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The Mystery of Sherlock Holmes

Ayesha Venkataraman '09

The marked eccentricity of Sherlock Holmes has been long remarked upon by Holmesian scholars and readers, becoming a trademark of his timeless allure. Simultaneously unsettling and attractive, the peculiarities of Holmes have caused much bemusement, settling as a smoky veil even as the story's mystery is expertly cleared up. Holmes appears rife with contradictions, ordering the world in a Platonic fashion, assuredly finding an objective truth while centralizing himself in a Nietzschean chaos of possibilities. The ease with which he repeatedly unravels the plot of various crimes demonstrates, with infuriating smugness the essential simplicity and predictability of human nature. Yet Sherlock himself slips between our fingers, remaining unpredictable by transgressing the "normative" social, sexual, professional, and gendered boundaries. This seemingly inexplicable queering or refutation of the normative by Sherlock can be better understood, in my opinion, when detection is viewed as a machinery of Foucault's Panopticism. Inspired by Bentham's prison system, Foucault envisioned a transparent world of continuous supervision from atop a central tower such that those policed are permanently visible, while those policing become obscured so as to remain unverifiable and yet omnipresent. This system would presumably lead to self regulation by the unconscious internalization of this policing. Sherlock's "super-vision," as D.A Miller calls it in clever pun, appears to mirror this idealized panoptic policing, centralizing him while simultaneously necessitating his obscurity (Miller 35). While in an ideal, fully effected Panoptic state, everyone polices themselves, the occurrence of crimes demonstrates the realistic failures of Panopticism, and therefore necessitates calling upon the services of the omniscient Sherlock Holmes. Thus it appears that Sherlock's privileged position in the Panopticon allows and even requires his queering, so as to keep him undefined, which effectively serves to undermine the very boundaries and binaries by which he orders society and thereby subvert the soundness of the social order he seeks to uphold. To demonstrate this reading I will use various Holmesian short stories and novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, first focusing on Sherlock's omniscient and omnipresent "super-vision" of the characters, demonstrating his alignment with an indefectible policer of the Panopticon. Next, I will outline Sherlock's "normative" ordering of the world, depicting his centrality in the maintenance of a rigidly regulated and patriarchal social order. Finally, I will analyze the contrary queerness of Sherlock, bringing to the fore his paradoxical position of being central to, and peripheral within a society, undermining the boundaries he seeks to uphold.

Foucault's conception of Panopticism is founded upon the idea of complete and constant unilateral visibility of those policed such that it is a "machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference" (Foucault

202). In concert with this idea, Sherlock demonstrates his “super-vision” from the very outset of the story, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” which centers on the investigation of the mysterious death of Julia Stoner. Hired by her concerned sister Helen, lest she meet the same fate, Sherlock uses his unparalleled powers of penetration upon their first meeting, running “her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances” (Doyle 213). Needing no introduction, Sherlock is able rapidly to make wholly accurate deductions based solely on his keen observations, noting nonchalantly that Helen must have arrived by dog-cart for the “left arm of [her] jacket [was] spattered with mud in no less than seven places...[and] there is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when one sits on the left hand side of the driver” (Doyle 213). Mirroring the arrangement of prisoners in the Panopticon, in which those “in the peripheric ring [are] totally seen, without ever seeing” (Foucault 202), those supervised by Sherlock are unable similarly to penetrate his behavior, and are left in the dark with regards to his reasoning and, even more generally, his character. Helen is thus depicted as giving “a violent start and star[ing] in bewilderment at Sherlock,” being unable to fathom such seemingly impossible astuteness (Doyle 213). But it is precisely because of his unique astuteness that he is called upon by Helen and multitudinous others, having heard that he “can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart” (Doyle 214). Sherlock’s singular omniscience is further highlighted, when having heard an incomplete recountal of the case from Helen, he exposes “five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and thumb, printed upon [her] white wrist,” and thus probes beyond the simple facts (Doyle 220). Interestingly, the bedrooms within which the investigation occurs lie adjacent to each other with “no communication between them but they all open out into the same corridor” (Doyle 217). This architectural design parallels the configuration of the peripheral ring of rooms opposite the central tower in the Panopticon, which “impose on [the individual] an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility” (Foucault 200). Upon careful examination of each room with his companion Dr. Watson, Sherlock makes key deductions that have escaped the attention of Watson, who confusedly remarks that Sherlock had “evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to [him]” (Doyle 231). While Sherlock demonstrates a painstaking attention for detail, inspecting even the most seemingly trivial object and crevice, he appears to require none of it, finding a solution long before the details align in concurrence. Exclaiming that he “knew that [they] should find a ventilator before ever [they] came to [the house],” Sherlock displays his amazing deductive abilities without the aid of actual investigation, suggesting of a transparency in nature as envisioned in the Panopticon (Doyle 237). Sherlock’s timely surveillance of Helen’s well-lit room from the uppermost opposite window where “he could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing” in which the rooms lay to prevent her further crime appears analogous to architecture of the Panopticon (Doyle 230), wherein “by the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery” (Foucault 200).

