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Hypotheses*

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If you entered a familiar place this evening, did you observe the furniture and windows to evaluate whether there was any unusual change? When introduced to someone new, did you attempt to assess his or her profession from appearance? Did you attempt to surmise habits and character from hands, wear and tear on shoes, the way the laces were tied, or speech patterns? If you have this observational ability, and have a special interest in crime, you may become a consulting detective or a masterful criminal, depending upon your moral inclinations.

While reading these comments, some of you may have intuitively thought of Sherlock Holmes, whose characteristics have had enough of an influence on readers that there are clubs devoted to the minutiae of the 56 short stories and four novelettes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Are there such clubs devoted to Miss Marple, Father Brown, Hercule Poirot, or Nero Wolfe? Is there an annotated Dupin or Maigret?

There is something in the character of Sherlock Holmes that has transcended the Canon (as the Doyle stories are called by aficionados). The first collection of Holmes stories was published monthly in a new middle-brow London journal, *The Strand*, from 1891-1893. After just two years, Conan Doyle decided that enough was enough and he decided to kill off Holmes in the Reichenbach Falls so that he could go on to writing historical novels. The resulting protest was enough that Conan Doyle revived Holmes eight years later with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and continued publication of short stories in *The Strand* through 1927, three years before he died.

Virtually simultaneously, the stories were published in American periodicals, mostly

* This paper, in slightly different form, was originally delivered to The Chicago Literary Club on March 18, 2002.



Photo / <http://www.studium.com/graphics/holmes/fgst111.jpg>

ABOVE: Basil Rathbone (center) and Nigel Bruce played Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson respectively in 14 black and white films released between 1939 and 1946. RIGHT: Sidney Paget's illustrations were used in the first appearance of Sherlock Holmes in *The Strand*.

Harper's Weekly, but also *McClure's*, *Collier's*, and *The American*. Holmes' following became immense on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the early American organizations dedicated to Holmes was and is the Baker Street Irregulars, which has met in New York annually for over 70 years.

Attempts have been made to crystallize Holmes' entire life from the brush strokes placed in the stories. One such book, by William Baring-Gould, has Holmes born in 1854 and living a grand total of 103 years. According to this book, Holmes died on



the shore of the English Channel sitting sedately in a beach chair and murmuring the name "Irene," referring to Irene Adler, the one woman who outsmarted him (in "A Scandal in Bohemia"). Parenthetically, Watson was supposed to have died in 1929, aged 77, exactly one year before Conan Doyle himself passed away.

One book, *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street, A Life of the First Consulting Detective*, gleaned from these subtle clues the interesting deduction that Nero Wolfe was a product of the union of Holmes and Irene Adler. Another interesting proposition in this book was that Jack the Ripper was none other than Athelney Jones, one of the stable

of Scotland Yard detectives whose careers

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SHERLOCK HOLMES, from page 1

Holmes constantly advanced with his brilliant interventions. In *The Sign of the Four*: Holmes: "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection. When Gregson or Lestrade or Athelney Jones are out of their depths (which, by the way, is their normal state) the matter is laid before me."

The identity of Jack the Ripper remains in doubt, but the play of fiction and fact always fascinates. In this case, Holmes deploys Jack the Ripper dressed as a woman, one of his many ingenious disguises. The conclusion is remarkable. Unlike any of the Holmes stories in the Canon, except one, Holmes is saved by Watson, who, at the last moment, as Jack is about to advance on the unconscious Holmes with a nine-inch knife in an isolated courtyard, leaps from a wall and smashes Jack's head against the cobblestones, knocking him out. In this case, it is Watson who has deduced the identity of the Ripper, from evidence that Inspector Athelney Jones had at one time attended lectures in surgery, and could have been the only one of three candidates to have heard a previously murdered woman singing "Sweet Violets." He shadowed the Inspector and was there to save Holmes. "Holmes took his pipe from his mouth," as Watson described his own deductions. "Extraordinary, my dear Watson," exclaimed Holmes. "Elementary, my dear Holmes," replied Watson. For those of you Sherlockians who have not remembered the one story in the Canon in which Watson saved Holmes' life, by shoving him out of a room with poisonous fumes, it was "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot."

This contribution notwithstanding, Watson is mistaken by some readers as a bumbler, though adroit athletically, and remarkably supportive of Holmes. Although he overlooks clues, he doesn't get in the way of the progress of Holmes' deductions.

It is generally concluded by Sherlockians that Holmes was born on January 6, 1854. The evidence for the year is that Holmes is described as a man of 60 in *His Last Bow*, which takes place in 1914. The date of January 6th is speculative. Among the credible reasons are two: in *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes appears unusually grumpy on the morning of January 7th, suggestive of a hangover. Some scholars concluded that Holmes had celebrated his birthday the night before. Another reason, perhaps less credible, was that Holmes liked to quote from *Twelfth Night*, which is, of course, the 6th of January. However, Conan Doyle himself did not provide a clue. How could one rely on the author anyway? The Canon is filled with inconsistencies. The most notorious example is Watson's war wound, suffered in Afghanistan from a Jezail bullet, which involved his shoulder in *A Study in Scarlet*, and his leg in *The Sign of the Four*. Given this example, there may be some question as to whether Holmes was really 60 in 1914.

