

May 2010

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Recommended Citation

Welton, Ben (2010) "The Downing Street Irregular: Post-Reichenbach Falls Sherlock Holmes and the Triumph of Conservative Internationalism," *Mountaineer Undergraduate Research Review*. Vol. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/murr/vol2/iss1/5>

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THE DOWNING STREET IRREGULAR: POST-REICHENBACH FALLS SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE TRIUMPH OF CONSERVATIVE INTERNATIONALISM

Ben Welton

"I think sir, when Holmes fell over the cliff, he may not have killed himself, but all the same he was never quite the same man afterwards."

A Cornish boatman to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1909

I have no great affection for the twentieth-century Holmes. But I will give the warmest welcome to as many adventures of the Baker Street Holmes as Watson likes to reconstruct for us.

A.A. Milne in *If I May* (1920)

The Game is Afoot

Detective fiction, until quite recently, has not been seen as a literary genre worth the attention of "serious" literary scholars. Many critics and scholars see detective fiction works as merely "promotions of the values of the modern police discipline, defending bourgeois property values, sexual morality and bureaucratic rationalities" (Kayman 2003, 44). Even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the legendary creator of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, lamented that his detective fiction "takes my mind from better things" (Reitz 2004, xiii). Likewise, Victorian crime fiction scholar Dr. Caroline Reitz (xiii) asserts in her book *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture* that most "readers of detective fiction consider themselves distracted...from more serious fiction." This view of detective fiction as a frivolous enterprise is one way to explain why detective fiction has been so long neglected by academic critics. Raymond Chandler, the highly acclaimed author of American "hard-boiled" detective fiction, offers another possible explanation for this critical ignorance:

"The detective story for a variety of reasons can seldom be promoted. It is usually about murder and hence lacks the element of uplift. Murder, which is a frustration of the

individual and hence a frustration of the race, may, and in fact has, a good deal of sociological implication. But it has been going on too long for it to be news. If the mystery novel is at all realistic (which it very seldom is) it is written in a certain spirit of detachment; otherwise nobody but a psychopath would want to write it or read it." (1988, 1-2)

Chandler's insistence on the "sociological implication(s)" of the crime fiction genre is the quarry from which I will extract my overall argument concerning the second half of the Sherlock Holmes canon. This latter portion of the Holmes's canon I will call the Post-Reichenbach Falls era; for it concerns the thirty-three short stories collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905), *His Last Bow* (1917), and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* (1927) as well as the final Holmes novel, *The Valley of Fear* (1915).¹ This Post-Reichenbach Falls era, which ran roughly from 1905 until 1927, tends to be seen as inferior to its Pre-Reichenbach Falls successor, which ran from 1887 until 1893.² For many Doyle scholars, biographers, and critics, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era represents a turning point in which the character of Sherlock Holmes throws away his former independence and Bohemianism for the sake of serving hegemonic interests. The Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes was an ardent outsider who is "frequently skeptical, if not downright contemptuous of the people he represents" (Drabble 2006). This contemptuous attitude on the part of Holmes solidifies his position as a private detective or as he calls it a "consulting detective," without any strong connections to the professional police force. In this earlier era, typical Holmes clients often include baffled Scotland Yard detectives or middle-class women in distress, such as Mary Sutherland in "A Case of Identity" (1891). In the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, many of Holmes's cases seem to only reinforce "the existing social order," i.e. Holmes is called into action to tackle cases that threaten British political, imperial, and social hegemony rather than cases that merely disrupt the fabric of private affairs (Drabble 2006). Holmes's most frequent client during the Post-Reichenbach Falls era is the British government. As such, Holmes's amazing abilities no longer serve to make the professional police look foolish; they in fact serve to bolster the status quo. Furthermore, most critics simply argue that the

Post-Reichenbach Falls era stories are grotesque caricatures of their Pre-Reichenbach Falls predecessors.³

Detective fiction scholar Ian Ousby characterizes the Post-Reichenbach Falls era as one of “progressive decline” with Sherlock Holmes as “a more crudely drawn and less impressive figure than earlier” (1976, 151). This is an attitude that I simply cannot share. My argument seeks to show that the separation between the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era and the Post-Reichenbach Falls era is not an actual separation so much as it represents a shift in the continuum. Also, my argument views the Post-Reichenbach Falls era in the light of its predecessor and not as a stand-alone entity as it is described by Joseph A. Kestner in his 1999 book *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. The Post-Reichenbach Falls shift begins and ends at the level of Sherlock Holmes. Unlike Conan Doyle biographer Andrew Lycett, I see the Post-Reichenbach Falls era change as a change in the cultural currency of the Sherlock Holmes character. I wish to argue that what readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories invest into the Holmes character changes during the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, hence this notion of a “cultural currency,” or the symbolic worth of the Sherlock Holmes character in terms of Edwardian and early Georgian British culture.

By the turn of the twentieth century, British audiences seemed more concerned with the threats posed by international politics than the threats posed by common criminals or disgraced gentry members. As a result of this new found fear, the Holmes character shifts his attention to cases that involve threats to the British establishment. I wish to argue that not only did Post-Reichenbach Falls readers invest different material into the Post-Reichenbach Falls stories, but they also placed far more stock into the character of Sherlock Holmes during the Post-Reichenbach Falls era. No longer were readers simply placated by a Holmes character involved in the private affairs of English country houses, Holmes’s readers desired to have their “great detective” involved in issues of British security. Namely, in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, the readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories invested heavily in Holmes as a character because he could dispel some of their fears about the perceived European threats to British imperial hegemony. In essence, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era stories increase the cultural worth of Sherlock Holmes as a character because in these stories he is heavily involved in the machinations and workings of imperial British politics, and therefore his value as a literary figure is much higher in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era than the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era.