The final scene of the story truly brings to the fore Sherlock’s “super-vision.” He willingly unravels the mystery for the benefit of his rather befuddled companion Dr. Watson, having “come to these conclusions before ever [he] had entered [the killer’s] room” (Doyle 237). Thus Sherlock’s omniscience and centrality to the act of observation are akin to those of the policer of the Panopticon. These powers allow him to apprehend criminals and regulate society with the ease of one before whom society is laid bare.

Sherlock’s omniscience presupposes a great deal of power just as “the Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power...thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behavior,” with power following the consequent advances of knowledge in those policing (Foucault 204). While using his power to regulate crime for the betterment and safety of society, Sherlock appears simultaneously to regulate the normativity of society, carefully upholding its status quo. In this story, Sherlock rescues his female client from the murderous clutches of her father, who wished her ill so as to enable him to keep the property willed to her upon her marriage, thus appearing overtly to overturn the patriarchy. This implication of the detective’s action, however, is incisively questioned by scholar Jasmine Yong Hall who asks if “Holmes’s power [is] really any less patriarchal than that of the villains in these stories?” (299). In the opening of this story, Sherlock appears to be a rather unsung savior of women, giving ear to Helen Stoner’s worries that were flippantly written off by her fiancé as “the fancies of a nervous woman” (Doyle 214). As Hall notes, the story progressively shifts focus away from Helen towards a fatal battle between Sherlock and her father, becoming a violent display of machismo. Upon defeating the father and seemingly establishing his dominance, Sherlock does not liberate Helen by allowing her unhindered marriage, but rather simply transfers her “from father to husband...facilitat[ing] the correct exchange of women” (300). Hall further suggests that Helen becomes a “conduit of male power,” facilitating a shift of power from her father to Sherlock (301). The story ends with a nonchalant mention of Helen’s untimely death after marriage, which neither Sherlock nor Dr. Watson feel the need to look into. This neglect, Hall argues, demonstrates a patriarchal indifference to women (302). Thus, it appears that Sherlock perpetuates the marginalization and oppression that women like Helen are forced to bear in a patriarchal society, further exploiting them to gain power while keeping them controlled and contained. Maintaining society’s unfounded binaries, Sherlock also appears to perpetuate an Orientalist view widely held by the society of those times. Appearing to hold such views, Helen blames her father’s raging temper and perhaps even his psychopathic tendencies on the fact that he lived in Calcutta, claiming that his violence has “been intensified by his long residence in the tropics” (Doyle 215). Despite his influential centrality in Helen’s life, Sherlock appears unwilling to overturn this binary, furthering it himself by suggesting her father’s murderous plan “was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training” (Doyle 236). This Orientalism by Sherlock manifests itself more clearly in many of the various Holmesian short stories and novels, most markedly in the novel *The*

Sign of Four wherein Sherlock saves the damsel in distress, Miss Morstan, from the disruptive and dangerous effects of colonial India. Thus Sherlock appears to order society along pre-established rigid boundaries, carefully upholding the "normative" while re-assembling society after the chaos of crime.

A closer analysis of Sherlock himself, however, depicts a reality far removed from the "normative" society he rigidly polices. If we are to believe that his "super-vision" corresponds to the functioning of the Panopticon, entitling him to the power of the gaze in the central tower, his contrary reality can be understood as a function of his role as "one [who] sees everything without ever being seen" (Foucault 202). Requiring obscurity, Sherlock's Panopticism produces in him an indeterminacy such that Sherlock paradoxically fringes himself from the society he is central to. Sherlock can thus be seen to "queer" himself, in that queer theory challenges a "stable concept of the self or selfhood because both terms are subjective and unstable," consequently embracing indeterminacy (Bressler 258). Transgressing various "normative" boundaries, Sherlock's identity appears fluid and undefined, impenetrable to those around him. In this story, as scholar Michael Atkinson highlights, Sherlock is seen to undergo "a series of migrations," crossing gender boundaries and changing positions in the process of solving the mystery (Atkinson 35). Blurring gender binaries, Sherlock employs the traditionally masculine domain of rationality within the feminized profession of detection, unmindful of the supposed disconnect between the two. When Sherlock is emasculated by Helen's father who not only calls him "the meddler" and "the busybody" due to his ostensibly feminine profession, but also threatens him, placing him in the probable role of (female) victim (Doyle 223), Sherlock responds with a display of masculine physicality, straightening the poker once bent by Helen's father and thereby simultaneously bending the gendered boundaries imposed upon him (Hall 300). This mobility between genders and roles becomes apparent in the final scene of the story, when the mystery unravels itself with a fatal battle in Julia's room, where Sherlock triumphs over Helen's father, using the very snake used to kill Julia. Convincing Julia that he "must spend the night in [her] room" (Doyle 229), Sherlock appears to inhabit the role traditionally held by her fiancé without any qualms about the impropriety of his request. Atkinson cleverly points out that, by taking Julia's place in her room to apprehend her killer, Sherlock then migrates into the role of the victim, fearing as she did, essentially becoming Julia, "waiting in her room, immobile on her bed, striking a match as she did, seeing the same snake she saw, and finally speaking her very words—'the band! the speckled band!'" (Atkinson 35). Migrating further, Sherlock "moves through the role of the villain as well," eventually driving the snake to bite Helen's father, becoming indirectly responsible for his death (Atkinson 36). It appears then that Sherlock continually shifts genders, occupying first the hetero-normative role as Julia's masculine bedfellow, proceeding towards the accustomed female role of a silent and passive victim, waiting for attack without "a sound, not even the drawing of breath...in a state of nervous tension" (Doyle 233). Finally, Sherlock dons the dominant and aggressive masculine position, actively killing Julia's father to demonstrate to him that Sherlock's "grip was not