In science, a hypothesis is made after careful

examination of observations. The purpose of the hypothesis is to test a possible connection, a cause and effect relationship that explains the workings of a small part of the universe. The more focused the hypothesis-testing, the more likely statistical evaluation will prove a result for or against the hypothesis. An interesting thing about scientific hypotheses is that the experiment to test the hypothesis also attempts to disprove what is called a null-hypothesis, which is that the results, if they are significant statistically, were not due to chance alone. (Even if this is determined to be so, there is always the possibility that a putatively proven hypothesis may be due to bias in setting up the experiment.)

Doyle was writing in the 19th and early 20th centuries, before this form of statistical analysis was commonly used. But Holmes nonetheless predicted some of these considerations in his science of deduction. "We must fall back upon the old axiom that when other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." ["The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans"] Here, indeed, is an expression of the null-hypothesis in Holmes' terms.

Much like a contemporary scientific researcher, Holmes begins with a series of related observations before he can develop a hypothesis. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," he will not interpret without appropriate observation: "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." This perfectly describes the problem of bias in scientific evaluation.

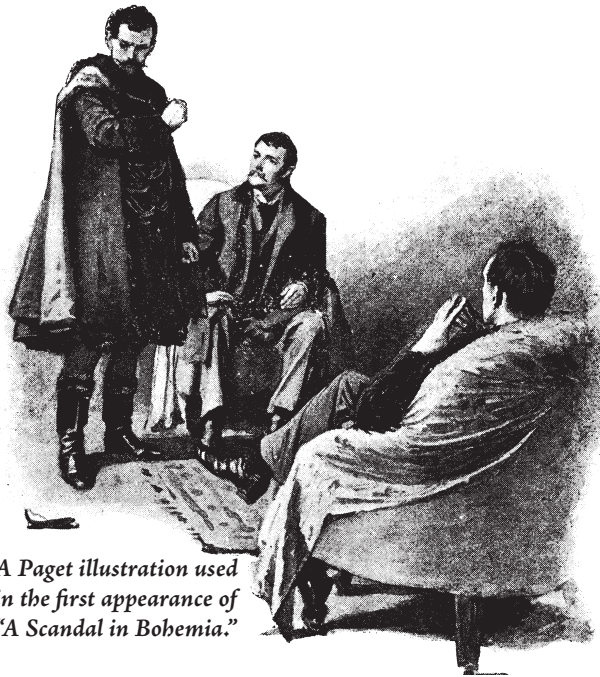
Unlike the scientist, who tests observations by performing controlled studies to determine whether one intervention produces a desired result, Holmes analyzes meaning after collecting all the information possible. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, as an example, Holmes studies the dead corpse of Sir Charles Baskerville. A problem is stated: How did Sir Charles die? A hypothesis is developed. The man either died of a heart attack or by a dog. The research process requires Watson to spend time openly in the Baskerville home, keeping a diary, while Holmes himself, as we discover later, secretly spends time in a secluded cave on the moor and visits the nearby village, collecting data. Holmes concludes from his analysis that only Stapleton could have been the killer for the plausible reason that he wanted the family wealth for himself. However, he has to test this hypothesis by a final and dangerous experiment, set up so that Stapleton is provoked to release his hound to attack the younger Baskerville. Such experiments are common in the field of detective literature, whereas scientific investigation involving humans is usually bolstered with safeguards.

This is not always the case. I was involved in a

large-scale study where the results indicated that, surprisingly, drugs used to save lives were associated with a higher mortality than a placebo. In scientific investigation, plausibility is important in testing hypotheses, but plausibility depends upon a rational view of the universe. If you believe in witchcraft and the supernatural, plausibility expands immensely. Plausibility is a weak link in the chain of hypothesis testing, along with bias in collecting data. In terms of my experience, from the same study, it was biologically plausible that a drug that decreased abnormal heart rhythms in people with underlying heart disease would save lives. In fact, it was more dangerous.

Sherlock Holmes' method of collecting information frequently mystifies Scotland Yard inspectors calling for his assistance, as well as Watson. In the very first novelette, *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes and Watson are called to investigate a murder in a vacant house in London. The dead body is present in one of the rooms. Watson, not yet knowing Holmes well, expects that he would "at once have hurried into the house and plunged into the study of the mystery." However, Holmes slowly and nonchalantly assesses the surroundings of the house, including the pavement, railings, sky, and opposite houses. Satisfied, he finally enters the house and spends the better part of an hour examining not only the body, but the dust on the floor, scratch marks on the wall in which a bloody word, "RACHE," is inscribed, and in the meantime, using a tape measure. Holmes deduces that the murderer was a man, that he smoked a particular brand of cigar (from the type of cigar ash on the floor), that he came with his victim in a four-wheeled cab, that he had a florid face susceptible to nosebleeds (no blood or wound was present on the victim to account for the bloody word on the wall) and that the fingernails of his right hand were remarkably long (from the scratch marks near the bloody letters). However, he needed something more than observation to conclude that the word "RACHE" was not an uncompleted woman's name, but the German word for revenge. This took imagination, or intuition, a leap from analysis alone.