It is my assertion that this change in the cultural currency of the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Sherlock Holmes is a product of the social and political upheavals of the Edwardian and early Georgian periods, and not the product of Conan Doyle’s changing political and social

beliefs, as biographer Andrew Lycett argues. Instead, I contend that the three specific political and cultural factors that lead to a shift in the cultural currency of the Sherlock Holmes character in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era are as follows: 1) the influx of central and eastern European immigrants into Great Britain around the turn of the century and the resulting xenophobic fears of anarchism and immigrant radicalism, 2) the rise in “well directed and concerted strikes” promoted by “more militant trade unionists” in Great Britain between the years 1910 and 1914 (Briggs 1964, 97), and 3) the popular rise in “British Germanophobia” resulting from the naval arms race between the British Royal Navy and the German *Kaiserliche Marine* (Kestner 1999, 212). All of these political and cultural factors found their way into the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories, and they forever changed the cultural currency of not only Sherlock Holmes but also succeeding fictional detectives. For the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, this change in cultural currency meant that the Sherlock Holmes character transforms from a once Bohemian fin-de-siècle figure who can “penetrate the foggy chaos of London with his mastery of disguise and his uncanny ability to guess occupations through telltale signs,” into a more conservative, nationalistic, and political figure (Damrosch and Dettmar 2006, 1556).

In doing all of this, my argument seeks to change the way in which readers view and understand both the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes and the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes; for, undoubtedly, Holmes stands alone as the premiere archetype of the fictional detective. Although Holmes was certainly not the first detective in English or English-language fiction (that honor belongs to Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin), he has become “the detective, a near-mythic character whose cloak and deerstalker cap, pipe and magnifying glass have defined our image of the ‘private eye’ for over a century” (Damrosch and Dettmar 2006, 1556). Without the ability to draw upon the precedents set by the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era as well as the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, then other famous fictional detectives such as Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe, Georges Simenon’s Jules Maigret, and Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot would not have a model to either imitate or politely reject. In essence, when the Post-Reichenbach Falls era shift in cultural currency dictated that Holmes should be involved in cases with international meaning, then the cultural currency for all succeeding fictional detectives changed as well.

Analyzing the Pre-and Post-Reichenbach Falls is Elementary

If we are to proceed in analyzing the political and cultural transformations of Sherlock Holmes as a character, then a closer examination of the Pre-and Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories is called for. The first appearance of Sherlock Holmes, alongside his ever-faithful chronicler Dr. John Watson, was in the 1887 novel *A Study in Scarlet*. In the novel, Holmes and Watson are called upon to solve a murder in Brixton. The victim, one Enoch Drebber of America, is found strewn under a wall with the German word “Rache” written in blood above his lifeless corpse. “Rache” is German for revenge, and Drebber’s killer, Jefferson Hope, explains his use of this particular word at the crime scene by stating that

“I don’t know what it was that put it into my head to write upon the wall with it. I don’t know what it was that put it into my head to write upon the wall with it. Perhaps it was some mischievous idea of setting the police upon the wrong track, for I felt light-hearted and cheerful. I remember a German being found in New York with RACHE written up above him, and it was argued at the time in the newspapers that the secret societies must have done it. I guessed that what puzzled the New Yorkers would puzzle the Londoners, so I dipped my finger in my own blood and printed it on a convenient place on the wall.” (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:91).

By “secret societies,” Hope is referencing the shadowy and much feared anarchist and socialist movements that were large parts of Victorian American and British social consciousnesses (*Leeds Mercury* 1887). It is also noticeable that this crime, with its use of a German word, links these “secret societies” with non-Anglophonic Europeans. But we must also recognize that Jefferson Hope is a U.S. national and this German threat is all a ruse meant to deflect suspicion away from him. This action by Hope speaks to the level of fear that late Victorian society had of foreigners and their supposed predilection for crime.

This fear of the criminal foreigner would only increase during the Edwardian and early Georgian eras due to the massive influx of central and eastern European immigrants into Great Britain during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As a result, by the turn of the century, the epicenter of the British Empire, London, had become the focal point of “national anxiety” (Blom 2008, 340). The Edwardian slums of London, which teemed with overcrowded tenements mostly populated by working class central and eastern European immigrants, painted “a disturbing picture” (Blom 2008, 340). A Post-Reichenbach Falls story that deals with this issue of unwanted European immigration is “The Adventure of the Red Circle (1911),” which

“concerns a dangerous Italian secret society” known as the Red Circle (Kestner 1999, 212). The criminal antagonist of “The Adventure of the Red Circle” is Giuseppe Gorgiano, who is described as “a devil and a monster” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:408). This motif of the dangerous foreigner, which can be stretched into the larger context of the dangers posed by foreign nation-states, is a recurring one in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories.

These more internationally-minded Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories, which will be discussed more in-depth shortly, describe Holmes as more willingly involved in the actual apparatuses of the British government, hence Holmes’s fin-de-siècle Bohemianism is replaced by a more nationalistic Edwardian and early Georgian conscience. More importantly, unlike the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories, where the European threat to British power is perceived as being as fabricated as Jefferson Hope’s intentional ruse, the European threat to Great Britain is real in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era. While foreigners are threatening in both the Pre-and Post-Reichenbach Falls stories, only in the Post-Reichenbach Falls stories are these foreigners linked to larger political mechanisms. In the Pre-Reichenbach Falls stories, dangerous Australian, South African, Anglo-Indian, and American criminals antagonize Holmes and Watson. But these criminals are individual nuisances who terrorize private individuals. In the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, German, Russian, and Italian criminals are usually connected with larger threats to British domestic and foreign hegemony. German spies Hugo Oberstein and Von Bork may operate within British soil, but they are clearly written as being motivated if not directed from Berlin. Likewise, the culprit in “The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez” has strong ties to Russian revolutionaries.