much more feeble than his own" (Doyle 223). Thus, Sherlock's gender lacks coherence, as he is able to effortlessly transition from it, demonstrating a revealing discontinuity. In alignment with Judith Butler's theory of performativity that challenges essentialism, positing instead that gender is performative and is naturalized through its repetition, Sherlock appears to adeptly perform both genders, calling into question the "reality" of gender. Sherlock's various migrations demonstrate the theatricality and flux of selfhood that Butler's theory is founded upon.

Refuting more than just gender normativity, Sherlock appears to transgress sexual boundaries imperturbably, seeming to develop homosocial relations with Helen's father. Eve Sedgwick's conception of homosociality as being inextricably entwined with homoeroticism is in keeping with Sherlock's relationship with Helen's father (Bressler 259), wherein their overt rivalry appears to be underpinned by homoeroticism. As suggested by Hall, the final battle scene becomes a stage upon which this homoeroticism plays out if the cane that Sherlock "lashed furiously with at the bell pull" (Doyle 234), beating the serpent unleashed by Helen's father, is interpreted as the clashing of erect phalluses (300). Suggestive of this homoeroticism is Sherlock's triumphant proclamation that while Julia's father "strikes even deeper...he shall be able to strike deeper still" (Doyle 232). Similarly, the intimacy between Sherlock and his companion Dr. Watson has often been observed, becoming evident when they wait fearfully in Helen's room as Sherlock's "hand closed like a vice upon [Dr. Watson's] wrist in his agitation" (Doyle 232). Furthermore, Sherlock transgresses even professional and lawful boundaries, for despite being an officer of the law, Sherlock refuses to be bound in that position, thinking it "insolent for [Helen's father] to confound [him] with the official detective force" (Doyle 223). Sherlock appears unafraid to transcend the boundaries of the law, seeing himself apart from it, and thus readily trespasses upon Helen's father's house, having "little difficulty in entering the grounds for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall" (Doyle 232). Unfettered by social and ethical norms, Sherlock casually absolves himself after indirectly killing Julia's father, remarking unabashedly to Dr. Watson that he "cannot say that [this death] is likely to weigh heavily upon [his] conscience" (Doyle 237). Sherlock therefore appears to consciously reject all boundaries, queering himself to remain undefined and impenetrable to the society he polices.

It is then noteworthy that Doyle appears to consciously invert the "normative" physics of power, depicting a society in which the center paradoxically is dependent on and regulated by the periphery. Sherlock epitomizes the power of the peripheral gaze which runs counter to the common epistemological dominance of the central insider. Situating the omniscient Sherlock within the category of outsiders "who have been systematically frustrated by the social system: the queer, disinherited, deprived, disenfranchised, dominated, and exploited," Doyle appears to turn this system on its head by highlighting the often overlooked powerful privilege this perspective offers (Merton 29). Drawing upon Plato's allegory of the cave, the English philosopher Francis Bacon depicts the limitations of a central

perspective within the cave which causes the perceiver to be mired in shadowy illusions, forever deceived by an erroneous view of reality (Merton 30). As an outsider, Sherlock mirrors the man who escapes the cave and finds authentic knowledge, becoming uniquely exempt from "the myopia of the cave" (Merton 31). His success is dependent on his perspective of vision for

society can only be protected by someone who does not share its orthodoxies, who sees through the disciplines of respectability, who despite his patriotism has little reverence for popular superstitions, who stands outside the normal system of rewards and punishments, who cares nothing for status and depends only on himself. (Clausen 63)

Thus Sherlock's peripheral position as a result of his queering is integral to his centrality to the regulation of society, facilitating a perspective of prime observability afforded to the policer of the Panopticon.