Many analyses have been performed on Holmes' techniques. It is too bad that the *Whole Science of Deduction*, which Holmes was to write in his retiring years, was never compiled by Conan Doyle. Although it is commonly assumed that deduction is the main factor in Holmes' systematic approach,



A Paget illustration used in the first appearance of "A Scandal in Bohemia."

most of his case analysis starts with inductive reasoning. It is used to develop hypotheses as to why a bloody fingerprint appears on a wall after the crime is committed, why a sailor's knot is used to tie up a victim, and why one of three empty glasses of port has no dregs. The hypotheses produced from inductive reasoning lead to testing of these hypotheses by deduction. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes states: "By the method of exclusion, I had arrived at this result, for no other hypothesis would meet the facts." Holmes characteristically used the word "hypothesis" to describe this aspect of his reasoning, rather than the term "induction." In "Silver Blaze": "I have already said that he must have gone to King's Pyland or to Mapleton. He is not at King's Pyland. Therefore he is at Mapleton. Let us take that as a working hypothesis and see what it leads us to." In "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," he remarks "I have devised seven separate explanations, each of which would cover the facts as far as we know them. But which of these [hypotheses] is correct can only be determined by the fresh information which we will no doubt find waiting for us."

Sherlock Holmes' thought processes may be summarized in sequence as observation, analysis, and imagination. As to the last, Holmes states in "The Valley of Fear" that "Breadth of view... is one of the essentials of our profession." In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he comments directly on the importance of imagination in his deductions. "[We are coming] into the region where we balance probabilities and choose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to

start our speculation."

As for the oblique uses of knowledge, Holmes built compendia on arcane subjects. He was an expert on tobacco ashes, poisons, the characteristics of special soils, the appearance of hands with respect to the trade of their bearers, and writings. In "The Adventure of the Reigate Squire," for example, he analyzes a written communication of several sentences, concluding that each word was written alternatively by a younger and an older man, probably blood relations, father and son. He concludes the different ages by the strong hand of half the words, and the "broken backed" appearance of the other half, with the loss of crossing of the "t's" and absence of the "i" dots in the latter

reinforcing older age in one of the writers. The blood relationship of the two writers is determined by the similarity of the peculiar writing of the letter "e," and the tails of some of the other letters.

Holmes makes a particular point of distinguishing analytical from synthetic reasoning. From *A Study in Scarlet*: "The grand thing is to reason backward... There are fifty who can reason synthetically for one who can reason analytically. Most people, if you describe a train of events to them, will tell you what the result would be. There are few people, however, who, if told them a result, would be able to evolve from their own inner consciousness what the steps were which led up to the result. This power is what I mean when I talk of reasoning backward, or analytically."

This is seen in the design of studies, well beyond Holmes' time, in what is called a case-control study. In clinical medicine, a group of patients is in the hospital with a certain condition. What is a risk factor for this condition? A hypothesis is generated that a cause leads to this condition. How can you test this hypothesis by reasoning backward? The answer is to take another group of patients hospitalized in the same location, of the same age, and with similar physical findings, except for the disease investigated, and determine the presence of risk factors in the past history of each group. If the putative causes of the disease are present in a statistically greater amount in the study group, compared with the non-diseased group, a cause-and-effect relationship is suggested.

A well-known example of Holmes' deductive reasoning is found in "Silver Blaze," when See *SHERLOCK HOLMES*, page 4

he learns a curious fact in relation to the disappearance of the horse, Silver Blaze, from the behavior of the guard dog in the stable.