In her article “The Visible Empire and the Empire At Home, 1832-1905,” Dr. Antoinette Burton asserts that Victorians were “preoccupied with a pure, unadulterated Englishness” which eventually manifested itself into the Aliens Act of 1905, which was “designed to curb...the displacement of the native-born.” The act, which for the first time set immigration controls and introduced registration in Great Britain, was also designed to prevent undesirable immigrants from coming into British ports. In the first article of the Aliens Act of 1905, anti-immigrant attitudes are clearly discernable:

An immigrant shall not be landed in the United Kingdom from an immigrant ship except at a port which there is an immigration officer appointed under this Act, and shall not be landed at any such port without the leave of the that officer given after an inspection of the immigrants made by him on the ship, or elsewhere if the immigrants

are conditionally disembarked for the purpose, in company with a medical inspector, such inspection to be made as soon as practicable; and the immigration officer shall withhold leave in the case of any immigrant who appears to him to be an undesirable immigrant within the meaning of this section.

Most historians today recognize the Aliens Act of 1905 as a piece of legislation that sought to curtail further Irish, South Asian, and Russian Jewish immigration into Great Britain, as well as a good example of how widespread anti-immigration sentiments in Great Britain were during the time period.

Beginning in the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era and then becoming a main point of concern in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, Sherlock Holmes takes on the role of a sort of surveillance mechanism for British imperialism, which “was, and remains, notorious for the kind of surveillance it turned on native peoples in all its dominions” (Aliens Act of 1905). As such, critic Martin Kayman asserts that Victorian (and in my opinion Edwardian and early Georgian) detective fiction is “a literary reflection of, if not propaganda for, a new form of social administration and control based on state surveillance” (Kayman 2003, 44). During the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era, Holmes’s efforts at domestic and state surveillance are undertaken in response to the threats posed by returning colonists. Thus, Holmes is called upon to solve crimes that are committed by the machinations of Americans, Australians, South Africans, and Anglo-Indians operating in and around southern England. During the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, however, Holmes’s skills are called upon in both domestic and foreign cases that involve the machinations of central and eastern Europeans. This is one instance of the shifting cultural currency of the Holmes character; for, because of the political anxieties of the Edwardian and early Georgian eras, British readers were no longer worried about the threats posed by the colonies. Edwardian and early Georgian British audiences were instead worried about the threats posed by increasingly powerful European nation-states and their nationals.

While certain Pre-Reichenbach Falls stories like “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891) establish Holmes as a willing participant in international matters, it should be duly noted that for the most part these affairs are private ones amongst upper to upper middle class individuals.⁴ Far more common during the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era are stories like “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” (1893), “The Five Orange Pips” (1891), and the oft-cited “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892). In these stories, Holmes and Watson immerse themselves in cases which originate in Anglophone lands and which involve British citizens who have spent many years in

either the colonies or the former colonies. “The Five Orange Pips” concerns the machinations of the Ku Klux Klan against British subjects, while “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” is primarily an entirely domestic story with only the spectre of India apparent in the story’s antagonist, Dr. Grimesby Roylott. In “The Adventure of the Crooked Man,” Holmes establishes that Henry Wood, a jilted lover who was sent on a suicide mission by his superior during the Indian Mutiny, is responsible for the death of Colonel Barclay, his former superior in the army and his former rival for the hand of Nancy Barclay.⁵ This story deftly combines private, drawing-room melodrama with actual military history. In this regard, “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” echoes the second Holmes novel, *The Sign of the Four*. In that novel, Holmes is called upon to solve the crime of murder committed against Captain Morstan, a former British Army officer in India. The culprits, Jonathan Small and Tonga, an Andaman Islander, are members of “The Sign of the Four,” a collection of three military convicts and one guard, who have sworn to secrecy the location of a treasure stolen during the Indian Mutiny. Once again, in the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era, Holmes asserts his abilities in cases that involve British domestic disturbances caused by returning subjects from the colonies.

The Pre-Reichenbach Falls era also establishes Holmes as a figure entrenched in the Victorian pseudo-science of phrenology as well as the burgeoning science of criminology. Holmes’s links to these pseudo-scientific fields is in large part due to the Victorian cultural uncertainties about what “Englishness” truly denotes. As Ronald R. Thomas states in his article “The Fingerprint and the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology,” the character of Sherlock Holmes “should be understood as the literary personification of an elaborate cultural apparatus by which persons were given their true and legitimate identities by someone else” (Thomas 1994, 655). As such, the popularity of Holmes was “made possible by the successful colonization of the minds of English citizens” (Thomas 1994, 657). This colonization of the collective British social consciousness manifests itself within the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories in ways that Thomas believes are directly connected back to British political policies:

Holmes’s emergence as an authoritative cultural hero in the 1880s and 1890s corresponds to a transformation of Britain’s national identity during the same period. Notably, during the first few years of the 1890s, Britain’s identity as a nation-in its own eyes and the world’s-was being radically redefined with respect to its vast global empire. Once an embattled and suspect pursuit, a ‘New Imperial-

ism' became equated once again with morality and patriotism in England, rising to the status of a national cult also referred to as the 'Pax Britannica.' (1994, 656)

While Thomas's argument is sound, it is my contention that Holmes's involvement with Victorian pseudo-scientific issues is more connection with Holmes's status as an intellectual. As critic J.K. Van Dover aptly puts it, Sherlock Holmes, as a "detective, who claims to speak the language of the thinking scientist yet who acts morally in the sphere of the common man, offers an imaginative bridge between the two worlds of the scientist and the layman" (1994, 24). As such, the Pre-Reichenbach Falls tales explore "the heroism of the intellectual," and the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era focus upon pseudo-scientific issues of "Englishness" are a part of the general academic discussion of the time, and directly involved in the politics of New Imperialism. In several of the short stories, Holmes is depicted as a functioning, if not a little erratic academic of sorts. In Pre-Reichenbach Falls story "The 'Gloria Scott' (1893), Holmes reveals to Watson that he developed his "own little methods" of criminal detection during his two year stint in college (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:446). Similarly, in the Post-Reichenbach Falls story "The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans" (1912), Holmes is shown to be the author of a monograph concerning "the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus" (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:430). Holmes's cultural currency as an intellectual hero continues through both the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era and the Post-Reichenbach Falls era.