This "super-vision" figures greatly in all the Holmesian mysteries, becoming Sherlock's key characteristic that evokes the awe of characters and readers alike. This characteristic becomes evident from the start of the short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," in which Sherlock attempts to save the king of Bohemia from being blackmailed by his mistress Irene Adler so as to avoid the resulting scandal that could effectively taint the King's rule. Mirroring the obscurity of the policer in the central tower from those in the peripheral, Sherlock remains inscrutable to even Dr. Watson, who upon coming to visit him sees that "his rooms were brilliantly lit, but, even as [Watson] looked up, [he] saw only his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind" (Doyle 6). Long before the case is brought before Sherlock, he is depicted as constantly exercising his penetrative powers in his everyday life, "look[ing] Watson] over in his singular introspective fashion" upon his usual morning visit (Doyle 8). Needing no prior discussion of the recent occurrences in Dr. Watson's life, Sherlock is quickly able to deduce them using his keen observation, proclaiming, "I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl" (Doyle 9). Despite Watson's familiarity with Sherlock's unique observational skills, Sherlock's methods remain impenetrable to him, causing him to flippantly highlight Sherlock's unfathomable omniscience by remarking that Sherlock "would certainly have been burned, had [he] lived a few centuries ago" (Doyle 9). Telling of the ease with which human nature unfolds before him Sherlock responds by saying that "it is simplicity itself," having effortlessly noticed "the inside of [Watson's] left shoe" and "a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right-fore-finger" which quite plainly brought his deductions to light (Doyle 9). Upon such simple explication, Watson wonders at his own inability to perform similar deductions "believ[ing] that [his] eyes are as good as [Sherlock's]," bringing to the fore the essential importance of Sherlock's peripheral perspective (Doyle 10). Later faced with an anonymous letter, Sherlock single-handedly deduces its author from his observations of its penmanship, going as far as to announce his arrival minutes before the author appeared, thereby indubitably establishing his rare omniscience. Despite the black vizard mask that covered the visitors face, Sherlock was unhindered in his assessment being able to see

beyond that which met the eye, finding the visitor's "long straight chin [as] suggestive of resolution pushed to the length of obstinacy" (Doyle 14). Upon prefacing his story with information regarding the secrecy and delicacy of the matter, Sherlock continually responds by saying that he "was aware of it," demonstrating his infinite knowledge without the need for any guidance from others (Doyle 15). Unmindful of alias the visitor had carefully constructed for himself, Sherlock effortlessly reveals his true identity, coolly remarking, "your majesty had not spoken before I was aware that I was addressing Willhelm Gottsreich von Ormstein, Grand Duke of CasselFelstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia" (Doyle 16). In an attempt to ascertain the location of the compromising photograph, Sherlock follows Irene Adler almost perfunctorily, as "it was [already] clear enough what was in the wind" (Doyle 24). Sherlock, in an unprecedented move, switches roles with Watson, asking him to position himself in front of an open window in order to observe his interaction with Irene Adler, saying "you are to watch me, for I will be visible to you" (Doyle 27). Sherlock thus appears to allow Watson to temporarily take his privileged place within the central tower of the Panopticon, putting himself into view for the sake of the case. Watson's vision however, is limited to that which Sherlock makes visible to him, and he is thus unable to completely take Sherlock's place, which is perhaps a reflection of the myopia of the central perspective in juxtaposition to the infinite observability facilitated by the distance of the peripheral gaze. Thus it appears that Sherlock's "immense faculties and extraordinary powers of observation" resemble that of the policer of the panopticon (Doyle 6), making him, as Watson plainly states, "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen" (Doyle 5).

In Plato's allegory of the cave, he nobly envisioned the escaped man who finds the real truth to proceed to liberate those within the cave from their shackled perception. Sherlock however, having escaped the cave, appears unwilling to relinquish his newfound power, acting instead as a keeper of the cave, ensuring those inside remain locked within the rigidity of fallacious boundaries. While Sherlock overtly appears to help rescue the King of Bohemia from the clutches of the shrewish Irene Adler, a closer analysis reveals that Sherlock merely attempts to aid the King conceal the indiscretions of his youth, readily silencing the desperate efforts of a heartbroken woman. Described as a "well-known adventuress" to Sherlock, Irene Adler is given a grotesque portrayal and is doggedly persecuted by Sherlock for merely attempting to make public her affair with the king so as to highlight his callous disposal of her affections once having had his way with her (Doyle 17). Despite knowing that the King's rejection of Irene was unjustly propelled by no want of affection but rather her low social status having said "I wish she had been of my own station! What a queen she would have made," Sherlock agrees to do the King's bidding without it being warranted (Doyle 36). He thus appears to condone the King's frivolous treatment of women by helping to conceal his seemingly tainted past, facilitating a more "appropriate" union for the King, thereby also legitimizing and deepening the unfounded stratification caused by socio-economic boundaries. There appears to be no illegality in the behavior of Irene Adler, and