Inspector: "Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

Inspector: "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

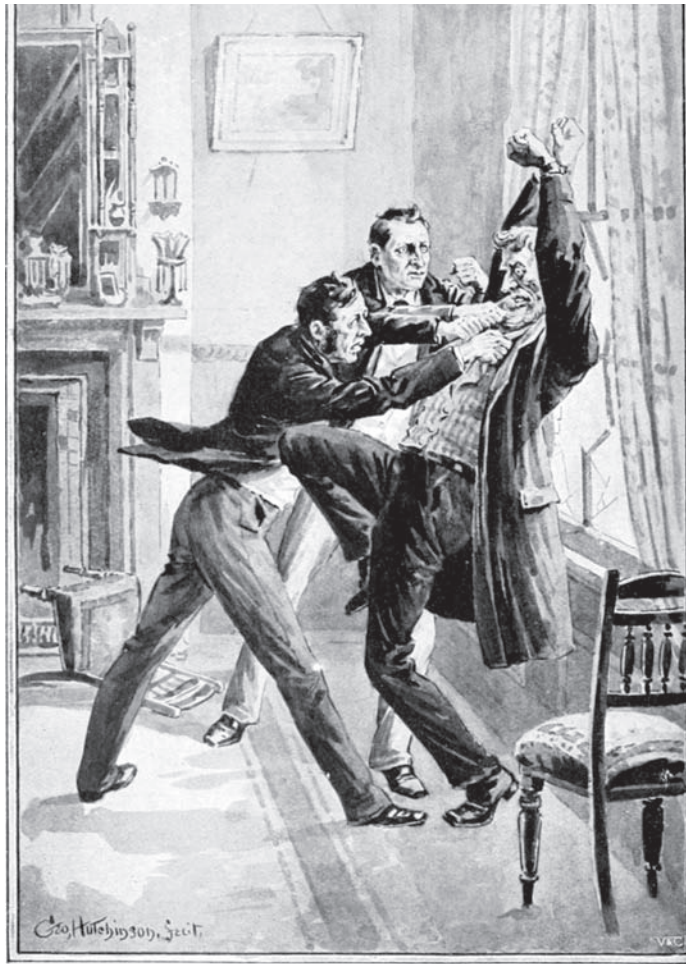
This deduction leads Holmes to conclude that whoever led the horse out was familiar to the dog and was, in fact, the horse's trainer.

There is considerable speculation about the model for Sherlock Holmes. Most have concluded that it was Dr. Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Edinburgh Infirmary when Conan Doyle was a medical student. Bell was physically similar to Holmes. He was described by Conan Doyle as tall, thin and dark, like Holmes, with piercing gray eyes and a narrow, aquiline nose. Here are Dr. Bell's own words:

"In teaching the treatment of disease, all careful teachers have first to show the student how to recognize accurately the case. The recognition depends in great measure on the accurate and rapid appreciation of small points in which the disease differs from the healthy state. The student must be taught to observe. [It is important that] a trained use of observation can discover in ordinary matters such as previous history, nationality, and occupation of a patient [in the diagnosis of disease]."

Bell would observe the way a person moved, and how the walk of a soldier was different from that of a sailor. Tattoos on a sailor's body would indicate not only that he was a sailor but where he had traveled. The hands of patients were important for determining occupation, by the location of calluses or the appearance of the fingers and fingernails.

Dr. Bell would call a student down to observe a patient brought into the lecture hall and ask for a diagnosis. In one case, observed by Dr. Harold Emery Jones, a contemporary of Conan Doyle, a student was asked for the diagnosis of an obviously limping man. "Use your eyes, sir!" Dr. Bell would exclaim. "Use your ears, your brain, your bump of percep-



George Hutchinson's illustrations first appeared in the second English edition of *A Study in Scarlet*.

tion." In one case, the student observed a patient and diagnosed hip-joint disease. "Hip nothing," responded Bell. "This man's limp is not from his hip, but from his foot. If you observe closely, you would see that there are slits, cut by a knife, in those parts where the pressure of the shoe is greatest against the foot. The man is a sufferer from corns, gentlemen! [Since] we are not chiropodists, his condition is of a more serious nature. This is a case of chronic alcoholism, gentlemen. The rubicund, bloated face, the bloodshot eyes, the tremulous hands and twitching muscles with the throbbing of the temporal arteries, all show this. These deductions, gentlemen, must be confirmed by concrete evidence. In this instance my diagnosis is confirmed by the fact of my seeing the whiskey bottle protruding from the patient's right-hand coat pocket."

Conan Doyle himself observed a dramatic example of Dr. Bell's faculty of deduction. In first seeing one of his patients, Bell remarked, "You are a soldier, and a non-commissioned officer at that. You have served in Bermuda." To the medical students: "How do I know that gentlemen? Because he came into the room without even taking his hat off as is his

habit in an orderly room. He was a soldier. A slight, authoritative air, combined with his age, shows that he was a non-commissioned officer. A rash on his forehead tells me he was in Bermuda and subject to a skin infection only present there."

Compare this with Holmes famous line on first meeting Watson, in *A Study in Scarlet*. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive." "How on earth did you know that?" exclaims Watson. Holmes coyly puts off an explanation until later. When Watson persists, Holmes elaborates. "From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps." He arrives at these conclusions from his knowledge that Watson is a doctor, but with the air of a military man, that his face is dark, but his wrists light, indicating a suntan, that his left arm has been injured, and that he has undergone hardship and sickness. Therefore he "had been in the tropics in a location of recent warfare – clearly Afghanistan." This was in 1881 or 1882. History recurs in cycles.