Holmes's involvement in other scientific issues is continued throughout the rest of the canon. In both eras, Holmes is described as having interest in the pseudo-science of physiology, which dictated that criminals and other social deviants could be identified as such by merely charting their physical characteristics. For Holmes's purposes, physiology served "to indentify the criminal body" (Thomas 1994, 657). As such, in the final Pre-Reichenbach Falls story "The Final Problem (1893)," Professor James Moriarty, the so-called "Napoleon of crime" is described as having "hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind" (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:559). Furthermore, "a criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers" (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:559). The importance of "The Final Problem" cannot be understated, for, as a story, it hints at the thematic direction in of the Post-Reichenbach Falls era stories. "The Final Problem" has both an international setting (the majority of the story takes place in Switzerland) and the story also comments upon the dangerous nature of foreigners, since Professor Moriarty has Irish blood.

In a similar vein, in the Post-Reichenbach Falls story "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton (1904)," Holmes's reliance upon physiology is evident in Watson's description of Charles Augustus Milverton, the "king of all blackmailers."

Charles Augustus Milverton was a man of fifty, with a large, intellectual head, a round plump, hairless face, a perpetual frozen smile, and two keen gray eyes, which gleamed brightly from behind broad, gold-rimmed glasses. There was something of Mr. Pickwick's benevolence in his appearance, marred only by the insincerity of the fixed smile and by the hard glitter of those restless and penetrating eyes. (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:113-114)

As the excerpt above shows, Holmes's method of criminal deduction relies heavily upon notions of "otherness," i.e. Holmes makes assumptions about his antagonists by merely charting their physical appearances as they either correlate to or run counter to accepted notions about the proper Englishman. In this regard, Holmes's method of detection is heavily indebted to the work of Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso. In his 1876 book *Criminal Man*, he "presented his theory of the 'atavistic' or born criminal" (Hoobler and Hoobler 2009, 165):

Lombroso held that criminal deviance arose because of biological traits that made criminals less fully evolved than other members of society. These throwbacks could be identified by outward physical traits that Lombroso called stigmata. Such traits included a low forehead, bushy eyebrows, and long arms that gave the individual an apelike appearance. Other indicators of criminal tendencies were excessively large or small hands, too large jaws or cheekbones, oversize lips, and ears of unusual size. (Hoobler and Hoobler 2009, 129)

Not only did Lombroso's theory help to inspire later, Social Darwinist criminology theories, it also helped Alphonse Bertillon develop the bertillonage system, or the "system of identification of criminals by anthropometric measurements, finger-prints, etc."⁶ So great was the influence of the bertillonage system that Holmes actually makes a quip about Bertillon and his system to a prospective client in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*:

'I am suddenly confronted with a most serious and extraordinary problem. Recognizing, as I do, that you are the second highest expert in Europe—'

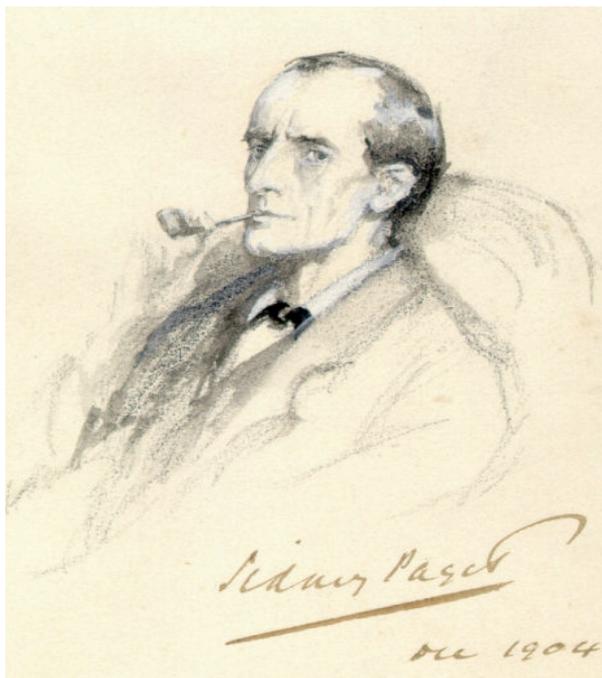
'Indeed, sir! May I inquire who had the honor to be the first?' asked Holmes, with some asperity.

'To the man of precisely scientific mind the work of Monsieur Bertillon must always appeal strongly.'

'Then had you not better consult him?'

'I said, sir, to the precisely scientific mind. But as a practical man of affairs it is acknowledged that you stand alone. I trust, sir, that I have not inadvertently—'
'Just a little,' said Holmes. (Hecht 2003, 165)

This minor jab at Monsieur Bertillon aside, both the Pre- and Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes is indebted to the criminology theories and practices of the Victorian and Edwardian ages. Holmes himself not only recognizes these theories, but also practices them as part of his own methods. Holmes is in a position to do this in the stories because, as an illustrated figure, Holmes is depicted as the ideal figure of English intellectualism.



As can be seen from the picture, Sidney Paget, the most famous Holmes illustrator in *The Strand* magazine, portrayed Holmes as “not merely a striking but a suavely commanding figure” (Ousby 1976, 160). Holmes is clearly shown to be a relaxed figure, i.e. Holmes is not only a thinking machine characterized by excessive bursts of energy; he is also a creature of leisure. Images such as these, along with the fact that the majority of Holmes stories were published in mass-circulation magazines, established Holmes as the preeminent English middle-class figure. As critic Ousby (1976, 151) asserts, Holmes is “calculated to appeal to a middle-class readership.” In describing Holmes this way, it becomes evident that the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes (and in many ways the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes) has a cultural currency that sees him as the model middle-class English citizen. As such, when the cultural currency of the Holmes character in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era shifts, it dictates that Holmes, like a proper British subject, must defend

the empire against foreign incursion. In this regard, Holmes popularized a “vigilant policing of the personal identity of the average British citizen” (Thomas 1994, 656). Although there are continuities here between “The Final Problem” and “The Adventure of Charles August Milverton,” it should be recognized that Holmes’s client in the latter story is a British noble subject, Lady Eva Blackwell. In “The Final Problem,” Holmes is his own client looking after his own ends. Once again, the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes firmly entrenches himself as a cultural authority within hegemonic British power structures. The Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes character therefore has a substantial cultural currency, and this cultural currency is invested in him because his readership desired to give him this greater authority. It can be said that not only is the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes a more conservative figure, he is also a far more established figure. On a certain level, these two elements run parallel to each other.