as James Edward Holroyd in *Baker Street By-Ways* points out, "One may fairly claim that only dubious and questionable aspect of the adventure was the conduct of the three men principally concerned" (38). Sherlock then demonstrates the effects of the long arm of the patriarchy, seeming to need little excuse to silence the voice of women. He even goes as far as to attempt to steal the photograph from her, playing on her kindness by pretending to a "poor gentlemen much hurt" and in need of her assistance (Doyle 31). While even his heartiest companion, Watson, had "never felt more heartily ashamed of [him]self in [his] life than when [he] saw the beautiful creature against whom [they] were conspiring," Sherlock remains resolute in his determination to deceive Irene Adler for the good of the King (Doyle 32). Sherlock appears unwilling to blur "normative" gender binaries, helping to perpetuate them himself. His unfounded readiness to take Irene Adler to task appears to stem from his own rigid gendered beliefs, thinking all women to be "naturally secretive...[preferring] to do their own secreting" (Doyle 30). Thus Sherlock serves to merely reestablish the selfsame boundaries after the disorder of crime, engaging society within their rigid limits while attempting to keep them in the dark about the possibility of life beyond.

Situated outside the confines of these boundaries as a function of his observational role, Sherlock flouts the boundaries he adamantly policies, enjoying the very possibilities he denies others. Unencumbered by "normativity," Sherlock is able to embrace a shifting sense of selfhood and identity that queer theory seeks to explore, producing in him a marginality that, as Watson admits, is "admirable for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions" (Doyle 5). Sherlock resists all kinds of conventionality, transgressing social and physical boundaries in his everyday existence by "remaining in [his] lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature" (Doyle 6). He then literally distances himself from the center, residing in the outskirts of London, while also blurring the boundaries of social acceptability, mixing pleasure with professionalism. Seemingly unconcerned with illegality despite attempting to enforce the law, Sherlock appears to transgress professional and legal boundaries, committing the felony of false alarm and attempted burglary in order to do what is right, even coaxing Watson into criminality by saying, "you don't mind breaking the law?...nor running a chance of arrest?...[if] the cause is excellent!" (Doyle 26). Resisting the commonality of love, Sherlock "never spoke of the softer passions, save with gibe and sneer," choosing instead a life of isolation over the idealization of love and the heteronormativity it presupposes (Doyle 5). He thus refutes the exalted passions for the cold preciseness of reason because love acts much like "grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one own high-power lenses," detracting from his supreme observational function as the central cog in the panoptic machinery (Doyle 5). While less evident in this story than the aforementioned, Sherlock's homosociality, a term which "hypothesizes the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (Sedgwick 1), with his companion Watson can be seen when

Sherlock fervently insists on Watson's presence despite the client's disapproval, saying "Not a bit, Doctor. Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell...never mind him" (Doyle 12). Thus Sherlock crosses sexual boundaries with ease, unmindful of popular censure, demonstrating with this discontinuity that "desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender...[and thereby] disrupting the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence" (Butler 173). In alignment with this revealing discontinuity, Sherlock performs a series of roles in this story, telling of the performativity and discursive origin of identity and gender. Upon deciding to follow Irene Adler, Sherlock disguises himself as a "drunken-looking groom, ill-kempt and side-whiskered, with an inflamed face and disreputable clothes," giving such a realistic portrayal that even Watson "had to look three times before [he] was certain that it was indeed he" (Doyle 20). Performing the gender and identity precisely called for by the role, Sherlock is able to mingle freely amongst horsy men, effectively "be[coming] one of them...[so as] to know all there is to know" about Irene Adler (Doyle 20). Later in the story Sherlock plays the part of a "amiable and simple-minded" Nonconformist clergyman with an exactitude that causes Watson to remark that "the stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when [Sherlock] became a specialist in crime" (Doyle 30). He performs this character with "his sympathetic smile, and general look of peering and benevolent curiosity" (Doyle 29), adding a pronounced dimension of femininity to this role from the last, so as to elicit a caring response from Irene, thereby demonstrating that "gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies" (Butler 174). Thus Sherlock depicts the theatricality of gender and identity, effortlessly changing not merely his costume, but "his expression, his manner, [and] his very soul...with every fresh part that he assumed" (Doyle 29-30). In the end, Irene Adler is able to get the better of Sherlock, slipping past him by adopting a fluidity of gender and identity, similarly transgressing these boundaries. Dressing in an ulster, she easily performs the role of a man, for, as she admits to Sherlock later, "male costume [was] nothing new to [her]...often tak[ing] advantage of the freedom which it gives" (Doyle 38). Thus Sherlock's paradoxical refutation of "normative" boundaries serves to undermine their legitimacy, allowing Irene Adler to capitalize on the selfsame possibilities, thereby making her a formidable opponent to Sherlock.