Further on in the same story, while Holmes and Watson are sitting in their flat, Watson looks out the window and points to a "stalwart, plainly dressed individual" walking down the street, and wonders what the fellow is looking for. Holmes: "You mean the retired sergeant of Marines?" Watson calls this "brag and bounce" but, fortunately, the individual appears at Holmes' door to hand him a request from a Scotland Yard inspector to investigate a murder and confirms the deduction. Holmes arrived at the correct conclusion from his observation of a blue anchor tattooed on his hand, his air of command, and his regulation side-whiskers.

There are numerous theories about the origin of the names Holmes and Watson, involving studies of Conan Doyle's encounters with these names. One James Watson was a leading member of the local literary and scientific society where Conan Doyle first set up practice. In Dr. Bell's *Manual of the Operations of Surgery*, published in 1883, which Conan Doyle had read, the first two cases described under "Disorders of the Hip and Knee Joints" cite a Mr. Holmes and a Dr. Watson, respectively, as authorities of the first two cases. A

Mr. Croft is mentioned in the second case. This may be the source of the name Mycroft, Holmes' brother. There are numerous coincidences involving these names cited in Conan Doyle's experience. I will take all the elements discussed and set up my own hypothesis: this time associating a Bell with a Watson – Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Watson. The first telephone conversation, in 1876, was: "Ahoy, Watson! Can you hear me?" Conan Doyle would certainly have heard about this well before 1887, when the first manuscript, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published. To place all this into an all-encompassing package, the Yale professor previously mentioned, who emulated Joseph Bell, coincidentally married Thomas A. Watson's daughter!

It has been proposed by one Sherlockian, Dr. Carl L. Heifetz, that Sherlock Holmes' obfuscation concerning his origins, early life and activities, his reticence to be photographed or appear in newspapers, or to acknowledge his crime investigations, was due to his undercover activities for the British government. 221B Baker Street may not have been his real address because of his undercover activities. Similarly, Holmes' reluctance to have Watson publish his cases (only 60 out of over 1000) suggests a secrecy that cannot be attributable to modesty [Holmes himself admitted that modesty was of no importance]. The basis for this hypothesis was Holmes' participation in three cases involving the British government and during which stolen documents were retrieved, "The Naval Treaty," the "Bruce-Partington Plans," and "The Second Stain." Heifetz noted that Holmes' service as an undercover agent was fully acknowledged in *His Last Bow*.

Other evidence that Holmes participated in government activities includes his undercover work as a Norwegian explorer to the Khalifa of Khartoum, with information delivered to the British foreign office. His brother, Mycroft, from his perch in the Diogenes Club, was a government auditor, and the ultimate resource for resolution of government issues. According to Holmes, "He actually was the British government." The apocrypha (Holmes stories after Conan Doyle's death) insist that Mycroft Holmes was the founder of the British secret services, MI5 and MI6 in 1909, and that the "M" stands for Mycroft!

Let us evaluate the mysterious pull of the Sherlock Holmes Canon using as an example "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez." The outline of the story is as follows: Holmes and Watson are called by a Scotland

Yard inspector to assist in investigating the murder of a male secretary of an invalid professor. Through the clue of a pince-nez, retrieved from the murdered secretary's hand, Holmes solves the mystery by determining that the murderer could not have left the house. The murderer was ultimately found hiding in the professor's closet. She was the long-estranged wife of the professor, and had killed the secretary when he discovered her trying to retrieve a document from the study.

Looking closer, readers familiar with Sherlock Holmes find elements in common with other stories. Watson, the usual narrator, lists cases with intriguing names ("the repulsive story of the red leech," e.g.) that are not ready for publication, and indeed, never will be, and recalls that Holmes achieved another honor from a foreign government for solving an international crime.

A second common element is weather. It was a "wild, tempestuous night," with howling winds, that draws a visitor to Baker Street only because of an extraordinarily pressing matter.

Holmes, as usual, is involved in one of many side interests, deciphering an original inscription in a medieval manuscript, occupying him all day. Watson is by no means idle himself, deeply absorbed in a surgical tract. Holmes is also shown to be interested in many special areas, including: de Lassus motets, wines, warships, medieval pottery, and the history and playing of violins.

The introduction also provides us with an example of Holmes' characteristic courtesy. When Inspector Stanley Hopkins appears, Holmes, handing him a cigar, bids him have a warm drink. However, there is clearly an acknowledgement of class. Holmes is a gentleman. Hopkins is, in a sense, a tradesman. He is addressed as "Hopkins," but it is always "Mr. Holmes."

Continuing the formula, the crime is summarized comprehensively but succinctly, in this case by the Inspector, and the points of the mystery delineated: the last ambiguous words of the secretary, "The professor, it was she"; the golden pince-nez in the murdered secretary's hand, with lenses too close even for thin-faced Holmes; the murder weapon, and a knife from a desk in the study. Naturally, the Inspector is stymied; he thinks he noted everything in the details of the inspection. "Except Sherlock Holmes," says Holmes, with a bitter smile. At another point, he says that with all his investigation, Hopkins "had made certain that [he] had made certain of nothing."