Becoming the Domestic Conservative

Holmes’s cultural authority and Holmes’s established identity as a distinctly English character themselves undergo transformations, and herein lies the point of contention between the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories and the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories: the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes was a character who delighted in the consumption of his own seven-percent solution of cocaine and his own Bohemian lifestyle, and who also unequivocally proclaims “I am a consulting detective” in *A Study in Scarlet* (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:18). As a “consulting detective,” Holmes is very much an outsider, even though his work brings him into contact with members of Scotland Yard, namely Inspectors Lestrade, Bradstreet, Gregson, and Hopkins. Of note also is the fact that the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes frequently uses the services of his so-called Baker Street Irregulars, a collection of London street urchins who perform surveillance work in many of the Pre-Reichenbach Falls stories. In the Post-Reichenbach Falls stories, Holmes is far more willing to cooperate with and work as a member of established British authorities, namely British royalty in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” and British government agencies in “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans” and “His Last Bow.” The Post-Reichenbach Falls transformation of the Holmes figure also takes on the shade of political action, i.e. the Holmes stories both bring awareness to political and social problems, and offer solutions. Notably, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era solutions to these problems tend to promote more conservative ideals, such as the need for law and order and the need to maintain im-

perial British hegemony in the face of continental European threats.

The earliest perceived threat to British conservatism occurred during the Edwardian era with the ascendancy of the Liberal Party, with backing from the growing Labour Party, in the 1906 election. When Arthur Balfour, the Conservative Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, resigned in December of 1905, immediate elections were called for. By 1906, the issue of tariff reform split the Conservative party, which allowed the Liberal Party to form a domestic majority. In the election of 1906, the Liberals swept the day, and immediately set upon social reform initiatives. This Liberal insistence upon social reform would, "from 1906 to 1914," help to establish "the origins of the mid-twentieth century 'welfare state'" (Briggs 1964, 87). Within a few years, the Liberal governments of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and H.H. Asquith passed sweeping reforms such as The Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, "which introduced non-contributory pensions 'as a right'" and the Mines (Eight Hours) Act, which "was the first definite statutory regulation of the hours of work for adult males, as distinct from children or women" (Briggs 1964, 87). These acts and others frightened British Conservatives who saw these social reforms as tantamount to Socialism, which was "growing strength" in Germany and France (*Paul Mall (London) Gazette* 1900). This growing fear of socialism was also linked back to the ongoing influx of central and eastern European immigrants into Great Britain. On Monday, May 14, 1900, an anonymous journalist from *The Pall Mall Gazette* characterized European socialism as thus:

The English nation are profoundly impressed with the supreme necessity of adapting their institutions to suit new needs, while they decline to force the pace to please the Socialists. It explains, likewise, the enormous and growing strength of Socialism in Germany, where the sound principles of State control that the Socialists would be the first to adopt are bound up with incompatible dogma of the divine rights of Kings. It explains the dangers of French Socialism whose claim for freedom of thought is necessarily irreconcilable with the spirit of authority embodied in the infallible religion that is at the same time one of the strongest political forces in the country. It explains the anarchical spirit of Nihilism, which, in its life and death struggle with a bureaucratic and military despotism, has no time to think out a new order of society. (*Paul Mall (London) Gazette* 1900)

It is noteworthy that this article links together French and German socialism with anarchy and nihilism. It should be noted also that *The Pall Mall Gazette* is a newspaper that takes its name from a rather fashionable dis-

trict in London which is known for its large collection of private, usually upper-class, clubs. In this regard, the author, who writes for a paper that targets the British upper middle-class, argues that only the British way of governance is acceptable in Great Britain. It is therefore not much of a leap to assume that many Edwardian British subjects viewed socialism and anarchism as entirely alien notions brought to Great Britain by central and eastern European immigrants, who were more often than naught located in the working class slums of East London. This fear of socialist and anarchist foreigners is manifested in many Post-Reichenbach Falls stories, wherein Holmes's cultural currency invests him with the authority of British law and order. This same cultural currency shift also dictates that Holmes has the authority to police the boundaries of the conservative British class and ethno-social structure.

While Conan Doyle was "nominally a Liberal," he nevertheless held "deeply Conservative sympathies" (Lycett 2007, 129-130). Throughout much of his life, Conan Doyle "enthusiastically supported" the British Empire and all of its endeavors.⁷ Conan Doyle's "Conservative sympathies" manifest themselves in certain Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories (Lycett 2007, 129), wherein Holmes is no longer portrayed as a "Bohemian redolent of foggy late-Victorian England" but as "a sadder figure, who, though still nominally operating around the turn of the century, was ill at ease with the mores of a harder, modern age" (Lycett 2007, 446). Even without the political sympathies of Conan Doyle, the transformation of Holmes into a more conservative character seems inevitable in the light of his anxious middle-class readership and his changing cultural currency; for the shift in the type of cases Holmes deals with is due to the fact that fears of foreign radicalism, fears of an increasing power in Germany, and fears of labor violence were all on the minds of the people who devoured the Holmes stories during the Post-Reichenbach Falls era.

Holmes, as a character, has cultural currency as a figure symbolic of an idealized not-so distant past. Born of a more conservative late Victorian era, he is saddened most by the rapid social transformations that took place during the Liberal period of political power (1906-1922). More specifically, the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes stories can easily be read as correlating the rapid Liberal social reforms with the supposed breakdown in traditional Victorian mores. For instance, Holmes is disgusted by the tactlessness of "Baron Gruner's 'lust diary' of female conquests" in the story "The Illustrious Client" (1924) (Lycett 2007, 446).

