within the city centre, but it matters not. No matter where the crime takes place, be it the busy city centre, the desolate moors, or a monotonous suburb, Sherlock Holmes always solves the case. The criminals of the stories selected in this work are not the normal people you meet on the street in daily life: in these three stories, they are all clear examples of degeneration, of evolutionary throwbacks. Josiah Amberley seemed to be pathetic, futile and broken, but this was only an act. Once the true nature of his crime is revealed, he reveals his true nature: the bird of prey, a misshapen demon. It is interesting that Holmes actively prevents Josiah Amberley from taking a pill to end his life. This is quite a different attitude than Holmes showed towards Jefferson Hope in *A Study in Scarlet*. In that story, Holmes was at peace with the fact that Jefferson would die before he ever went to trial, because his moral grounds for committing the crimes was just, and he did society a favour by ridding it from two horrible criminals. In the case of Josiah Amberley, his moral reasons were corrupt, displaying the true depravity inside. It would appear that Sherlock Holmes doesn't mind letting a criminal escape the court of law, as long as the morality of the crime is just. In Josiah Amberley's case, everything had to be done decently and in order, capturing another criminal, a demon who will be put to justice. These neat and orderly proceedings are similar to the pattern established in the Sherlock Holmes canon: each story or novel follows the similar pattern, offering the reader closure and the comfort of familiarity every time, as the stories still do in the twenty-first century today.

Conclusion.

The central question, posed in the introduction was: what was the message that Arthur Conan Doyle possibly wished to send his contemporary readers through his description of London and his use of the genre of crime fiction? The first novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, placed emphasis on Watson's anxieties as he travelled to London for the first time. The city is described to be 'a great cesspool' as well as an 'enormous wilderness', the stereotypical image of the city. It has grown to such an extent that authors, as well as the common people who inhabited the city were searching for ways to control the city. Watson feels disoriented, out of balance as he has come to this new reality where he knows no one. Sherlock does not display these anxieties at all, is completely at ease within the city. It is the country which makes Sherlock Holmes feel uncomfortable, anxious even. From the beginning he possesses an extensive knowledge of the city and enjoys taking long walks through the city. He is even capable of walking through the lowest parts of the city, parts that his contemporary readers would most likely avoid like the plague. Thus through Holmes, Conan Doyle attempts to show that it is not necessary to fear the city, as long as one believes in the protection of Sherlock Holmes and makes an effort to familiarise his or herself with the terrain.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, which is situated approximately in the middle of the Holmesian canon, shows Holmes's discomfort with the country, as well as Watson's adjusted view of the city. He describes the city with more confidence and trust. It is clear that he has expanded his knowledge of the city, and as a result of both this fact and the fact that he has been living with Sherlock Holmes for quite some time now, has clearly lessened his anxieties about the city. The message is again a soothing one, accomplished mostly by showing that it is not the city which should be feared, but the moor country. This country is isolated and distant, making it a more dangerous place to be alone than the city centre of London could ever be. The end of this novel is truly comforting and soothing: the largest part of the novel has been spent in rising tension, as Watson traversed the moors, seemingly separated from Sherlock Holmes. Once the case is solved,

the tension is released in a thrilling scene of action, and everything is neatly rounded up, the case closed while Holmes and Watson are sitting comfortably in their sitting room, chatting throughout the evening near a blazing fire.

The last story in the Holmesian canon only strengthens this soothing message, despite the atmosphere of decay and old age. Although this is the last Sherlock Holmes tale, the brief comparison between the bustling city centre and the suburb Lewisham still show a clear preference for the busy life in the centre of the city. Watson travels through the city with confidence, as Sherlock had done since the first chapters of *A Study in Scarlet*. He had gained enough knowledge of the city in order to no longer fear this urban reality.