Thus, Sherlock's role as the policer of the Panopticon helps illuminate and explain his distinct queerness, requiring that he remain an enigma himself, paradoxically causing Sherlock to refuse to be pigeonholed by the very boundaries he imposes on society. The ease with which he transgresses these boundaries however, simply serves to demonstrate the "temporality and contingent groundlessness" of their application (Butler 172), thereby undermining Sherlock's power and the validity of the order for which he stands. Sherlock's necessary queering then proves to be counterproductive, seemingly providing opportunities for "deviance." If, as sociologist Howard Becker points out, deviance is seen as "publicly labeled wrongdoing---[that] is always the result of enterprise in that though a practice may be harmful in an objective sense to the group in which it occurs, the harm needs to be discovered and

pointed out," Sherlock appears inadvertently to not only facilitate "deviance" through his personal resistance of boundaries, but also, in some senses, to create it (162). Sherlock then seems to be a conjurer of cheap tricks, merely apprehending "deviants" of his own fabrication.

If the signification of deviance ironically creates it, Sherlock appears to be guilty of making monstrosity of deviance for his Panoptic society in which "polymorphous conducts [are] actually extracted from people's bodies and from their pleasures...[to be] drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices" (Cohen 14). As insightfully pointed out by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, monsters become defined and highlighted as such, to serve as "vehicles of prohibition," enacting the seeming grotesqueness of that which is tabooed to enforce the normativity that they stand at odds with (15). Theorizing on the utility of monsters, Cohen draws upon Becker's aforementioned stance by viewing the monster as a "construct and a projection...exist[ing] only to be read...signifying something other than itself," standing as a warning against hideous effects of deviance (Cohen 4). Crime and thus those "monsters" who perpetrate it, reappear continually, despite Sherlock's ingenuity at detection, functioning to constantly reinforce and regulate normative boundaries. Sherlock therefore is indebted to the monsters he ritually begets and destroys, scapegoating them to his disciplinary cause (Cohen 18).

Nowhere does the grotesque corporeality of these fabricated monsters figure more greatly than in the classic novel, "The Hound of the Baskervilles," in which Sherlock bravely defeats an allegedly supernatural hound that is believed to haunt the Baskerville family after the misdeeds of Hugo Baskerville, saving the incumbent heir Sir Henry, from its master's murderous grip. Since deviance is a "product of enterprise...[needing the offender to be] discovered, identified, apprehended and convicted" (Becker 163), Sherlock's "super-vision" is integral to his success, becoming evident from the very outset of the narrative. Despite Watson's back being turned to Sherlock, the latter is able to accurately surmise Watson's actions, startling Watson into asking, "How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head" (Doyle 49). Upon finding an anonymous walking stick in his living quarters, Sherlock carefully discounts Watson's conclusions regarding its owner, surmising only through examination of the stick that its owner was "a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the professor of a favorite dog, which [he] described roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff" (Doyle 54). The accuracy of his description is brought to the fore when the selfsame visitor makes an appearance a little later, highlighting Sherlock's almost divine omniscience. Using his "super-vision" to scrutinize every inch of the visitor before he had had the time to sit down, Sherlock coolly remarks that he hoped the visitor would have hesitation in smoking, having "observe[d] from [his] forefinger that [he] made [his] own cigarettes" (Doyle 56). Dating an important manuscript from the inch or two of it that protruded from the visitor's pocket, Sherlock proclaims it to be from the "early eighteenth century, unless it is a forgery," demonstrating his incredible powers of penetration (Doyle 56). Sherlock deduces, with unnerving exactitude, the activities of Watson upon his