Although we do see a more dour Holmes in the Post-Reichenbach Falls stories (which might have something to do with his aging, after all), Holmes nevertheless manages to engage in his own social reforms,

albeit reforms that favor native British middle-class persons. Unlike the much more domestically inclined Pre-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era has Sherlock Holmes more involved in cases with international roots. Two stories in particular, “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” (1904) and “The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez (1904),” have Holmes involved in cases that examine “culture in the context of social disturbances and terrorism” (Kestner 1999, 91). In “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” Holmes, Watson, and Inspector Lestrade investigate a series of disturbances in London whereby some unknown assailant keeps smashing privately-owned busts of Emperor Napoleon I. Much like the later “The Adventure of the Red Circle,” “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” involves crimes committed by an Italian immigrant (Beppo), who is described as “an alert, sharp-featured simian man with thick eyebrows, and a very peculiar projection of the lower part of the face like the muzzle of a baboon” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:130). Similar to “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,” Holmes and Watson both view their antagonist as something foreign, in this case as something close to an animal; for Watson clearly describes Beppo as behaving similarly to “a hungry wolf” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:137). This nativist loathing of immigrants is also coupled with a pseudo-scientific conjecture that sees these central and eastern European immigrants as atavistic in comparison to average British subjects. This same pseudo-scientific belief in the atavism of central and eastern European foreigners was coupled with a strong belief in the inherent threat of radical politics:

In the manuscript, Doyle had originally described Beppo as ‘missing link’ (381): foreigners and/ or revolutionaries are associated with atavisms and the frightening theories of evolution. The animus against Napoleon is thought to be ‘madness’ (176) or a ‘monomania’ (179), so the culture is beset by a wide range of fears...The fact that the busts are of Napoleon might also suggest massive power drives and the fantasies of the men who purchase them. That the manager of Gelder’s is ‘a big blond German’ with ‘blue Teutonic eyes’ (186, 187) evokes the fear of Germans in Edwardian society, here German potency commanding a company in Britain named Gelder. (Kestner 1999, 93).

The Edwardian and early Georgian British fear of revolutionary foreigners is another important aspect of “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” wherein one of the victims claims that Beppo’s actions were all “A Nihilist plot,” and that “No one but an anarchist would go about breaking statues” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:132). In this story, Holmes himself acts as somewhat of a social reformer, in that he takes it upon himself to rid the Lon-

don streets of a malign foreign influence. In this sense, Holmes, as a detective, becomes an extension of “rather than anathema to English national identity” (Reitz 2004, xiii). “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” is very much a story about us versus them, imperial British law and order versus the anarchy and revolutionary spirit of central and eastern Europeans.

Another story that deals with these same issues is “The Adventure of Golden Pince-Nez,” which deals with the murder of Willoughby Smith, the secretary of the irascible Professor Sergius Coram. The murderer in the story is Coram’s “estranged wife Anna” who was formerly “a revolutionary in Russia” (Kestner 1999, 91). At the story’s conclusion, it is revealed that Anna “had tried to steal papers from Coram which would free Alexis, her lover and fellow anarchist, from imprisonment in Siberia” (Kestner 1999, 91). Upon her capture, Anna herself proclaims to Holmes that “We were reformers-revolutionaries-Nihilists, you understand?” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:137).⁸ Much like “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” this story “plays on two areas of concern to the Edwardians and early Georgians, one being the anxiety about anarchy” and the other being a “preoccupation” with “Fenian and Socialist disturbances from the later nineteenth century” (Kestner 1999, 92).

Becoming the Conservative Internationalist

Edwardian and early Georgian preoccupations with the “disturbances from the later nineteenth century” had a lot to do with the fact that these “disturbances” had not fizzled out with the conclusion of the nineteenth century (Kestner 1999, 92). Furthermore, two particular concerns re-emerged with a vengeance during the Edwardian and early Georgian periods: the labor movement and Irish nationalism. Both of these movements during these periods became more militant, as well as becoming larger. Labor union membership “rose by two-thirds between 1910 and 1913” and it became clear that “the more militant trade unionists of 1910 to 1914 were openly skeptical about parliament ever being able to accomplish ‘a democratic revolution in the name of labour’” (Briggs 1964, 97). Alongside this new, more militant British labor movement, radical Irish nationalist groups such as the Fenians were becoming a powerful political bloc in Great Britain. These two movements, which certainly caused alarm in bourgeoisie British society, can be found as Sherlock Holmes’s antagonists in the final Holmes novel *The Valley of Fear* (1915).

Because it was published only a year before the Easter Uprising of 1916, *The Valley of Fear’s* anti-Irish stance seems fitting in the context of an English novel. And yet the story owes much of its plot to Allen Pinker-

ton's 1877 book *Molly Maguires and the Detectives*. In that book, Pinkerton chronicles the exploits of James McParlan, a Pinkerton detective who disguised himself as James McKenna in order to infiltrate the Molly Maguires, a secret brotherhood of violent Irish miners operating in the anthracite regions of eastern Pennsylvania (Pinkerton 1973). As a force, the Pinkerton Detective Agency was notorious for "spying on labor organizers" as well as investigating "robberies, murders, and other major crimes" (Repetto 2004, 11). By having Sherlock Holmes linked to a Pinkerton agent (who's killing of a man he investigates), Conan Doyle links his private detective to Anglo-American feelings of distain for labor unions and Irish revolutionaries. Arguably, the extensive investment in the cultural currency of the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes was done by both British and American audiences. As such, Holmes's cultural currency allows him to be a cultural authority even in America; for, while *The Valley of Fear* presents specifically British attitudes about Irish agitation, it also involves itself in the historical Anglo-American discourse about the inferior status of Irish-Americans.