Thus, the message that Conan Doyle was possibly trying to send his contemporary readers was a soothing one. It offered his contemporary readers a sense of psychic protection. If they believed in a character like Sherlock Holmes who would always be there, solving the most difficult cases in the blink of an eye. Who possessed a thorough and complete knowledge of the enormous metropolitan city, who traversed it without fear, despite that thorough knowledge, then they could too. Sherlock Holmes is said to know everything about the city: he knows the best parts of it, but also the very worst of the worst. He still chose to remain in the city, to enjoy living in it, and never showed any fear in doing so. If Sherlock Holmes could do that, then so could his contemporary readers, who could recognise so much of the London of reality in the Holmesian canon.

Besides, with Sherlock Holmes standing guard over the city and the areas surrounding the city, there were no criminals and no crimes worth fearing. Through his creation of his famous consulting detective, Conan Doyle might have been able to assuage the anxieties which accompanied the Industrial Revolution and the process of accelerated development in London and the rest of Great Britain. Although Conan Doyle never possessed the thorough knowledge of the city which he endowed upon his most famous creation, he managed to base his stories on enough facts to find resonance in the anxieties that his contemporary readers might have experienced. Through the thorough analysis of

the novels and stories, the hypothesis of Ian A. Bell and Stephen Knight is confirmed: the stories offered a sense of psychic protection

The calming influence of rationality and Holmes's scientific method, as well as the message Conan Doyle intended to send his contemporary readers has not lost any of its value. Even in the twenty-first century, this message is still very much appreciated. This can be seen in the immense popularity of Sherlock Holmes, which has yet to fade. Even though the address and museum at 221B Baker Street are not real, they are still visited by millions of tourists every year. It seems as though Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were never actual persons, they are considered to be alive and protecting the inhabitants of the city, even in the twenty-first century.

Appendix one: 'The Retired Colourman'.

Sherlock Holmes was in a melancholy and philosophic mood that morning. His alert practical nature was subject to such reactions.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"You mean the old fellow who has just gone out?"

"Precisely."

"Yes, I met him at the door."

"What did you think of him?"

"A pathetic, futile, broken creature."

"Exactly, Watson. Pathetic and futile. But is not all life pathetic and futile? Is not his story a microcosm of the whole? We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow — misery."

"Is he one of your clients?"

"Well, I suppose I may call him so. He has been sent on by the Yard. Just as medical men occasionally send their incurables to a quack. They argue that they can do nothing more, and that whatever happens the patient can be no worse than he is."

"What is the matter?"

Holmes took a rather soiled card from the table. "Josiah Amberley. He says he was junior partner of Brickfall and Amberley, who are manufacturers of artistic materials. You will see their names upon paint-boxes. He made his little pile, retired from business at the age of sixty-one, bought a house at Lewisham, and settled down to rest after a life of ceaseless grind. One would think his future was tolerably assured."

"Yes, indeed."

Holmes glanced over some notes which he had scribbled upon the back of an envelope.

"Retired in 1896, Watson. Early in 1897 he married a woman twenty years younger than himself — a good-looking woman, too, if the photograph does not flatter. A competence, a wife, leisure — it seemed a straight road which lay

before him. And yet within two years he is, as you have seen, as broken and miserable a creature as crawls beneath the sun.”

“But what has happened?”

“The old story, Watson. A treacherous friend and a fickle wife. It would appear that Amberley has one hobby in life, and it is chess. Not far from him at Lewisham there lives a young doctor who is also a chess-player. I have noted his name as Dr. Ray Ernest. Ernest was frequently in the house, and an intimacy between him and Mrs. Amberley was a natural sequence, for you must admit that our unfortunate client has few outward graces, whatever his inner virtues may be. The couple went off together last week — destination untraced. What is more, the faithless spouse carried off the old man’s deed-box as her personal luggage with a good part of his life’s savings within. Can we find the lady? Can we save the money? A commonplace problem so far as it has developed, and yet a vital one for Josiah Amberley.”

“What will you do about it?”