Although Holmes is always courteous, there is always a barb to indicate his intellectual superiority. This infallibility may be one of his attractions to readers.

Holmes concludes that the murderer is a well-dressed woman with a thick nose, closely-set eyes, and a peering expression, who has seen an optician twice during the past month. He explains the reasoning behind his deductions, based entirely upon his observation of the pair of glasses found by the Inspector. The reader is provided with a dazzling deduction and explanation, but which verges on the mundane. It is a repeated formula, appearing once or twice in each story, designed not necessarily to educate the reader or Watson, but to demonstrate Holmes' ongoing superiority of observation.

Then there is the inevitable trip, this time by train, to an isolated home. There unfolds a careful inspection of the study in which the victim was murdered and two passages leading out of the study, one to the professor's room, the other to the garden, and the interesting finding that both passages were covered with coconut matting. There is a red herring of footsteps on the garden lawn leading away from the study. The coconut matting is important because the wife, being nearsighted and having lost her pince-nez, went the wrong way and entered the professor's bedroom. This is not obvious to Watson, nor the reader.

Holmes meets the professor in his room and rapidly smokes four cigarettes, deliberately spreading the ashes on the floor, just as a large lunch is brought up for the professor, who himself has a small appetite. This is one of a number of mysterious actions of Holmes that are finally explained by him in resolving the crime. When Holmes returns, he sees new footprints defined by the ashes near the closet, and the murderer is discovered.

However, the mystery is not yet over. It turns out that the woman and the professor were Russian Nihilists. A Russian police officer was killed, and in order to save his own life, the professor betrayed his wife and companions, who were imprisoned. He fled to England after receiving a reward for his actions. The wife fell in love with one of the companions, who was wrongly imprisoned. The evidence was in the professor's diary in his study. His wife found out his whereabouts after being released from prison in Russia. She eventually found her way to the study where the diary was located, but was discovered by the secretary, who seized her. Because she was nearsighted and her pince-nez had

See *SHERLOCK HOLMES*, page 8

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Bernice E. Gallagher

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "Everyday Adventures Growing Up: Art from Picture Books" (works by award-winning illustrators Nancy Carlson, Peter McCarthy and Timothy Basil Ering, showing how picture books help children to decode images and develop critical thinking skills), Ryan Education Center and Gallery 10, through November 28.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Japonica: The Artistry of Rare Books" (delicate and artistic books with floral themes such as peonies and irises, often on rice paper and in watercolor), through August 15.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630: "Louis Sullivan's Idea" (an installation of photographs, drawings, documents and artifacts relating to Sullivan's life, writings and architectural works, presented by Chicago artist Chris Ware and cultural historian Tim Samuelson), Chicago Rooms, through November 28.

Chicago Public Library, Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, 9525 S. Halsted Street, Chicago, 312-747-6900: "Chicago Alliance of African-American Photographers Presents a Ten Year Retrospective" (work that informs, educates and records history, by Pulitzer Prize winning photographers Ovie Carter, Milbert Brown, Jr., and John H. White), through January 7, 2011.

Columbia College, Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-369-6630: "Marilyn Sward: Speaking in Paper" (spanning four decades of work by the founder of the Center for Book and Paper Arts, whose groundbreaking work inspired many and helped handmade paper come into its own as a fine art medium), through August 20.

Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society, 361 E. Westminster Avenue, Lake Forest, 847-234-5253: "Nature by Design: Drawings of the Foundation for Architecture and Landscape Architecture, 1926-1935" (a collaborative project with Special Collections at Lake Forest College, featuring watercolors, measured drawings, sketches of estates and gardens at home and abroad, drawn by students from Midwestern universities who participated in an innovative summer program founded over seventy-five years ago by renowned landscape architect Ferruccio Vitale and housed at the College), through December 16.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Twenty-sixth Annual Newberry Library Book Fair" (more than 110,000 donated books, many priced under \$2, sorted into seventy categories and covering subjects ranging from antiques to zoology), July 29 through August 1; "Henry IV of France: The *Vert Galant* and His Reign" (marking the 400th anniversary of the French monarch's death and including the facsimile of a letter to his mistress, a beautifully illustrated manual on horsemanship, a treatise by the royal gardener, and a 1608 publication marking the establishment of a French colony at Quebec), Spotlight Exhibition Series, through July 15.

Northwestern University, Charles Deering Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "Only Connect: Bloomsbury Families and Friends" (rare materials from the McCormick Library including numerous personal letters sent to friends, lovers, siblings and cousins – at times some of these simultaneously; a selection of first editions from Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press; a copy of E. M. Forster's novel *A Room with a View*, signed by the author), third floor, Main Library, extended through August 20; "The Once and Future Saint: Two Lives of Hildegard von Bingen" (documents focusing on Hildegard's extraordinary twelfth century life as a famous author, composer and visionary, as well as her twentieth century revival as feminist and New Age icon), Main Library, through August 27; "Burnham at North-



Newberry Library Book Fair

western" (documents, photographs, blueprints and sketches of Daniel Burnham's 1905 "Plans of Northwestern," a redesign of the University's Evanston campus), Special Collections and Archives, ongoing.