Conan Doyle, who ironically was of Irish ancestry and who was also raised Roman Catholic, had a lifelong view of the Irish as "untrustworthy agitators," and this view is reflected in his fiction when the Irish are depicted as "members of the conspiratorial Molly Maguires or as Professor Moriarty" (Lycett 2007, 25). Furthermore, by setting the majority of the novel's action in America, Conan Doyle links the American struggles against radicalized labor movements with the British one; thus creating a unified bourgeoisie battle against syndicalism. This struggle "echoes the tension of the era in a number of ways:"

With its presentation of the violence of the Scowlers (Conan Doyle's version of the Molly Maguires) in the Vermiss Valley (Conan Doyle's version of the Susquehanna Valley), it deploys the anxiety about terrorist organizations but now in a context of violent labour disputes. The terrorist group is exported from the United States to Great Britain. (Kestner 1999, 346)

Once again we see Holmes involved against an agency of terrorism, much like in "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons," "The Adventure of the Red Circle," and "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez." Likewise, in *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes, who is "deeply involved in both the incidents and ideology of Empire," engages in the role of imperial British defender (Reitz 2004, 65-66). In the case of *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes defends British domestic law and order by involving himself in a case that manages to include both radicalized labor and Irish nationalist militancy. Once again, the Post-Reichenbach

Falls Holmes is invested with enough cultural currency that he is able to successfully tackle both of these troubling issues.

Holmes's role as an imperial British watchdog is further advanced in the stories "The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans" (1912) and "His Last Bow" (1917). While both T.S. Eliot and Ian Ousby accuse these stories of descending Holmes "to the level of Bull-Dog Drummond," they are nevertheless in keeping with the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes's tradition of engaging in matters of British national security (Eliot 1984, 18). These two particular stories, along with the Pre-Reichenbach Falls story "The Naval Treaty" (1893) and the Post-Reichenbach Falls short story "The Adventure of the Second Stain" (1904), form what I call Holmes's "Major Government Assignments." These particular stories all share a certain level of Germanophobia, which is only fitting considering that they were all written when the German Empire was Great Britain's military and naval nemesis.

During the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era, Holmes does have some encounters with somewhat sketchy German characters. For instance, in "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb" (1892), Holmes becomes involved in the case of Victor Hatherely and his severed thumb. Hatherely, a hydraulic engineer, is recruited by one Colonel Lysander Stark, who is depicted as being a rather shady German criminal, to work on a hydraulic press that is stored in a house in Oxfordshire. Although Hatherely eventually escapes certain death and presents Holmes with a lucid account of his assault, Holmes nevertheless fails to capture Stark and his fellow criminals. Though the German character in that story is presented in a rather unflattering light, he is little more than a common criminal. In the Post-Reichenbach Falls era, Germans become much more sinister.

In the "The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans," Holmes is called upon by the British government to retrieve the stolen blueprints of the Bruce-Partington submarine. While Conan Doyle would go on to write another submarine tale called "Danger!" in 1914, "The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans" is indebted to the political climate in which it was written. During the years before World War I, the British Royal Navy and the German *Kaiserliche Marine* engaged in a significant arms race that put both countries on edge. Germany's "building of a fleet was a direct threat aimed at Great Britain in her most vulnerable spot" (Kemp 1964, 491). Because of this fear of the growing naval might of Germany, the British Royal Navy, under the leadership of First Sea Lord John Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher of Kilverstone, enacted a series of sweeping naval reforms that thoroughly modernized its ships and armaments. This dual spirit of naval intrigue and Germanophobia is cen-

tral to the action in “the Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans.” It is therefore not surprising that the secret agent who coerces Colonel Valentine Walter into stealing the Bruce-Partington blueprints is named Hugo Oberstein.

But also of importance is the fact that “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans” is part of a trio of stories that all deal with the same issue. “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans” is more or less a retelling of the Pre-Reichenbach Falls story “The Naval Treaty.” In that tale, Holmes is hired by Percy Phelps, an employee in the Foreign Office, to retrieve an important naval treaty that has been stolen from his office. The treaty itself is described as being of “immense value,” and as such it is feared that the treaty has been stolen by foreign agents (Conan Doyle 2003, 1:157). As it turns out, the treaty was stolen by Joseph Harrison, the brother of Phelps’s fiancée Annie Harrison. Holmes explains that Harrison stole the treaty because he had recently lost a considerable amount of money on the stock market, and he believed that he could pay off his debts by selling the treaty to either Tsarist Russian or French agents. While these two-nation states would later become Great Britain’s allies during World War I, at the time they were perceived as threats to British hegemony. Holmes, as the defender of all things British, steps in and prevents Harrison from completing his task. Since this story is a Pre-Reichenbach Falls tale, the cultural currency invested in Holmes is somewhat less than it will be in the succeeding years. First, this story is almost entirely a domestic intrigue. While foreign plots move in the periphery, the criminal is still a British subject acting upon purely selfish motives. While Colonel Valentine Walter is both a British subject and one of the criminal conspirators in “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans,” his links to foreign intrigue are far more substantial than Harrison’s, thusly continuing the Post-Reichenbach Falls trend of giving substance to the threats that the Pre-Reichenbach Falls stories only hinted at.

Colonel Valentine’s German contact is a man named Hugo Oberstein. Oberstein can also be found in “The Adventure of the Second Stain,” although Oberstein is only mentioned in passing. This story details the theft of a document from the home of Trelawney Hope, the fictional Secretary of State. The document itself is described as a letter “from a certain foreign potentate” who resembles the German Kaiser Wilhelm II (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:211). Hope avidly tells Holmes that if this letter is published, it will cause Great Britain to become “involved in a great war” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:211). When Holmes eventually foils the machinations of Eduardo Lucas, a fellow spy operating in London, he basically halts the outbreak of an international conflagration. This story serves as a perfect example of Holmes’s shifting and increasingly powerful cultural currency in the Post-Reichenbach Falls era; for Holmes is enough of

an authority that the British government entrusts him with the responsibility of preventing a full-scale European war.