“Well, the immediate question, my dear Watson, happens to be, What will you do? — if you will be good enough to understudy me. You know that I am preoccupied with this case of the two Coptic Patriarchs, which should come to a head to-day. I really have not time to go out to Lewisham, and yet evidence taken on the spot has a special value. The old fellow was quite insistent that I should go, but I explained my difficulty. He is prepared to meet a representative.”

“By all means,” I answered. “I confess I don’t see that I can be of much service, but I am willing to do my best.” And so it was that on a summer afternoon I set forth to Lewisham, little dreaming that within a week the affair in which I was engaging would be the eager debate of all England.

It was late that evening before I returned to Baker Street and gave an account of my mission. Holmes lay with his gaunt figure stretched in his deep chair, his pipe curling forth slow wreaths of acrid tobacco, while his eyelids drooped over his eyes so lazily that he might almost have been asleep were it not that at any halt or questionable passage of my narrative they half lifted, and two gray eyes, as bright and keen as rapiers, transfixed me with their searching glance.

“The Haven is the name of Mr. Josiah Amberley’s house,” I explained. “I think it would interest you, Holmes. It is like some penurious patrician who has sunk into the company of his inferiors. You know that particular quarter, the monotonous brick streets, the weary suburban highways. Right in the middle of them, a little island of ancient culture and comfort, lies this old home, surrounded by a high sun-baked wall mottled with lichens and topped with moss, the sort of wall —”

“Cut out the poetry, Watson,” said Holmes severely. “I note that it was a high brick wall.”

“Exactly. I should not have known which was The Haven had I not asked a loungee who was smoking in the street. I have a reason for mentioning him. He was a tall, dark, heavily moustached, rather military-looking man. He nodded in answer to my inquiry and gave me a curiously questioning glance, which came back to my memory a little later.

“I had hardly entered the gateway before I saw Mr. Amberley coming down the drive. I only had a glimpse of him this morning, and he certainly gave me the impression of a strange creature, but when I saw him in full light his appearance was even more abnormal.”

“I have, of course, studied it, and yet I should be interested to have your impression,” said Holmes.

“He seemed to me like a man who was literally bowed down by care. His back was curved as though he carried a heavy burden. Yet he was not the weakling that I had at first imagined, for his shoulders and chest have the framework of a giant, though his figure tapers away into a pair of spindled legs.”

“Left shoe wrinkled, right one smooth.”

“I did not observe that.”

“No, you wouldn't. I spotted his artificial limb. But proceed.”

“I was struck by the snaky locks of grizzled hair which curled from under his old straw hat, and his face with its fierce, eager expression and the deeply lined features.”

“Very good, Watson. What did he say?”

“He began pouring out the story of his grievances. We walked down the drive together, and of course I took a good look round. I have never seen a worse-kept place. The garden was all running to seed, giving me an impression of wild neglect in which the plants had been allowed to find the way of Nature rather than of art. How any decent woman could have tolerated such a state of things, I don't know. The house, too, was slatternly to the last degree, but the poor man seemed himself to be aware of it and to be trying to remedy it, for a great pot of green paint stood in the centre of the hall, and he was carrying a thick brush in his left hand. He had been working on the woodwork.

“He took me into his dingy sanctum, and we had a long chat. Of course, he was disappointed that you had not come yourself. ‘I hardly expected,’ he said, ‘that

so humble an individual as myself, especially after my heavy financial loss, could obtain the complete attention of so famous a man as Mr. Sherlock Holmes.'

"I assured him that the financial question did not arise. 'No of course, it is art for art's sake with him,' said he, 'but even on the artistic side of crime he might have found something here to study. And human nature, Dr. Watson — the black ingratitude of it all! When did I ever refuse one of her requests? Was ever a woman so pampered? And that young man — he might have been my own son. He had the run of my house. And yet see how they have treated me! Oh, Dr. Watson, it is a dreadful, dreadful world!'