Oriental Institute of Chicago, University of Chicago, 1155 E. 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Pioneers to the Past: American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919-20" (never before exhibited photos, artifacts, letters and archival documents highlighting the daring travels of James Henry Breasted, noted Egyptologist and founder of the Oriental Institute), through August 29.

Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 5500 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200: "People Wasn't Meant to Burn: Ben Shahn and the Hickman Story" (sixteen original drawings by artist Ben Shahn, originally appearing in *Harper's Magazine* and documenting the murder trial of James Hickman, who shot and killed his landlord after the four Hickman children died in a 1947 Chicago tenement fire. Note: the drawings were donated by legendary Chicago alderman Leon Depres, who served as one of Hickman's original defense lawyers.), through August 29.

Bernice Gallagher will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or gallagher@lakeforest.edu.

Caxtonians Collect: Margaret Oelrich

Sixty-seventh in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Margaret Oelrich joined the Caxton Club in 2006, when she was still in graduate school at Dominican University in library science. She has rapidly become valuable to the Club's operation. She serves on the Council, assists Skip Landt with Membership Committee activities, and does much of the recording for the videos of meetings.

She now works as the head of young adult services for River Forest Public Library. At Dominican, she had been taking one course a term, trying to keep her options open. But when she took a course in young adult literature and discovered how much she liked it, she threw herself headlong into the rest of the program. "Young adult literature is such an interesting area these days," she explains. "Wonderful books are being published every week and it is truly exciting to be the one to select these titles and then to also be the one who gets them into kids' hands."

These books are not just for teens, she notes. "Adults are often surprised by the quality of the today's young adult titles." As an example, she tells how surprised a patron was recently that her book group was reading a teen book, *The Book Thief*, Markus Zusak's story of a German girl living with a foster family during WWII. (One of the most remarkable elements of the story is that death himself is the narrator.) Although the woman was doubtful about the book when she left the library, she came back shortly after raving about it.

Like many libraries, River Forest follows the modern trend of placing the young adult collection with the adult collection rather than with children's books, as was the plan in the past. Most teens prefer it this way, she explains. In keeping with that view, Oelrich also works with adults. She mans the adult reference desk 16 hours per week. "When they first explained it was part of my job, I was not sure how much I would like it since I had taken mostly courses in children's literature." But she quickly found that she was able to do it just fine, and that she enjoyed it greatly.

"In some ways, working the reference desk reminds me of being a Caxtonian," she confessed. "People come to the reference desk with

very specific questions. To help them, I have to get up to speed quickly in their area of interest. It's like being at a Caxton dinner, and spending an hour with an expert on the social history of brewing. You quickly get to know a great deal from someone whose knowledge would take years to acquire on your own. It gets me



learning about areas that I never would have otherwise explored."

Her other duties at the library include programs for teens. She visits the River Forest schools to present some, and gives others at the library. She mentioned a whole host of programs – book clubs, craft days, video game days, movie nights, ACT test prep – the main purpose of which is to keep the library in the lives of the students between childhood, when their parents brought them in, and their own parenthood, when they will bring their children.

One program that has proven particularly successful is a mystery night, where a crime scene is constructed at the library and the teens are invited in to see if they can figure out who did it. Representatives of the police department join in preparing and presenting.

She also teaches an adult course every month or so (which might interest a few Caxtonians) on "The Internet for Book Lovers."

In general, she finds River Forest Library a stimulating place to work. "We're constantly trying to come up with new ways to get people involved with books and information. We want to connect with our users wherever they are."

Oelrich did much of her schooling at Jesuit institutions. She went to Loyola Academy for high school, followed by Boston College for undergraduate studies and then Dominican for her master's in library science. She did a double major at Boston College, in history and film studies. "I managed to get them to let me make a movie as a large part of my senior history thesis," she laughs. "I made a film about 19th century whaling captains' wives. I went to New Bedford and studied the letters and diaries from the period, filmed on the old whaling ships they have on display at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and went out to sea to film a modern whale watch." Between college and graduate school she taught film and humanities in an alternative high school and then managed college access projects for the Chicago Public Schools. "These different jobs taught me a lot," she says, "I learned that I really liked working with people, especially teenagers, and that I loved connecting them to information." She had always loved books and storytelling and so library science seemed a natural fit when it

came time for graduate school.

Margaret is passionate about social history. While at Dominican, she took archives courses, a favorite of which was a class in Collective Memory. She has become active in the Chicago Area Women's History Council thanks to meeting Caxtonian Mary Ann Johnson. Oelrich's background in film is appreciated here, as well, as the group is conducting oral history interviews.