Holmes’s rival Oberstein in “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans” and “The Adventure of the Second Stain” in many ways serves as the model for the German spy Von Bork in “His Last Bow.” Both characters, while sharing German heritage, are depicted as being enemies within the island of Great Britain itself. Oberstein’s address is given as “13 Caulfield Gardens, Kensington,” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:425) while Von Bork’s “English mission” calls for him to immerse himself in an entirely English way of life, a way of life which he often mocks to his confidant and fellow spy Baron Von Herling:

“They have strange limits and one must learn to observe them. It is that surface simplicity of theirs which makes a trap for the stranger. One’s first impression is that they are entirely soft. Then one comes suddenly upon something very hard, and you know that you have reached the limit and must adapt yourself to the fact. They have, for example, their insular conventions which simply must be observed.” (Conan Doyle 2003, 2:480-481)

Within the context of the of Holmes’s earlier, Pre-Reichenbach Falls concerns, Von Bork presents such a serious threat because he can “pass” for an English gentleman. On an even more interesting note, Holmes passes himself off as a non-English, Irish-American radical in an attempt to police the cultural and social borders of “Englishness.” In this regard, “His Last Bow” represents both a Pre-Reichenbach Falls thematic continuation, while also presenting a Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes who positions himself as a key and essential member of the British government.

This story, along with “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans,” blurs the lines between detective fiction and spy fiction. As Reitz (2004, xvi) argues, these Holmes stories contain “intersections and imbrications with other writing, especially the imperial adventure story.” From this vantage point, the Post-Reichenbach Falls stories blur these lines between genres because of the cultural necessity to involve Holmes, as the preeminent fictional British figure, in matters of state security. As such, this Post-Reichenbach Falls era intersection between detective fiction and imperial, quasi-spy thriller narratives solidifies the position that the Edwardian and early Georgian Sherlock Holmes transforms himself into a more conservative figure as a result of both his concerns with social agitation at home and his increasing involvement against threats to British imperial hegemony. In short, Holmes’s conservative internationalism is a product of his cultural currency as the embodiment of British hegemony.

Because of the issues of the Edwardian and early Georgian ages, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories directly refute T.S. Eliot's assertion that "Sherlock Holmes reminds us always of the pleasant externals of nineteenth-century London" (1984, 17). Not only are the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories heavily involved in the socio-political events of the twentieth century, they offer up a cadre of distinctly unpleasant externals and internals that are in need of Holmes's assistance. For instance, the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes combats both the external threats from the industrial and military powerhouse of Germany and the internal threats posed by labor radicals and central and eastern European immigrants. Holmes's transformation from an almost entirely domestic, Bohemian London figure to a more conservative internationalist is brought about by the socio-political anxieties that plagued Great Britain in the Edwardian and early Georgian eras. The Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories seem to suggest that as a result of increased political and military threats to the British Empire, it is necessary for Holmes, as the embodiment of British law and order, to confront these threats. Furthermore, these stories seem to also suggest that the more Holmes becomes involved in international matters, the more it is needed for him to become a conservative figure without any attachments to his previous decadence.

Of course, Holmes is in a position to accomplish all of these things because of the shift in cultural currency that occurs between the Pre-Reichenbach Falls era and the Post-Reichenbach Falls era. When readers during the Edwardian and early Georgian periods decided to invest a greater cultural currency in the figure of Sherlock Holmes, they intentionally created a version of the Holmes character who reflected their conservative sensibilities. As such, the Post-Reichenbach Falls era Holmes stories are worthy of critical attention because they clearly display the impact that readers can have upon literary characters. This shift during the Post-Reichenbach Falls era allows Holmes to become a cultural figure, rather than just simply a literary figure. As he stands in our culture today, the Holmes that often gets represented in other forms of media is the Post-Reichenbach Falls Holmes, not the Pre-Reichenbach Falls Holmes.

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NOTES

1. Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland was the location of Sherlock Holmes's supposed death at the hands of his arch rival Professor James Moriarty in "The Final Problem" (1893). Conan Doyle, who had already grown tired of the character, initially intended this to be the final Sherlock Holmes story, but in 1902 he published *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. This novel details a case which "seems to be set in 1889, long before Holmes's fatal tumble at Reichenbach Falls" (Freeman 2003, xxxiii). Then, in the 1903 short story "The Adventure of the Empty House," Holmes tells Watson about how he escaped death and found his way back to London.

2. The Pre-Reichenbach Falls era is composed of the first two Holmes novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890), as well as the stories collected in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894).

3. Sherlock Holmes enthusiast and editor of both volumes of Barnes & Noble's *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Kyle Freeman claims that the stories collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* have plots that "are remakes of older ones" (Freeman 2003, xxvi). Furthermore, Freeman asserts that the stories collected in the final Holmes short story compilation, *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, are so bad that because of "the poor quality of many of them, the details that differ significantly from the earlier stories, and the erratic characterization of Holmes himself," many Doyle scholars have "concluded that several stories are spurious" (Freeman 2003, xxxiii). While Freeman comes to the conclusion that several Post-Reichenbach Falls stories are representative of "cartoon fiction" (Freeman 2003, xxxvi), famed British adolescent and detective fiction author A.A. Milne claims that after *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, he would prefer it if Holmes would stay permanently retired on "his farm on the Sussex downs" (Freeman 2003, 703).

4. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first Holmes short story, Holmes is involved in a case concerning the Grand Duke of Bohemia and his attempts to retrieve a photograph before his upcoming marriage. In the photograph, the Duke is seen with his former liaison, the American opera singer Irene Adler.

5. The Indian Mutiny, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny, was "an uprising, in 1857 and 1858, against British rule in India" (Freeman 2003, 699). During the rebellion, "Indian soldiers, known as sepoys, who were employed by the British East India Company, massacred the Europeans at Meerut, then joined with other Indian forces as the rebellion spread, but were eventually suppressed by British troops" (Freeman 2003, 699).

6. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "bertillonage."

7. Conan Doyle was knighted as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1902 after his work in a field hospital and his treatise on the Boer War, *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*. In that treatise, Conan Doyle defended the conduct of the British Army against accusations of war crimes during the Second Boer War (1899-1902).

8. Since many Holmes scholars nominally set the action of this story in 1894, it seems probable that Anna is referring specifically to events in Russia during in 1881. During that year, a Russian anarchist group called Narodniki, “blew up Tsar Alexander II with a bomb” (Wilson 2000, 290- 291).