"That was the burden of his song for an hour or more. He had, it seems, no suspicion of an intrigue. They lived alone save for a woman who comes in by the day and leaves every evening at six. On that particular evening old Amberley, wishing to give his wife a treat, had taken two upper circle seats at the Haymarket Theatre. At the last moment she had complained of a headache and had refused to go. He had gone alone. There seemed to be no doubt about the fact, for he produced the unused ticket which he had taken for his wife."

"That is remarkable — most remarkable," said Holmes, whose interest in the case seemed to be rising. "Pray continue, Watson. I find your narrative most arresting. Did you personally examine this ticket? You did not, perchance, take the number?"

"It so happens that I did," I answered with some pride. "It chanced to be my old school number, thirty-one, and so is stuck in my head."

"Excellent, Watson! His seat, then, was either thirty or thirty-two."

"Quite so," I answered with some mystification. "And on B row."

"That is most satisfactory. What else did he tell you?"

"He showed me his strong-room, as he called it. It really is a strong-room — like a bank — with iron door and shutter — burglarproof, as he claimed. However, the woman seems to have had a duplicate key, and between them they had carried off some seven thousand pounds' worth of cash and securities."

"Securities! How could they dispose of those?"

"He said that he had given the police a list and that he hoped they would be unsaleable. He had got back from the theatre about midnight and found the place plundered, the door and window open, and the fugitives gone. There was

no letter or message, nor has he heard a word since. He at once gave the alarm to the police.”

Holmes brooded for some minutes.

“You say he was painting. What was he painting?”

“Well, he was painting the passage. But he had already painted the door and woodwork of this room I spoke of.”

“Does it not strike you as a strange occupation in the circumstances?”

“ ‘One must do something to ease an aching heart.’ That was his own explanation. It was eccentric, no doubt, but he is clearly an eccentric man. He tore up one of his wife’s photographs in my presence — tore it up furiously in a tempest of passion. ‘I never wish to see her damned face again,’ he shrieked.”

“Anything more, Watson?”

“Yes, one thing which struck me more than anything else. I had driven to the Blackheath Station and had caught my train there when, just as it was starting, I saw a man dart into the carriage next to my own. You know that I have a quick eye for faces, Holmes. It was undoubtedly the tall, dark man whom I had addressed in the street. I saw him once more at London Bridge, and then I lost him in the crowd. But I am convinced that he was following me.”

“No doubt! No doubt!” said Holmes. “A tall, dark, heavily moustached man, you say, with gray-tinted sun-glasses?”

“Holmes, you are a wizard. I did not say so, but he had gray-tinted sun-glasses.”

“And a Masonic tie-pin?”

“Holmes!”

“Quite simple, my dear Watson. But let us get down to what is practical. I must admit to you that the case, which seemed to me to be so absurdly simple as to be hardly worth my notice, is rapidly assuming a very different aspect. It is true that though in your mission you have missed everything of importance, yet even those things which have obtruded themselves upon your notice give rise to serious thought.”

“What have I missed?”

“Don’t be hurt, my dear fellow. You know that I am quite impersonal. No one else would have done better. Some possibly not so well. But clearly you have missed some vital points. What is the opinion of the neighbours about this man Amberley and his wife? That surely is of importance. What of Dr. Ernest? Was he the gay Lothario one would expect? With your natural advantages, Watson, every lady is your helper and accomplice. What about the girl at the post-office, or the wife of the greengrocer? I can picture you whispering soft nothings with the young lady at the Blue Anchor, and receiving hard somethings in exchange. All this you have left undone.”

“It can still be done.”

“It has been done. Thanks to the telephone and the help of the Yard, I can usually get my essentials without leaving this room. As a matter of fact, my information confirms the man’s story. He has the local repute of being a miser as well as a harsh and exacting husband. That he had a large sum of money in that strong-room of his is certain. So also is it that young Dr. Ernest, an unmarried man, played chess with Amberley, and probably played the fool with his wife. All this seems plain sailing, and one would think that there was no more to be said — and yet! — and yet!”