Oelrich is engaged to be married to Rudra Banerji, with the wedding to take place in August. She joined the Club because her father ran into Skip Landt at his health club. Her father happened to mention the project about whaling captains' wives, and Landt decided she would make an ideal Caxtonian, and pursued her until she joined.

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SHERLOCK HOLMES, *from page 5*

dropped, she attacked the secretary with the nearest object at hand, a knife.

In the end, everything is neatly wrapped. The woman had already taken poison when she is discovered. The papers are to be taken by Holmes and Watson to the Russian embassy to free the wronged lover, and Holmes explains the final details.

The characteristic in all these stories is the eventual control of conditions which initially seem uncontrollable. The wild November evening turns into a cool but bright and placid autumn day, the characters behave according to their class in society, the criminals, once discovered, freely admit their motivations for the crime. There is the brilliant dénouement in which Holmes ties all the clues together and explains his thinking. This is also true of other crime stories. What is so special about these stories? Not the least important is the reader's identification with Watson, who is not a really a bumbler but who responds as we might to Holmes' flashes of insight.

An interesting perspective on the popularity of Sherlock Holmes is offered in *Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes*. The book's author, David S. Payne, hypothesizes that the complex processes of modernity, already engulfing society in the Victorian era but continuing through the present, brought about swift changes. This precipitated nostalgia for a fabricated, stable past. Payne's theory is that the Holmes stories provide a method of comprehending these changes by bracketing them within a world of traditional virtues, with characters that portray stereotypes of certain social classes and cultures.

In a sense, according to this hypothesis, a world was created with its own innate culture and values, which was close enough to a nostalgic reality of the past to draw readers from a wide variety of backgrounds into its mystique. Perhaps Holmes is arguably the most famous character in English literature because of that. I would entertain the notion that a good part of the attraction of Holmes, and the continuity among the stories, is his attempt to prove his analytical skills, his verbal sparring with Watson, and yes, even his gradually developing humanity. Two other characteristics, commented upon by author Colin Wilson in a Holmes anthology, is Conan Doyle's passion for factual detail, providing "an illusion of reality." Since the first arguably modern novel, *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson in 1740, defined by Wilson as one in which the reader can truly identify with a character, Conan Doyle may have provided a step forward by combining in Holmes and his environment, not only a sense of reality, but the fantasy of wish fulfillment, because of the absence of despair or defeat, aside from Doyle's temporarily killing off Holmes. That decision was a grave mistake and a large group of Victorian readers rebelled. The readership remains strong today. This essay alone reflects the ease of discussing Holmes and his motivations, almost as if he actually had lived.

To paraphrase a Holmes coda: "Ah, Watson, draw up your chair and hand me my violin for some baroque airs, for the only problem we still have to solve is how to while away these bleak winter evenings."

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BOOKS CONSULTED

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. *Sherlock Holmes: The Com-*

plete Novels and Stories. paperback, two volumes. Bantam Books, 1986.

William S. Baring-Gould. *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street. A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective*. Bramhall House, New York, 1962

David S. Payne. *Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes*. Gaslight Pubs., Bloomington, Indiana, 1992.

Owen Dudley Edwards. *The Quest for Sherlock Holmes*. Barnes and Noble, 1983.

Michael Harrison. *Sherlock Holmes. A Study in Surmise*. Gaslight Publications, Bloomington Indiana, 1984.

Colin Wilson. "The Flawed Superman," in Michael Harrison (ed), *Beyond Baker Street. A Sherlockian Anthology*. Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. Indianapolis/New York, 1976.

Dan A. Oren. *Joining the Club. A History of Jews and Yale*. 2d edition. Yale University Press, 2000. p. 152.

Since this talk was delivered, Leslie S. Klinger has provided us with his three-volume "The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes," which makes cross-referencing the Canon ridiculously easy.

INTERNET SOURCES

The Origins of Sherlock Holmes:

http://www.siracd.com/work_bell.shtml [For description of Joseph Bell].

<http://www.diogenes-club.com/joebell.htm> [Tom McQuain. "Dr. Joseph Bell, a Model for Sherlock Holmes"].

<http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/The Sherlock Holmes Society of London> [material on Joseph Bell].

Sherlock Holmes and the Scientific Method:

"How Sherlock Holmes and the Scientific Method Relate to the Book *The Hounds of the Baskerville*" [sic], <http://www.angelfire.com/bc/SherlockHolmes/>

"What is Deduction? The Steps in the Process.", http://www.Sahs.utmb.edu/pellinore/intro_to_research/wad/ductioo.htm

"Sherlock Holmes and Probabilistic Induction." [Prof. Uchii], http://www.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~suchii/holmes_t.html

Ray Betzner, "Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?" (site no longer available)

Carl L. Heifetz, "Sherlock Holmes: Master of Espionage" <http://kspot.org/holmes/spy.htm>