return, confidently commenting that he perceived that Watson "ha[d] been at the club all day" (Doyle 75). Despite Watson's familiarity with Sherlock's observatory powers, he is unable to similarly penetrate Sherlock to comprehend his methods, left mumbling "certainly, but how--?" in bewilderment (Doyle 75). Having heard a recountal of the mysterious death of Sir Charles Baskerville, Sherlock is extraordinarily able to make sense of the seemingly disconnected clues, discounting a popular theory by stating with certainty that Sir Charles had been "running desperately, running for his life, running until he burst his heart and fell dead upon his face" (Doyle 77). A cursory examination of a note composed with printed words pasted together, warning Sir Henry away from the accursed house in Devonshire, led Sherlock to make some key deductions to the sheer puzzlement of his company, causing Dr. Mortimer to remark that he "could understand anyone saying that the words were from a newspaper; but that [Sherlock] should name which, and add that it came from the leading article, is really one of the most remarkable things which [he had] ever known" (Doyle 81). Going beyond these observations, Sherlock is able to penetrate further into the minute preparatory details of the note, deducing not only that it was made using gum and nail-scissors, but also that "the pen has spluttered twice in a single word and has run dry three times in short address, showing that there was very little ink in the bottle...[usually the product of] hotel ink and the hotel pen" (Doyle 84). In alignment with the power and supremacy endowed to the policer of the Panopticon, Sherlock god-like authority as the "dealer of justice and arbiter of life and death" (Gorman 93) is made implicit when he remarks that he "holds several threads in [his] hands, and the odds are that one or the other of them [will] guide him to the truth" (Doyle 93). When attempting to interrogate the cabman, Sherlock begins by revealing all he knows, startling the cabman into saying, "why there's no good my telling you things, for you seem to know as much as I do already" (Doyle 98). Seemingly unable to accompany Sir Henry to Devonshire, Sherlock allows Watson to fill his shoes, instructing him to "simply report the facts in the fullest possible manner to [him]" (Doyle 102). However, as is later discovered, Sherlock continues to secretly observe everything, seen "standing motionless and gazing after [them], being unable and unwilling to relegate his unparalleled powers to anyone (Doyle 103). It comes as no surprise then that Watson staggers as Sherlock, and yearns for Sherlock to "come down and take this heavy burden of responsibility from [his] shoulders" (Doyle 113). The self-regulating effects of Sherlock's Panopticon is depicted through the trait-laced character of Watson, who follows Sherlock's instructions to the tee by "imagin[ing] what [his] feelings would be if [he] had to return to [Sherlock] and to confess that some misfortune had occurred through the disregard of [his] instructions...[causing his] cheeks to flush at the very thought" (Doyle 133). Keenly aware of Sherlock's constant surveillance as one should be in well-effected Panopticon, Watson realizes that "possibly he had taken no step since [he] had been upon the moor which had not been observed and reported [for] always there was a feeling of an unseen force" (Doyle 166). Sherlock appears to treat interrogations as a mere formality, expediting the process with Laura Lyons by simply "tell[ing] her what occurred, and [she]

could check [him] if [he made] any material mistake" (Doyle 187). In juxtaposition to Watson's inability to make sense of the mystery of the hound in Devonshire, perhaps on account of his central perspective, Sherlock is depicted as having "made certain of the hound, and hav[ing] guessed at the criminal before ever [he] went to the West country" (Doyle 207). Thus Sherlock's singular omniscience places him in the privileged role of the policer of the Panopticon, allowing him to reign over society with his godlike surveillance.

In true Platonic fashion, Sherlock reestablishes order in society by upholding fixed Truths, enclosing society within their rigid boundaries. So as to maintain the supposed "natural" order of things, Sherlock exorcises society of its disrupting deviants, demonizing, in all forms, the rejection of normativity. The apparent monstrosity of deviance is caricaturized by the hound who is described as a "huge creature, luminous, ghastly, and spectral" (Doyle 71). Acting as the grotesque face of deviance, the hound is considered to be supernatural because it is "hard to reconcile with the settled order of Nature" (Doyle 71), making it dangerous as a "form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" and bring about a category crisis (Cohen 6). Refusing easy categorization by normative boundaries of "scientific inquiry and its ordered rationality" (Cohen 7), the hound is monstrous as it "could not possibly be any animal known to science" (Doyle 71). In order to prevent the chaotic fragmentation of a disciplinary society that the "deviant" offers, presenting "an escape from its hermetic path, an invitation to explore new spirals, new and interconnected methods of perceiving the world" (Cohen 7), Sherlock dehumanizes them by making them appear monstrous, thereby justifying his eventual persecution and destruction of them. It is then an obvious progression when Sherlock "emptie[s] five barrels of his revolver into the creature's flank" upon the first chance he gets (Doyle 193). When the murderous master of the hound Stapleton, first makes an appearance, he disguises himself with a "bushy black beard" (Doyle 87), which has a destabilizing effect, calling into question the fixedness of reality. While originally a descendant of the Baskervilles, Stapleton performed a series of convincing roles, finally adopting the name Stapleton to play a meek-mannered and amicable naturalist, even going as far as to have his wife pretend to be his sister. Effortlessly performing this new identity without drawing any suspicion from those around him for most of his life, Stapleton's performance functions to denaturalize and subvert the seeming inherency of identity, rupturing normative boundaries and thus becomes more of a threat to Sherlock's disciplinary society (Butler 133). In alignment with the monsters it bears, the moor of Devonshire is depicted as being equally grotesque, appearing as a "gray melancholy hill, with a strange jagged summit, dim and vague in the distance...and in the middle of it rose two great stones, worn and sharpened at the upper end until they looked like the huge corroding fangs of some monstrous beast" (Doyle 104, 126). The marked absence of light not only makes Devonshire a more ominous place, for it is in the "hours of darkness when the powers of evil are exalted" (Doyle 103), but it also suggests its deviation from the normative Panoptic society in which visibility is key. Depicted as a refuge for all that is primitive and monstrous, having housed

prehistoric man with his "little arrangements [still found] exactly as he left them" (Doyle 118), the moor also becomes home to the escaped convict Selden, who is then unsurprisingly made to appear conspicuously savage with "an evil yellow face, a terrible animal face, all seamed and scored with vile passions...and small, cunning eyes which peered fiercely to right and left through the darkness like a crafty and savage animal" (Doyle 144). Selden's accidental death is therefore met with much relief and triumph from Sherlock who sees it as an inevitable sacrifice for the maintenance of a disciplinary society.