“Where lies the difficulty?”

“In my imagination, perhaps. Well, leave it there, Watson. Let us escape from this weary workaday world by the side door of music. Carina sings to-night at the Albert Hall, and we still have time to dress, dine, and enjoy.”

In the morning I was up betimes, but some toast crumbs and two empty eggshells told me that my companion was earlier still. I found a scribbled note upon the table.

DEAR WATSON:

There are one or two points of contact which I should wish to establish with Mr. Josiah Amberley. When I have done so we can dismiss the case — or not. I would only ask you to be on hand about three o’clock, as I conceive it possible that I may want you.

S.H.

I saw nothing of Holmes all day, but at the hour named he returned, grave, preoccupied, and aloof. At such times it was wiser to leave him to himself.

“Has Amberley been here yet?”

“No.”

“Ah! I am expecting him.”

He was not disappointed, for presently the old fellow arrived with a very worried and puzzled expression upon his austere face.

“I’ve had a telegram, Mr. Holmes. I can make nothing of it.” He handed it over, and Holmes read it aloud.

“Come at once without fail. Can give you information as to your recent loss.

“ELMAN.

“The Vicarage.

“Dispatched at 2:10 from Little Purlington,” said Holmes. “Little Purlington is in Essex, I believe, not far from Frinton. Well, of course you will start at once. This is evidently from a responsible person, the vicar of the place. Where is my Crockford? Yes, here we have him: ‘J. C. Elman, M. A., Living of Moosmoor cum Little Purlington.’ Look up the trains, Watson.”

“There is one at 5:20 from Liverpool Street.”

“Excellent. You had best go with him, Watson. He may need help or advice. Clearly we have come to a crisis in this affair.”

But our client seemed by no means eager to start.

“It’s perfectly absurd, Mr. Holmes,” he said. “What can this man possibly know of what has occurred? It is waste of time and money.”

“He would not have telegraphed to you if he did not know something. Wire at once that you are coming.”

“I don’t think I shall go.”

Holmes assumed his sternest aspect.

“It would make the worst possible impression both on the police and upon myself, Mr. Amberley, if when so obvious a clue arose you should refuse to follow it up. We should feel that you were not really in earnest in this investigation.”

Our client seemed horrified at the suggestion.

“Why, of course I shall go if you look at it in that way,” said he. “On the face of it, it seems absurd to suppose that this parson knows anything, but if you think —”

“I do think,” said Holmes with emphasis, and so we were launched upon our journey. Holmes took me aside before we left the room and gave me one word of counsel, which showed that he considered the matter to be of importance. “Whatever you do, see that he really does go,” said he. “Should he break away or return, get to the nearest telephone exchange and send the single word ‘Bolted.’ I will arrange here that it shall reach me wherever I am.”

Little Purlington is not an easy place to reach, for it is on a branch line. My remembrance of the journey is not a pleasant one, for the weather was hot, the train slow, and my companion sullen and silent, hardly talking at all save to make an occasional sardonic remark as to the futility of our proceedings. When we at last reached the little station it was a two-mile drive before we came to the Vicarage, where a big, solemn, rather pompous clergyman received us in his study. Our telegram lay before him.

“Well, gentlemen,” he asked, “what can I do for you?”

“We came,” I explained, “in answer to your wire.”

“My wire! I sent no wire.”

“I mean the wire which you sent to Mr. Josiah Amberley about his wife and his money.”

“If this is a joke, sir, it is a very questionable one,” said the vicar angrily. “I have never heard of the gentleman you name, and I have not sent a wire to anyone.”

Our client and I looked at each other in amazement.

“Perhaps there is some mistake,” said I; “are there perhaps two vicarages? Here is the wire itself, signed Elman and dated from the Vicarage.”