In keeping with the liminality of the dissociated monster, Devonshire is described as being "the most God-forsaken corner of the world...so vast, and so barren... [such that] its mysteries and its strange inhabitants remain as inscrutable as ever" (Doyle 116, 145). Devonshire is thus queered, in that its landscape and its inhabitants resist normativity, made explicit when Stapleton refers to it as a "queer place... [with] queer hills breaking...[and] bogs that make queer noises sometimes" (Doyle 116, 118). Free from the shackles of normativity then, Devonshire is all the more alarming because "all things are possible upon the moor" (Doyle 118). The queer is thus made monstrous, threatening with its presence which "demands a radical rethinking of boundary and normality" (Cohen 6) that to give way to a dizzying and chaotic array of possibilities. Unwilling to disrupt the status quo of society, Sherlock upholds normative sexist notions, treating both Laura Lyons and Mrs. Stapleton as extraneous characters, present merely to facilitate the capture of the "monstrous" Stapleton. While Sherlock overtly appears to be the rescue Laura from the tyranny and deception of Stapleton, a closer analysis depicts that he does so that he "may find the lady of service" (Doyle 171), undeceiving her to get to reveal information which would aid his apprehension of Stapleton. In the same vein, upon finding Mrs. Stapleton whipped and bound by her ironhanded husband, Sherlock's first inquiry upon untying her is regarding the whereabouts of Stapleton, even playing on her conscience to assure his success by adding, "if you ever aided him in evil, help us now and so atone" (Doyle 196). Once having accomplished his purpose, Sherlock makes no mention of both women, leaving them emotionally crippled and alone. Thus Sherlock serves to purge society of its monsters, rescuing it from their grip, to leave it enmeshed by normativity.

In his quest for the maintenance of normative boundaries, Sherlock necessarily queers himself to remain undefined, hypocritically utilizing the infinite possibilities he disallows others. Having familiarized himself with Sherlock's unconventionality, Watson takes no offense when asked to leave by Sherlock, "know[ing] that seclusion and solitude were very necessary for [his] friend" (Doyle 74). While claiming to send Watson to Devonshire to keep watch for him, Sherlock never really relinquishes his observational role, keeping a necessary distance from the centrality of Baskerville Hall by literally living on the moor. He was often seen as a "black ebony statue on that shining background" (Doyle 144) allowing for the unverifiable omnipresence of the policer of the Panopticon. Choosing to live sparsely in a hut with "some blankets rolled in a waterproof...some cooking utensils and a bucket half-full of

water...[upon] a flat stone [that] served the purpose of a table" (Doyle 165), Sherlock appears to consciously abandon creature comforts for the hard life of Neolithic man, shifting roles with ease. Describing his seemingly inhospitable abode as an "occasional retreat" (Doyle 168), Sherlock reveals the performativity of selfhood and the liberation found in its infinite possibilities (Butler 173). Sherlock appears to treat the law frivolously, taking gross liberties by allowing the Barrymores to aid in the convict, Selden's escape, acknowledging that as a seemingly "conscientious detective [his] first duty [should be] to arrest the whole household" (Doyle 180). It is no wonder that Sherlock describes Stapleton as "a foil as quick and supple as [his] own" (Doyle 99), as Stapleton is able to similarly transgress normative boundaries, turning the tables on Sherlock. This becomes very evident when Stapleton embraces a shifting sense of selfhood like Sherlock, going as far as to introduce himself as Sherlock Holmes, causing the real Sherlock to become "white with vexation" (Doyle 87). Literally following in Sherlock's footsteps, Stapleton surveys Sherlock, causing Sherlock to "twice stroll over to the window" to check for Stapleton's gaze (Doyle 88), suddenly appearing like those in the peripheral rooms of the Panopticon who are subjected to constant observation. Thus while Sherlock's queering appears necessary for him to remain unverifiable and maintain an essential peripheral perspective, it also inadvertently invites a similar resistance to normativity in some those he polices, thereby undermining his objective. Thus by the signification of the queer as monstrous, Sherlock in turn holds a mirror to himself, appearing a monster as well. Adamantly circumscribing society within normative boundaries, Sherlock becomes more monstrous by "prevent[ing] mobility (intellectual and sexual), delimiting the social sphere through which private bodies may move" (Cohen 12). Sherlock's monstrosity is made implicit when he informs Watson that he "must cast around for another scent" (Doyle 98), suggesting of his similarity with the hound. Sherlock then appears to "police the borders of the possible" (Cohen 12), attempting to stitch society in to a contained and seamless whole while reveling in the fragmentary and disparate nature of himself.

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