“There is only one vicarage, sir, and only one vicar, and this wire is a scandalous forgery, the origin of which shall certainly be investigated by the police. Meanwhile, I can see no possible object in prolonging this interview.”

So Mr. Amberley and I found ourselves on the roadside in what seemed to me to be the most primitive village in England. We made for the telegraph office, but it was already closed. There was a telephone, however, at the little Railway Arms, and by it I got into touch with Holmes, who shared in our amazement at the result of our journey.

“Most singular!” said the distant voice. “Most remarkable! I much fear, my dear Watson, that there is no return train to-night. I have unwittingly condemned you to the horrors of a country inn. However, there is always Nature, Watson — Nature and Josiah Amberley — you can be in close commune with both.” I heard his dry chuckle as he turned away.

It was soon apparent to me that my companion’s reputation as a miser was not undeserved. He had grumbled at the expense of the journey, had insisted upon travelling third-class, and was now clamorous in his objections to the hotel bill. Next morning, when we did at last arrive in London, it was hard to say which of us was in the worse humour.

“You had best take Baker Street as we pass,” said I. “Mr. Holmes may have some fresh instructions.”

“If they are not worth more than the last ones they are not of much use,” said Amberley with a malevolent scowl. None the less, he kept me company. I had already warned Holmes by telegram of the hour of our arrival, but we found a message waiting that he was at Lewisham and would expect us there. That was a surprise, but an even greater one was to find that he was not alone in the sitting-room of our client. A stern-looking, impassive man sat beside him, a dark man with gray-tinted glasses and a large Masonic pin projecting from his tie.

“This is my friend Mr. Barker,” said Holmes. “He has been interesting himself also in your business, Mr. Josiah Amberley, though we have been working independently. But we both have the same question to ask you!”

Mr. Amberley sat down heavily. He sensed impending danger. I read it in his straining eyes and his twitching features.

“What is the question, Mr. Holmes?”

“Only this: What did you do with the bodies?”

The man sprang to his feet with a hoarse scream. He clawed into the air with his bony hands. His mouth was open, and for the instant he looked like some horrible bird of prey. In a flash we got a glimpse of the real Josiah Amberley, a misshapen demon with a soul as distorted as his body. As he fell back into his chair he clapped his hand to his lips as if to stifle a cough. Holmes sprang at his throat like a tiger and twisted his face towards the ground. A white pellet fell from between his gasping lips.

“No short cuts, Josiah Amberley. Things must be done decently and in order. What about it, Barker?”

“I have a cab at the door,” said our taciturn companion.

“It is only a few hundred yards to the station. We will go together. You can stay here, Watson. I shall be back within half an hour.”

The old colourman had the strength of a lion in that great trunk of his, but he was helpless in the hands of the two experienced man-handlers. Wriggling and twisting he was dragged to the waiting cab, and I was left to my solitary vigil in the ill-omened house. In less time than he had named, however, Holmes was back, in company with a smart young police inspector.

“I’ve left Barker to look after the formalities,” said Holmes. “You had not met Barker, Watson. He is my hated rival upon the Surrey shore. When you said a tall dark man it was not difficult for me to complete the picture. He has several good cases to his credit, has he not, Inspector?”

“He has certainly interfered several times,” the inspector answered with reserve.

“His methods are irregular, no doubt, like my own. The irregulars are useful sometimes, you know. You, for example, with your compulsory warning about whatever he said being used against him, could never have bluffed this rascal into what is virtually a confession.”

“Perhaps not. But we get there all the same, Mr. Holmes. Don’t imagine that we had not formed our own views of this case, and that we would not have laid our hands on our man. You will excuse us for feeling sore when you jump in with methods which we cannot use, and so rob us of the credit.”

“There shall be no such robbery, MacKinnon. I assure you that I efface myself from now onward, and as to Barker, he has done nothing save what I told him.”

The inspector seemed considerably relieved.

“That is very handsome of you, Mr. Holmes. Praise or blame can matter little to you, but it is very different to us when the newspapers begin to ask questions.”

“Quite so. But they are pretty sure to ask questions anyhow, so it would be as well to have answers. What will you say, for example, when the intelligent and enterprising reporter asks you what the exact points were which aroused your suspicion, and finally gave you a certain conviction as to the real facts?”

The inspector looked puzzled.

“We don’t seem to have got any real facts yet, Mr. Holmes. You say that the prisoner, in the presence of three witnesses, practically confessed by trying to

commit suicide, that he had murdered his wife and her lover. What other facts have you?"

"Have you arranged for a search?"

"There are three constables on their way."

"Then you will soon get the clearest fact of all. The bodies cannot be far away. Try the cellars and the garden. It should not take long to dig up the likely places. This house is older than the water-pipes. There must be a disused well somewhere. Try your luck there."

"But how did you know of it, and how was it done?"

"I'll show you first how it was done, and then I will give the explanation which is due to you, and even more to my longsuffering friend here, who has been invaluable throughout. But, first, I would give you an insight into this man's mentality. It is a very unusual one — so much so that I think his destination is more likely to be Broadmoor than the scaffold. He has, to a high degree, the sort of mind which one associates with the mediaeval Italian nature rather than with the modern Briton. He was a miserable miser who made his wife so wretched by his niggardly ways that she was a ready prey for any adventurer. Such a one came upon the scene in the person of this chess-playing doctor. Amberley excelled at chess — one mark, Watson, of a scheming mind. Like all misers, he was a jealous man, and his jealousy became a frantic mania. Rightly or wrongly, he suspected an intrigue. He determined to have his revenge, and he planned it with diabolical cleverness. Come here!"

Holmes led us along the passage with as much certainty as if he had lived in the house and halted at the open door of the strong-room.

"Pooh! What an awful smell of paint!" cried the inspector.

"That was our first clue," said Holmes. "You can thank Dr. Watson's observation for that, though he failed to draw the inference. It set my foot upon the trail. Why should this man at such a time be filling his house with strong odours? Obviously, to cover some other smell which he wished to conceal — some guilty smell which would suggest suspicions. Then came the idea of a room such as you see here with iron door and shutter — a hermetically sealed room. Put those two facts together, and whither do they lead? I could only determine that by examining the house myself. I was already certain that the case was serious, for I had examined the box-office chart at the Haymarket Theatre — another of Dr. Watson's bull's-eyes — and ascertained that neither B thirty nor thirty-two of the upper circle had been occupied that night. Therefore, Amberley had not been to the theatre, and his alibi fell to the ground. He made a bad slip when he allowed my astute friend to notice the number of the seat taken for his wife. The question now arose how I might be able to

examine the house. I sent an agent to the most impossible village I could think of, and summoned my man to it at such an hour that he could not possibly get back. To prevent any miscarriage, Dr. Watson accompanied him. The good vicar's name I took, of course, out of my Crockford. Do I make it all clear to you?"

"It is masterly," said the inspector in an awed voice.

"There being no fear of interruption I proceeded to burgle the house. Burglary has always been an alternative profession had I cared to adopt it, and I have little doubt that I should have come to the front. Observe what I found. You see the gas-pipe along the skirting here. Very good. It rises in the angle of the wall, and there is a tap here in the corner. The pipe runs out into the strong-room, as you can see, and ends in that plaster rose in the centre of the ceiling, where it is concealed by the ornamentation. That end is wide open. At any moment by turning the outside tap the room could be flooded with gas. With door and shutter closed and the tap full on I would not give two minutes of conscious sensation to anyone shut up in that little chamber. By what devilish device he decoyed them there I do not know, but once inside the door they were at his mercy."

The inspector examined the pipe with interest. "One of our officers mentioned the smell of gas," said he, "but of course the window and door were open then, and the paint — or some of it — was already about. He had begun the work of painting the day before, according to his story. But what next, Mr. Holmes?"

"Well, then came an incident which was rather unexpected to myself. I was slipping through the pantry window in the early dawn when I felt a hand inside my collar, and a voice said: 'Now, you rascal, what are you doing in there?' When I could twist my head round I looked into the tinted spectacles of my friend and rival, Mr. Barker. It was a curious foregathering and set us both smiling. It seems that he had been engaged by Dr. Ray Ernest's family to make some investigations and had come to the same conclusion as to foul play. He had watched the house for some days and had spotted Dr. Watson as one of the obviously suspicious characters who had called there. He could hardly arrest Watson, but when he saw a man actually climbing out of the pantry window there came a limit to his restraint. Of course, I told him how matters stood and we continued the case together."

"Why him? Why not us?"

"Because it was in my mind to put that little test which answered so admirably. I fear you would not have gone so far."

The inspector smiled.

“Well, maybe not. I understand that I have your word, Mr. Holmes, that you step right out of the case now and that you turn all your results over to us.”

“Certainly, that is always my custom.”

“Well, in the name of the force I thank you. It seems a clear case, as you put it, and there can’t be much difficulty over the bodies.”

“I’ll show you a grim little bit of evidence,” said Holmes, “and I am sure Amberley himself never observed it. You’ll get results, Inspector, by always putting yourself in the other fellow’s place, and thinking what you would do yourself. It takes some imagination, but it pays. Now, we will suppose that you were shut up in this little room, had not two minutes to live, but wanted to get even with the fiend who was probably mocking at you from the other side of the door. What would you do?”

“Write a message.”

“Exactly. You would like to tell people how you died. No use writing on paper. That would be seen. If you wrote on the wall someone might rest upon it. Now, look here! Just above the skirting is scribbled with a purple indelible pencil: ‘We we —’ That’s all.”

“What do you make of that?”

“Well, it’s only a foot above the ground. The poor devil was on the floor dying when he wrote it. He lost his senses before he could finish.”

“He was writing, ‘We were murdered.’ ”

“That’s how I read it. If you find an indelible pencil on the body —”

“We’ll look out for it, you may be sure. But those securities? Clearly there was no robbery at all. And yet he did possess those bonds. We verified that.”

“You may be sure he has them hidden in a safe place. When the whole elopement had passed into history, he would suddenly discover them and announce that the guilty couple had relented and sent back the plunder or had dropped it on the way.”

“You certainly seem to have met every difficulty,” said the inspector. “Of course, he was bound to call us in, but why he should have gone to you I can’t understand.”

“Pure swank!” Holmes answered. “He felt so clever and so sure of himself that he imagined no one could touch him. He could say to any suspicious neighbour,

‘Look at the steps I have taken. I have consulted not only the police but even Sherlock Holmes.’ ”

The inspector laughed.

“We must forgive you your ‘even,’ Mr. Holmes,” said he “it’s as workmanlike a job as I can remember.”

A couple of days later my friend tossed across to me a copy of the bi-weekly North Surrey Observer. Under a series of flaming headlines, which began with “The Haven Horror” and ended with “Brilliant Police Investigation,” there was a packed column of print which gave the first consecutive account of the affair. The concluding paragraph is typical of the whole. It ran thus:

The remarkable acumen by which Inspector MacKinnon deduced from the smell of paint that some other smell, that of gas, for example, might be concealed; the bold deduction that the strong-room might also be the death-chamber, and the subsequent inquiry which led to the discovery of the bodies in a disused well, cleverly concealed by a dogkennel, should live in the history of crime as a standing example of the intelligence of our professional detectives.

“Well, well, MacKinnon is a good fellow,” said Holmes with a tolerant smile. “You can file it in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story may be told.”

¹⁶⁴ The University of Adelaide Library, ‘The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes, by Arthur Conan Doyle: The Adventure of the Retired Colourman’: https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/doyle/arthur_conan/d75ca/chapter12.html (10-08-2017).

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